**A HEALTH OF INFORMATION**

**Written by Sammie Crowley, Whitney Wetta**

**Produced by Devon Cody**

**Story editing by Joanna Lewis, Kristine Songco, Josh Haber**

**Supervising direction by Jim Miller**

**Directed by Denny Lu, Mike Myhre**

**Transcribed by Alan Back (**[**ajback@yahoo.com**](mailto:ajback@yahoo.com)**)**

Notes: This episode makes reference to characters who have appeared in the IDW comic

series *My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic*. Reading that particular issue (#58)

is not essential to being able to follow this episode, but the two do dovetail with

each other slightly.

All lines marked with one asterisk (\*) are delivered as a voice over.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to an expanse of trees with overgrown, drooping foliage that waves slightly in the breeze of late afternoon. Large, pale blue flowers with light orange spots sprout from branches and trunks, and one breaks loose to ride the air currents as the camera pans to follow it. The trees line a swamp, at which Fluttershy and Zecora have arrived; the pegasus stands on solid ground, while the zebra has wrapped her tail around an overhead branch to anchor herself as she stands on a protruding root and leans toward the water. Broad smears of yellow-green plant growth cover the surface, and a few blossoms sprout from floating lily pads.*)

**Fluttershy:** Thank you so much, Zecora. I never would have found the criss-cross moss without you.

**Zecora:** (*leaning toward one patch*) Of course!

I know where it grows, so it’s not much to ask,

Though retrieving it has been a difficult task.

**Fluttershy:** Oh, but the oxen visiting Sweet Feather Sanctuary next week will surely appreciate it. It really adds a shine to their coat.

(*Recall that this was the facility she set up in “Fluttershy Leans In.” A striped hoof punches into one mass, swirls around in it, and drags the viscous stuff up into free air.*)

**Zecora:** There we go! Now, that wasn’t so tough.

Fluttershy, tell me—will this be enough?

**Fluttershy:** Gee, I don’t know. It’s a pretty big pack.

(*holding up a bag*) So maybe enough to fill up this sack?

(*Gasp, then laugh as she drops it.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, my! You’re rubbing off on me, Zecora!

(*The herbal expert smiles and leans back into her task, but her rear hooves begin to lose purchase on the root’s slimy surface. She yelps in surprise and fright as the branch held by her tail snaps, sending her into the water with a splash and bringing down a shower of the trees’ blossoms. Fluttershy screams and gallops to the edge.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh no, oh no, oh no!

(*Zecora’s head breaks the surface and she pulls in a huge breath.*)

**Fluttershy:** Zecora, are you all right?

**Zecora:** No need to fret.

I only got wet.

(*gathering moss*) At least now I can easily grab

All the criss-cross moss there is to be had.

(*With a sizable accumulation encircled by her forelegs, she wades toward the shore. A lily pad floats past, the flower on it emitting a sudden dense burst of pinkish pollen that fills the screen. When the view clears, Fluttershy has backed up a few steps before the cloud that has drifted toward her and Zecora is emerging from this. A closer shot picks out a few new, bright red-orange spots on the striped coat; the sight of these prompts Fluttershy to utter a deep gasp.*)

**Fluttershy:** What’s happening to you?

**Zecora:** (*voice weakening*) Honestly, it’s hard to tell.

But suddenly I don’t feel so well.

(*Taking a good look at herself, she starts in surprise upon noticing the stipplings. Fluttershy gasps again, her eyes constricting to terrified points, and the view fades to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: the black screen splits horizontally and resolves into the interior of a slowly opening mouth. The camera points out between the teeth and into a doctor’s examination room, and two eyes behind pince-nez spectacles lean in for a close look, noticing the heavily spotted tongue. They glance one way, then another, and the camera cuts to the room itself. Zecora is sitting on an examination table, fully dried out and mouth open, and the doctor in question is the khaki stallion who had a look at Spike during “Secret of My Excess.” Fluttershy stands a few paces back, no longer hauling her moss collection bag.*)

**Doctor:** All right, Zecora. Let’s have a listen to the old ticker.

(*Putting his stethoscope to her chest, he is rewarded with the sound of an energetic drum solo.*)

**Doctor:** Hmmm…hmmm.

(*He backs off and pulls the earpieces out.*)

**Doctor:** (*ominously*) Hmmm.

**Fluttershy:** Do you think it’s serious, Doctor?

**Doctor:** Well, that wasn’t a good sign. (*He paces away.*)

**Fluttershy:** I can’t believe a flower did this! (*pacing, viciously*) I take back thinking it was pretty!

(*As he examines Zecora’s ear, she coughs up a few bubbles; thinking fast, he trades his scope for a small vial half full of pale blue liquid. Close-up of this; a deft hoof maneuver gets one bubble balanced on the neck, and a second fits the cork in to capture it without popping.*)

**Doctor:** (*from o.s., shaking*) Mmm-hmm. (*Cut to him.*) We’re looking for any color other than red.

(*The agitation stops and the vial is held up—no color change.*)

**Fluttershy:** Phew!

(*And now the contents go red, bringing a long gasp from her throat.*)

**Doctor:** Oh, it’s just as I thought. (*to Zecora*) I’m afraid you have a very rare disease called… (*echoing*) *…swamp fever!* (*Lightning cracks out behind him.*)

**Zecora:** Tell me, Doctor, what should I do?

I’ve never heard of swamp fever, mind you.

**Doctor:** (*pacing*) Unfortunately, very little is known about the disease— (*dipping down and o.s.*) —except, of course, its symptoms.

(*He comes up with a book and begins to skim its pages.*)

**Doctor:** Change of coat…coughing bubbles…shock sneezing…confusion…and the last stage… (*facing book to camera: pictures, of the flower, the symptoms, and a swamp tree*) …the afflicted turn into the very trees that drop the disease-spreading flower.

(*Zoom in to a close-up of the illustration as he finishes, then cut to Zecora as Fluttershy crosses to her.*)

**Zecora:** (*gasping softly*) Is there anything that can be done

For such a terrible conundrum?

**Doctor:** (*checking book*) A cure has yet to be discovered. (*Close it; head drops sadly.*) I’m sorry, Zecora.

**Zecora:** (*to Fluttershy*) Hmmm…

**Doctor:** (*opening door*) It’s a lot to take in. (*brightly*) I’ll leave you two to discuss.

(*Having already blown a hole in his bedside manner, he decides to completely sink the rest by darting out and shutting the door behind himself.*)

**Fluttershy:** Zecora, this is all my fault! If you hadn’t been helping me get the criss-cross moss, you wouldn’t have gotten swamp fever! I’m so sorry.

**Zecora:** Fluttershy, you are not to blame.

These things happen all the same.

**Fluttershy:** (*firmly*) I refuse to accept that! There has to be somepony who can help you! (*Zecora thinks had for a moment.*)

**Zecora:** Ahhh!

There’s a healer of legend who never would fail,

But I only know her from ancient folk tales.

(*covering eyes, gesturing*) Mystical and masked, she came in the night,

(*Cut to Fluttershy; she continues o.s.*) And cured everything from hoof cough to fur blight.

(*Back to her.*) What became of the healer, nopony knows,

For she disappeared ages and ages ago.

**Fluttershy:** The Mystical Mask! Of course! My parents would tell me about her whenever I was sick in bed.

**Zecora:** There’s so many accounts of her power to heal,

She can’t just be a legend. I think she’s real.

**Fluttershy:** If that’s who we need to cure you, then I’m going to find her—and I know just the pony who can help.

(*Dissolve to a long shot of the Castle of Friendship and zoom in slowly as a panting Fluttershy gallops up to the front doors, then cut to just inside them. She throws one open.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight?

(*Off she goes across the entrance hall; cut to within Twilight Sparkle’s bedchamber, whose doors are flung open. The yellow flyer surveys the room, finding no other signs of life.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight!

(*Hooves race off down the corridor; cut to an extreme close-up of another door and zoom out as she opens it from the other side. Here stands Twilight in the kitchen, wearing a white chef’s toque on her head and splotches of flour on the rest of her. She stands at a messy table, cradling a bowl of batter in her forelegs and using a magically held spoon to stir it.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight! (*The stirring stops; Twilight turns to her.*) Oh! I’m so sorry to bother… (*puzzled*) …are…are you cooking? (*The bowl is set down; now lopsided cakes can be seen on the table.*)

**Twilight:** Yeah! Spike and I are having a cook-off.

(*On the start of the next line, cut to Spike pulling a tray from of the ovens. He wears a toque of his own, along with a heart-decorated apron and matching oven mitts.*)

**Spike:** My cauliflower bites blew her sweet potato muffins out of the water! (*Twilight spares him a tight smile, then turns back to Fluttershy.*)

**Twilight:** I’m glad you’re here, Fluttershy— (*levitating a tray of muffins and a bowl of bites to her*) —because we’re gonna need a second opinion about that.

(*Her field moves a sample of each across the gap for a taste-test.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, they’re both delicious, but… (*rapid fire, leaning into Twilight’s face* ) …Zecora has swamp fever and there’s no cure and it’s all my fault and the only pony who can cure her is the Mystical Mask and I need your help to find her!

(*She finishes this line by bulldozing the winged unicorn out the door.*)

**Twilight:** Uhhh…

**Spike:** (*crossing kitchen, setting a tray on the stove*) So what’d she pick? The cauliflower bites, right?

(*It takes him a moment to realize that has lost his entire audience. Dissolve to a close-up of one shelf in the library, from which Fluttershy pulls several books at once and then takes one more after a moment’s thought. She flies them down to ground level, which is littered with stacks and untidy piles of literature; Twilight sits reading at a similarly disordered table. After a quick flip through the pages with her aura, she shuts the cover and lets it flop with a disappointed moan. She has cleaned up from her kitchen venture and shed her toque.*)

**Twilight:** That’s the last book on ancient ponies. (*Fluttershy sets her stack down.*) And still no mention of the Mystical Mask.

**Fluttershy:** Hmmm…did we check the unabridged versions?

**Twilight:** Yes, and the books on rare diseases, the books on rare plants— (*floating one up*) —and the entire section on bog habitation. (*Down again.*)

**Fluttershy:** Well, we might have to look through every book in the entire library, but I know we’ll figure it out.

(*She takes wing for the upper reaches as her research partner moans again and magically scoops up another book for perusal. Tilt up to Fluttershy, who begins pulling one at a time from the shelves, giving a cursory glance, and tossing them over her shoulder—nothing promising in any of them. A dissolve leaves the place stripped clean, the volumes thrown down in great piles tall enough to reach most of the way to the highest level. The next-to-last book is flung away, and a flip through the very last one brings a crushed moan from Fluttershy’s lips before it too joins the pile.*)

**Fluttershy:** Another dead end. (*addressing herself down o.s.*) Have you found anything yet, Twilight?

(*A soft snore drifts up to her; cut to the bookworm, crashed out atop one of the piles. Fluttershy flies down to her.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight? (*Who snaps awake with a cry and falls off.*) Goodness! Are you okay?

(*Twilight sits up wearily, a book lying open on her head.*)

**Twilight:** (*sighing*) I’m fine. Fluttershy, you know that I want to help Zecora. But I think we’d be a lot better off if we got some sleep. We’ve been at this for hours.

**Fluttershy:** Oh, I’m so sorry. I didn’t realize how late it had gotten. (*Twilight slides down to the floor.*)

**Twilight:** No problem. I’ll grab you a pillow and— (*Fluttershy descends to her.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, no, no, no. I meant *you* should sleep. I can’t rest until Zecora is healed.

**Twilight:** I understand how you feel, but I still think we’d have more luck if we tried again in the morning. (*Fluttershy sits down and starts reading.*) Just promise me you’ll take a break soon.

**Fluttershy:** (*distractedly*) Mmm-hmm.

(*On her way out the door, Twilight uncorks a cavernous yawn.*)

**Twilight:** Good night, Fluttershy.

(*Her field pulls the doors shut behind her. Dissolve from them to her sleeping uneasily in bed.*)

**Twilight:** (*talking in sleep*) …nine-by-thirteen-inch pan…

(*Her slumber gets derailed when the doors burst open to admit a fatigued but excited Fluttershy, who has donned her saddlebags.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight!

(*Who falls off her bed, sheets and all, and sits up in a googly-eyed panic; the pillow is on her head, and the blanket is snarled around her body.*)

**Twilight:** *Nonstick pans!*

(*In walks Spike with a drowsy groan, a butterfly-decorated sleep mask propped on his forehead and one fist rubbing his eyes He has ditched his toque from the previous day’s cook-off.*)

**Spike:** What’s all the commotion in here, ladies?

**Fluttershy:** Sorry! But I figured out who the Mystical Mask is.

(*Twilight pulls herself up to mattress level with a lung-bursting gasp. The early morning sky can be seen through the window behind her.*)

**Twilight:** You did?

**Fluttershy:** All I had to do was cross-reference a book about masks with another book on ancient Equestrian healers, then use a third book to translate it all from Old Ponish, and there it was! Zecora was right! The Mystical Mask wasn’t just a legend. (*She jumps on the mattress and leans toward Twilight.*) The Mystical Mask was Mage Meadowbrook!

(*This revelation causes Twilight to gasp again and her eyes to roll back in her head before toppling onto her back.*)

**Twilight:** The ancient sorceress from Hayseed Swamp? We studied her at Celestia’s School! Are you sure?

**Fluttershy:** Absolutely! Mage Meadowbrook wasn’t just a sorceress, she was also a healer, and back then healers wore masks so they wouldn’t get sick themselves!

**Twilight:** (*sitting up*) Fluttershy, I am so incredibly proud of you for using your research skills to figure this out! (*Fluttershy climbs down to the floor.*) But Meadowbrook lived ages ago, and…didn’t she disappear?

**Fluttershy:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. (*pulling Twilight upright*) But if we go to Hayseed Swamp, maybe we can find something she left behind—something that could lead to a cure!

**Twilight:** It seems like a longshot, but I guess it’s possible.

(*A light yellow hoof hooks itself around her foreleg and yanks her away; a moment later she finds herself being shoved toward the door with some effort.*)

**Fluttershy:** We have to try. I’ve got a route all planned out, and on the way we can check up on Zecora, and then—

**Twilight:** Whoa, whoa, whoa. (*Fluttershy stops pushing.*) We’re leaving *now?*

**Fluttershy:** Of course! Every second we spend waiting is a second Zecora is coughing bubbles!

**Twilight:** But, Fluttershy, you haven’t slept! And that’s a long journey!

**Fluttershy:** (*moving toward Twilight*) There’s no use trying to talk me out of this, Twilight.

(*She starts trying to muscle the Princess out the door, with much grunting but no forward progress, as Spike crosses toward the bed.*)

**Fluttershy:** We’ve got no time to waste! (*Close-up of her and Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** Can we at least grab some breakfast?!

(*The pegasus relaxes and produces a grease-stained paper bag from her luggage.*)

**Fluttershy:** I packed cauliflower bites.

**Twilight:** (*dejectedly*) Awww…no sweet potato muffins?

**Spike:** (*from o.s.*) I, uh… (*Cut to frame him at bedside.*) …ate them all.

(*As Fluttershy gets her hooves in gear and Twilight smiles in at him, he climbs up with her discarded pillow.*)

**Spike:** (*settling sleep mask over eyes*) They were actually really good.

(*Fluttershy reaches back to yank Twilight away as he settles down for a nap. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to a bedroom nook within Zecora’s hut. She is tucked in, and the two mares are attending to her. Zoom in slowly.*)

**Fluttershy:** And that’s when I realized the Mystical Mask was actually Mage Meadowbrook!

**Zecora:** (*coughing a bit*) That’s marvelous, Fluttershy. I am quite impressed.

While you’re gone on your journey, I’ll try not to be…

(*She taps her chin for a moment, trying to find a way to finish the couplet.*)

**Zecora:** …worried. (*Fluttershy gasps, shocked top to bottom.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, no! Zecora, you didn’t rhyme! You must be getting worse!

**Zecora:** (*forcing a smile*) Oh, no, no! No, not at all!

Something, something…ball?

(*A weak offering indeed, but the sneeze she fires off next has considerably more juice behind it. Namely, a bolt of lightning that singes Twilight’s forelock as she ducks barely in time. This would be the “shock sneeze” portion of the symptoms read off by the doctor in Act One.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*shuddering, to Twilight*) That’s it! We have to go now! (*She trots away.*)

**Twilight:** Lead the way, Fluttershy.

(*She follows her traveling companion, who runs headfirst into the closed front door and ends up seeing stars for a second or two. After a woozy moan and head shake, she gets it open and exits, trailed closely by Twilight. The door slams behind them; cut to outside the hut as both take flight, then dissolve to them making a beeline through a sky that has progressed to late afternoon. Twilight’s mane has sorted itself out from being nearly fried. Fluttershy, now hanging back and still visibly worn down, fails to notice Twilight’s stop and rams her from behind. Both look down to find a cluster of ramshackle houses and docks that project out from the shore of an expansive swamp. Twilight and Fluttershy smile at each other, having recognized the area as their destination of Hayseed Swamp, and land on one of the rickety platforms. The camera pans ahead of them to show a little more of this settlement—with no visible signs of pony life—then cuts to a close-up of an uneasy Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** So…

(*She shudders ever so slightly as a dragonfly meanders lazily past.*)

**Twilight:** …where do you think Meadowbrook lived? (*Pan back to a yawning Fluttershy.*)

**Fluttershy:** I’m not sure. Maybe there’s somepony we can ask.

**Twilight:** I think we might be the only ponies here.

(*Both look uncertainly around themselves for some seconds before Fluttershy’s eyes lock onto a particular direction.*)

**Fluttershy:** Wait!

(*Not too far from them, on dry land, is an old tree with a thick, gnarled trunk.*)

**Fluttershy:** I recognize that tree!

(*She lifts off from the dock, followed by Twilight, and they are at it in no time flat. So many age-thickened branches and brambles have twisted around the trunk and each other that it is impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. A door is set deep into the wood, and Twilight lands next to this as Fluttershy does a victory lap around the tree.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*gasping softly*) Yes! This has to be it! It’s just like the illustrations of her home!

**Twilight:** Anypony who lives in a tree is okay by me.

(*Landing and shedding her saddlebags, Fluttershy heaves and grunts in a prolonged but futile attempt to push the door open. Finally she collapses to her haunches.*)

**Fluttershy:** Phew! Well, if the doorway’s sealed up, we’ll just have to dig our way in! (*standing up*) Back up, Twilight! I don’t want you to get hurt!

(*She goes to it with gusto, sending dirt clods flying in all directions. Twilight, already a few paces back, lets a mildly disgusted expression flick across her eyes before stepping over.*)

**Twilight:** (*dryly*) Or we could try the handle.

(*This brings the equine excavator up short, having already dug a wing-deep hole and made quite a mess of herself.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*laughing sheepishly*) It really blends in with the bark.

**Twilight:** Easy to miss.

(*It is, in fact, wider than the keyhole plate and made of metal in a shade that contrasts markedly with the wood. Cut to the tree’s interior, which bears quite a few similarities to Zecora’s hut: assorted masks hanging on the walls, shelves of varied medicaments, a large caldron in the center of the floor, and so on. However, the thick layers of cobwebs in nearly every crevice tell of the severe neglect that has befallen the place. The door swings open and Twilight and Fluttershy put their heads in for a look-see; the latter is clean again.*)

**Fluttershy:** Wow! (*They enter.*) It looks like this place has been abandoned for years.

(*Almost as soon as a bit of horn power shuts the door, the timid mare finds herself staring at a bottled specimen of the flower that infected Zecora. She gasps sharply.*)

**Fluttershy:** Twilight, look! It’s the same kind of lily pad that gave Zecora swamp fever! (*She smiles to herself as Twilight crosses to her.*) Hmm. I wonder if Meadowbrook was looking for a cure for swamp fever too! (*Gasp.*) Do you think she found it? (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** I hope so, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves. (*A loud squeak from o.s.*) That’s exactly what I’m talking about! You’re making your excited squeaking noise!

**Fluttershy:** (*nervously*) Uh…I wasn’t making my excited squeaking noise.

(*It asserts itself again, loud and clear, and the camera zooms out at ground level to frame the lower portion of a creaky rocking chair in motion—and the two legs hanging over its front edge. Twilight and Fluttershy scream in terror and clutch at each other as the camera cuts to a head-on view of the chair’s occupant, who climbs off and advances from shadow into light. Heavyset, dark tan earth pony stallion; thick, two-tone blond tail/beard/mustache, the first two tied into loose sheaves; red kerchief tied across forehead; mane covered by a brown top hat with a lighter band accented by green leaves; narrowed red-violet eyes; sleeveless green shirt with yellow edging around the foreleg holes; two necklaces, one gold and one of beads strung on a cord; cutie mark of two crossed cattail reeds under a yellow sunburst spiral. This is Cattail, who puts a foreleg around each mare’s shoulders and pulls them gently apart with a friendly grin, causing them to fall silent. He speaks with a pronounced Cajun accent.*)

**Cattail:** Y’all can stop screamin’ now. Didn’t mean to scare you. (*Chuckle.*) I do that a lot. (*He walks past them.*)

**Twilight:** (*testily*) Scare ponies, or rock creepily in the dark?

**Cattail:** Well…both, I s’pose. Name’s Cattail.

(*He doffs his hat, exposing a mane swept/bundled up and back in the same fashion as his beard and tail.*)

**Cattail:** Pleased to meet you.

**Fluttershy:** Likewise. But, um, may I ask—why are you in Mage Meadowbrook’s home?

**Cattail:** (*opening caldron; hat on again*) Oh, I take care of the place. (*A dragonfly buzzes out; the lid goes back on.*) I ain’t much of a cleaner, but from what I hear, my kin wasn’t either, so I doubt they’d mind a few cobwebs in our ancestral home.

(*Fluttershy flies across and clasps one of his front hooves with an ecstatic gasp.*)

**Fluttershy:** You’re related to Mage Meadowbrook?

**Cattail:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. (*She drops the limb.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh my goodness, Twilight, we did it! (*She wheels around and squashes the violet cheeks.*) Not only did we find Mage Meadowbrook’s old house— (*foreleg across shoulders*) —we actually found one of her descendants!

**Twilight:** Honestly, I would not have guessed it.

**Cattail:** So you’re lookin’ for some kinda cure, huh? Well, now, I know Meadowbrook was known to always be writin’ in her journals. If she had the cure you want, I reckon that’s where it’d be. (*beckoning*) Come on. I’ll show you the library.

**Twilight:** (*excitedly*) Library?! (*following him*) Now we’re talking!

(*Cattail proudly turns to indicate a smallish bookcase whose three shelves are stuffed with a haphazard assortment of books, many with slips of paper protruding from between the pages. Like the rest of the place, it bears the cobwebs of poor upkeep. Cut to within a gap between tomes, the camera pointing out at a dumbstruck Twilight and a hopefully smiling Fluttershy.*)

**Twilight:** (*forcing a smile*) Oh! Well. (*Chuckle.*) Libraries come in all shapes and sizes. (*Cut to Fluttershy.*)

**Fluttershy:** This is good! It’ll take us less time to go through everything.

(*A quick sweep of Cattail’s hoof clears a small side table so Twilight can have a spot to set down a stack of journals under her influence. Fluttershy takes the topmost one, blows dust from its cover, and opens it.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*reading*) “Today, my mom made me eat peas. Peas are yucky.” (*Glance up with a smile.*) And we can probably skip this one, unless she found a cure when she was a foal. (*Cut to Twilight, levitating another open one.*)

**Twilight:** (*reading*) “I met a colt today. He pulled my mane, so I put a frog on his head.” (*She closes it.*) Also not helpful. (*Open it again and flip ahead.*) But I do kinda want to see where it goes.

(*The yellow hooves thrust a third volume toward her. Irritated at having been interrupted in her desire to read about budding young romance and/or the battle of the sexes, she groans softly and transfers her hold to this one so her eyes rove over their pages. Fluttershy is the first to hit paydirt in a fourth, though.*)

**Fluttershy:** Wait! Listen to this! (*reading; zoom in between them*) “Today I tried again to brew an un-sniffle elixir.”

(*The camera ends up focused on the caldron, and a dissolve restores the hut to the state of neatness that comes from conscientious long use. Glowing orange crystal encircle the caldron’s base, similar to those seen in “A Hearth’s Warming Tail,” and two earth pony mares fade into view around it. The younger, who stirs the brew, wears a sleeveless, light green sundress with pale yellow collar/hem accents and a brown necklace and foreleg bracelet. Her coat is sky blue, her eyes blue-green, and her two-tone red mane/tail are tied back in a manner similar to Cattail’s, the former further restrained by a pale yellow headband. This is Mage Meadowbrook. The coat of the older one, her mother, is light blue-violet; her dress is also sleeveless and done in purple with lighter waist/hem trim. Her eyes are faded red, and her mane/tail are two-tone orange and each in a single bunch, the former upswept and held with a purple band and a pale violet kerchief that matches the one around her neck. A brown belt is around her waist. Meadowbrook lifts a ladle full of the mixture. Both mares’ voices carry less pronounced versions of Cattail’s Cajun accent.*)

**Fluttershy, Meadowbrook:** (*Fluttershy in voice over*) And I finally got it right.

(*A tiny, congested snort is heard from o.s.; cut to the source, a chipmunk whose inflamed eyes and nose give away the cold it has picked up. It sneezes loudly and sips from the ladle extended in its direction. The redness and swelling go down almost instantly, and it takes an effortless deep breath and wags its tail happily before scampering away.*)

**Mother:** (*pulling a gift box from a drawer*) Meadowbrook, I think it’s time you had this.

(*The lid is marked with a cluster of acorns/berries/leaves. Meadowbrook opens the box, stares into it for a long moment, and gasps happily while lifting out the item it contains—a mask styled as a parrot’s blue/yellow-striped head with a crest of green/orange feathers.*)

**Meadowbrook:** My very own healer’s mask! You think I’m ready, Mother?

**Mother:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm.

(*The happy reverie is broken by a knock at the door. Mother opens it to find an exhausted mare on the step, a gray hooded cloak covering everything from the knees/hocks up except for her face and the very fringe of her forelock. She lowers the hood to expose the telltale red-orange spots of swamp fever; Mother darts over, takes one good close look, and gasps softly.*)

**Mother:** What caused this?

(*Without a word, the afflicted pony produces one of the culprit blooms from within her cloak. Close-up of it.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** Mother calls it “swamp fever.”

(*Around it, the background dissolves to put it on a small platform. Zoom out slightly as a ladle of liquid is poured over it.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** We’ve been tryin’ to find a cure, but it hasn’t been easy.

(*Cut to a longer shot on the end of this; Mother is the one doing the dosing, while her daughter takes notes. A sudden burst of pollen, the same as that which blew up in Zecora’s face during the prologue, causes Mother to cough and drop the ladle held in her teeth. Meadowbrook hurries to comfort her, but once again a knock curtails the tender moment. Cut to just outside the door and zoom out slightly as Meadowbrook opens it to find three new arrivals on the step, all showing the rash and one coughing up bubbles. Zoom out quickly to frame a long line of suffering residents all in search of relief. The sky over the swamp shows the red-orange of approaching sunset.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** The fever’s spread like wildfire.

(*More coughs, more lightning-bolt sneezes—and in close-up, Mother coughs a bit s well, startling Meadowbrook no end.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** I fear if we don’t find a cure soon— (*Zoom in slowly on her face.*) —everypony will be in grave danger!

(*Dissolve to a close-up of Mother laid up in bed, properly spotted up and coughing, and zoom out to frame Meadowbrook hurrying over to feel her forehead.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** With Mother sick—

(*Dissolve to the far end of Hayseed Swamp, the village visible in the distance, and pan to frame her on one shore, pondering the laden lily pads on the water.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** —I didn’t think I’d ever find a cure. But starin’ at those cursed flowers today…

(*Two large, blue/yellow-striped bees with long antennae buzz lazily into view over one flower, their stingers jagged and resembling lightning bolts.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** …I saw somethin’!

(*They get a good dose of pollen, but are unfazed by it and descend to start gathering the grains. As Meadowbrook stares across the water, her mind blown, she watches other bees carry out this same activity with no ill effects and voices a gasp of happy epiphany.*)

**Meadowbrook:** Flash bees!

(*Her determination restored, she gallops off after the closest two to leave their flower. Within only a few steps, she finds herself chasing them all, now coalesced into a blue/yellow/white-glowing swarm that crackles with electrical energy.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** I realized the flowers’ poison didn’t affect the flash bees, and if they were immune to swamp fever, their honey could be the cure!

(*Reaching an old tree at the swamp’s edge, the swarm turns into a vertical climb and disappears among the ponderous boughs. With barely a moment’s hesitation, Meadowbrook leaps from one protruding root and branch to another, swings from a loop of vine by her teeth, and slides to a stop on a contorted limb that puts her eye to eye with a large hanging beehive. Cut to just inside its opening as she stares in, finding the flash bees going about their work and a particularly large one perched on a small raised platform. This one wears a small crown and has a pronounced ruff of blue/yellow fuzz around its neck—the queen of the hive—and is surrounded by bees standing quietly motionless.*)

(*Outside again. As Meadowbrook leans a bit closer, one limb snaps under her weight. Inside: the disruption draws the ire of every bee within earshot, and her eyes widen in a silent “uh-oh.” Outside: she ducks just in time to avoid being electrocuted by the entire swarm when it rockets out at her, but one stinger after another still finds its way into various bits of her anatomy, sending up sparks. Thrown off by both the swarm’s aggression and the pain of these strikes, Meadowbrook loses her balance and lands flat on her back at the base of the tree, smoke curling upward from her body. On the start of the next line, though, she quickly rises to her hooves and glares up at them.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** But they were so aggressive defendin’ their hive, I didn’t know how I was gonna get it!

(*She gives the matter some serious thought. Dissolve to a close-up of the hive and zoom out; her injuries healed, she has perched a short distance away and is holding the mask that Mother gave her.*)

**Meadowbrook:** Here goes nothin’!

(*She puts it on as the swarm begins to close in, and the view fades to black.*)

(*The screen splits horizontally and the gap widens as if it were an eye opening, giving a close-up of Meadowbrook smiling and holding up a small, stoppered vial of flash bee honey. The image is slightly fuzzy at first, but quickly focuses itself before the view cuts to frame her at Mother’s bedside. This was the latter’s perspective, and she offers a weak smile and reaches for the sweet stuff.*)

**\* Meadowbrook:** Today, I cured Mother—

(*Zoom out to frame Twilight and Fluttershy in the foreground as the view dissolves to the present, Meadowbrook and Mother fading away.*)

**Fluttershy, Meadowbrook:** (*Fluttershy reading, Meadowbrook in voice over*) “—and the rest of the bayou.” (*Meadowbrook drops out.*) “It was the greatest feeling I’ve ever experienced, and I promise to dedicate my life to curing ponies all over Equestria.”

**Cattail:** (*from o.s.*) And she did just that. (*Zoom out slightly; he crosses to the pair.*) Right up ’til she disappeared without a trace. (*Fluttershy closes the journal.*)

**Fluttershy:** So all we have to do is find those aggressive flash bees and get them to give us their honey!

(*Another glance at the pages takes the wind out of her sails.*)

**Fluttershy:** Of course, it doesn’t say how she did that.

(*A mild grimace of apprehension passes between Twilight and Cattail, prompting her to lower the book.*)

**Fluttershy:** What?

(*She turns her head slightly, revealing quite a bit of dishevelment in the back portion of her mane. The hoof she lifts to fluff it carries the distinctive red-orange spots of swamp fever.*)

**Fluttershy:** Is my mane messy? I know I haven’t slept in a while, but—

(*A longer shot picks out lesions on all four legs. Without a word, Cattail picks up a grimy old mirror and pivots it to face her. Even as she watches her own image in the sullied glass, the spots begin to spread upward to her face; she gasps in horror and backs away.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, no! I’ve caught swamp fever!

(*Fade to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to a close-up of Fluttershy, face frozen in horror as the pustules multiply across every inch of her. The colors of her mane/tail have lost some of their brightness, and more of her mane has deteriorated into disarray.*)

**Fluttershy:** Huh?

(*She snatches her saddlebags from a hook on which they have been hung up, takes some specimen bottles from a shelf, and pulls down two masks from the wall. These last are plunked onto the heads of Twilight and Cattail—a bird and wolf, respectively.*)

**Twilight:** (*muffled, dryly*) Are you sure these are necessary?

**Fluttershy:** What? (*Twilight lifts her mask.*)

**Twilight:** I said, are you sure these are necessary?

**Fluttershy:** Yes! (*She pulls it back into place.*) I won’t risk infecting you or Cattail!

**Twilight:** (*muffled*) What you can’t risk is getting any sicker. If you don’t rest, your symptoms’ll only get worse. (*Fluttershy coughs out some bubbles.*)

**Cattail:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. You really should rest up before goin’ up against those flash bees. They are nasty critters.

(*Unlike Twilight, the cut of his mask leaves his mouth free enough to speak normally. Fluttershy gives him a condescending little smirk.*)

**Fluttershy:** Um, you don’t know this about me, but I’m pretty good with animals. And besides, Dogtail—

**Cattail:** Cattail.

**Fluttershy:** —um, Zecora is counting on me. (*breathlessly, flying toward door*) I have to help her, just like Meadowbrook helped her mother and all those bayou ponies long ago!

**Twilight:** (*muffled*) But, Fluttershy, as much as Meadowbrook took care of other ponies, I’m sure she also took care of herself.

**Fluttershy:** (*savagely, pushing her and Cattail toward door*) You’re not gonna change my mind, Twilight!

**Cattail:** (*chuckling faintly*) Ooh! For being sick, she sure is strong.

(*Dissolve to a hilltop, the camera zooming out to give a full view of the tree in which Meadowbrook found the flash bees’ hive so many years ago. They are out in force.*)

**Cattail:** (*as all three advance into view*) The flash bee hive is just up yonder. (*Fluttershy now has her saddlebags on.*)

**Twilight:** (*to Fluttershy*) Are you sure you don’t want me to come with you?

**Fluttershy:** No. It’s too dangerous, Twilight. Besides, I’ve already gotten one friend hurt. I won’t let it happen to another! (*Exhale.*) Okay, Fluttershy. You can do this.

[*Error: Twilight’s line in the preceding exchange is heard normally instead of being muffled.*]

(*But a bubbly coughing spasm provides evidence to the contrary. Dissolve to the base of the tree; the faded pegasus gallops up, already winded, and leaps/flies from one perch to the next with considerable effort. Her first attempt to climb the trunk sends her sliding back down.*)

**Fluttershy:** Mind over matter!

(*A second attempt also fails, but her third does not and she gets her forelegs hooked onto a branch. After a pause to catch her breath, she heaves herself up the rest of the way and stands facing the hive, whose denizens have now retreated within. The blue-green eyes narrow over a fierce little smile, and she takes Meadowbrook’s last slide to end up staring the structure dead on. Cut to just inside as she peers in through the entrance, finding the same tableau encountered by the healer of old—some flying about, the queen on her platform surrounded by silent, unmoving ones.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*brightly, reverberating slightly through hive*) Hello, flash bees! I was hoping I could get some of your honey.

(*An endearing, hopeful grin is met by glares from every pair of apian eyes. Outside, Fluttershy turns her face away as the entire swarm starts to boil out toward her.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*unnerved*) Oh! I see. You don’t let others have any. (*looking them full on*) Well, I’m sorry, but I really need it!

(*She takes a sting to the nose that sends her yelping and reeling back as far as she can without toppling, then sighs quietly.*)

**Fluttershy:** I didn’t want it to have to come to this, but I’ll just have to use… (*leaning in point-blank*) …*the Stare!*

(*She lets them have it with both barrels for some seconds, but it has absolutely no effect on them. One after another amped-up stinger strikes home, and she cries out and slides to a low point in the branch’s twists to avoid the flash bees’ massed charge.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*coughing*) You really are aggressive!

(*A more violent spasm cuts off any further words; she looks up, the camera cutting to her perspective of the swarm directly above her. The view begins to rotate and go out of focus; back to her, eyes spinning in their sockets from pain and extreme exhaustion.*)

**Fluttershy:** Oh, dear.

(*And down she goes with a weak moan, collapsing off the branch as if every solid bone had been removed from her body. The camera tilts down to follow her insensate plunge, passing into an area of leaves thick enough to completely black out the screen.*)

(*As in the flashback of Meadowbrook’s successful cure, the screen splits horizontally as if it were an opening eye to give a blurry view of w very worried Twilight and Cattail. The image quickly focuses itself—Fluttershy’s perspective—and Twilight smiles with relief. They are back in Meadowbrook’s hut and are no longer wearing the masks.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*moaning woozily*) What happened?

(*Cut to the three; she is in the same bed in which Meadowbrook’s mother was laid up. The stings have healed, but the swamp fever rash remains; her saddlebags have been set aside.*)

**Fluttershy:** Where am I?

**Twilight:** (*touching her hoof*) Oh, I’m so glad you’re okay! You’re still in Meadowbrook’s tree.

**Cattail:** You fainted, but Twilight shot some magic up and caught you. It was crazy!

**Fluttershy:** Goodness gracious! (*Cough; turn to Twilight.*) Have you heard from Zecora? Is she okay?

**Twilight:** (*hesitantly*) Uh…

**Cattail:** We got word your zebra friend has started sproutin’ leaves!

**Fluttershy:** (*shocked*) She’s already turning into a tree? I thought we’d have more time!

**Twilight:** Actually, you’ve been asleep for three days.

**Fluttershy:** *Three days!?*

**Twilight:** (*nodding*) Mmm-hmm. You were asleep so long, we were afraid you wouldn’t be able to move when you woke up. But thankfully, you just wore yourself down.

**Fluttershy:** Oh, dear! We have to get back to the hive! (*Out of bed; cross the floor.*) I’ve wasted so much time, and—

**Cattail:** Now hang on there, Fluttershy. (*She stops.*) Those flash bee critters are tricky.

**Twilight:** (*circling to them*) Cattail’s right. I can’t even use magic to calm them down. We’ll have to find another way to get the honey.

**Cattail:** We’ve tried everything, from disguises to things I won’t even speak of. (*Shudder.*)

**Twilight:** (*touching his shoulder*) He’s been through a lot these past three days.

**Fluttershy:** (*thoughtfully*) Wait….disguises.

(*A tiny buzzing marks the passage of a single bee around Twilight’s and Cattail’s heads. Now wearing her saddlebags, Fluttershy glares daggers at its flight toward the parrot mask that Meadowbrook’s mother gave her, hanging on the wall. Age and use have faded the colors and left cracks and spots on the surface, but the bee cares nothing for this damage and lands to nuzzle it happily. Fluttershy gasps sharply at the sight and breaks out in a huge smile.*)

**Fluttershy:** That’s it! I know how she did it! I know how Meadowbrook got the honey!

(*Dissolve to an overhead close-up of the hive, orbited closely by two bees on guard duty, and pan to frame Twilight, Fluttershy, and Cattail. Fluttershy has the parrot mask in hoof, and the other two are wearing the ones she chose for them.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*showing them the one she holds*) *This* is how Meadowbrook got the honey from the flash bees.

**Cattail:** She threw a mask at ’em? I wouldn’t recommend that.

**Fluttershy:** No. The male bees aren’t aggressive around the queen bee, and this mask has the same stripes that she does.

**Twilight:** (*muffled*) Fluttershy, that’s brilliant!

(*The determined smile on the yellow face gives way to a sneeze that makes her drop the headpiece; its concomitant lightning bolt barely misses Cattail’s hooves.*)

**Cattail:** (*diving into weeds*) Whoa! (*Thud and grunt.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*gasping)* There’s no time to waste!

**Twilight:** (*muffled, crossing forelegs*) Hooves crossed!

(*Throwing her horn into drive, she levitates both her ailing friend and the mask up into the branches as Cattail peeks out from the undergrowth.*)

**Cattail:** Oh, golly! (*covering eyes*) I can’t watch!

(*By the time Fluttershy lights on the branch near the hive, the flash bees have gathered outside it in preparation for her approach.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*coughing*) Mind over matter!

(*Steeling herself, she plucks the mask out of the air and dons it. One slide later, she is again nose to nose with the energized swarm. A single bee perches on the mask, treating it just as the straggler did in Meadowbrook’s hut, and she voices a series of buzzing noises that cause the swarm to part and let her have a clear line of sight through the opening. Inside, the peers in and continues her speech, drawing the ire of the queen and her attendants—but only for a moment before all eyes widen and the group disperses. Outside, Fluttershy puts a hoof through the opening and draws it out laden with honey.*)

**Fluttershy:** (*muffled*) Twilight… (*Raise mask and hoof.*) …it’s working!

(*She beams at her success. Dissolve to an extreme close-up of Zecora’s face as she leans forward to swallow some honey from an offered ladle. Cut to Twilight and Fluttershy in her hut, the utensil in the yellow mare’s teeth; she is fully cured, her coat and mane are back to their normal brightness and neat appearance, and she has shed her saddlebags and mask. In addition, Twilight no longer wears the mask given to her. After Fluttershy sets the ladle down, the camera cuts to the bedridden zebra, whose condition has advanced since Cattail’s update—not only leaves, but twigs and branches are growing all over her fever-spotted body. Almost as soon as she swallows, though, the foliage drops off and the rash fades away.*)

**Twilight:** I think she’s cured now, Fluttershy.

**Zecora:** Oh, I do feel fine,

And this honey is divine.

**Fluttershy:** Oh, you’re rhyming again!

Welcome back, my friend. (*Pan slowly across the group.*)

**Zecora:** Thank you, Fluttershy, for all you endured.

If not for you, I would not be cured.

**Fluttershy:** (*sadly*) Oh, if it wasn’t for me, you wouldn’t have been sick in the first place.

**Zecora:** Regret is not what you should feel,

Because on this journey you’ve learned a great deal.

**Fluttershy:** (*smiling*) That’s true. I certainly learned that if you don’t take care of yourself, you won’t be able to take care of anypony else. In fact, if I had rested, like Twilight suggested all along, maybe I would’ve thought to use Meadowbrook’s mask sooner.

(*Comes now a loud creak followed by a hearty coughing fit that sends bubbles drifting and popping. On the start of the next line, pan to the source of the commotion—the doctor who diagnosed Zecora in Act One, having opened the nearest window and put his head in. He is in just as bad a shape as she was before eating the honey, having contracted swamp fever himself.*)

**Doctor:** (*wearily*) Please tell me you’ve found the cure!

(*He lets go with a lightning-laced sneeze. As the view “irises out” to black, centered on his face, a few more bubbles drift from his mouth and two of these make it out through the aperture, followed closely by the bolt from a second sneeze. The bubbles then pop to leave the screen empty.*)