

Kerry's Story, by differential_Sloth

Volume Two

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'Wakies Speciaw fwend. Wakies babbehs.'

You open your see places. '*Yawn* W-wat am wong?'

'*Yawn* Wat happen Daddeh?'

'Uww, Big Wed nu wan wakies...'

'Am time fow pway gain?'

'Daddeh nee show famiwy wotsa tings,' your Special friend says. 'Speciaw fwend an babbehs nee knu how hewd du tings, so nu bweak wuwes ow get huwties. An, id am bwighttime nao!'

You don't want to get up, but you better learn this stuff so you and the babbies don't make the Smarty or the other scary fluffies mad. '*Sigh* Otay. Cum on babbehs.' Flower and Runny get up, but Big Red doesn't budge.

'Big Wed nu wan,' he curls up. 'Wan stay sweepies.'

'Nu Big Wed,' you push him out the nestie. 'Yu nee cum tu; nu be bad babbeh.' He grumbles some more, so you give him a small bop on the nose. When you've got him in line, you follow your Special friend out of the den; you walk at the back, so Big Red doesn't try to sneak back to the nestie.

'Dewe wotsa tings Daddeh nee show famiwy!' Your Special friend leads you through the safe place. All around the other fluffies in the herd do their stuff; some of them work on their den, and there's a bunch of them working on a really big one. You walk by a couple of the toughies, but they ignore you; suits you fine. 'Dis am nummie den,' Your Special friend stops near some bushies with a large hole that goes into the ground. 'Id am pwace dat nummies go tu, an whewe hewd get nummies when nee dem.'

You see a couple of fluffies crawl out of the hole and walk in the direction of the forest. 'Wat day doin?' you ask.

'Day am nummie findahs; day find nummies in fowest fow hewd.' He looks at the babbies. 'Dat am wat Daddeh du!' He leads you away from the nummie den to a forever sleepies tree. 'Dis am oda nummie den.'

'Wai hav mowe?' Runny asks.

'Hewd nee wotsa nummies fow cowl times,' your Special friend tells him. 'Fowest nu hav wotsa nummies in cowl times, so nee find wots befow day hewe.'

'Huu dat am scawies!' Flower says.

'Nu be scawdies Fwowah, cowl times nu be hewe soon. Daddeh make suwe hewd hav wotsa nummies befow den!'

'Yay! Daddeh am bestest!' Runny says, and you see a big smile on your Special friend's face.

'Dis way nao!' He leads you away from the other nummie den toward what looks like a bunch of holes in the ground. The closer you walk-

'Nu smeww pwetty!!' Flower yells. 'Nu wan!'

'Wai Daddeh take babbehs tu nu smeww pwetty pwace?' Big Red says.

'Cause Daddeh nee show whewe poopie pwace am.' He stops and points at the holes. 'Dis am poopie pwace; if yu du poopies in safe pwace, yu get huwties.'

'Huu Fwowah nu wan...'

'Babbehs go tu poopie pwace befow,' when you were on your own, you picked a place far from the nestie for the babbies to do their poopies and pee pees.

'Bud dat was wittwe poopie pwace,' Runny says. 'Onwy wittwe nu smeww pwetty. Dis am big nu smeww pwetty!'

'Babbehs nee be gud!' You tell them. 'Famiwy wive in hewd nao, an nee be gud!' You've got no idea what the Smarty does to bad fluffies, but you don't plan to find out.

'Otay, dis way nao!' Your Special friend leads you away from the poopie place back to, your old nestie? What's be brought you here for? 'Dis am safe babbeh pwace,' he says, 'id am whewe dah wittwe babbehs go when dewe Mummahs an Daddehs nu am in safe pwace.' Oh yeah, you remember those fluffies said that's what they had to do to it. While you stand outside, a fluffy with some babbies on her back walks into the bushie; a little while later she comes out without them.

'Otay.'

'Du babbehs nee be hewe?' Runny asks.

'Onwy if Mummah an Daddeh nee go way,' he says. 'Babbehs can stay in nestie if Mummah hewe.'

'Hey!' You all turn to look at the voice and see one of the toughies. 'Wai yu nu wookin fow nummies?' He asks your Special friend.

'Fwuffy jus show famiwy safe pwace tings an teww dem wuwes.'

'Otay, bud yu nee wook fow nummies nao,' the toughie tells him. 'An yuw Speciaw fwend nee find sumtin tu du fow hewd.' He looks at you. 'What fwuffy knu how du?'

You feel some cold tingles and scardies; you didn't think about needing a job to stay in the herd! What can you do? You can't find nummies that aren't grassies or leafies, you can't dig very well, or... wait, of course!

'Kewwy knu how tu take cawe of babbehs!' You say. 'Can take cawe of babbehs when dewe Mummahs an Daddehs nu am in safe pwace!'

The toughie looks at you for a moment. 'Otay, Kewwy go in dewe an hewp,' he points his hoofie at the bushie. 'Take yuw babbehs tuu.'

Your Special friend looks at you. 'Fwuffy be back soon Speciaw fwend,' he hugs you, then gets down to give the babbies huggies. 'Be gud babbehs, Daddeh see yu gain soon.' He walks toward the forest, and you lead the babbies to your old nestie, the safe baby place. The first thing you notice is the tunnel to get in is much shorter. Once you're in, you see how much they've changed things; you barely recognise it!

There are a few larger nesties on the ground, you see holes that go into the ground in different places, and there are babbies everywhere! There are some in fluff piles in the nesties, others play games like huggie tag and something that looks like huggie wrestle. There are also a few big fluffies who must be here to take care of the babbies.

One of them, a grey mare with a blue mane, sees you and walks over. 'Hewwo, Yu am dat nyu fwuffy. Yu wan weave babbehs hewe?' She asks.

'Nu, Kewwy hewe tu hewp take cawe of babbehs.'

'Otay,' the mare says, 'Fwuffy show Kewwy wat du, an show babbehs-'

'*Gasp* Fwend!' You look down just in time to see Runny charge off toward a small group of babbies; when you look, you see his orange and green friend. Runny goes up and hugs him; 'FWEND AM ID!' The two of them start to chase each other around in the safe baby place.

'Dis nu am hawd,' The grey mare tells you. 'Kewwy onwy nee make suwe babbehs nu weave safe babbeh pwace, an nu wet dem be meanies.'

'Otay, Kewwy du dat.' You tell her, then look at Big Red an Flower. 'Go on babbehs, go make fwends.'

'Otay!' Big Red starts to walk off, but then turns back. 'Wai sissie nu move?'

Flower's as low to ground as she can get, and her hear places are hiding. 'Huuuu tuu many, Fwowah nu wike!'

'Id am otay Fwowah!' Big Red says. 'Big Wed keep sissie safe; nu wet oda babbehs be meanies.'

'*Sniff* O-otay...' Slowly, Flower gets up and follows Big Red to a group of babbies. You want to stay and look after her, but the grey mare talks to you again.

'Fwuffy wan Kewwy tu wook aftah wittwe babbehs in dewe,' she points at a hole in the ground. 'Day nu be hawd.'

'Otay, Kewwy du dat.' You walk over and go into the hole; there, you find a den a little smaller than yours, and a nestie with some babbies in it. All of them have their see places open, and quite a few are walking about. None of the look many brighttimes old though. 'Uh, hewwo babbehs,' you say, 'Fwuffy name Kewwy, am hewe tu wook aftah yu.' A few of them look at you.

'Hehe cheep! Pweety!'

'Wub nyu fwuffy! W-wub!'

'Huggies?' One of them sits up.

What do you do? They're too small to run away, so that won't be much of a problem. You sit down a little bit away so you can watch all of them at the same time. Some crawl around to explore the den, others play funny huggie games like yours used too, and others just sleep in fluff piles.

'Hehe! Spwouwe! Cheep! Babbeh spwouwe!!' You look up at the noise and see a baby try to leave the den; you can't have that.

You walk around the nestie and get to the baby before he can get out. 'Sowwie babbeh,' you pick him up in your nummie place and carry him back to the nestie.

'Nu! Peeep! Spwouwe!!'

You put him back in the nestie with the others. 'Wittwe babbeh nee say in fwuff piwe.'

'Huhuuu babbeh wan spwouwe! Cheep!' You look closer and see he's got wingies; that must be why he wants to explore so much. Runny was like that, still is actually. Oh well, soon he'll be big and strong enough to explore on his-

'Huh?' You look down and see a couple of babbies try to get to, your milkie places? You step back, and they look up at you.

'Cheep cheep! M-miwkies!!'

'Babbeh hav tummeh huwties peep!'

What? How are you supposed to deal with this? Are you allowed to give them milkies? Will, that make all the babbies want milkies too? Do you even have enough for all of-

'Am Kewwy fwend otay?'

You at the tunnel out of the den and see the nice grey mare from earlier. 'Dese babbeks wan miwkies, an Kewwy nu knu wat du!' You tell her.

'Nu wowwie Kewwy fwend,' she puts the babbies back in the nestie. 'Yu nu nee giv dem miwkies, dewe Mummahs be back soon. Kewwy jus nee make suwe day nu go way ow giv each oda huwties.'

'Otay,' you say. Your new friend leaves, and you get back to your job. A few other babbies try to get milkies from you, but you stop them; no matter how gently you do it they cry and peep. But other babbies come over and give them huggies, which stops them crying. Their tummy hurties must not be so bad then. Your new friend was right, this is pretty easy.

For the next few whiles, you stay in the same spot and watch the babbies. You don't get bored though, it's fun to watch them play and hug each other; it reminds you of your babbies when they were little. Then, something tries to crawl under you; at first, you think its one of the babbies trying to get to your milkie places again, but it turns out to be Flower. 'Wat Fwowah doin? You ask.

'Huhuuu nu wike dis pwace *sniff*' she says. 'Tuu many babbeks! Fwowah nu wike huhuuu.'

'Id am otay Fwowah, yu stay hewe wif Mummah.'

Flower cuddles up as close. '*Sniff* tank yu Mummah.' For a minute you wonder where Big Red is; he said he'd look after Flower, but it's probably not his fault if Flower got so scared she ran back to you. Besides, you can't leave the babbies alone to go look for him; so, you and Flower sit and watch them together. After a while, Flower walks over to get a better look. She sits close to the nestie, then looks back at you. 'Day am pwetty Mummah!' It looks like her scardies are gone.

One of the babbies must have heard her; it crawls away from its fluff pile over to her. 'Hehe,' it sits up and waves its leggies at her. 'H-huggies! Chirp.'

Flower looks at the baby, then back at you; 'Can Fwowah giv wittwe babbek huggies?'

'Yes, Fwowah.' You don't see why not. Flower steps over to the baby and hugs him.

'Hehe! Wub! Wub huggies! Chirp!'

'Fwowah wub wittwe babbek huggies!'

It makes you happy to see Flower happy again. While she's hugging the first baby, another crawls up; she does her best to hug them both, and she does a good job too. You know Flower's little, but you can't help but think about how good of a Mummah she'll be when-

'Cheep cheep! Cheep cheep!!' You look at the fluff pile; one of the babbies is looking everywhere with a scared look on his face. 'Cheep cheep! Mummah! Mummah!!' Hang on, those are poopie chee-

'Mummah hewp! Nee du poopies!!' What are you meant to do!? The grey mare didn't tell you! Before you can get too worried though, you see her, and a few others come into the den.

'Nu wowwie babbeks!' She looks at you. 'Kewwy hewp fwuffies get babbeks on backsies so can take dem fow poopies!' You help her, and the other fluffies get the babbies onto their backs. 'Tank you Kewwy fwend,'

she says. 'Fwuffies be back soon. Kewwy wook aftah oda babbhehs oud dewe nao.' She points her head at the way out of the den.

'Otay. Cum on Fwowah.' You both walk out of the den after the fluffies. Out in the middle place the big babbies are still playing or sleeping. You see a few run around, and when you look close, you see Runny being chased by a lot of other babbies, including his orange and green friend. You smile; it looks like he's having so much fun. Now, where's Big Red gotten two?

You look around some more, but you can't find him. Then you hear babbies yelling, but not like they have scardies. You look at the noise and see some bigger babbies around two others playing that huggie wrestle game. You walk closer and see Big Red and another baby about his size, but older. While you watch Big Red knocks him over and, NO!

'Big Wed nu!!' You get there just in time to stop Big Red giving the other baby sorry hoofies! 'Bad Babbheh!!'

He and all the others stop and look at you; all of them look sacred. 'Wai Mummah-'

'Bad Babbheh!' You yell again. 'Nu giv sowwie hoofies!!'

'Bud dat am how pway game!' He says.

'Dat am wight,' one of the other babbies says. 'Babbhehs pwayin tuffy game! Am sposed be wike tuffies!'

What? That sounds like a horrible game! Babbies shouldn't play games where they try to give each other hurties and-

'Id am otay,' You look and see another of the mares. 'Babbhehs can pway Tuffy game if nu giv big huwties.'

'Bud, bud babbhehs nu-'

'Babbhehs nee pway tuffy game, ow hewd nu hav nyu gud tuffies.' She says it like they're playing with blockies! 'An hewd nee gud tuffies fow keep hewd an babbhehs safe.'

'B-bud...'

'Dat am wat Smawty say, an he keep hewd safe fow wong time.' She says.

'Pwease Mummah,' You look back at Big Red. 'Big Wed wan knu how be big an stwong! Nu wan anything giv Famiwy huwties!'

Your think place hurts! You know there are scary monsters out there, and fluffies who can keep them away are good to have. But you can't stand the idea of Big Red being like them, especially the really big mean fluffy with the missing see place! You wish your Special friend were here!

'Du Mummah *sniff* wan Big Wed stahp?' He sounds like he's about to cry, whcihmakes you feel bad. You don't want him to feel sad, and it looked like he was having a lot of fun. Plus, all the other babbies might make fun of him...

'*Sigh*, Big Wed can pway.' You tell him. 'Bud nu giv huwties!'

'Otay Mummah,' he says, but they don't start the game again; they must not want you to watch.

'Cum on Fwowah.' You turn and walk away, and Flower follows you. When you get further away, the game starts again.

#

'Speciaw fwend, babbehs, Daddeh am back!' You look at the way out of the small baby den.

'Daddeh!' Flower gets up and runs out, but you stay where you are; a lot of Mummahs have gotten their little babbies, but there's still a few left, and you don't want to leave them alone.

'Kewwy fwend can go nao,' your friend, the grey mare, pokes her head in. 'Fwuffy wook aftah babbehs.'

'Otay.' You get up and leave the baby den. When you get out, you see your Special friend next to the way in with your babbies. You walk over and hug one another.

'Babbehs hav gud bwighttime?' He asks them.

'Yes, Daddeh!' Runny says. 'Wunnie pway huggie tag wif fwends!'

'Fwowah hewp Mummah wook aftah wittwe babbehs!' Flower tells him. 'Giv cute babbehs huggies!!'

'Dat am gud,' Your Special friend leans down and hugs Flower. 'Wat Big Wed du?' Big Red looks at him but doesn't say anything. 'Wat am mattah Big Wed? Wai nu tawkies?' Your Special friend asks.

'Big Wed pway wif fwends.' He says.

'Wat Big Wed Pway?'

'Games.'

Your Special friend looks at Big Red funny but doesn't say anything else. 'Otay,' he says to all of you, 'famiwy go back tu den nao.' You leave the safe baby place. 'Daddeh find mowe bewwy nummies!' Your Special friend says. 'Had put sum in big nummies piwe, bud stiww hav pweny fow famiwy!'

'Yay!' Runny says. 'Wub bewwy nummies!!' He and Flower run around all happy, but Big Red just walks with his head down, away from you. You get some heart hurties; he's still upset about earlier. You should say something, but what? And what would your Special friend think? Well, you should at least wait until you're back in the den

When you get back, Runny and Flower run into the nestie ahead of the rest of you; your Special friend goes in next, then Big Red, and you come in last. By the time you're in, Runny and Flower are already pulling berries off the branch, and it doesn't take long for Big Red and your Special friend to join in. You walk up and pull some berries off. While you eat you look over at Big Red, but he doesn't look back.

'Wat am wong Big Wed?' Your Special friend says. 'Wai wook so saddies?' When Big Red doesn't say anything, your Special friend looks at you. 'Am he otay? Was oda babbehs meanies tu him?' Well, you might as well tell him what happened.

'*Sigh,* Big Wed was pwayin Tuffy game an...' your wordies try to hide, 'A-an Kewwy say dat he was bad babbeh.'

'*Sniff*' Big Red's sad sounds give you more heart hurties. 'Nu mean be bad babbah,' he says. 'Was jus pwayin...'

'Nu Big Wed,' your Special friend tells him. 'Babbah nu am bad if pway tuffy game, onwy if giv oda babbah big huwties.' He looks at you. 'Wai Speciaw fwend tink Big Wed was bad babbah?'

You hang your head. 'Kewwy tink dat he, he giv oda babbah huwties. Nu, *Sob* nu wan Big Wed be meanie.'

'Big Wed nu wan be meanie!' He yells. 'Wan keep famiwy safe fwom meanies!!'

'Big Wed, id am otay!' Your Special friend goes over and hugs him. 'Mummah nu mean make yu saddies, she nu wive in hewd wong time.' He tells him. 'She nu knu how tings am in hewd.' At first, you want to yell at him! But when you use your thinkie place, you realise your Special friend is right; even counting the time since you ran away from Daddeh, you haven't lived out here for long at all. Your Special friend on the other hand, you're pretty sure he's been out here since he was a baby.

'Babbahs stay hewe,' Your Special friend puts Big Red down. 'Daddeh an Mummah nee tawkies.' You follow your Special friend out of the den and go a little bit away from it. 'Wai Speciaw fwend nu wan Big Wed pway tuffy game?' He asks. You use your thinkie place for a while.

'Kewwy nu wike tuffies.' You tell him. 'Day big an scawdie and meanies. Kewwy nu, *sob* nu wan Big Wed be wike dat huhuu.'

'Tuffies nu am meanies cause day wan be meanies,' your Special friend says. 'Day am meanies cause dat how day keep munstahs and bad fwuffies way fwom hewd. Day stiww wub dewe babbahs and speciaw fwends, an dewe Mummahs an Daddehs.' He steps close and hugs you. 'Big Wed nu be meanie if he be tuffy.'

'*Sniif* HUUU.' You hug your Special friend tight; you don't know what to say or do. Big Red growing up to be like those tuffies gives you big heart hurties, but making him upset also gives you heart hurties! What if you make him hate you? That would also make him grow up to be a meanie! 'HUUU Kewwy nu knu huhuhuu!'

'Id am otay Speciaw fwend, we go back to nestie nao.' You follow him back to the nestie; when you get there you see Big Red off to the side by himself, and it looks like he has the biggest saddies. As soon as you see him you feel awful heart hurties; you go over and give him the biggest huggies you can!

'Mummah am sowwies Big Wed! Nu mean make yu saddies!' You tell him. 'Mummah sowwies!'

'O- *sob* otay Mummah *sniff*.'

You feel your Special friend, Flower and Runny come up and hug the both of you. You all stay like that until you and Big Red stop making sad water.

#

After your talk with your Special friend, you let Big Red play the tuffy game with his friends; it doesn't make you happy, but you'd feel worse about making him feel bad about it. Big Red has so much fun though, and none of the babbies he plays with hate each other or get bad hurties. So, you guess that's ok.

As for you, the other mares have taught you how do more things to take care of the little babbies. One of the things they've taught you is how to take them to the poopie place when they have to do poopies and pee pees. It's probably the hardest part of the job because you need to get all the babbies to the poopie place *before* any of them do poopies! This brighttime, you weren't fast enough...

'Ewww ickies!'

You look at the poopies in your fluff; it smells so bad!

'Nu wowwie Kewwy fwend,' the grey mare says, 'Fwuffy hewp make poopies go way when babbehs back in safe pwace!'

'Huu otay.' It's hard to ignore the smell while you get all of the babbies to do their poopies and pee pees. It's even harder to make sure none of them touches the poopies when you put them on your back. When all of them are back in the safe place, the mare takes you to a patch of dirt a little bit away.

'Dis am how tu get poopies off!' The mare goes up to the dirt patch and rolls around in it, then flips over to rub her back. She gets up and shakes a lot, which makes a lot of dirt and dust fall off. 'Nao Kewwy du it.'

'Otay.' You walk up to the dirt patch and try to do what she did. When you think you've done a good job, you get up, shake, and look at where the poopies where. Most of it's gone, but you can still see some on you; better try again. After a few more times all of the poopies are gone, but you've got a lot of dirt on you. At least dirt doesn't smell like poopies. Now you can get back to work.

#####

You love the tuffy game! It's so much fun, but you don't know why Mummah doesn't didn't want you to play. How will it make you a meanie? None of the babbies you play with are meanies, even when you beat them. And you've beaten a lot of them! Some of the bigger babbies beat you, but it doesn't make you hate them, or want to be a meanie! But it doesn't matter now since Mummah lets you play it.

'Big Wed nu gun beat Babbeh gain!' The Yellow and brown baby opposite you says. 'Babbeh beat yu!!' He runs at you, and you run at him; 'Oof!' You crash into each other, and you try to get on top of him, but he slips away and kicks you in the side! He tries to climb on you, but you jump away just in time! You manage to give him some sorry hoofies and almost knock him over, but he gets back up and jumps at you!

But you're ready. You jump to the side, then quickly jump back and get on top of him! You push him over and get him on the ground; he tries to get up, but you've got him pinned!! You're about to win again!!!

'Yu newa catch-'

What's tha-

'Oof!'

'Eeee!'

Something crashes into you and knocks you over; it happens so fast you can't tell what happened! When you pick yourself off the ground, you see a bunch of babbies you don't recognise. But, then you see a wingie baby with orange and green fluff and-

'Am fwend otay?!' That's Runny's voice! A little bit later you see him run up to the orange and green wingie baby.

'Huu Babbeh hav smewwy pwace owwies!' The orange baby holds his hoofies over his smelly place. Runny hugs him, and you go to see if you can help. The babbies you were playing with come over, and so do all the babbies Runny was playing with; soon you're crowded around them.

'Wat happen?' One of the big fluffies who look after all of you asks. 'Du Babbeh hav huwties? Wat happen?'

'*Sniff* Babbeh was pwayin huggie tag, an den wun intu oda babbehs,' the orange baby says. 'Hav smewwy pwace owwies huhuu.'

'Big Wed nu mean id,' you tell the big fluffy. 'Nu see oda babbehs.'

'Dat am otay,' she tells you, 'bud babbehs nu can pway huggie tag in safe babbeh pwace nu mowe.'

'Bud-' Runny tries to say, but the mare stops him.

'Dewe nu am woom fow huggie tag in safe babbeh pwace nao; babbehs am tuu big.'

'Can babbehs pway huggie tag oudside?' One of the other baby's asks.

'Nu. Babbehs am tuu wittwe fow oudside.' She says. 'Babbehs nee pway oda games.'

'Huu nu faiw,' one of the babbies who was playing huggie tag says as they walk away, but you don't pay attention to where they go. After all, you haven't finished the game yet!

'Big Wed gun beat yu!'

#####

'Huuu Babbeh so bowed!!'

'Wan pway huggie tag gain!'

'Dummeh tuffy babbehs...'

After your friend ran into Big Red, one of the big fluffies stopped the huggie tag game and wouldn't let you start it again. A lot of you asked if you could go outside, but they said it's too scary out there and you're all too little. Why can't they come out with you while you play? Isn't it their job to keep you safe? You went to Mummah about it, but she was no help.

'Pwease Mummah!'

'Nu Wunnie, yu nee stay in safe-'

'Mummah take babbehs out of nestie aww dah time befowe hewd! Dis nu faiw!!'

'Nu tawk meanies to Mummah; bad babbeh!' For a moment you were scared she'd bop you! 'It nu am same ting nao; Mummah an babbehs fowwow hewd wuwes.'

Now you and the other huggie tag babbies have to sit around; some of them went over to try the tuffy game, but they came back pretty quick cause it was too rough for them. Others left to sit with their brothers and

sisters, or their Mummahs if they're in the safe place. You don't want to do either of those; sitting around watching Big Red play his dumb tuffy game is just as bad as sitting around with Flower and Mummah taking care of the little babbies.

'Huu babbeh sowwies Wunnie fwend,' your friend says. 'Babbeh wuin game huhuuu.'

'Nu cwy fwend, Wunnie nu am maddies.' You give him some huggies so he feels better.

'Wish babbehs wewe big, den cud pway outside aww bwighttime.'

You wish that too; the bigger babbies don't have to stay in this dummy safe place in the brighttime, they can run around outside all they want, so long as they don't go into the forest. Why can't you and your friends be big now! You get let out of the safe baby place when all the nummie finders come back from the forest, but that takes so long, and you don't much time to play outside if any! If only there were a way you could play outside! Wait, maybe...

'Wunnie fwend? Wai nu tawkies?' Your friend asks.

'Wunnie tink knu how pway oudside,' you say with little wordies.

'*Gasp* Weawy?!'

'Shh! Nu big tawkies!' You don't want the big fluffies to hear. 'Babbehs nee be sneakies.'

'Otay,' he says in little wordies. 'How babbehs du it?'

'Wunnie tink knu how bud nee use tinkie pwace mowe.'

'Otay Wunnie fwend. Babbeh nu can wait!'

You can't either; this will be so much fun!

####

'Did babbehs hav gud bwighttime?' Your Special friend asks on the walk back to the den.

'Big Wed had wotsa fun!! Won dah tuffy game wots!!'

'Dat am gud Big Wed, Daddeh am pwoud!'

You feel a little mad, but you keep them to yourself; you don't want to make Big Red upset again.

'Fwowah hewp Mummah wook aftah babbehs gain!' Flower gets a big smile on her face. 'Fwowah wub hewpin babbehs! Am bestest hewp fow Mummah!'

'Dat am wight,' you smile at her. 'Fwowah am big hewp fow Mummah!' She was really good this brighttime; she stopped a couple of the little babies from leaving the den.

'Wat boud Wunnie babbeh?' Your Special friend looks at him. 'Wunnie hav gud bwighttime?'

'Bwight-time was gud fow wittwe time,' he says, 'bud den had stahp pwayin huggie tag cause Tuffy babbeh huwt fwend.'

'Dat nu happen!' Big Red yells, 'Day wun intu Tuffy game!!'

'Yu was in way dumme!!'

'Nu tawkies wike dat!' Your Special friend says, and Big Red shuts up.

After a few moments, Runny talks again. 'Nu can pway huggie tag in safe babbeh pwace nu mowe. Nu am faiw!'

'Id am otay Wunnie; when yu an fwends am big babbehs, yu can pway oudside.'

'Hey,'

You look back and see one of the toughies; your Special friend sees him to.

'Yes, Nice Tuffy fwend?'

'Dewe am sum big babbehs missin,' the toughie says. 'Yu Fwuffies see dem?'

'Nu.' You wouldn't know which ones he meant, even if you had seen them.

'Nu nice Tuffy fwend,' your Special friend says. 'Fwuffy am famiwy nu see-'

'Screeeee!'

Your fluff stands on end, and you look in the direction of the scream; you think it came from the forest, but it sounded close!

'Dis way!' The toughie runs into the forest; a little bit later you see a few more fluffies run after him, including the big scary Bestest Tou-

'Cum on! Back tu den! Huwwy Speciaw fwend!' You run after your Special friend and make sure none of your babbies fall behind! It's not long at all until you get back to the den. Your Special friend sends you and the babbies right to the back, and he stays near the front. 'Famiwy stay dewe,' he says. 'Famiwy stay hewe tiww tuffies say id safe.'

'Wat happenin Daddeh?' Flower asks with a lot of scardies.

'Daddeh nu knu Fwowah,' you can hear some scardies in his voice too. 'Bud, bud tuffies knu wat du; day keep hewd safe.' You stay in the den for a while, but it feels like a lot longer! You have to stop Big Red going over to help your Special friend guard the way in a few times. After a while, you hear fluffies outside talking and yelling, and crying too.

'Famiwy stay hewe,' your Special friend says. 'Daddeh go see.' You watch him walk out; a small part of you gets really scared he won't come back. But, it's not long until he walks back in. 'Id am otay,' he walks over to you. 'Dewe nu munstah ow scawy ting,' you see a sort of sad and scared look on his face. 'Bud, famiwy nee go wisten tu Smawty.'

'Wai? Wat happen?' You ask.

It takes a little bit for him to answer. 'Famiwy see.'

#

'Hewd wisten tu Smawty!!'

You stand with your Special friend and your babbies with the rest of the herd in the safe place's big open area. The Smarty stands out front on a rock, and on either side of him are most of the toughies. Some of them hold three big babies against the ground so they can't move. Two of the babbies cry, but one of them struggles and tries to get away.

'Wet big babbeh go dummehs!' he yells.

'Dese big babbehs du bad ting; day take oda big babbeh tu fowest an giv hew bad speciaw huggies!!'

You feel something inside you; you can't tell if it's heart hurties, sickies or maddies; maybe it's all of them. But, you have felt it before, a long time ago when the horrible green monster baby gave-

'Speciaw huggies nu am bad!' The mad baby yells. 'Big fwuffies am-'

'SHUD UP!!!' The Bestest toughie yells right in the baby's hear places; that must have hurt.

'Bwing oda babbeh hewe,' the Smarty says to some fluffies you can't see from where you are. 'Smawty an tuffies nu wet bad babbehs huwt hew.' A little bit later, you see a family walk out of the crowd; a Mummah, a Daddeh, and a big baby who looks about the same size as the babbies the tuffies are holding. Even from where you are, you can tell she's really sad, and her Daddeh looks really mad.

'Smawty wan babbeh tu teww hewd wat dah bad babbehs du.' He says it a lot nicer than you've heard him say anything, but the baby doesn't speak.

'Id am otay babbeh,' her Mummah says. 'Mummah an Daddeh hewe, id am otay.'

'*Sob* O-otay Mummah huuhuu.' The baby says, but doesn't look at the herd. 'B-babbeh was pwayin with fwend, an he *sob* he say dat oda babbehs wan pway game in fowest...' The baby stops, and you can see how hard she's working to not cry.

'Wat happen?' The Smarty asks.

'*Sob* Babbeh say yes, an fwend take Babbeh tu fowest whewe oda babbehs wewe an, an, wuuhuhuhuuu wai fwend wet meanies huwt babbeh huhuuu!!!'

The mummah hugs her baby close, and the daddeh tries to get at the bad babbies, but a toughie pushes him away.

The Smarty looks at all of you 'Hewd tink babbeh wie?' You certainly don't.

'Fwuffy nu tink babbeh wie!' You hear one yell.

'Dat nu am wie, dose babbeh du bad tings aww dah time!!'

'Dat babbeh nu wie! Tuffy see bad babbehs giv hew bad speciaw huggies!!!'

More and more fluffies yell and talk, until 'Nu mowe tawkies!!' The Smarty stops all of them. He gets off the rock, walks to one of the toughies and leans down to the baby. The baby cries and tries to look away from him. 'Wai yu take babbeh to fowest!? Yu teww hewd nao!!!'

'Day teww Babbeh tu take fwend tu fowest! Day say was onwy fow game!!!' The baby cries. 'Babbeh nu mean id!! Am sowwies! Sowwies huhuhuhu!!!'

'Dummeh!!!' The mad Daddeh yells. 'Yu bad babbeh!! Yu take Babbeh an wet-'

'Shud up!' One of the toughies stops him. Even though he looks really mad, the Daddeh shuts up. The Smarty walks to the next bad baby.

'Wai yu giv bad speciaw huggies?!'

'Babbeh nu mean id!! Fwend nu say was be bad!!' he screams. 'Fwend onwy say was gun be-'

'Shud up dummeh!! The Smarty yells. 'If dummeh nu mean id, wai nu weave?'

'Babbeh was scawdies! Tink bad fwend was gun giv bad huwties!! Pwease! Babbeh sowwies!! Sowwies! Babbeh du anything!! Pwease nu take wumps huhuhuhuuuuu!!!'

Take lumps, what does-

'Smawty am dummeh!!!'

The herd goes quiet, and everyone looks at the last bad baby, the one the Bestest toughie is holding. Slowly, the Smarty walks over to him and leans down really close. 'Say dat gain.'

'Smawty am dummeh! Dummeh!!!' The bad baby screams. 'Dummeh say dat babbehs nu can hav speciaw huggies! Hav wait fow speciaw huggies!!! BABBEH NU NEE WAIT!! HAVE SPECIAW WUMPS AN NU-NU STICK!!!! YU DUMMEH!!!'

The Smarty stands really still, more still than anything you've ever seen. You feel some scardies deep in your tummy, the kind you get when something bad is about to happen, but you don't know what it is. Nothing happens; then, the Smarty lifts his head and looks at the herd.

'Wet yuw babbehs see.'

He doesn't yell, but the whole herd moves their babbies up to the front, even your Special friend! 'Wai Speciaw-'

'SHH!' He pushes Runny, Flower and Big Red up to the front. 'Nu can nu du wat Smawty say tu du,' he says with lots of scardies.

'Babbehs wisten tu Smawty,' The Smarty looks at all of the other babbies in the herd, including yours. 'If yu in Smawty's Hewd, yu fowwow Smawty's wuwes. Yu du bad tings, yu get huwties an owwies.' He looks at the toughies holding the two crying babbies. 'Stompies.'

'Screeee!!!'

'Owwwies! Pwease nu huwties!!!'

The Toughies hit the babbies with their hoofies, hard! They beat them on the head, the leggies, smelly place, everywhere! You can barely watch, and every part of you wants to grab your babbies and run back to the den! But you don't dare move; no way you'll risk making the Smarty-

'Tuu scawdies!!!' You feel something dive under you; it turns out to be Flower. 'Tuu scawies! Tuu scawies huhuhu!! Nu wike!!.'

'Shh, i-id am otay Fwowah,' you do your best to hide your own scardies. 'Id am otay.'

'Stahp nao.'

The toughies get off the two babbies; they curl up and cry their see places out, but no fluffy comes to help them, not even their mummahs and daddehs!

'Owwies! Owwwieees huhuhuhu!!'

'Mummah huhuhuhu muummahhh!'

The Smarty walks back to the baddest baby; the baby looks scared, but you can also see him try to not let the Smarty know.

'B-babbeh nu scawdies of stompies,' he says. 'N-nu cawe!!'

The Smarty's quite for a moment. 'Hehehe, babbeh am dumme; yu nu gun get stompies.' Before the baby can talk, the Smarty looks at the Bestest toughie and nods. It happens so fast you can barely tell what's happening; the Bestest toughie flips the bad baby on his back, then puts his head down and-

'SKWEEEEEEEEEE!' The baby screams so loud it gives you hear places hurties!! 'REEEEEEEEEE!!! EEEEEEEEEEE!!!'

'Mummah!!! Fwowah nu wike huhuhu!!!'

You want to get down and hug Flower closer, but you can't look away. The Bestest toughie lifts his head and spits something on the ground. You can't tell what it is, but you're not sure you want to know.

'SCREEEEEE! MUUUMMAHHH EEEEEEEEE!' The bad baby rolls around on the ground; you see boo-boo juice near he back leggies and get an idea what they just did to him.

'Scree! Scawies!!'

'Mummah! Babbeh nu wike!!'

'Hhuhuuuu babbeh scawde!'

Most of the babbies run back to their mummahs and daddehs; you feel something else dive under you and see it's Runny. You look to see if Big Red is down there too, but you can't see him.

'Dis am wat happen tu bad fwuffies in hewd!' the Smarty yells. 'Bad fwuffies get owwies!!' He and the toughies walk off, leaving the bad babbies on the ground to scream and cry. A little bit after they go, some fluffies rush up to them babbies hug them.

'Wets go,' your Special friend says. He goes to get Big Red, and you all go back to the den.

#

'Wai big fwuffies giv babbehs huwties huhuhu!!!' Flower hasn't stopped crying since you got back to the nestie. 'Nu wike huhuhuhu!! Big Fwuffies am meanies!!'

'Nu Fwowah,' your Special friend says. 'Day nee giv bad fwuffies huwties-'

'Bud wai?! Wai giv babbehs huwties?!' You know Flower's scared, and doesn't understand what those bad babbies actually did. But how are you supposed to explain what bad special huggies are? She's still a baby.

'Wunnie nu wike big fwuffies!' He's not crying, but he still looks really scared. 'Nu wike!! Day scawies!!'

'Babbeh, tuffies nu am meanies cause wike be meanies.'

'Bud wat babbehs du? Wai day get-'

'Bwuddah an sissie am dummehs!' You look at Big Red, but before you can yell at him for calling his brother and sister dummies, 'Does babbehs meanies! Day giv huwties, so day get huwties!'

'Nu tawkies wike dat!' Your Special friend tells him. 'Day nu am dummehs.'

'Weww... Weww does oda babbehs am stiww meanies!!' Big Red yells. 'Big Wed u wike meanies!! When Big Wed Big an stwong, giv aww bad fwuffies huwties an-'

'Bad babbeh stahp nao!' Your Special friend yells. Big Red stops talking and gets really low and his hear places hide. After a few minutes, '*Sigh* Daddeh sowwies Big Wed,' he walks over and hugs him. 'Big Wed am gud babbeh fow wan keep famiwy safe. Bud nu be meanie!' When your Special friend puts him down, Big Red goes over to Flower and Runny.

'Big Wed am sowwies,' he says. '*Sniff* Nu mean caww bwudda an sissie dummehs an be meanie.'

'Am otay bwudda,' Runny says, 'Wunnie nu am maddies.'

'*Sob* Fwowah nu am maddies,' Flower hugs Big Red really tight. 'Fwowah jus scawdies *sob*.'

You and your Special friend go over and hug them all as well; it isn't long until they're settled. Later on in the darktime after you've had nummies and you're in the fluff pile, you stay awake when your Special friend and babbies are asleep. You can't get the picture out of your thinkie place of the Bestest toughie ripping off the bad baby's no no stick and special lumps. You can't stop hearing the screams in your thinkie place either. But, the strange thing is you don't feel bad about any of it.

At the same time, you think back all those bright times ago at the park, when the horrible green baby gave that other poor baby (you think her name was Angel) bad special huggies. You remember how bad Angel's scardies and saddies were, and how much her Mummah wanted to hurt you. You look at Flower, asleep and cuddled next to Runny and Big Red.

Before you can stop it, your thinkie place shows you a picture of the green baby giving her bad special huggies, and you nearly scream!! You feel maddies you've never felt before, and that was just from a thinkie place picture. Now you know what Angel's Mummah felt, and why she wanted to give you such bad hurties. You also know why you don't feel bad for those bad babbies; they got exactly what they deserved.

Chapter Twelve

'Hehe! Babbeh wub Fwowah huggies! Chirp!!' The baby says as you hug him.

'Fwowah wub babbeh huggies tuu! Wub wittwe babbeh!'

'Chirp! Hehe! Wub! Babbeh wub Fwowah fwend!' He gives you more huggies, which makes you happier. It's so much fun to spend time in the little baby den with Mummah and the little babbies, it's the best part of the brighttime! The little babbies are so much fun to play with, and they don't scare you like the big babbies do. They don't try to scare you on purpose, but you don't like to be around so many of them; you've got no idea how your brothers do it.

So, you stay in here and help Mummah, even though she doesn't need a lot of help. When she does need help, she usually gets the big fluffies. It's alright though, because it gives you more time to play with the little babbies, and give them huggies!

'Babbeh wan huggies tuu!' Another baby climbs out of the nestie and waddles over. 'Wan huggies!' She comes over and sits up; you pull her close with the other baby to hug them both. 'Cheep! Wub huggies! Wub pwetty Fwend!'

'Fwowah wub wittwe babbeh fwend tuu!' Even though you like all the little babbies, there's a few you like more than the others (you hope that doesn't make you a meanie). Besides these two, there's the pointy baby who has the same colours as Big Red, another pointy baby who has pink fluff like you but with a yellow tail, and there's a wingie baby who has the same tail colour as Mummah, except-

'Nu, bad babbeh!'

You look at the noise; Mummah's got a mad look on her face, and it's pointed at a couple of babbies outside the nestie.

'Nu giv sowwie nummies babbeh, dat am bad ting!' She picks up one of the babbies and carries it to a little hole the big fluffies dug a few brighttimes ago. Mummah told them how when she used to take care of babbies at her Daddeh's nestie long ago, they had a place to put bad babbies in they couldn't get out of. So now, Mummah puts the bad babies in the hole until their mummahs and daddehs get back.

'Spwouwe!' You look back around. 'Babbeh gun spwouwe! Spwouwe!!' It's the wingie baby's who always tries to get out of the den, and he's about to make it this time!! No time to tell Mummah!

'Sowwie babbehs!' You push the babbies away and run after the wingie baby. He's nearly gotten all the way out, he seems to get faster every time he tries! But he's still not as fast as you are; you catch him at the same time he gets to the top of the tunnel.

'Nu babbeh!' You grab him with your leggies. 'Wittwe babbeh nu can be hewe!'

'Nu!! Peeeeeep! Wan spwouwe! Spwouwe!!!' He does his best to get away.

'Nu babbeh!' Why's it so hard to keep a hold of such a little baby? 'Nee go back tu-'

'Hewwo!'

You look up; in front of you, there's a wingie baby who's green all over, and the same size as you. You feel a few scardies; you don't like to talk to the other babbies like you! 'Uh, h-hewwo...' At least you keep hold of the bad baby.

'Am babbeh name Fwowah?'

You nod; how does he know your name? Did Big Red or Runny tell him!?

The green baby smiles. 'Babbeh wike dat name! Am pwetty, wike Fwowah am!'

'Uhhh...' What do you say? Why do your thinkie place and wordies have to go all dummy when this happens!?

'Fwowah!' Some of your scardies go away; Mummah! She comes up beside you; 'Du Fwowah babbeh hav bad babbeh?'

'Y-yes Mummah! He am hewe!'

'Peep! Babbeh wan spwouwe!!'

'Fwowah am gud babbeh. Am bestest hewp fow Mummah!' She leans down to take the baby away from you. Great, you can go back in the little baby den with her and-

'Du Fwowah wan pway?'

You look at the green wingie babbeh; 'Nu, Fwowah nee go back an-'

'Fwowah can pway with gween babbeh.'

What? You look at Mummah. 'B-bud-'

'You nu nee be in wittwe babbeh pwace nu mowe,' she says. 'Fwowah can pway with gween babbeh.'

'B-bud...' On the inside, you yell at your wordies to work properly. 'Fwowah nu wan-'

'Fwowah nee make fwends wike bwuddas du,' Mummah says. 'Nee tawkies an pway wif oda big babbehs.'

Your hear places hide. 'B-bud...'

'Nao Fwowah, nu be bad babbeh.' Mummahs looks at the green baby. 'Nu be meanies tu Fwowah babbeh.'

'Nu wowwie nice fwuffy, Babbeh nu be meanies.'

'Gud. Cum on bad babbeh, yu go in sowwie pwace!'

'Nu!' The baby struggles as Mummah carries him back to the den. 'Wan spwouwe!! Wet babbeh spwouuuwe!!!' She goes into the tunnel and leaves you alone with the green baby. You look back at him; he has a smile on his face, does that mean he's nice?

'Fwowah am Big Wed sissie?'

'Uh, uh-huh.' Dummy Big Red, he must have told him your name!

'Babbeh pway if Big Wed aww dah time; he am gud at tuffy game!'

Stupid dummy Big Red, why can't he keep his nummie place shut and, wait... 'Babbeh pway tuffy game? Bud babbeh am wingie babbeh, wai nu pway huggie tag?'

'Babbeh nu nee pway huggie tag, nu am gun be wookie fwuffy,' he sits up really straight and gets a weird look on his face that looks mad and happy at the same time. 'Babbeh am Smawty's babbeh! Nee be big an stwong if wan be Smawty tuu!'

Smarty?! 'Huu Fwowah nu wike Smawty!' All the noises and other scary stuff from when the Smarty told the toughies to give those babies hurties come into your thinkie place. 'Smawty giv huwties!'

'Huh? Oh, does bad babbehs!' The green baby's face changes to a mad look. 'Day du bad tings, an bad babbehs get huwties an owwies!'

'Bud, bud...'

'Fwowah nu nee be scawdies, Smawty Daddeh nu giv huwties if babbehs am gud!'

'B-babbeh nu wie?'

'Nu! Babbeh newa wie! Wie am bad ting!' The green baby sits still for a little while, then gets happy again. 'Cum on Fwowah, Babbeh take yu tu oda fwends!'

You don't want to go, you want to run back into the baby den! But Mummah will kick you out and make you go find friends anyway. 'O-otay...' If you do this, Mummah won't bother you about it.

'Yay! Dis way, fowwow babbeh!' The Green baby turns and walks to a group of other babbies; you force your leggies to work and follow him. 'Hewwo fwends,' he says to them when you get close, 'dis am nyu fwend; hew name am Fwowah!'

'Uh, h-hewwo.'

'Hewwo nyu fwend!' One of them says.

'Babbeh wike Fwowah's fwuff,' a white baby with orange fluff comes over. 'Fwowah am pwetty babbeh!'

'T-tank yu.' It makes you feel so weird; the baby's wordies give you some strange scardies, but they also make you feel happy. 'Babbeh h-hav pwetty fwuff tuu.'

'Tank yu!!' She gives you a big hug, which takes you by surprise. You have to remind yourself to hug her back. At least it means she's a nice baby, but who is she anyway?

'Dis am sissie,' the green baby comes over and hugs her. That answers that question.

'Babbeh wike bwudda's nyu fwend! Fwowah wan be Babbeh's fwend tuu?'

Another new friend? This is happening kind of fast, but it'll make mummah happy. 'O-otay, Fwowah wan be fwends.'

'Yay nyu fwend!!' The white baby hugs you again, and this time you hug her back properly. While you give her huggies, another of the babies walks over.

'Am Fwowah Big Wed's sisse?'

You step away from the white baby and nod. 'Uh-huh.'

'Wai Big Wed so big?' he asks you. 'He biggah dan oda babbehs an win wots mowe. Wai he so big?'

'Fwowah nu knu.' Big Red was always bigger than you or Runny; it's part of how he got his name.

'Big Wed nu beat yu cause he big,' another baby says, 'yu jus bad at tuffy game.'

'Dat nu twue!' The first bay glares at him. 'Babbeh beat Big Wed if he nu big!'

'Yu nu beat babbehs big as yu am dummeh!' The two babies stare at each other; for a moment you're scared they'll fight right here and now, but your green friend steps between them.

'Dummehs nu giv owwies hewe!' He tells both of them. 'Yu go tu tuffy pwace fow dat!' The two babies run over to where the tuffy game place. That's good, you were scared for a second. 'Cum on Fwowah,' your green friend walks back over. 'Babbeh an sissie show yu rest of safe babbeh pwace!'

####

'Du Wunnie fwend knu how get oudside fow pway nao?'

'Huh?'

Your friend gets a mad look on his face. 'Wunnie fwend said was gun tink how get oud of safe babbeh pwace!'

'Shh!' You look around, worried one of the big fluffies might have heard you. Luckily, your friend starts to use little wordies.

'Du Wunnie fwend nao how yet?'

'Uh,' you were using your thinkie place on it, you really were! But when the Smarty showed what they do to bad babbies...

'Wat Wunnie fwend duin? Wai nu tawkies?!'

'Wunnie was tinkin!' you say, 'Bud, nu tink is gud idea nu mowe.'

'Wai?'

'Wunnie nu wan be bad an make Smawty ow tuffies maddies!' You get shivers when you think about what they might do. 'Nu wan get stompies ow-'

'Wunnie fwend nu nee be scawdies,' your friend interrupts. 'Does babbehs du big bad ting, an dis am onwy wittwe bad ting!'

'Huh?'

'Smawty onwy giv big huwties if du big bad tings, he nu wowwie boud wittwe bad tings!' Your friend sounds sure, but how does he know? He must have heard your thinkie place wordies. 'Babbeh saw big babbeh du bad poopies in safe pwace, bud onwy his mummah an daddeh giv him huwties. Smawty nu cawe!'

He doesn't sound wrong. But... 'Wunnie nu knu fwend,' you say, 'stiwv nu tink shud-'

'If big fwuffies catch babbehs, fwends nu wet Wunnie fwend get aww owwies!' Your friend says. 'Babbeh pwomise!'

'Dat am wight!' Another of your friends comes over. 'Fwends nu wet Wunnie fwend be bad aww awone!'

You look at them for a while. '*Sigh* Otay, Wunnie teww fwends how get oudside.'

####

'Yu nu gun win dummeh!!' A dark yellow baby is on Big Red's back, and has his leggies around him. But, he's not strong enough to push your Brother to the ground.

'Am tuu!!' Big Red screams. 'Big Wed beat yu!!' He slips away from the yellow baby, jumps back and then forward again. Big Red clammers on top of the baby and pushes him over; the yellow baby tries to get away, but Big Red holds him still.

'Wet gun dummeh!!' The baby yells.

'Nu!' Big Red yells back. 'Big Wed win nao!!'

'Yu nu win!!' The yellow baby screams. 'Babbeh gun-'

'Big Wed win gain,' another bigger baby says. 'Yu wose.'

'Nuuu!!'

'Yay!!!' Big Red gets off the baby and jumps up and down a few times! 'Big Wed win! Am bestest! Bestest!!!'

'Huhuhuhu,' the other baby doesn't get up, he just lies still and cries. Big Red goes back and hugs him.

'Big Wed am sowwie, nu mean make fwend cwu.'

The yellow baby gets up, but walks away and doesn't talk to Big Red; you hope he doesn't hate him, but he doesn't seem worried. Instead, your Brother looks at the babbies around the tuffy game place. 'Who wan pway nao?!' None of them move; maybe the game is finally over! That means your new friend will show you something else, or maybe you can go back to the little baby den and-

'Babbeh wan pway.'

Out of the crowd around the toughie game places steps a brown baby; he's big, just as big as your Brother! The other babbies say lots of little wordies you can't hear.

'Babbeh nu tink yuw bwudda win dis time,' your friend says.

'Wai?' As far as you know, your Brother's won every time he's played this game.

'Cause, dat am Bestest tuffy's babbeh,' your friend whispers.

'Huh?'

'Dah Bestest tuffy; dah one with dah missin see pwace!'

Oh, that one; the really scary one. Why'd your friend have to make you think about him?

'Bestest tuffy am stwongest fwuffy ewa,' your friend's sissie says. 'Nuting giv him scawdies, eben kitteh munstahs!'

The word "kitty monster" gives you horrible scardies, even though you've never seen one!

'Yu nu win dis.' The Bestest toughie's baby says.

'Nu, Big Wed gun win! Big Wed awways win!!'

The Bestest toughie's baby doesn't talk back; he stands still and looks at Big Red. Nothing happens for a while, and you think you can see a few scardies on Big Red's face.

'Big Wed scawdies?' The Bestest toughie's baby says. 'Yu nu tink yu gun win nao?'

'Dummeh!!!' Big Red runs at the Bestest tuffy's baby, but he doesn't move. At the last moment, when you think Big Red will run into him, 'Huh?' the Bestest toughie's baby jumps to one side really fast, and then 'Ooof!' kicks Big Red, hard!!! He falls down and curls up.

'bwudda!' You run over to him. 'bwudda! Am bwudda otay?!' When you get to him you see lots of sad water in his see places, but he doesn't cry. In fact, it looks like he can't breath! 'bwudda!!' You give him the biggest huggies you can! 'Pwease be be otay!! Pwease!!!' You look at the Bestest toughie's baby; 'Wat meanie du tu bwudda!!?!'

'He be otay,' he says. 'Soon.'

'*Cough, gasp!!*'

You look back at Big Red. 'bwudda? Am bwudda otay?!'

'*Gasp* Huuu *cough* o-oowwieees huhuuu...'

'Babbehs hewp fwend!' Some of the other babbies come over and drag Big Red away. They crowd around and help hug him. It sounds like he's getting better, but baby huggies aren't enough for this; you need Mummah! But you don't want to leave Big Red to go get her; what do you do?!

'Nu wowwie Fwowah fwend,' that was your green friend! Did he hear your thinkie place? 'Babbeh go get yuw Mummah!' You hear him run off while you and the others keep hugging Big Red.

'*Cough weeze* Uhuhuhuu owwiess,' Big Red sounds like he has a lot of hurties. 'W-wai giv big huwties huhuhuu...'

'If yu wan be tuffy,' you look up and see the Bestest toughie's baby. You want to yell at him to go away, but before you can, 'yu nee knu how hav huwties. Daddeh say dat tu babbeh, an babbeh say dat tu oda babbehs.' You want to yell at him even more, but you feel Big Red move. You look and see him, nod?!

'O-otay...'

Why is he-

'Big Wed!' It's Mummah! 'Babbehs go way! Nee giv Big Wed huggies!!' You all step back and let Mummah grab Big Red. 'Id am otay Big Wed, Mummah hewe nao! Mummah giv huggies fow owwies.' She gives him

huggies for a while, then looks up; you don't think seen her madder than she is right now. 'Who du dis!? Who giv Big Wed huwties?!'

A lot of the babbies cower, but not the Bestest toughie's baby. 'Babbeh du it.'

Just when you thought Mummah couldn't get more mad, 'BAD BABBEH!!!' If she weren't so focused on your Brother, she'd give the Bestest toughie's baby biggest sorry hoofies for sure.

'Wat am mattah?' One of the other big fluffies runs over. 'Wat happen?'

'Bad babbeh giv Big Wed Huwties!' Mummah yells. 'He am bad!!!'

The big fluffy walks over to the Bestest toughie's baby. 'Yu giv big huwties?'

'Uh-huh,' he nods. 'Dat am how pway game. Tuffies nee nao how hav huwties ow-'

'Yu am bad babbeh!!!' Mummah yells over him. 'Bad!!!'

'Mummah pwease *cough*' Big Red tries to speak. 'Big *cough* Wed am otay *cough* Big Wed, wose.'

'Shh, nu tawkies,' Mummah hugs him closer. 'Nu tawkies nao, wet Mummah-'

'Babbehs am wunnin way!!!' You look to where the yell came from. The grey fluffy who's in charge runs to the way out of the safe baby place, and you look just in time to see a baby run out!

'Stahp dem!!!' The big fluffy who came over looks at Mummah. 'Yu nee hewp tuu!!!'

'Bud-'

'Nao!!!'

Mummah puts Big Red down. 'Wook aftah Big Wed, Fwowah!' She turns and runs to the way out with the other big fluffies. 'Mummah be back soon!!' You go back to hugging Big Red, but then you think of something; the little babbies, there's no one to take care of them!! You should go and, no you can't! You have to stay here with your Brother!!

'Cum on fwend!' Your green friend says to the Bestest toughie's baby, 'Big babbehs keep wittwe babbehs safe.'

'Otay!' They run off towards the safe baby place, then you feel Big Red try to get up too!

'bwudda nu!'

'Wet, wet Big Wed up sissie; wan *cough* hewp-'

'Nu bwudda. Wait fow huwties go way!' Lucky for you he stops, which is good; there's no way you could stop him if he wanted to-

'Screeeeee!'

Your fluff stands on end; that scream sounded like it came from outside. Was it one of the fluffies who stay in the safe place all brighttime, or one of the babbies who escaped? Oh no, what if it was Mummah?! 'Nu be scawdies, sissie,' Big Red must have known you were sacred. 'Nu wet scawy ting giv huwties.' This time you

don't stop him when he gets up. You hide behind him and a few other babbies. While you hide, you hear more sounds from outside; screams and yells and crying. What's going on?

####

'Nao, quick!'

You and the other huggie tag babbies run for the way out of the safe baby place as soon as the big fluffies are distracted by the tuffy game. You can't help but wonder what's happened over there, and if Big Red's involved; but that's not important, you have to get out before the big fluffies notice!! You, your orange friend and another wingie baby are first ones out; you try not to make any noise, but by the time you're outside you can't help it!!

'Yu Newa catch babbeh!!' Your friend yells, and you and the other wingie babbies chase after him! It feels so good to run again, and with so much space to do it!!

'Wat babbehs doin?' A big fluffy resting by a bushie ask as you run past, then you hear the big fluffies from the safe baby place.

'Cum back bad babbehs!!'

'Go back tu safe pwace nao! Nu am safe fow wittwe babbehs hewe!!'

'Wunnie! Wunnie cum back nao!!!'

You should be scared that the big fluffies and Mummah are coming after you, but it doesn't; it makes you want to run more, even try to outrun them!!

'Keep goin!' Another of your friend's yells, 'Day nu can catch wingie babbehs! Am Fastest babbehs!!' You run around a bushie, past a couple of fluffies working on a den.

One of the big fluffies behind you yells 'Stahp dem!' The two fluffies dive in front of you and the other wingie babbies, and manage to catch some. But, not you or your friend! You're too fast for them, and so the other babbies who get away! You chase your friend around another few bushies and see him run for one of the open places. From behind, you hear a big fluffy yell 'Nu go dewe babbehs!! Tuu scawies dewe!!!'

But none of you listen; this is too much fun, way more than you've ever had in the safe baby place!! You get out in the open place and try to catch your friend; you run as fast as you can, faster than ever before!! Little by little you get closer to him. This is it!

'Wunnie gun catch yu fwend!!'

Woosh

The sound comes from above you, but you don't pay attention; all you care about is catching up to your friend and-

snatch

'SCREEEEEEEE!'

It happens so fast; something comes out of nowhere, grabs your friend and... Those wingies are HUGE!!

'SCREEEEEE!! HEWP! HEWWWP!!!' The thing flaps it's huge wingies and goes up into the sky like you do in your sleepie pictures! 'HEWP WUNNIE FWEND!!! SABA BABBEH!!!' Your friend's screams snap you out of it; your friend, that monster has him and it's taking him away!!!

'Wunnie cummin fwend!!!' You run even faster and flap your wingies!! If you flap them hard enough,

'SABA BABBEH!! SABA BABBEHH! NU WAN BE MUNSTAH NUMMIES!! SCREEEEEEEE!'

but the thing gets further away, and higher into the sky until it disappears above the trees.

'SCREEEE!! MUMMAH!!!' MUUMAAAaahhh! Pwease saba babbeh!!!' Your friend's screams gets smaller and smaller as the 'EEEEEE!!' Something grabs you! At first, you think it's another of those monsters,

'Bad babbeh stahp nao!!'

but the yell lets you know it's a fluffy. 'NU!!' You try to get away, you have too! That monster still has your friend!! 'WET WUNNIE GO! NEE SABA-'

'Yu nu can saba him!!' The fluffy yells. 'Biwdy munstah hav him; he am munstah nummies nao.'

'NUUUU! NUUUHUUUUU!!' You try even harder to get away, 'FWEND!! FWEEEND HUUUUUUU!!'

'Wat happen?!'

####

When you get to the open place it's chaos; most of the mares who work in the safe baby place and some others are holding one or two babbies each. One of them is out in an open place with a baby who's crying really loud. 'Wat happen?! Taww Smawty nao!'

'Wingie and huggie tag babbehs wun way fwom safe babbeh pwace!' One of the mares yells.

'Wai dat babbeh cwu so much?!' You ask.

'Nu knu, Fwuffy nu see wat-'

'Wingie munstah!' The mare who has the really sad baby yells.

'Huh?'

'Biwdy munstah take one babbeh, dis babbeh's fwend.'

You look up at the sky and hope the baby is already forever sleepies. But, there's no time to worry about that; you need to figure out exactly what happened, and who's fault it is. 'Take babbehs back tu safe pwace,' you tell the mares. 'Smawty deaw wif dis.'

#

'Bad babbehs taww Smawty wat happen.' The babbies who ran away from the safe place are in front of you; behind them are the mares and a few toughies so they don't run away. None of them speak. 'Smawty ask yu sumtin!!' They flinch, 'Yu taww Smawty wat happen, NAO!'

'Babbehs wun way!' One of them yells.

'Smawty knu dat, dumme! Wan knu wai!'

'Babbehs wan pway huggie tag gain!' She says. 'Jus wan pway huggie tag ou-'

'Yu tuu wittwe!!' You stop her. 'Mawes say yu stay in safe pwace tiww am big!' You look at the grey mare who runs this place. 'How day get oud? Yu sposed keep dem hewe!'

'F-fwuffies am sowwie Smawty,' she says. 'Bud fwuffies whewe hewpin at tuffy game, cause tink babbeh hav bad huwties!'

Hmm. That might explain it, but the babbies know the rules; stay inside, which means they waited for a chance to run out. *That means*, one or more of them planned it. You look back at them. 'Smawty knu one of yu dummehs say tu wun way when big fwuffies nu wookin,' you look from one end of the line to the other. 'Who du it? Yu?' You stare at a yellow and red filly. All she does is shake and make sad water. 'Yu?' You look at the colt next to her; you think he made scardie poopies. 'Smawty fin who du it soon,' you keep looking. 'If yu nu teww Smawty nao, huwties gun be bigg-'

'Wunnie du it! WUNNIE DU ID HUHHUUUU!!!'

You walk down the line to the baby who said it, a blue and red wingie baby; he's lying on his tummy with his leggings over his see places. 'Wunnie du it! Wunnie teww fwend an oda babbehs can wun way when big fwuffies nu wookin huuhuhuhu!! Am sowwies!! Wunnie so-'

'Shud up dumme.' So, he's the one who caused this, part of it at least; it's Runny, one of the new mare's babbies. What's her name again? Kelly? Doesn't matter, she's right there. You look at her; she's got horrible scardies, and you can tell she wants to grab her baby and run. You really hope she's not enough of a dummy to try.

'P-pwe-ease,' she manages, 'nu giv Wunnie big-'

'Yu teww him wuwes?' She nods. 'Yu teww him nu go oudside?' She nods again. Well, she did her job at least; it's not her fault if her baby didn't listen when she told him the rules. That means you only have to punish him. But how?

You *could* take his lumps and no-no stick. But, as bad as this is, it's not as bad as taking a baby away to give her bad special huggies. Plus, he didn't mean to make his friend into monster nummies. Hmm, maybe you don't need to give him stompies or other hurties. You step closer; his Mummah whimpers, but doesn't dare stop you.

'Dumme! babbeh wook at Smawty.' When he doesn't look at you, 'Wook at Smawty nao, ow Smawty giv yu owwies.' That gets his attention. 'Yu am dumme, big bad dumme! babbeh!' you tell him. 'Yu fwend am fowewa sweepies nao; biwdy munstah giv him wowstest huwties, an make him nummies,' more sad water comes out of Runny's see places. 'Dis am yuw fauwt dumme; yuw fwend am fowewa sweepies cause yu was dumme dat nu fowwow wuwes.'

'Uuuhuhu Wunnie sow-'

'Shud up. Dummeh nu say sowwies tu Smawty, yu say sowwies tu dat babbeh's mummah an daddeh when day back.'

'Wunnie say sowwie! Wunnie say sowwies nice Smawty!'

'Gud.' You look at the rest of the babbies. 'Yu du dis gain, yu aww get huwties an owwies.' You look at a couple of the toughies. 'Yu stay hewe' You tell one of them, 'Nu wet oda bad tings happen.'

'Yes, Smawty.'

'Gud. Oda tuffy's cum wif Smawty.' You and the rest of the toughies leave the safe baby place; time to go fix the next problem some dummy's caused.

#####

'Huuuuhuhuuuu Wunnie am bad babbeh uuhuhuuuu! Am bad dummeh babbeh huuuhuuu!'

You hug Runny close, but you don't know what else to do; you can't tell him it's alright, and you can't tell him he's not a bad baby. His friend is forever sleepies, and Runny is the one who gave the babbies the idea to run away when you and the other mares weren't looking! But isn't it your fault too? You made such a big deal over Big Red, which gave the babbies a chance they needed to run away!

But, the babbies are the ones who ran away in the first place; they knew the rules, and you told Runny the rules yourself! All they had to do was wait until they were big enough to be safe from those birdy monsters! Why couldn't they do that? Why did Runny give them the idea, and why aren't you more mad at him? You should be, he did such a dummy thing! It could have been *him* the birdy monster took!! But you don't feel maddies at all. Maybe it's because the Smarty's already yelled at him so much, or because Runny feels so bad about what he-

'Kewwy?' You look up; one of the mares pokes her head inside the den. 'Dah babbeh's mummah an daddeh am hewe.'

It's time. You nod and look at Runny. 'Wunnie nee say sowwies nao.'

He nods a lot. You put him on the ground, and you both follow the mare out of the spare den to a pair of fluffies. Even from where you are, you can see the saddies and scardies they and their other babbies have. You feel some tight and sharp heart hurties, but as bad as they are they're small compared to what Runny must feel.

When you get closer, the daddeh fluffy runs over. 'Whewe am wingie babbeh?!' He yells. 'Wat happen?! Wat du wif-'

'Stahp!' The toughie stops him. 'Yu wet dem tawkies.'

The daddeh fluffy stops, but he still looks really mad and really scared.

'*Gulp* T-teww dem Wunnie.'

Runny takes a moment to start. 'Wunnie say dat babbehs can pway outside if wun oud when big fwuffies nu wookin,' he doesn't look up while he talks. 'Wunnie an fwend an oda babbehs get oud, an pway huggie tag oudside. Fwend was wunnin way fwom Wunnie an, a-an den...' Runny's wordies try to hide.

'Wat happen?! Teww Fwu-'

'Shud up!' The toughie stops the daddeh again. 'Keep tawkies,' he says to Runny.

'An, an biwdy munstah take fwend way huuhuhu. Wunnie am-'

'NUUUUUUUUUUU!!!' The Mummah screams so loud. 'BAAABBEHHHH HUUUUUUUU!! BABBEH AM MUNSTAH NUMMIES!!'

'Bwuddaa huuhuuu!'

'Meanie munstah eat bwudda!! Wowstest heawt huwties! The other babbies hug their Mummah as hard as they can and cry their see places out. But the Daddeh stands still.

'Huuhuhu *sob* Wunnie am so sowwies huuhuuuu! Wunnie was biggest dummeH huuhuuuu!'

The daddeh looks at Runny in a way which makes you really scared, but before you can say or do anything, 'DummeH babbeh!!!' he jumps at Runny, 'Gah!' but the toughie jumps forward and kicks the daddeh in the side! He knocks the daddeh fluffy to the ground, who coughs and makes other sounds like Big Red did. You grab Runny and hold him close.

'Nu du dat dummeH,' the toughie says to the Daddeh. 'YuW babbeh am fowewa sweepies! Givin dat babbeh huwties an fowewa sweepies nu du anyting!'

'Dat babbeh am bad!!' The mummah screams. 'He nee get-'

'Shud up!' The toughie yells. 'Dah Smawty aweady deaw wif dis; id am ovah, dummeHs.' The mummah and the daddeh fluffy look so mad; you understand why, but Runny's had enough heart hurties and saddies to last so many brighttimes! He doesn't need sorry hoofies and stompies too! 'Nu twy giv dat babbeh huwties, ow Smawty be maddies.'

When the toughie mentions the Smarty, the mummah and daddeh stop trying to get at you and Runny; they give you some mean looks, then leave the safe baby place. After they're gone, the toughie looks at you. 'Yu teww tuffies if day twy giv yu ow yuw babbeh huwties. Hewd nu nee mowe fowewa sweepies babbehs.' The toughie leaves too. You stay where you are, and hug Runny more to calm him down.

'Cum on Wunnie,' you say. 'Mummah fin bwudda an sissie, den go back tu den.'

#

'Speciaw fwend, babbehs, wat happen?' your Special friend comes into the den. 'Wai Speciaw fwend an babbehs nu in safe pwa... Wunnie? Wunnie wat am mattah?' He rushes over to Runny, who's cried since you got back from the safe baby place. 'Wunnie wat happen? Yu hav huwties? Oda babbehs be meanies?' He looks at you. 'Wat happen speciaw fwend?'

It's so hard to say it. 'Wunnie an oda babbehs wun way fwom safe babbeh pwace an... An biwdy munstah take Wunnie's fwend way.'

'*Sob* uuhuhuuu fwend huhuhuuu!'

'Daddeh so sowwies Wunnie,' your Special friend hugs Runny too. 'Wat happen? Wai babbehs wun-'

'Wunnie du id huhuhuuu! Wunnie teww fwends cud wun way when big fwuffies nu wook.'

'Wat? Wai? Wai Wunnie du dat!?'

'Jus wan pway huggie tag gain huhuuu!'

'Wunnie, dat was bad ting!' This is the first time you've heard your Special friend mad. 'Dis wat happen when nu fowwow hewd wuwes!'

'Speciaw fwend pwease,' you say, 'Wunnie aweady hav-'

'Nu speciaw fwend, Wunnie nee knu dis!' He looks at Runny, 'Hewd hav wuwes cause fowest am scawy pwace; dewe munstahs an bad fwuffies oud dewe,' your Special friend leans closer. 'Wuwes keep hewd an fwuffies safe. If fwuffies nu fowwow dem, day get huwties an fowewa sweepies. Jus wike yuw fwend!'

'Wunnie undewstan Daddeh *sob* newa bweak wuwes gain!'

'Wunnie nee pwomise! Pwomise newa du id gain!'

'Wunnie pwomise! Pwomise Daddeh huhuhuuu!!' He gives your Special friend big huggies. 'Pwomise! Pwomise huhuhu!!'

For a moment your Special friend stays still; you beg him to hug Runny in your thinkie place wordies, but you can't make yourself use your real wordies. Finally, he picks Runny up and gives him huggies. 'Gud Babbeh,' he says. 'Daddeh nu mean make Wunnie mowe saddies. Jus *sniff nu wan babbeh get huwties ow, o-ow...'

You go over and give both of them huggies. Flower and Big Red do the same, and it's not long until you all cry and make sad water together. It's a long while before you stop, and you don't think any of you are happy when you get in the fluff pile to go to sleep.

It's been such a horrible brighttime, but at least it's over.

####

'Yu nu beat Big Wed dis time dummeh!!'

'Am tu dummeh big poopie!!' The Bestest toughie's baby runs at you; he tries to kick you, but you're way too fast! You jump right over him, turn around and kick him hard in the poopie place! 'Screee!' He flies off into, you're not too sure really, but you know it's a long way away!

'BIG WED WIN!!' You yell, 'AM BESTEST TUFFY BABBEH!!'

All the other babbies run up to give you huggies and cheer you on, then all the big fluffies and the toughies, and the Smarty himself!! All of them say what a big strong baby you are, and how you'll keep the herd safe from all the monsters and-

'bwudda?'

Huh? You look around, but you can't see where Runny is. That doesn't make any sense, because you heard him over all the other-

'bwudda? bwudda pwease be wakies!'

All the babbies and big fluffies get quite and blurry, then the safe baby place turns dark and-

'bwudda pwease! Pwease be-'

'Wat?' You finally get your see places open; it was just a sleepie picture. 'Wai bwudda make Big Wed wakies?' You look around, but cant see much; it's still darktime. 'Am bwudda-'

'Shh!' He puts his hoofie near your nummie place. 'Nu wakes Mummah ow Daddeh ow sissie,' he says with his little wordies. You don't know why he only wants you awake, but it can't hurt to play along.

'Wat bwudda wan?' You use your little wordies too. 'Hav bad sweepie pictuwe? Nee-'

'Wan Big Wed cum dis way.' He nods his head to a far corner of the nestie.

'O-otay.' You get up, careful not to wake up Mummah or Daddeh or Flower. You follow Runny away from the fluff pile. 'Wat bwudda-'

'Wunnie wan bwudda giv sowwie hoofies.'

'Huh?' Who would he want you to give sorry hoofies to?

'Wan yu giv sowwie hoofies tu Wunnie.'

W-what? 'Big Wed nu undew-'

'Wunnie nee hav sowwie hoofies,' he sounds sad, really sad. '*Sob* am bad babbeh, bad babbehs nee sowwie hoofies!'

'Bud, Big Wed nu wan giv bwu-'

'Pwease!' For a moment you think he was loud enough to wake Mummah or Daddeh. 'Pwease! Wunnie nee hav sowwie hoofies!'

You don't want to do this, you really don't want to do this! You know Runny was bad, but he's your Brother! You can't give him sorry hoofies and hurties, you want to stop your family from getting hurties an owwies! But he looks so sad, and you can see he's got the worstest heart hurties! You have to help those, and all the huggies you gave him earlier didn't help. If there's a chance, this will work...

'*Sigh* Otay, Big Wed giv bwudda sowwie hoofies.'

'*Sniff* Tank yu.' Runny closes his see places and waits. You take a few deep breaths to get ready; you have to do this right. Give Runny big enough hurties, so he feels better, but not so big you hurt him too much, or that Mummah and Daddeh find out. 'Huwwy up!' You take one last big breath, lift up your hoofie and *smack* hit your Brother on the smelly place, hard. 'Eee!' He falls on the ground and holds his hoofies over his smelly place. Even in the dark, you can see him make more sad water and do his best not to cry out loud.

'Am bwudda otay?' You do your best not to let your scardies get out of control.

Runny nods. '*Sniff* Wunnie am otay *sob* tank yu.'

You give him some huggies, and together you go back to the fluff pile, careful not to wake anyone up.

#

'Gun beat yu dis time dumme!!' You struggle to push the Bestest toughie's baby off balance, and not let him push *you* to the ground. He digs his hoofies in and pushes back, which leaves you with one choice; you jump on top of him and grab hold of him with your leggies.

'Ngh!' You feel him stumble; you've nearly got him! You bounce up and down a few times, and he trips over; you've got him now!

'Big Wed beat yu dumme!!' You yell right in his hear places, but he doesn't give in. 'BIG WED WIN!' You yell even louder! 'DUMMEH STAHP NA-'

You don't feel the hit at first, but it still makes you freeze up and fall off the Bestest toughie's baby. You don't know why, but you curl into a ball. It's all too fast for your thinkie place to figure out what happened, but then you feel the hurties! They're so big, but you can't scream or cry because your nummie place and wordies have gone all dummy on you! '*Cough, Gasp...*'

All you can do is make the same funny breathing noises you did when he kicked you in the side, but he didn't kick you in the side this time.

'Wai yu kick fwend's speciaw wumps?!'

'Dat nu faiw meanie dumme!!'

Some of your friends yell at the Bestest toughie's baby, others rush up to give you huggies then drag you off to the side.

'Munstahs an bad fwuffies nu am faiw!' The Bestest toughie's baby yells. 'Day onwy wan win! If wan be tuffy, nu can be faiw!!'

Even with all the hurties and owwies you realise he's right; why would a monster or a bad fluffy fight by the rules? What makes them monsters and bad fluffies in the first place is they don't follow rules! But, why couldn't he *tell* you? Why'd he have to hit your special lumps!?

'bwudda? bwudda!!' Flower runs up and pushes a couple of your friends out of the way. 'Fwowah giv bwudda huggies fow owwies!' She gives you lots of big huggies; even though it helps, you really didn't want Flower to come over, because once she's done here... 'Fwowah go get Mummah!' No! Not that! 'Mummah huggies make-'

'N-nu...' You manage to get the wordies out through all the hurties.

'Huh? W-wai? Wai bwudda-'

'Pwease nu t-teww Mummah...' It's so hard to talk with all these hurties, but you can't let Mummah know what's happened! 'Nu wan Mummah be scawdies, *cough*.'

'Bud bwudda hav big huwties!' Flower says again. 'bwudda nee-'

'Oda babbehs wun way gain if yu get Mummah!' That stops Flower. 'Big Wed *cough* be otay, sissie. Pwease nu teww Mummah.'

Flower stays quiet for a few moments. 'Otay bwudda, Fwowah nu teww Mummah.' You can tell she doesn't want to do what you asked, and you hope she doesn't tell Mummah anyway.

'sissie, pwomise?'

'Fwowah pwomise.' She gives you more huggies for your owwies, which is good cause they haven't gone away yet!

#

'Huuuu owwies...'

You've sat off to the side of the tuffy game place to wait for the hurties and owwies in your special lumps to go away. Flower's come over a few more times to check on you, and she still hasn't told Mummah what happened; that's good. If Mummah thinks you're getting too many owwies, she won't let you play the tuffy game anymore. That, and you don't want her to worry about you too much, especially after what happened with Runny. Speaking of who,

'Am bwudda otay?' Runny comes up and sit next to you. You nod. 'bwudda nu wook otay.'

'Big Wed be otay soon.' The hurties can't last forever, right? 'Am Wunnie otay?'

Runny looks at the ground. '*Sob* nu, huhuu.' A little bit of sad water comes out. 'Nu am otay.'

It's only been a couple of brighttimes since the birdy monster took his friend away. As far as you know, he stays in the little baby den with Mummah all brighttime. 'bwudda go back tu fwends?'

'Nu *sniff* day hate Wunnie nao huu.'

'Dat nu twue-'

'Id am! Wunnie make fwend go fowewa sweepies! Wunnie am-'

'bwudda nu am bad babbeh nu mowe,' you tell him. 'bwudda get wotsa sowwie wowdies fwom big fwuffies, an sowwie hoofies! Dat mean yu nu am bad nu mowe!'

He looks at you for a while. 'bwudda tink so?'

You nod. 'When bad fwuffies get sowwies, den nu am bad nu mowe. Wunnie get sowwies, so nu am bad nu mowe.'

Runny leans over and give you huggies. 'Tank yu *sniff*.'

'Dat am otay. Du bwudda wan go back tu fwends?' Runny looks at the ground, and doesn't talk. 'Big Wed cum tu, an nu wet oda babbehs be meanies.' Runny stays quiet for a few more whiles until he finally looks at you.

'Otay,' he nods.

'Gud. Wets go.' You stand up to walk, 'Huph!' but it makes the hurties get bigger for a moment! You nearly fall over, but manage to stay on your hoofies.

'Am bwudda otay?' Runny asks.

You nod. '*Haff haff* Am otay. Cum on.' You lead Runny over to his friends, but it takes a while since the hurties get worse when you walk. The walk to his friends seems like it'll take a long time, but they see you and meet you both half way.

'Am Wunnie bwudda otay?'

'Wat babbehs wan?'

You don't answer though, you've got your own question to ask, and its way more important than theirs. 'Du babbehs hate bwudda?' They look at you but don't talk. 'Du babbehs hate bwudda?' you ask again.

'Wat Big Wed mean?' One of the asks.

'bwudda am scawdies fwends hate him nao cause oda babbeh am fowewa sweepies.'

'Nu! Babbehs nu hate Wunnie fwend!' One of them says.

'Id nu am Wunnie's fauwt fwend am fowewa sweepies, am meanie munstah's!'

A couple of them go up to Runny and give him big huggies. 'Babbehs nu hate yu fwend, pwease nu be saddies nu mowe.'

'T-tank yu huhuhuuu *sniff.*'

You watch Runny and his friends make up, but notice some other babbies off to the side. They don't look like his friends, but you recognise them; they're the brothers and sissies of Runny's orange friend, and they're making meanie looks at him. You look back at them and puff your cheeks out, which makes them go away. Good, they better not try and hurt him, or you'll give all of them sorries!

####

It's been a lot of brighttimes, you think five and five and three since Runny and the other huggie tag babbies ran out of the safe baby place, and his friend got taken by the birdy monster. Now they're big enough to play outside while their mummahs and daddehs are away, so long as a big fluffy watches them and they don't go into the forest. The safe baby place isn't any less crowded though, all the little babbies have gotten bigger, and they're out of the little baby den. Now they're up in the big part of the safe baby place, and they've split up into groups; some play huggie tag, others play the tuffy game, and the rest make up their own games and fun.

A few of the mares who were in here with you have got other jobs now, like finding nummies or helping out with other jobs around the safe place. But you still take care of the little babbies; you don't know how to do other jobs after all. Flower stays in to help sometimes, but she spends more time with her new friends these

brighttimes, especially the green wingie baby. You were surprised when you found out he's one of the Smarty's babbies, but he seems really nice, and Flower likes him, so it doesn't worry you too much.

What does worry you is Runny; even though he's made up with his friend's, he doesn't play outside with them. In fact, he hasn't played much of anything at all. Ever since his orange friend was taken, he sits around with you in the safe baby place. When you asked why he doesn't play anymore, he told you it gives him bad thinkie place pictures and reminds him of what happened. That's bad enough, but he's had a lot of bad sleepie pictures as well. It gives you such bad heart hurties for him, but you don't know how to help him. You're not sure if there's anything you can do.

#

It's about midway through the brighttime, and you're in the safe baby place as usual. Flower's with her friends somewhere outside and so is Big Red, but Runny's in here with you. He's been a good help, he stopped the same baby who always tried to get out of the little baby den from getting out of the safe baby place. What is with him and exploring? Doesn't he know how scary it is out there?

Mostly though Runny just sits around, and you can't take it anymore! You've got to at least try and help him. You walk over to him; 'Wunnie,'

He looks up. 'Wat Mummah?'

'Du Wunnie wan go oud and pway?'

'Nu Mummah!' He looks sad really fast. 'Nu wan pway nu mowe! Pway make-'

'Wunnie pwease,' you stop him before he can say much else. 'Mummah nu wan Wunnie be sad nu mowe; am tuu many heavt hwties.'

'Huu Wunnie am sowwie mu-'

You hold one of your hoofies close to his nummie place. 'Mummah nu wan Wunnie be sowwies, Mummah wan Wunnie go pway gain.'

'B-bud...'

'Pwease Wunnie, du it fow Mummah.'

He looks at you some more; after a couple of whiles, 'Otay Mummah.' He gets up, gives you some huggies, and slowly walks out of the safe baby place. When he gets there he looks back at you; you nod and smile, and Runny walks out.

You hope he'll be alright.

Chapter Thirteen

'Dah Smawty wan say sumtin!'

You and your family leave the den and go to the place where the Smarty talks to the herd. You get there, and pick out a spot away from the front and a little to the side. Flower stands close to you and your Special friend,

but Runny and Big Red get closer; the Smarty doesn't scare them much anymore. A little bit after the last fluffies arrive, the Smarty climbs on his rock and looks at all of you.

'Hewd wisten tu Smawty!' The herd goes so quiet, you can hear the sounds of the forest. 'Dah cowl times gun be hewe soon!' As soon as the Smarty says "cold times," some fluffies around you start to whine; out in front, you see one shake. 'Dat mean hewd nee be weady! Aww fwuffies dat can be nummie findahs du dat nao! Oda hewp make mowe nummie dens an make nesties wawm!' A lot of the herd nods, even the ones who had bad scardies a little while ago. 'An cause cowl times am cummin, nu mowe babbehs tiww day go way!'

Somewhere, a fluffy speaks up. 'Bud fwuffy nu wan wait tiww-'

'Nu mowe babbehs tiww cowl times go way!!' The Smarty yells over the fluffy, whoever it was. 'Nu bweak dat wuwe dummehs!! Hewd undewstan!?'

'Yes Smawty!' The herd says at the same time.

'Gud. Hewd go back tu nesties nao.' The Smarty gets off his rock, and the herd breaks up. You and your family walk back to the den, but on the way, you notice something wrong with Flower.

'Fwowah? Fwowah wat am mattah?' Her hear places are hidden and she looks really scared, like she did when she was a little baby in the baby den.

'*Sniff* huuu.'

You look at your Special friend; he nods. 'Cum on,' he says to Runny and Big Red, 'wets go.' They keep walking to the den and leave you with Flower. When they're gone, she gives you big huggies and tries to hide in your fluff like she did when she was little.

'Huuuhuu Fwowah nu wan cowl times!' She says. 'Oda fwuffies say cowl times make fwuffies go fowewa sweepies! Huuuu Fwowah nu wan huhuhuuuu!'

You hug her close and try to think of what to say. You have some old thinkie place pictures about the cold times from when you lived with Daddeh. He'd always put on a lot more not fluff when they came, and didn't take you outside. That was good because it did get really cold out. Still, you had a nice safe room with plenty of blankies, and it never got cold inside Daddeh's housie anyway! The truth is you've got scardies about the cold times too. But, you can't be scardies in front of your babbies; good mummahs fix their babbies' owwies and scardies.

'Nu be scawdies Fwowah, id be otay. Daddeh knu wat du.'

'*Sniff* Mummah nu wie?'

'Nu babbeh, Mummah nu wie.' you give her another hug. 'Ewyting be otay. Mummah pwomise.'

'Otay Mummah.'

You and Flower go back to the den; when you get there, your Special friend is telling Big Red and Runny about the cold times.

'Dewe am onwy wittwe nummies weft in dah fowest, an cowl fwuff cum fwom dah sky.'

'Wat am cowl fwuff?' Big Red asks.

'Id am wike fwuff, bud id make fwuffies aww wet an cowdies,' your Special friend tells him.

'How fwuffies nu wet cowl times giv huwties ow,' Runny swallows hard, 'fo-fowewa sweepies?'

'Id nu am tuu hawd,' your Special friend says. 'Bud fwuffies nee tu fowwow aww dah wuwes. Nu take mowe nummies dan yu nee, nu weave nestie when dah cowl fwuff am cumin down, an awways wisten tu dah Smawty.'

'Otay Daddeh,' Runny says.

'Babbehs be gud Daddeh,' Big Red adds. 'How can Big Wed an bwudda an sissie hewp?'

Your Special friend uses his thinkie place. 'Babbehs can hewp make nestie bettah, bud am stiww tuu wittwe tu go in fowest.'

Flower looks happy at that, and so does Runny. Big Red though, 'Big Wed am big! Am biggah dan bwudda an sissie!!'

'Bud nu am as big wike Mummah an Daddeh,' you tell him. 'Nu am safe fow yu in fowest.'

Big Red humphs, but doesn't talk back. Your Special friend goes on. 'Babbehs hewp make nestie wawm fow cowl times, an oda nesties tuu.' He looks at all of you. 'Hewd nee hewp each oda in dah cowl times.'

'Babbehs undewstan Daddeh,' Runny says.

'Gud babbehs,' he says.

'Speciaw fwend?'

He looks at you. 'Yes?'

'Wat Kewwy du tu hewp?'

'Speciaw fwend hewp fwuffy find nummies!' Your Special friend says. 'Hewd nee wots befowe cowl times!'

'Bud Kewwy nu knu how!'

'Nu wowwie, fwuffy show Speciaw fwend how nex bwighttime!'

'O-otay.' Well, if he says so.

You talk more about the cold times while you finish your darktime nummies; your Special friend says he's been through two, or it might have been three. He can't remember exactly, but he knows they were all hard. But he got through them, and he's sure all of you will too, so long as you follow the rules like the Smarty said.

####

'Mummah an Daddeh be back soon babbehs,' Daddeh hugs you, then Runny and Flower. Mummah does the same, but she hugs for longer. 'Yu find tings tu make nestie bettah an wawm, bud nu go in fowest!'

'Otay Daddeh,' you tell him. 'Big Wed and bwudda and sissie du dat.'

'Gud babbehs.' Daddeh looks at Mummah. 'Wets go speciaw fwend.' They walk off and disappear into the forest.

'Otay,' you look at Runny and Flower, 'Babbehs du wat Daddeh say nao.' They stand there and look at you. 'Wai bwudda an sissie nu du anything?'

'Nu knu wat du' Runny says.

Come to think of it, you're not sure either. Daddeh told you to find stuff to make the nestie warm, but not *how* to do it! The three of you stand around and use your thinkie places.

'Shud Wunnie twy tu find Daddeh?'

'Nu, Daddeh say nu go in fowest!' Flower says. You don't like that rule, but she's right. Also, you don't know which way Mummah and Daddeh went. 'Huu wat babbehs du?'

'Wat am mattah?'

You turn your head; it's one of the toughies. That's good, he'll know what to do. 'Babbehs wan make nestie bettah an wawm, bud knu nu how.'

'Dat nu am hawd,' the toughie says, 'jus find mowe wong gwassies. Can awso use fwuff.'

Great, that's a start; first you'll find some... wait, what? 'Fwuff? Wat tuffy mean?'

'Yu can puww oud fwuff, an make nestie wawm wif it.'

'Bud dat giv bad owwies!'

'Flower nu wan wose pweety fwuff.'

'Eh, bettah dan bein coddies.' The toughie walks away, and you turn to Flower and Runny.

'O-otay, babbehs go find wong gwassies nao.'

'Otay!' Runny leaves right away, and you go to follow, but Flower stops you.

'Nu nee puww oud fwuff?'

You shake your head; that tuffy was probably playing sillies with you.

####

'Dewe am wotsa kinds of nummies in fowest, bud nee knu whewe tu wook,' your Special friend says while you walk through the forest; he uses small words, so you have to stay close to hear. 'Sum nummies go way when codd times am cummin, bud dewe am stiww wots. Hewe,' he leads you to a small bushie that looks scratchy, and points at it with his hoofie. 'Wook.'

'Bewwy nummies?' You ask.

He nods.

'Bud, how get dem?'

'Wike dis.' Your Special friend reaches into the bushie and grabs part of it with his nummie place. Then he pulls his head back, and digs in his hoofies. There's some pops and snap sounds, and a piece of the bushie with some berries comes off. He reaches his head around and puts it on his back. 'Nao Speciaw fwend twy.'

You step up to the bushie and do what he did; it's not as easy as he made it look, and when the piece breaks, you almost fall over. Your Special friend helps you put the piece on your back, and the two of you walk away from the bushie. Not long after, you see a fluffy from the herd with all sorts of stuff balanced on his back.

'How many nummies we nee tu get speciaw fwend?' You ask.

'As many as can get on backsies,' he says, 'den we go back tu safe pwace, put dem in nummie piwes an go find mowe.'

'Otay...' It sounds like it will be a long brighttime. But, if it helps you get through the cold times, it'll be worth it. Your Special friend takes you to another bushie; it has berries on it too, but they're bigger than the first ones. You both pull a couple of branches off, put them on your backs and move on. Later on, you find some fluffies from the herd digging holes.

'Wat am fwuffies doin?' You ask them.

'Wookin fow gwound nummies' one of them says.

'Wat am gwound nummies?'

'Big nummies in dah gwound,' another says. 'Day nu taste pweety, bud day make tummeh huwties go way.'

'Du fwuffies nee hewp?' your Special friend asks.

'Uh-huh.' One nods.

'Otay. Wait hewe Speciaw fwend, dis nu take wong.' He walks over to the fluffies and helps them dig. That leaves you with nothing to do. You should have offered to help, but you don't know how to dig like them; you'd just get in the way. Maybe you should look around instead; there's not as many trees here, so you can see more than usual. You don't see any bushies like the first two your Special friend found.

'Huh?' You see some colour and turn your head back to where you saw it; it's not far away, so you won't get lost if you take a better look. When you get close, you find the colour is a bunch of, what are they called again? Daddeh used to put them in his nummies all the... oh yeah, mushrooms! These ones look different to the ones he used, but they're kind of the same colour as the berries, so that must mean they're good nummies too.

'Speciaw fwend? Whewe yu go?'

'Kewwy am ovah hewe!' you yell. 'Kewwy find mowe nummies!'

'Weawy?' You hear him trot over. 'Wat Speciaw fwe-NUUUU!!!'

Before you can ask why he's screaming, 'Gahh!' he pushes you away from the mushrooms and knocks you on the ground! '*Cough* O-owwies. Wai Speciaaw fwend du dat?!'

'Am sowwie Speciaaw fwend, bud does am bad nummies!' He looks back at the mushrooms. 'Day am baddest nummies ewa! Giv fwuffies wowstest huwties an fowewa sweepies!' He stares at the mushrooms, and you see sad water in his see places. 'Dat, *sniff* dat am how sissie go fowewa sweepies.'

Well, now you know why he yelled so much. You look at the mushrooms again, and feel really scared; you were *that* close to picking them up. This job is a lot harder and more dangerous than it looks. 'Am sowwies Speciaaw fwend, Kewwy nu mean make yu scawdies.'

He's quiet for a while; 'Id am otay.' He helps you off the ground and puts the stuff you dropped back on your back. 'Wets take nummies back tu safe pwace.'

#####

'Nnnngh,' You dig your hoofies into the ground and pull! 'Nnnn!'

Priipp

'Ehhh!' The long grassies let go, and you nearly fall over! You stumble and trip a couple of times, but you've got them! You leave Runny, who's struggling with long grassies of his own, and walk back to the den. All the fluffies in the safe place who aren't out finding nummies work on theirs, and the big dens the nummies are kept in. Like you, none of the babbies are playing, even the toughies' and the Smarty's are working.

You arrive at the den and Flower comes out to meet you. 'bwudda hav mowe tings fow nestie?'

You put the grassies down. 'Uh-huh. How am nestie nao?'

'Uhh, id... id am gud...' Something about that doesn't sound right. You walk past her. 'Wat bwudda doin?' The closer you get to the way in, the more she tries to stop you. 'Nu! Nestie nu am weady! Nu go in!' She's not strong enough, so you push right past her; you go down the tunnel into the den and-

'Huh?' The long grassies you and Runny have gotten are just piled around! Flower hasn't even tried to put them in the nestie!! Now you get mad!!! 'Wat sissie been doin!!?! Wai nu do anything!!?!'

'Fw-Fwowah am doin tings. Was, was jus usin tinkie-'

'Nu, yu bein wazy!!' You're so mad; you agreed that Runny and you would get stuff for the nestie, and Flower would put it together!

'D-dat nu am twue,' she hides her hear places. 'Fwowah jus, jus twyin tu-'

'Yu go get gwassie nao.' You interrupt.

'Wat?'

'Fwowah go get gwassies nao!!' you yell. 'Yu go hewp Wunnie, ow Big Wed teww Mummah an Daddeh yu bein wazy dumme!!'

Flower looks at you for a while, it looks like she's mad, scared and sad all at once. '*Sob* M-meanie!' She turns and runs out of the den; you don't like to make her sad, but she'd better go and help Runny! After Flower's gone, you take a little while to make your maddies go away. When they're all gone, you get to work.

You put some long grassies around the edge and some on top of it, but you're not sure how that'll make it warmer. It looks like all you've done is make the nestie bigger, and that doesn't mean it'll be warmer. You remember what Mummah said about the blankies she used to have, a long time ago when she didn't live in the herd. They're supposed to be warm, but you've never seen a blankie, and you don't know if grassie can be turned in to...

'Sigh...'

This is harder than it looks; maybe Flower wasn't lazy after all. She was probably as confused as you are. You feel like a meanie, a big poopie meanie; better go find Flower and say sorry. You leave the den and go back to where you and Runny got the long grassies from. Somewhere along the way, you see Flower run over. You sit down with your hear places back and get ready to say sorry.

'Big Wed am sowwies fow-'

'Nu can find Wunnie!'

'Huh?' What's she-

'NU CAN FINE WUNNIE! HE NU AM DEWE NU MOWE!!'

She can't find him? But that doesn't make sense! He was there when you left, and he'd have to walk past Flower to get back to the den! All kinds of scardies and cold feels go over you; pictures of what happened to Runny's friend go through your thinkie place. You run back to the spot with Flower.

'bwudda? bwudda whewe am yu?! WUNNIE!!!'

'Wat am wong Fwowah?' You turn and see Flower's green wingie friend with the Bestest toughie's baby.

'Wunnie am gone!' she yells. 'Nu can find him!!'

'He was hewe?' he asks.

'YES!!' You yell. 'NU CAN FI-'

'Wook!!' The Bestest toughie's baby runs forward and points at some grassies. 'Fwuffies whewe hewe! Wooks wike day go dat way!'

You run that way as fast as you can go. 'Wait!!' The Bestest toughie's baby runs after you, and so does Flower and the Smarty's baby. Wherever Runny went, you hope you're not too late!!

####

They must have waited for Big Red to leave.

A little bit after he left, you heard something move, no, run toward you. But before you could get a good look-

'Gah!' You got kicked in the side, hard, and fell on the ground; the hurties were so bad it was impossible to move or use your wordies!

'Quick!' Before you can see who said that you get grabbed and dragged through the grassies. The first thing that comes to your thinkie place is monster! You try to call for help, but the hurties in your side make your wordies all dummy! You twist your head and manage to see what has you; it's a fluffy, not a monster! Just as the scardies go away, you remember who this fluffy is and get scardies all over again!

Your orange friend's Daddeh drags you through the patch of long grassies into the forest. Next to him is one of his other babbies, who must be the one who kicked you; if it had been your friend's Daddeh, you'd have gone into one of the trees. You try to talk to them, but only manage a few coughs and little wordies.

'Shud up poopie dumme!' Your friend's brother hisses.

It gives you more scardies; where are they taking you, and what are they going to do?! This must be about your friend and the wingie monster, but you said sorry for that!!

'P-pwe-ease' you try again. 'Wunnie soww-'

Your friend's brother reaches over and bites you, bites you!! If you could, you'd scream so loud the whole herd would hear! That must be why they kicked you the way they did, and if they don't want any of the herd to hear...

'*Gulp*'

Whatever they have planned, it's bad.

Your friend's Daddeh drags you behind some bushies where his other babbies and his special friend are; all of them have the biggest maddies. He lets go and stands with his special friend and other babbies. You look at them and try to stand.

'Pw-pwease *cough* nu giv huwt-'

'Shud up dumme babbie,' your friend's Daddeh says in a low scary voice.

'Dats wight dumme poopie dumme,' one of his babbies says. 'Nu tawkies.'

'Nu, pwease! Wunnie sowwies, nu mean fow fwend tu-'

The Daddeh walks up, and 'Eeeee!' pushes you hard against the ground.

'Fwuffy say shud up dumme.' His wordies are so scary, you do scardie pee pees. 'Yu nu sowwies yet. Babbie get wowstest huwties an fowewa sweepie cause of yu.' He leans close to you. 'Famiwy du dat tu yu nao dumme.'

The worstest scardies go all over you; 'Nu! Pwease nu du dis!!' You try to get away, but he's too strong. 'Nu huwties! Pwease!! Wunnie sowwies!!!'

'Yu tink babbie nu teww biwdy munstah tu nu giv him huwties?! Yu tink id wisten?!?!' He pushes down harder. 'Yu am dumme.' He looks at his other babbies and nods. They rush forward and crowd around you.

'Screeee!' They kick and bite you all over! They hit your smelly place and your leggings, they kick you in the side, your head and 'SCREEEE! NU HUWT WINGIES!!' One of the babbies has a wingie in his nummie place; he's trying to eat it or rip it off!! The hurties are so bad, and there's so many, you don't notice one of the babbies go round the back of you.

'Take his wumps.' The Daddeh says. Before you can figure out what he means-

'Eeee!' You try and turn your head around. 'Wat dat?! Wat babbeh du tu pwmmght!' The Daddeh puts his hoofie on top of your head and pushes it hard against the ground. You try to get your hoofies on the ground 'NNNNNNNNNMPH!!!'

'Take his wumps sissie! Take dem!'

STOP IT!!! LET GO LET GO!!!

'Mowe sissie! Make him dumme nu speciaw wump fwuffy!!'

'NNNNNNPH!! MMMMMMPH!!' It hurts so much!!! You try to get away, but they've got you trapped!! Sad water pours from your eyes; why is this happening?! You said you were sorry!! You're sorry!!!

'How id feew dumme?' The Daddeh hisses right in your ear. 'How id feew tu hav wowstest huwties an scawdies?' He smiles a meanie smile at you. 'Yu gun hav fowewa sweepies, an nu one gun sabe yu, wike nu one sabe-'

'NU HUWT BWUDDA!!!!'

'Huh?' The Daddeh turns his head, 'Screee!' and something knocks him over!

'Daddeh!' One of the babbies runs to his Daddeh but gets tackled by another bigger baby. 'Eeee!'

'Nu huwt dat babbeh!!!' The baby behind you gets tackled too; there's a lot of yells and screams, but you don't see any of it. Once you're free, all you can do is curl into a ball.

'MUMMAH!! MUUMMAAAH HUHUU!!'

'bwudda!!' You hear Flower, and a few moments later she gives you big huggies. They don't help.

####

SMACK SMACK SMACK

You hit the big fluffy as hard, and as many times as you can! You've never felt so mad before!! 'STAHP GIVIN BWUDDA HUWTIES! WEAVE HIM AWONE MEANIE!!'

*SMACK SMACK!!'

'Speciaw fwend!!' The yell comes from beside you, but before you can react, you get knocked over! The meanie's special friend tries to hit you. 'Nu giv speciaw fwend sow- *SMACK* EEEE!' You kick her hard in the Smelly place, then jump back at the stallion. He's back up and ready for you, but you're almost as big as him; you can do this!!

'Dummeh!!!' You run into the mean fluffy and try to get your leggies over his neck, like in the tuffy game, but he pushes you back. 'NNNNGH!!' You push with everything you have, but you're not strong enough!

'Get him Speciaw fwend!' He yells. This is bad, you've got to do something! His smelly place in front of your see places. Well, better than nothing!

Chomp

'SCREEEEEEEEEE!!!!'

He screams so loud it hurts your hear places, but you don't let go! The big fluffy twists his head back and forth, but you don't let go!!

'Nuuuu!' His special friend kicks you away again; you scramble back on your hoofies in time for her to run at you like you ran at the Bestest toughie's baby the first time you fought. And just like he did, you jump to one side at the last moment then kick back hard!! 'Screeeee!' You hear the mare fall and tumble to the ground, so you must have hit something! You look back at the stallion, who has his hoofies over his smelly place. You run over *SMACK SMACK* and hit him in the face to keep him down.

'Weave Daddeh awone dummeh!!' You turn to the noise; it's one of their babies! He jumps on you, but you shake him off and give him sorry hoofies, right in the face! 'Screeeee!'

'BABBEH!!' His mummah gets back and runs at you, and so does the stallion! You can't fight both of them, but you don't have to; the Bestest toughie's baby and the Smarty's baby rush over to help fight these-

'YU DUMMEHS STAHP DIS NAO!!!!'

#####

The toughies rush forward and pin everyone down; the two big fluffies and their babbies, Kerry's baby Big Red, the Bestest toughie's baby, even your wingie baby. You leave Kerry's other babbies alone.

'Mummah huhuhu sabe Wunnie!! Wowstest huwties!!!'

'Pwease go way huwties!! Nu make bwudda saddies nu mowe!!'

It's not like they're going anywhere. With the fight stopped, you walk into the middle of it. 'Wat happen hewe?'

'MEANIES HUWT BWUDDA!!' Big Red yells. 'DAY GIV BWUDDA HUWTIES AN-'

'Shud up.' Your wordies are smaller, but they shut him up. You look at the stallion, and when you recognise who it is, you get really mad. 'Wat yu du dummeh?' He doesn't talk; pretty brave, since one word from you and the toughies will give him forever sleepies. You try his special friend. 'Wat yu du?' Nothing. That's annoying, but you don't need them to figure out what happened.

'Uuuhuhuhuu Mummah! Wan Mummah huhuhuu!!'

You look at Runny; no point trying to ask what they did to him. You've seen fluffies pretend to have bad hurties, and he's not pretending. A hot mad feel start in your tummy, and rise to your thinkie place; you have to stop yourself telling the toughies to give all these dummies forever sleepies. You told them this was over!!

And what did they do? They try and give Runny forever sleepies, which would make his family want to do something back, and on and on!!!

You can't let that happen; you will not let the herd tear itself apart, especially when the cold times are coming. There's only one thing to do. You walk back to the stallion and his special friend. 'Yu dummehs wook at Smawty.' They look at you; try as they might, they can't hide their scardies. 'Yu dummehs nu wisten tu Smawty; Smawty say dat dis was ovah.' You look back at Runny. 'Smawty giv dat babbeh sowwies aftah biwdy munstah.'

'Yu nu du dat!!' The Daddeh yells. 'Smawty nu du anything!! Babbeh am fowewa sweepies, an yu jus-'

You put a hoofie on his head, and push it hard against the ground. 'Givin sowwies is Smawty's job. Yu nu wisten when Smawty say dis was ovah, dat mean yu gun wisten in cowl times.' You lean as close to him as you can get. 'Yu an yuw famiwy nu am in hewd nu mowe.'

'W-wat?' The mare says.

'Yu nu am in hewd nu mowe, dummeh!'

The Daddeh fluffy moves his head about really hard, and you can't keep your hoofie in place. 'DAT NU FAIW!!!' He screams. 'NU FAIW!!! FWUFFY AN FAMIWY BEEN IN HEWD FOW WONG TIME!!! YU NU CAN DU-'

You smack him in the head. 'Smawty nu cawe. Yu nu wisten tu Smawty, an yu twy giv dat babbeh huwties an fowewa sweepies. Yu nu can be in hewd nao.' You lean close. 'Yu weave nao, ow Smawty an tuffies giv yuw aww fowewa sweepies!' The stallion goes quiet for a long time, then nods. You look at the toughies. 'Wet dem go.' They him, his special friend, and their babbies go.

'Cum on babbehs,' he says. 'Famiwy nee go nao.'

'B-bud,' one of their babbies starts. 'Nu wan weave! NU WAN-'

'Shud up!!' One of the toughies yells.

'Pwease babbeh,' the Mummah says. 'Id *sob* id be otay.'

The babbies cry and yell more, so you have the toughies push them into the forest. At last, they leave. You look at the Bestest toughie, 'If day cum back,'

'Fowewa sweepies.' He nods. 'Bestest tuffy knu.'

'Gud.' That done, you walk over to Runny and his sister.

'*Sob* uuuhuhuhu wai huwt Wunnie-huhuhuu! Wunnie say sowwies!!'

'Id am otay bwudda, Fwowah hewe! sissie giv huggies an make owwies go way!'

'Pwease!! Pwease wet Big Wed go!!' You look at the toughie who tackled Big Red; he's still holding him.

'Wet him go, dummeh!' The toughie lets go of Big Red, and he runs straight to his brother.

'bwudda!! Big Wed so sowwies!' He gives Runny the biggest huggies he can. 'Am sowwies *sob* nu cud stahp meanies givin bwudda huwties!'

You don't let yourself feel sad much; it doesn't look good to the rest of the herd if they see you make sad water. But, you let yourself feel a few saddies for them. 'Whewe am dewe Mummah an Daddeh?' You ask one of the toughies.

'Tink day am wookin fow nummies.'

You nod. If they left early, it won't be long until they're back; for you all you know, they already are. 'Bestest tuffy.'

'Yes Smawty.'

'Hewp dese babbeks get tu dewe den, an teww dewe mummah an daddeh wat happen when day get back.' You pause for a moment. 'Teww dem day nu nee wook fow nummies gain dis bwighttime.'

'Otay Smawty.' The Bestest toughie walks over to the babbies. 'Babbeks,' they look up at him. 'Bestest tuffy hewp yu take bwudda back to nestie nao.' Flower and Big Red nod, and help Runny get on the Bestest toughie's back. They walk off, but as you're about to tell everyone else to go,

'Daddeh?'

You look down. 'Yes, Babbek?'

'Can Babbek go hewp Fwowah hewp hew bwudda?'

You use your thinkie place for a while, then nod. 'Fow wittwe time.'

'Tank yu Daddeh.' He runs off after the Bestest toughie and Kerry's babbies.

'Dis am ovah nao,' you tell the toughies. They walk back to the safe place and what they were up to before this mess happened. You shake your head while you walk; why does this have to happen? You know those dummies were sad over their baby, but you dealt with it as best you could. You didn't give him sorry hoofies, but he had more than enough saddies and heart hurties to make up for it. They could have left it there, but they had to go and do this.

'*Sigh*' Well, at least you have less fluffies to feed over the cold times.

####

You and Kerry felt really good when you got back to the safe place; between the two of you, you found lots of good nummies! The toughies guarding the nummie den even said so, which made you feel really happy. Part of you hoped the Smarty would find out and let you and Kerry have more babbies, once the cold times are over of course.

The two of you put what you found in one of the piles and left to go find more, 'Hey,' but the Bestest toughie blocked the way out. For a few moments you had the worstest scardies, but you noticed he didn't look as mad like he usually did.

'Wat am id nice, Bestest tuffy?' Kerry asked him.

'Yu fwuffies nee go tu yuw den, nao.'

Sharp cold hurties went all over and through you; Kerry must have felt them too, because she ran off as fast as she could go! The run back to the nestie seemed to take more forevers than you could count. Your thinkie place showed you all the horrible, horrible pictures of what might have happened! Your babbies, please please let them all be okay! Or at least, please let none of them be forever sleepies!!

You and Kerry get to the den at almost the same time; she goes in first, and you follow right after. Inside, you find Big Red and Flower hugging Runny, who's crying and making lots of sad water.

'Wunnie!' Kerry runs over and picks Runny up. 'Wunnie wat happen? Wat happen?'

'*Sob* Uuuhuhuu! Fwuffies giv Wunnie owwiess huhuhuu!!'

You look at Big Red and Flower. 'Wat happen?'

'Big Wed an Wunnie wewe gettin gwassies fow nestie, an den oda fwuffies take Bwudda way an giv him owwies!!' He gets sad water in his see places. 'Nu *sob* nu cud keep Bwudda safe!!'

'Who? Who giv Wunnie huwties?'

'Was his fwend's famiwy!!' Big Red says. 'Day waned giv him huwties an fowewa sweepies!'

'Huuhuhuu wai fwuffies huwt Wunnie huhuu!! Wunnie say sowwies!'

You're not the kind of fluffy who likes to give hurties; it's why you're a nummie finder, not a toughie. But right now, all you want to do is find those fluffies and give them hurties, the worstest hurties you can!! You want to stomp and bite them for what they've done to-

'Bestest tuffy wan tawkies tu yu.'

You turn around; the Bestest toughie is outside the den. For a really short moment, you want to yell at him to go away, but it's not a good idea. You walk over. 'Yes?'

'Dah fwuffies dat du dis nu am in hewd nu mowe,' he says. 'Dah Smawty nu wan yu ow oda fwuffies tu wook fow dem an giv dem mowe huwties. Id am ovah, an dah Smawty nu wan deaw wif dis gain. Yu undewstan?'

There's part of you who wants to do exactly that! Hunt them down and give them hurties!! But, you know it won't really help. And the last thing Runny needs is for you to make the Smarty mad at all of you. 'Fwuffy undewstan.'

'Gud.' The Bestest toughie says. 'Dah Smawty awso say yu nu hav tu find mowe nummies dis bwighttime.'

'Tank yu nice Bestest tuffy.' You turn to go back to your family-

'Wait,'

You look back at the Bestest toughie.

'Big Wed did gud' he says. 'He gun be gud toughie.'

You feel a little happy, despite everything. 'Tank yu nice Bestest toughie.' He nods and walks away. You go back to your family and help Kerry give Runny huggies. Big Red and Flower help too, and together you try to make Runny's hurties and scardies go away. It takes a long time for him to stop crying, and in the darktime, he hardly gets any sleep.

#

The next brighttime, Kerry refused to leave the den; she wouldn't leave Runny alone until he was better. You wanted to stay as well, but the Smarty came and said you had to do your nummie job.

'Smawty knu yu wan hewp yuw babbeh,' he said, 'bud hewd stiww nee nummies.'

'Pwease Smawty, Wunnie stiww nee wotsa-'

'Yu nee du yuw job.' He interrupted. 'Bud, Smawty wet yu onwy find nummies two times dis bwighttime, den yu can go back tu yuw babbeh.'

Well, it's better than nothing, and you won't get a better deal out of the Smarty. 'Tank yu nice smawty; fwuffy du dat.'

'Gud.' He leaves, and you go back inside to tell your family.

'Daddeh am sowwie,' you say, 'Bud nee go wook fow nummies gain. Pwomise nu be way aww bwighttime.'

Kerry nods; you know shes upset, but she understands. You turn to leave-

'Daddeh,'

You turn back and see Big Red in front of you.

'Can Big Wed hewp Daddeh find nummies?'

You use your thinkie place; Big Red's really big for his age, so it might be safe if he's with you. You look at Kerry. 'Am dat otay?'

She looks at Big Red, then back at you and nods.

'Otay. Cum on Big Wed, fowwow Daddeh.'

#

In the forest you teach Big Red all the stuff you showed Kerry; he learns fast, maybe faster than his Mummah. He'd be a good nummie finder, but you're sure he still wants to be a toughie. But in that case, why did he want to come out here with you? Why does he want to be out here and not back at the nestie with Runny?

'Big Wed?'

'Yes, Daddeh?'

'Wat am wong?'

He's quiet for a while. Then, he stops, and sad water comes out of his see places. '*Sob* Big Wed am bad bwudda huhuhu!!' He falls on his tummy and holds his hoofies over his see places. 'Big Wed wet meanies giv Wunnie huwties *sob* am bad bwudda!!'

'Nu Big Wed!!' You giv him big huggies. 'Big Wed nu am bad, dis nu am yuw fauwt!' You feel sad water in your see places. 'Yu did gud ting; yu sabed Wunnie fwom mowe huwties an fowewa sweepies! Yu am gud bwudda!'

'*Sniff* uuhuhuu.'

'Bestest toughie say yu du gud ting tuu.'

Big Red looks up at you. '*Sniff* W-weay?'

You nod. 'Day say yu du wat tuffies sposed tu du, an yu be gud tuffy!'

His sad waters don't go away, but he gets a big smile on his face. 'Dat, dat am twue?' You nod. 'Tank yu Daddeh!' You hug each other as hard you can for a while, until a couple of nummie finders come over.

'Am yu fwuffies otay?'

You nod. '*Sniff* Am otay. Nu hav owwies, jus saddies.'

'Otay,' the other nummie finder says. 'Yu nee hewp?'

'Nu, fwuffies be ot-'

Rustle

You all look in the direction the noise cam from; a little bit away some bushies move. You feel Big Red pull away, and the next thing you know he's staring down the bush with his cheeks puffed out. One of the other nummie finders does the same, but not you; 'Fwuffies shud go,' you say. 'Dat might be-'

'Hewp!' The bushie moves some more, and a red fluffy stumbles out of it. 'Hewp! Pwease hewp Wuby!' The fluffy comes over to you; she's dirty and has twigs and leafies stuck in her fluff. 'Hav tummeh huwties! Nu can find nummies ow safe pwace! Pwease hewp!'

One of the nummie finders runs over. 'Id am otay, fwuffies hewp yu.' He pulls a few berries off his back and gives it to the new fluffy; you wonder what the Smarty would think if he was here.

'*Sniff* Tank yu!' The new fluffy numms the berries fast.

'Wat fwuffy doin oud hewe?' You ask. 'Yu wost? Nu knu how get back tu yuw hewd?'

'Wat am hewd? Wuby nu hav hewd!'

'Nu hav hewd?' Big Red asks?

'Dat mean she am housie fwuffy,' the other nummie finder says. 'She get wost, ow wun way fwom hew housie-'

'Yes *cough* Wuby wun way fwom meanie Mummah an Bwuddas an Sissies.' She tells you. 'Pwease, pwease hewp Wuby! Nu knu whewe go ow wat du! Pwease!!'

You all look at each other. 'Big Wed,' you tell him. 'Stay hewe wif nice fwuffy. Daddeh an oda fwuffies nee tawkies.'

'Otay Daddeh,' It looks like his saddies are gone, at least for now. 'Big Wed wook aftah nyu fwuffy.'

You and the two nummie finders walk a little bit away from Big Red and Ruby. 'Wat fwuffies du?' You ask.

'Fwuffies shud giv hew sum nummies an teww hew go way,' one of them says.

'Bud dat am meanie ting!' The other says. 'She nu knu how wive in fowest.'

'Fwuffies nu nee wowwies boud dat, dat am hew fauwt.' The first one says. 'She wun way fwom hew housie.'

'Bud if she wun fwom meanie housie an hoomins?!'

'So? Dewe am oda hewds in fowest; she can find one of dem.'

'Wat yu tink?' The other nummie finder asks. 'Wat we du wif nyu fwuffy?'

You look at Ruby; she's talking to Big Red, and though you cant hear what they're saying, she seems alright. Plus, it looks like shes been out here a while, so she cant be a big dummy. Not to mention, with the meanie family gone, there's room in the herd for-

'Wai yu nu tawkies?' The first nummie finder says.

'Fwuffie tink nyu fwuffie am otay,' you say. 'Bud nu knu if she shud stay. Tink shud ask dah Smawty.'

'Fine,' the first nummie finder says, 'bud yu dummehs du id.' He walks off and leaves you and the second nummie finder alone.

'Shud fwuffies go back tu hewd nao?' He asks.

You use your thinkie place. 'Fwuffies find mowe nummies, den go back. Dat way Smawty nu be tuu maddies.' Hopefully, at least.

'Otay.' The nummie finder says. He and you walk back to Ruby and Big Red. 'Nyu fwuffie?' Ruby looks at the nummie finder. 'Fwuffies nee find mowe nummies, bud den we take yu tu meet Smawty. He say if yu can be in hewd.'

Ruby gets a really big smile on her face. 'Tank yu! Tank yu so much!!'

'Dat am otay,' you tell her, 'bud fwuffies nee go nao.'

'Otay, Wuby fowwow nyu fwends.'

Ruby follows you, Big Red and the other nummie finder while you find more nummies. Once you've got enough, you all head back to the safe place.

Chapter Fourteen

You look at the dirty red fluffy.

'W-wai big fwuffy wookin at Wuby so meanies?'

You ignore Ruby for the moment, and walk around to get a better look at her; she slinks away while you do. When you're done, you turn to the nummie finders who brought her in. 'Whewe yu find dis fwuffy?'

'Fwuffies nu find hew,' one of them, a Dark green and brown stallion says, 'she find nummie findahs. She cum oud of bushie an say dat-'

'She wun way fwom meanie housie.' You finish for him. 'Yu aweady teww Bestest tuffy dat.'

The stallion's hear places hide. 'Sowwie nice Bestest tuffy...'

You roll your see places; it's not always good to be the scariest fluffy in the herd. 'So, wai yu bwing hew tu safe pwace?'

'Fwuffies tink dat *gulp* dat Smawty shud say if Wuby can be in hewd.' Big Red's Daddeh says.

You look at him; 'Wai yu nu teww hew tu go way?'

'Cause, cause dat was meanie ting tu du,' he says.

'So?'

'Wots of fwuffies wun way fwom meanie housies,' the green stallion says, 'an day nu knu how wive in fowest. Hewd wet wotsa fwuffies wike dem in!'

You wouldn't say lots, but he has a point. Quite a few fluffies in the herd came from meanie housies and monster humans. *But*, they usually have lots of hurties and act way more scardies than usual. Ruby doesn't have any hurties a human would make, and she's not very scared anymore. 'How was owd housie meanies?'

'Huh?' Ruby says.

'Yu heaw Bestest tuffy; how was owd housie meanies?'

'Oh. Oh id was big meanies!' Ruby says. 'Mummah Mummah make Mummah go way, an make Ruby pway wif dummehe meanie bwudda, an nu wet-'

'*Sigh* Shud up dummehe.' Great, another one of these. A housie fluffy who didn't want to follow their human mummah and daddeh's rules; how many of those have you seen? You'd like to do poopies in Ruby's face and tell her to get lost. But, it's the Smarty who decides which fluffies stay in the herd. 'Yu fowwow Bestest tuffy,' you tell Ruby. 'An yu dummehe,' you look at the ones who brought her in. 'Go an find mowe nummies.'

'Yes, nice Bestest tuffy!' The green Stallion leads Big Red and his Daddeh back to the forest.

'Wets go.' You lead Ruby through the safe place to the Smarty.

####

'Am Speciaw fwend weady?'

You close your see places and grit your teethies. 'Du id.' Your Special friend grabs some of your fluff in her nummie place and *rip* 'Nnnnnph! *Haff haff.*'

'Am yu otay?' She asks.

'Du id gain.' You prepare yourself for the *rip* 'EEEEH!'

'Du Speciaw fwend wan stahp?'

You shake your head. '*Haff haff* Nee fwuff tu make nestie wawm. Du id gain, Smawty can-'

'Smawty?'

You look up; what does the Bestest toughie want? And who's with him?

'Can Smawty tawkies nao?' He asks.

'Yes,' you stand up. 'Wat am dah mattah?'

'Sum nummie findahs find dis fwuffy in dah fowest.' He cocks his head at the red mare. 'Day wan knu if she can stay.'

From the Bestest toughie's wordies, you can tell he wishes the ones who found this fluffy told her to get lost, and so do you! The last thing you want when you and your Special friend have to pull out each other's fluff is... No, no. Don't get mad when you don't have to, this isn't a big problem. '*Sigh* Otay.' You walk over to the new fluffy. 'Who am yu?'

'F-fwuffy name am Wuby,' she says. 'Wuby wun way fwom meanie housie.'

'How meanie was-' you start, but the Bestest toughie talks over you.

'Onwy wittwe meanie housie, Smawty.'

Lovely. 'Wai yu wun way?'

'Cause Mummah Mummah was biggest meanie!' Ruby says. 'She make Wuby pway with meanie dummeH Bwuddas an Sissie, an *sniff* an she make Mummah go way when she-'

'How wong yu wive in fowest fow?'

'Huh?'

'How wong yu been in fowest dummeH?'

Ruby flinches but doesn't yell back when you call her a dummy. Good sign, means she knows who's Smarty. 'Ruby nu knu, bud was wong time.' It certainly looks like it was; she's got lots of dirt and twigs in her fluff, and you see a few owwies here and there. Still, it's not like a fluffy can't do that to themselves in one brighttime.

'Wat Wuby knu how tu du?' You ask.

'Wat fwuffy-'

'He am Smawty!' The Bestest toughie tells her. 'Yu caww him Smawty!'

'Eee, Wuby sowwies! Pwease nu huwti-'

'Jus teww Smawty wat yu knu how tu du! Yu knu how find nummies?'

'Nu.'

'Wat boud diggin?'

'Wuby knu how du dat,' she says. Wuby du diggies in meanie Mummah Mummah's yawd aww dah time.'

Well, it's something. 'Wuby can fowwow wuwes?'

'Mummah Mummah make Wuby fowwow wotsa dummech wuw-'

'Not wat Smawty say dummech!' You try again. 'Can yu du wat Smawty say tu du?' When she doesn't answer, 'If yu nu can du dat, yu nu can be in Smawty's hewd!'

'Wuby can fowwow wuwes!' She says, really fast. 'Wuby can du wat Smawty say! Pwease nu make Wuby go back tu-'

'Shud up.' You look at the Bestest toughie. 'Keep hew hewe, Smawty nee use tinkie pwace.' You find a bushie away from the rest of the herd. You're not very impressed with this Ruby; she seems like the average dummy house fluffy, the kind you normally tell to get lost as soon as they turn up. But this isn't a normal time.

The trees and the darktime tell you the cold times are close, very close; as important as nummies are, there needs to be enough fluffies too. You can have all the nummies in the world, but it doesn't matter if you can't make a fluff pile to stay warm. Plus, you kicked out the orange baby's family, which means there are two and three less fluffies around to help; everyone has to work harder because of it. Ruby might not be a good fluffy, but she doesn't look like a complete dummy. As long as she can do what she's told, she'll be of some use. If not, you can always kick her out. Besides, Kerry was a housie fluffy too, and she's turned out ok. Maybe Ruby will be the same.

'Smawty knu wat du nao,' you say when you get back. You look at Ruby. 'Smawty say yu can be in hewd, bud onwy if yu du wat Smawty say when Smawty say id! If yu nu du dat, yu go back tu fowest!'

'Yes Smawty, Wuby can du dat! Nu wan go back in fowest!'

'Gud.' Now all she needs is someone to get her settled. Right at that moment you see another mare walk close by, the grey one who's in charge of the safe baby palce. 'Hey!' You call out, and she gallops over.

'Yes, nice Smawty?'

'Dis am nyu fwuffy,' you tell her. 'Hew name am Wuby. Find hew tings tu du in safe pwace an teach hew hewd wuwes.'

'Yes, nice Smawty.' The mare grey turns to Ruby. 'Cum on nyu fwend.' The two of them walk off; you'll keep an eye on Ruby and see if she's worth the trouble. For now though,

'Otay Speciaw fwend,' you lie down, 'Smawty am weady gain.'

####

'Huuuhuhuu speciaw wumps stiww hav owwies.'

'Id am otay Wunnie, owwies go way soon.' You give Runny a few hugs; you'd like to give him bigger ones, but you need to pick him up for that. You tried earlier, and gave his special lumps more hurties by mistake! After that, you left him in the nestie.

'Mummah?' Runny asks.

'Yes?'

'Can Wunnie hav nummies? Nu wan hav tummeh huwties an speciaw wump huwties.'

You're not sure; you've already had first brighttime nummies, and you don't know if it's time for next brighttime nummies yet. But, it wouldn't hurt to check. 'Mummah go find oud, Wunnie' You tell him. 'Fwowah, take cawe of Bwudda tiww Mummah am back. Nu weave nestie!'

'Yes Mummah, Fwowah wook aftah Bwudda!' She climbs into the nestie with him, and you walk to one of the nummie dens.

'Wat yu wan?' One of the toughies asks when you get there.

'Kewwy wan knu if can get nummies fow nex bwighttime nummies nao. Babbeh hav tummeh huwties.'

'Sowwies,' the toughie says, 'Nu am time yet.'

'*Sigh* Otay. Tank yu nice Tuffy.' You head back to the nestie. Could you go into the forest and find some nummies by yourself? No, that wouldn't be a good idea; you might get lost. Runny will have to wait. You wish you could do more for him, but you guess that's how things are sometimes.

'Kewwy!'

You turn and see the grey mare who runs the safe baby place, and a fluffy you don't recognise. 'Hewwo fwend! Who am dis fwuffy?'

'Dis fwuffy name am Wuby; she am nyu in hewd.'

Ruby? Have you heard that name before? Your thinkie place says you have, but it doesn't tell you where or when. Hmm, maybe you're playing sillies with yourself. 'Hewwo Wuby, Fwuffy name am Kewwy.'

'Hewwo nyu fwend.' She walks up and hugs you. 'Kewwy wook wike nice fwuffy.'

'Kewwy am nice Fwuffy.' Your friend says. 'She am housie fwuffy wike yu.'

'Weawy? Yu wun way fwom meanie housie tuu?!' Ruby asks you.

'Uh-huh.'

'Yu have meanie Mummah Mummah dat giv yu wotsa dumme wuwes an nu wet yu hav babbehs tuu?!'

'Uhh, yes?' You understood a little of what she said. At least, you think you did...

'Wuby,' your friend says, 'nu tawkies so much; Kewwy busy wookin aftah hew babbeh.'

'*Gasp* Yu hav babbehs? Can Wuby see?'

'Nu,' you say. 'Wunnie babbeh hav bad huwties; Kewwy an oda babbehs an tuu busy.'

'Pwease! Wuby wan see-'

'Nu. Maybe oda time.'

'Cum on Wuby,' your friend pushes her away. 'Fwuffy nee show yu wots mowe tings. Bai Kewwy.'

'Bai fwend.' Hmm, you have an odd feeling about this new fluffy.

####

'-an dis am nummie den.' The mare tells you. 'Dah nummie findahs take nummies hewe, an yu can hav nummies fow bwighttime nummies, nex bwighttime nummies an...'

You're not using your hear places very hard; part of it's how sleepy you are, but also because everything the mare tells you is so boring.

'Nu can take mowe nummies dan yu nee, ow... Wai Wuby nu wisten?'

'Huh? Wuby wisten!'

The mare looks at you. 'When can Wuby get nummies fwom den?'

'Uhhh... Eeee!' She bopped you on the nose! 'Wai huwt Wuby?'

'Cause yu nu wisten!!' The mare yells. 'Yu nee wisten an knu how hewd du tings, ow yu make Smawty maddies!'

'W-wat happen if-'

'He make yu weave hewd. Yu wan dat?'

'Nu!!!' The few brighttimes you spent in the forest were the scariest and worstest-

'Den wisten. Dis way nao; Fwuffy show yu whewe go poopies an pee pees.'

When you found this herd, you were the happiest you'd been in such a long time! Making it through the forest was the worstest, hardest thing ever; it was scary, dark, and there were no nummies! Your tummy hurties got so bad, you'd have eaten two and three bowls of kibble! But, with the mare teaching you all this stuff you need to know...

Well, it's still better than Mummah Mummah's dummy housie with her dummy rules, and your dummy brothers and sisse. It wasn't so bad when you were little babies; Mummah was still around, and you had so much fun! Her huggies, milkies and songs made you so happy and warm, and it was even better because you were one of Mummah's bestest babies; no, you were *the* bestest. Sure, Mummah never said so, but that was to keep Mummah Mummah happy. After all, how could Trinket be as good as you, or even Snow and Jewel, when his fluff was such a dummy colour? Dummy poopie Trinket; it was all his fault.

Sniff sniff Ewwww, sumtin nu smeww-'

'Dat am poopie pwace,' Can this mare let you finish for once? She leads you to a spot away from everywhere else. Bits of the ground look like they've been dug up and filled again, but there are also some open holes with-

'Ewwww!'

'Onwy du poopies in dose pwaces!' She points at one of the holes.

'Wat happen if Wuby du poopies in safe pwace?' You ask.

'Fwuffy tink Smawty made dah wast fwuffy who did dat eat his poopies.'

The smell doesn't seem so bad now.

'Wuby undewstan?'

'Yes,' you tell her, 'Wuby undewstan.'

'Gud,' she sounds happy for once. 'Dis way, fwuffy show yu whewe yu can wive.' The mare leads you away from the poopie place to... This is just a hole in the ground! 'Fowwow Fwuffy,' she crawls into it. You don't want to follow her, it looks scary down-

'Cum on!'

You scramble into the hole, which isn't as cramped as you thought it would be. Inside it's dark, but your see places get used to it quite fast. You're in a big space under ground with a lot of things made out of grassies, you think. Are these their beddies? They don't look very nice. There are a few other mares in here too; most of them are doing stuff to the beddie things.

'Dis am pwace fow mawes who nu hav speciaaw fwend.' The fluffy says. 'Nu hav wive hewe if nu wan, bud it nu am nice tu be in den aww awone.'

Yeah, you've had enough of being alone in the darktime. Now, 'Which beddie am Wuby's?'

'Huh?'

'Which beddie am Wuby's?'

'Beddie?' The mare gets a funny look on his face. 'Oh, Wuby mean nestie!'

'Yes!' You nod. 'Which am-'

'Wuby nee make own nestie.'

What? 'Make own nestie? Bud Wuby nu knu-'

'Yu can ask oda fwuffies hewe tu hewp.' She says.

'B-bud...' You try, but the mare walks past you and back up the tunnel! 'Whewe Fwuffy-'

'Nee hewp Speciaaw fwend make nestie bettah!' She says. 'Oda fwuffies hewp yu nao!'

'Nu wait!' You call, but she doesn't come back.

'Nu wowwie nyu fwend,' one of the mares comes over. 'Fwuffies hewp yu make nestie.'

####

'Huuuhuuuu speciaw wump hwties...'

Poor Runny. It makes you so sad to see him like this, but you don't know what else to do; you've tried everything you can think of! It looks like he'll have to wait until the hurties go away by themselves.

'Id am otay Wunnie fwend,' the Smarty's green baby says. 'Daddeh make does meanies go way fowewa!' He was here when you came back from the nummie den. He said he wanted to see how Runny was, *buuut*, you're pretty sure he came here to see Flower; they were giving each other huggies when you got back after all. It doesn't worry you; he seems like a nice baby, and Flower really likes him. He better not try anything bad, though.

'Daddeh an Big Wed am back!' The two of them walk inside and give you huggies. 'Am Wunnie otay?' Your Special friend asks.

'Nuu,' Runny says from the nestie. 'Speciaw wumps stiww hav owwies, huuu.'

'Dewe dewe Wunnie,' Your Special friend goes over and gives Runny some huggies. 'Daddeh knu; had speciaw wump hwties tuu. Day am wowstest hwties ewa.'

'Nu am,' you say. 'Biggest poopies am wowstest hwties!'

'Speciaw fwend newa hav speciaw wump hwties, so nu knu!'

'Speciaw fwend nu hav-'

'Huuu pwease nu be maddies!' Runny yells. 'Nu wan *sniff.*'

That was stupid. 'Mummah sowwies Wunnie.' You and your Special friend give him huggies together, which cheers him up a little.

'Cum on Speciaw fwend.' Your Special friend says. 'Wets go get nummies. Am time nao.'

You were there a little while ago, but alright. '*Sigh* Otay. Be gud babbehs.' On the way to the nummie den, your Special friend asks if you've met the new fluffy.

'Uh-huh.'

'Speciaw fwend tink she am gud fwuffy?'

'Kewwy tink so,' you tell him, 'bud she wan see babbehs when Kewwy say nu.'

'Hmm. Tink she wun way cause hew Mummah ow Daddeh nu wet hew hav any.'

Makes sense; that's why you're here after all. 'Bud, she stiww nu can hav babbehs tiww coud times am ovah. Dat Wat Smawty say.'

'Yes.' Your Special friend gets a funny look on his face. 'Fwuffy, hope she nu twy hav any...' His wordies get all quiet, then hide.

'Speciaw fwend, am yu otay?'

He nods. 'Uh-huh.' Then, 'Nu mean make Speciaw fwend maddies boud owwies...'

You step close and nuzzle him a little. 'Dat am otay. Jus nu du id gain.'

####

You're so sleepy.

Even with the other mares help, it was so hard to build this dummy nestie! It's not as bad as it looked at first but it's still scratchy, and nothing like your nice blankie pile. That's probably the only thing from Mummah Mummah's housie you miss. Still, you've got too many sleepies to care; you get into the nestie and curl up.

'Wat Wuby doin? Nu am sweepies time nao!' One of the mares says.

'Huuu Wuby am tuu sweepies...' You tell her. 'Was wunnin in fowest fow so wong, an nu hav nummies an hav tu weawn tuu many tings an-'

'Otay!' The mares yells. 'Yu get yuw own nummies.'

She and the others leave the den. When they're all gone, you get comfortable in your new nestie; you guess it'll have to do. Your see places close, and not long after you fall asleep. It's been a rough few brighttimes, but it'll be worth it. You even dream about the reason you're here.

#

'Absolutely not.' Mummah Mummah looks at you and Jewel. 'Neither of you are having babies; ever.'

'Pwease Mummah Mummah!' You let Jewel talk; Mummah Mummah likes her more than you. 'Jewaw an Wuby sissie am gud fwuffies! Can be gud mummahs tuu!!'

'You're a good fluffy, Jewel. But your sister,' Mummah Mummah looks at you, 'is far from it.'

'Pwease Mummah Mummah, Jewaw an Wuby du anyting!'

'Jewel, you don't have to do anything for me to let you have babies.'

'*Gasp* Weawy?!'

'Yes. Because there will be no more babbies in this house, and that is final! I made that mistake with your mother, and I'm not doing it again.'

You get hot, prickly maddies when she talks about Mummah; you want to give her sorries hoofies for it, but you'll get sent to the sorry box. Again.

'Go on, back to the living room you two,' Mummah Mummah's spins her sitting thing back around. 'We're done here.'

You and Jewel walk out of Mummah Mummah's workie place and go back to the living room. Snow and Trinket are there, playing their dummy blockie game; Snow builds a blockie tower, and then Trinket knocks it down with his one front leggie. Maddies flow from your thinkie place to your tail, like every time you see him. Dummy Trinket, if only Mummah Mummah had sent him away instead of Mummah. Mummah...

‘*Sniff*’

You miss her so much. Mummah Mummah still has pictures of her around, but it gets harder every brighttime to remember what she smelled like, and how her huggies and fluff felt! It gives you the worst heart hurties; if only you knew where Mummah Mummah took her! You could rescue her, or find a way to make Mummah Mummah bring her back or-

‘Wuby fwend?’

Huh? That didn't sound like...

#

‘W-wah?’ You open and close your see places a few times and look around. It seems darker than it should be.

‘Wuby?’

Oh, it's one of the mares; one of your new friends, you guess. ‘Yes?’

‘Fwuffy hav dawktime nummies fow yu.’

Oh, that's nice of... wait. ‘Dawktime?’

‘Uh-huh. Wuby was sweepies fow wong time.’

You look around; all the nesties have a fluffy or two in them, and they're all eating something. You must have been really sleepy for... Hey, they didn't tell you could share a nestie!!

‘Hewe,’ the mare pulls a branch with some berries off her back and puts them in front of you.

‘Tank yu.’ You pull the branch into your nestie and eat the berries off it. Around you, the other mares talk about all sorts of stuff,

‘How wong tiww cowl times?’

‘Wish cud find speciaw fwend befowe cowl times...’

‘When cowl times am ovah, Fwuffy wan Big Wed be speciaw fwend.’

‘Eww, he am babbeh!’

‘He nu be babbeh when cowl times am ovah!’

There's way too much for you to listen in, but it's boring anyway. You concentrate on your nummies, but after a while, you hear a mare say your name.

‘Wat?’

'Du Wuby wan teww stowie?' She asks

'Boud wat?'

'Boud wai Wuby wun way,' she says. 'Oda fwuffies say yu wun way fwom meanie housie.'

'Dat am wight! Was biggest meanie housie! Wuby have meanie Mummah Mummah; she make Mummah go way.' You feel sad water in your see places. 'Mummah onwy twy sabe Wuby fwom meanie bwudda.' So what if Trinket lost his leggie? He hit you first!

'Dat am saddies,' one of the mares says.

'Uh-huh. Mummah Mummah hav wotsa dummeh wuwes tuu, an awways giv Wuby sowwie box an sowwie stick!' One of the mares shivers a little, and you hear a few cries from somewhere. 'So, Wuby wun way fwom meanie housie!'

'How Wuby du dat?'

#

'Alright guys; you can play with the other fluffies, but you have to be nice to them and stay in the yard. Do you understand?'

'Yes, Mummah Mummah.'

'Snow be gud, Mummah Mummah.'

'Ruby? Ruby, are you listening?'

'Yes...'

'Yes what?'

'Yes, Wuby be gud fwuffy!'

'Good.' Mummah Mummah opens her vroomy monster's door, and lets you all jump out onto the ground. Well, when you say... 'Here you go, Trinket.' Mummah Mummah lifts him out of the vroomy monster and puts him on the ground.

'Tank yu Mummah Mummah.' He says. With him out, you follow Mummah Mummah to her friend's housie; Trinket does his dummy walk, but you force yourself not to laugh. Mummah Mummah will put you in a sorry box if you do. She opens a small swingy wall and lets you into her friend's yard, where there's a bunch of fluffies already. That's good; you don't have to spend the whole time with your brothers and sissie.

Sure, you like Snow and Jewel a little bit at least, but they both love Trinket for some reason. A couple of fluffies you've met before invite you to a game of huggie tag; it's fun at first, but then Trinket and Snow come over to play. You leave, cause everyone has to go slower for Trinket. You look at the flowers, then go over to some mares playing with toy babbies. 'Du Wuby wan pway wif babbeks?' One of the them asks. What kind of question is that? Are they really dumb enough to think those toys are real? Or better than the real thing? Urg, dummies!

The brighttime is pretty bad overall; you're bored and sick of all these dummies. In fact, you've been sick of them for a while; sick of your dummy brother Trinket, your other dummy brother Snow and your dummy sissie Jewel. But, the dummy you're the most sick of is Mummah Mummah and her rules! You can't stand it anymore! If only you could-

'Huh?'

Something's wrong with the bushie here; there's like a... is, is this a hole? You poke your head through; the branches and leafies scratch you, but you push further, and you see-

gasp

The forest! You've heard stories about it at the park and day care; it's where fluffies can live without Mummahs and Daddehs or dummy rules, do all the stuff dummy Mummahs and Daddehs say not to, and have all the babies they want!!! Your heart goes really fast; you could push through the bushies and run for the forest, then you'd be free! No more Mummah Mummah! No more dummy rules! No more dummy-

'Wat am Wuby doin?'

Why? Why him?! You pull your head out of the bushie and stare at Trinket with the maddest look you can manage! 'Shud up dummehe poogie Twinket!' You hiss. 'Wuby du wat wan tu!'

He looks at you for a moment. 'Mummah Mummah say id time fow go home.'

'Nu!'

'Huh?'

'Yu heaw Wuby dummehe!' You yell. 'Wuby nu gun go home!'

'Den whewe yu goin?'

'Wuby am, am gun wun way tu fowest!!!' You didn't plan to say that, but once it's out this strange hot, tingly feel goes all over you; yes, you'll run away! Away from all of them! 'Am gun wun way fwom dummehe Mummah Mummah an dummehe wuwes, an dummehe poogie Twinket!!' You look him right in the see places. 'Am gun wun way fwom yu dummehe!'

Trinket looks at you for a while; he must feel like the biggest dummy! He knows you're about to go and live the bestest life ever, cause you're so much smarter than-

'Otay.'

W-what? He, he should be more mad than-

'Dat soun gud; Sissie am meanie, wike Mummah was.'

Did... How dare he-

'Twinket nu wub Sissie; yu an Mummah newa wub Twinket. Twinket happies Mummah go way, an be mowe happies if Sissie go way tuu.'

'Time to go guys.'

'Sissie shud go nao, befowe Mummah Mummah see. Bai.' Trinket turns and, walks away. He, he was supposed to get angry! That was horrible! You didn't even get to tell him how much smarter you are, or break his other leggies for talking about Mummah like-

'Ruby, where'd you go? Come on, it's home time!'

Oh, never mind! You push through the hole and make a run for the forest; the further you get the faster you run, and the bigger the smile on your face gets!!!

#

'An dat am how Wuby wun way fwom meanie housie!' You leave out the bits where you had bad tummy hurties and scardies; it would make the story less fun.

'Wow!' One of the mares yells.

'Dat am fun stowie!!' A mare who looks a little younger than you says. 'Wan heaw id gain!'

A warm, happy feel washed over you; this is great!

'Am Wuby happies yu nu am in meanie housie?' Someone asks.

'Uh-huh!' You nod really fast. 'Wuby hav biggest happies! Nu hav fowwow dummeh wuwes, ow wive wif dummeh bwuddas an sissie nu mowe! An nao Wuby can have babbehs! Nu can wait!!' The den goes quiet; why are they-

'Wuby nee wait tiww cowl times go way.' One of the mares says.

'Huh? Wat dat mean?'

'Dah Smawty say hewd nu can hav mowe babbehs tiww dah cowl times go way.'

What? What?! 'Bud id nu am cowl nao!!'

'Nu, bud cowl times am cummin. Day gun be hewe soon!' Another mare says. 'Dawktimes am gettin wongah, an nummies am goin way!'

'Fwuffy am wight,' another mare says. 'Nu can hav babbehs nao. Dat am Smawty's wuwe.'

Rule? Rule?! You came here to get away from those!! 'Wai?!' You yell. 'Wai Smawty hav dummeh wuwes tuu!?' The den goes very quiet, and every mare looks like they've seen a monster.

'Nu say dat!' one of them whispers. 'Wuby nu wan make Smawty maddies,' you see sad water in her see places. 'He am biggest meanie when he maddies.'

Maybe, but right now you don't care; you're so mad there are dummy rules here too, and you don't know why! With all these nummies and all this space, you should be able to have as many babbies as you can! '*Pfft* Wuby nu cawe!' You don't notice one of the older mares get up from her nesties. 'Does wuwes am dummeh wuwes! Nu am meanie Mummah Mummah hewe so-' You feel the hoofie on top of your head, and a short time later it's pressed against the ground. 'Eeee!'

'Dummeh Wuby wisten tu Fwuffy!' The mare hisses at you. 'When cowl times am ovah, yu can hav babbehs. Bud if yu nu du wat Smawty teww yu,' she leans closer, 'yu nu get tu end of cowl times. Dummeh undewstan?'

You nod really fast, and she lets you up. Afterwards, you don't talk much, and neither do the other mares. It gets darker, and everyone settles down in their nesties. You stay awake after all of them are asleep, though. Part of the reason is the scardies the older mare gave you, but it's mostly the dummy rule. Wait until the cold times are over, easy for them to say!

But, maybe it doesn't have to be that way.

You were smart enough to get away from Mummah Mummah and her dummy rules. If you use your thinkie place really hard, you can find a way around the Smarty's rules too!

#####

'Du Wunnie feww bettah? Tink can wawkies gain?'

Runny takes a couple of deep breaths, scrunches his face a little, and 'Hnnn,' stands up. Next, he tries to walk off the nestie; he takes a few steps, but stumbles. You go to help, but he shakes his head. '*Haff, haff* Wunnie am otay, Daddeh.' He takes some more steps around the den; you can tell it gives him hurties, but his special lumps must feel better if he can walk at all. Those meanies probably didn't have enough time to give them really bad hurties. 'Wunnie goin tu wawa nao.' He goes to leave the den, but you stop him.

'Dat am tuu wong way Wunnie,' you say. 'Take Big Wed tuu.'

'Bud Daddeh-'

'Take Big Wed tuu.' You say again, then look at Big Red. He gets up and walks over to Runny.

'Cum on bwudda,' the two of them walk to the way out. When they get closer, you hear Big Red say 'Big Wed onwy hewp Wunnie wittwe bit.' He probably thinks you couldn't hear him, but you don't do anything. You go over to Kerry and Flower, who are giving each other lickie cleanies.

'Speciaw fwend,'

Kerry looks up. 'Yes?'

'Du speciaw fwend wan go find nummies gain?'

She uses her thinkie place for a while. 'Kewwy wan hewp Speciaw fwend, bud,' she looks at Flower, 'Nu wan weave Fwowah awone.' After what happened to Runny, that doesn't surprise you.

'Nu be scawdies Mummah, Fwowah can go hewp gween fwend!'

Kerry looks at you; it's your turn to use your thinkie place. 'Daddeh tink dat am otay Fwowah.' It should be fine; plus, Big Red will be here all brighttime too. Flower looks at Kerry.

'*Sigh* Otay,' She gives Flower some big huggies. 'Pwease be caweful.'

'Nu wowwie Mummah!' Flower says, then runs out of the den.

'Wet's go,' Kerry gets up and follows you to the forest, but before you get there, a toughie comes over and stops you.

'Yu knu whewe dat nyu fwuffy am? Dah Smawty wan tawkies tu hew.'

Before either of you can say anything, another fluffy with some long grassies on her back says 'She hewpin make nesties wawm.'

'Tank yu.' The toughie walks off, probably to find the Smarty.

'Wat am dat fow?' Kerry asks.

'Nu knu.' And you don't *want* to know. 'Wets go.'

#####

'Hewe, wook!' The mare who brought you darktime nummies goes up to a forever sleepies tree, and points at some funny stringy stuff. 'Dis am twee fwuff; id hewp make nesties wawm an soft.' She pulls it off the tree and puts it on her back. 'Dis way nao.' She leads you away from the tree to a patch of long grassies, but most of it's gone. 'Hmm, maybe dewe mowe ovah dis way!' The mare points with her hoofie. 'Fwuffies go-'

'Nyu Fwuffy!'

You turn and see the Smarty, the big scary fluffy with the missing see place, and another mean fluffy. You try to ask them what they want, but before you can, the Smarty comes up really close. 'Yu cum wif Smawty, nao.'

Part of you wants to run, but the other two fluffies step to both sides. You look at the mare, but she's already left. With no way out of this, '*Gulp* O-otay...' The Smarty leads you a little way into the forest. The two toughies walk on both sides and a little bit behind you. The Smarty leads you behind bushies and turns around; he doesn't say anything. You wonder if you should talk first, but you get the feeling-

'Yu tink Smawty am dummeh?' His voice isn't loud, but it's one of the scariest things you've ever heard. It's so bad you can't answer, which makes things worse. He steps closer. 'Du yu tink Smawty am dummeh? Smawty nu ask gain.'

'*Gulp* N-nu' you manage. 'W-wuby nu tink-'

'Smawty knu wat yu say in mawe den,' he says. 'Yu tink day nu teww Smawty?' He walks around you really slow. It feels like you're about to make scardie pee pees. 'Dis am Smawty's hewd,' he says. 'Fwuffies in Smawty's hewd fowwow Smawty's wuwes. Wuby undewstan?'

You nod. 'Wuby undewstan! Wuby am sowwies fow sayin dat Smawty am dummeh! Was tuu sweepies and maddies an-'

'Yu fowwow wuwes,' he cuts you off. 'Yu nu do dat,' he looks at you with one of the scariest looks you've ever seen, 'Smawty an tuffies make yu wish yu newa wun way.' The Smarty walks off with his toughies. You stay where you are for a little while.

'*Sob* uuuhuhuuu *Sob*!' Your whole body shakes, and you make lots of sad water. Your leggings go all shaky and dummy, it feels like you're about to fall!

'Wuby?' You turn your head; it's the mare you were with. 'Am Wuby otay?'

'*Sob* Nuuhuhuuu' She runs over and gives you big huggies. You're not mad at her for leaving; these are the worst scardies you've ever felt! How can one fluffy be scarier than the forest in the darktime? How?! How does that big, big meanie do it?! That dummy, dummy meanie!! '*Sniff*,' No, you won't let him do this to you; you did not run away to get bossed around by more dummy meanies!!

'Du Wuby wan go back to nestie?'

Even though you'd like to, it would look like the Smarty got too you. You shake you head. 'Wuby *sob* can stiww hewp *sniff*.' That dummy, meanie Smarty thinks he's beaten you, but you'll show him.

Somehow, you'll find a way to get your babbies.

#####

'Ruby? Ruby where did you go?' Sally searched the yard with her friends. 'You're sure you didn't see her?'

'No Sal,' he friend Dwight said. 'I wasn't watching.'

'Ruby!' Sally called again. She and the others had searched the yard and the surrounds over and over, but there was no sign of the young mare. Sally walked to Ruby's sibblings, who waited patiently by the gate.

'What am wong Mummah Mummah?' Snow asked. 'Whewe am Wuby sissie?'

'Guys, have any of you seen Ruby? Did you see where she was playing?'

'Nu' Snow said.

'Wai Mummah Mummah nu knu whewe Wuby sissie am?' Jewel had a soft spot for sister, despite Ruby being, well...

'I'm sorry Jewel, I was busy with my friends.' Sally said. 'Now listen, I need you all to think really hard; did any of you see where Ruby was last?' The fluffies were silent. 'Trinket?' Sally turned to the three-legged gelding. 'Did you see where she was?'

Trinket looked at Sally for a moment. 'Nu Mummah Mummah,' he said in a defeated tone, 'Trinket nu see whewe Wuby was.'

Sally sighed and considered her options; the sun was low in the sky, so it was too late to start a proper search, especially if Ruby had made a break for the forest. Given how close the tree line was, and Ruby's behaviour in general, it was very likely. Sally thought about it; if it were one of the three in front of her, Sally would have been out there in a heartbeat. But, since it was Ruby... '*Sigh*' Sally stood. 'Come on, we have to go home.'

'Bud We nu knu whewe Wuby sissie am!' Jewel cried.

'I know Jewel, I know. But it's too close to darktime to look for her.' Sally said. 'I promise I'll come back out here and look for her.' Her promise, empty as it was, placated Jewel and her siblings. 'Come on, let's go.' Sally led the three fluffies to the car and helped them get in.

On the drive home, while his brother and sister mourned the loss of Ruby, Trinket gazed out the window at the world while it slipped past. All through the journey home, the young fluffy had a small grin on his face.

Chapter Fifteenth

It's the soon darktime, and you're having darktime nummies with your family. But, instead of the den, you're outside with some other fluffies. You started doing it a few brighttimes ago, and so far it's been great. The sky ball makes lots of pretty colours before it goes to sleep, and you like to talk to the other fluffies in the herd; they've got fun stories, but they also have good advice for the cold times.

'If dewe wotsa cowl fwuff cumin, get wotsa nummies fwom dah nummie piwes.' One of your friends from the safe baby den tells you.

'Wai?'

'Nu wan weave den when dewe am wotsa cowl fwuff oudside,' she says. 'Id make yu tuu cowlies, an yu can get stuckies ow wost!' She gets a sad look on his face. 'Bwudda got stuckies in cowl fwuff when was babbeh. He nu am hewe nu mowe.'

'Dat am saddies. Du fwend wan hu-'

Trees rustle

The fluff on your back stands on end; you know what makes that noise!

'bweezie munstah!' Comes the scream from somewhere.

'Hewd go back tu dens! Hide fwom bweezie munstah!' He doesn't need to tell you twice. You get up to find your family; luckily, your Special friend already has. Together, you run back to the den and get there as the breezie monster arrives. In the nestie, you huddle together and hide.

'Nu wike bweezie munstah!!!' Flower hugs you really hard like she's scared the breezie monster will take her away. For all you know it might! 'Tuu woud huhuhuhuuu!! Nu wike!!!'

'Id am otay Fwowah!' You say over the noise and your scardies. 'Mummah hewe! Mummah nu wet-'

Crackboom

'Screee!!' Flower hugs you even harder!

'Nu be scawdies sissie!' Big Red shifts around to hug Flower too. 'Big Wed nu wet meanie bweezie munstah get yu!' Even with the monster outside, it makes you happy to have a baby like Big Red, who isn't scared of any-

Crackboom

'Uuhuhuhuuuu!!'

'How wong tiww Munstah go way Speciaw fwend?'

'Fwuffy nu knu,' he says. 'Cud be hewe fow wong time.'

'Huuuuuhuhuhuu!!!'

'Wai bweezie munstah twy huwt fwuffies?' Runny asks. 'Wai id be big meanie?'

'Nu knu Wunnie,' your Special friend says. 'Bud mowe cum in dah cowd times; Fwuffy nu knu wai.'

'HUUHUUUUU!!'

Flower really didn't like that; she's scared enough of the cold times already. 'Id am otay Fwowah, Mummah nu wet anyting bad happen! Mummah pwomise!' Flower cuddles closer to you, and the rest of your family cuddles close around both of you.

####

'Bud Daddeh, Fwuffy wan hewp Fwow-'

'Nu.'

'Bud,'

'Nu! Bad babbeh!' You tell him. 'Yu stay wif famiwy an hide fwom bweezie munstah.'

'Fwuffy nu am scawdies of bweezie munstah!' He yells. 'Wan go keep Fwowah fwend safe fwom eeeee!' He holds his hoofies over his smelly place and falls on his tummy. Well, if he didn't want to get bopped, he shouldn't have yelled.

'Dummeh babbeh wisten tu Daddeh nao!' You yell. 'Yuw fwend hav famiwy tu keep hew safe fwom bweezie munstah! Day be otay if day stay in den!'

'Bud wat if day nu stay in nestie?!' Your green baby says.

'Day nu du dat, cause day nu am Dummehs.'

'Bud-'

'Bweezie munstahs nu can find Fwuffies in den,' you tell him. 'Bud if babbeh weave nestie, bweezie munstah make yu get wost. Den Mummah an Daddeh twy find yu an get wost tuu! Den aww dah hewd get wost!!' You lean close. 'Babbeh undewstan?'

He stares at you with a mad look on his face, but it turns into a sad one. '*Sniff* Yes Daddeh. Jus wan Fwowah be safe!'

'Daddeh knu babbeh.' You give him some huggies. 'Nu be scawdies, Fwowah be otay. Cum on babbeh, back tu nestie.'

'Huu, otay Daddeh.'

You lead your green baby back to the fluff pile. While you lie there and wait for the breezie monster to leave, you think about how much he likes Flower. No doubt he wants her to be his special friend, and that's fine with

you. You don't know more about Flower than you need to, but she'll be a good fluffy for the herd. And, a good special friend for your green baby. With how big they are now, they should be big enough for all that when the cold times are over.

That's something to look forward too when the cold times get to their coldest.

####

'Wat am dat?! Wat am dat huhuhuuuu!!!'

Your hoofies are over your see places, and you're hunkered as deep in your nestie as you can get! Whatever's out there, it's scarier than anything you've come across before!!

'Id am bweezie munstah!' A mare yells, but she's more mad than scared. 'Fwuffy say id was bweezie munstah!'

Well it's not your fault you didn't hear her! The monster was too-

sssssCrack-booom!!

'SCREEEE!!!' You almost do scardie pee-pees and poopies in your nestie. 'WAI SCAWY FWUFFIES NU MAKE MUNSTAH GO WAY?!!' What good are they if they don't get rid of monsters?! Are they only around to make other fluffies-

'Tuffies nu can fight bweezie munstah dummeh!' The same mare yells. 'Hav tu hide fwom bweezie munstah!'

'Nu be scawdies Wuby fwend,' your friend comes over and cuddles up next to you. 'Fwuffy stay in nestie wif Wuby; nu wet bweezie munstah get yu!' You hug her as hard as you can. It helps, but you're so scared the breezie monster will get in and take you away! Then it would do who knows what to you, and you'd lose the chance to have babbies!!

####

The breezie monster roars and howls around the safe-place long after the sky ball goes away. The dark makes it worse, especially for Flower; you've never heard her cry so much before! It seems like the breezie monster will be around all darktime, but after a while, it gets quieter and quieter until you can't hear it anymore.

A little bit after the breezie monster goes away, you hear a fluffy call into the den. 'Am fwuffies otay in dewe?'

'Fwuffies am otay,' you tell him. 'Nu hav any huwties.'

'Gud.' You hear him leave. It was nice of him to check on you, even if he didn't stay long.

'*Sniff* Am, am bweezie munstah gone Mummah?'

'Yes Fwowah,' you say, 'Twy an go sweepies nao.'

'Otay Mummah.' Flower shifts around to get comfortable. A little bit later, you hear her sleeping. Soon enough, all of you are.

#

It's a mess out here!

The breezie monster must have been angry; it couldn't find any of you, so it messed up the safe place. There are big and small branches everywhere, and some bushies have really bad hurties. The worst thing the breezie monster's done is wreck the safe baby place; there's a big branch in the bushies, which have bad hurties. It's good the herd doesn't have any small babbies, and won't for a long time. It'll take a lot of brighttimes to fix the safe baby place.

'Smawty say take bwanchies way fwom safe pwace!'

You and your family get to work; Big Red, Runny and Flower drag the smaller branches, while you and your Special friend work together to drag a bigger branch from the safe place back into the forest. It was enough to make you sleepies again; you're not used to this kind of work.

'Speciaw fwend get wittwe bwanchies nao,' your Special friend says. 'Fwuffy hewp oda fwuffies take big bwanchies way.' He walks off, and you go get the small branches like said. It's hard work, but everyone works together, and it doesn't take long to clean up the safe place. The safe baby place is still a mess, but the herd can worry about it later.

#####

When the safe place was clean again, all you wanted to do was sleep, but that wasn't going to happen.

Once the safe place was clean, the meanie Smarty said everyone had to do their jobs like normal. What surprised you is no-one complained! You don't understand why, but it can't be because the herd actually likes him. Sure, you haven't been here very long, but you haven't seen the Smarty do anything that would make a fluffy like him. The herd probably listens to him because he has all these mean toughies. Yeah, that's it.

Anyway, the last thing you need is the Smarty's attention. So for now, you'll do what he says. You find your friend, and follow her into the forest to find more warm stuff. It's safe to say she's your best friend here; well, your only friend. The other mares don't hate you, but they never help you with anything unless you ask, and they certainly didn't keep you safe from the breezie monster. It's ok though because you don't know which of them told on you to the Smarty. For now, the fewer friends, the better.

'Fwuffy an Wuby fwend gun go wong way intu fowest dis bwighttime,' your friend tells you. 'Nu go way fwom Fwuffy, ow Wuby get wost.'

'Otay fwend.' She's so nice; the other mares, especially the older ones, would probably let you get lost. It really makes up for her fluff, which looks like Trinket's. Your friend leads you into the forest, and you make sure to stick close. Luckily, you don't have to go very far to find some tree fluff. But your friend says it isn't enough to take back, so further in you go. It's good news actually since you can ask her stuff without anyone hearing.

'Du fwend hav speciaw fwend?' You ask her.

'Nu,' she says. 'Bud Fwuffy wan speciaw fwend.'

'Wai fwend nu hav speciaw fwend nao?' Her fluff isn't as pretty as yours, but it's not bad.

'Cause nu one wan get speciaw fwend tiww coud times am ovah.' She says. 'Nu am fun tu be speciaw fwends, an wait so wong tu hav babbehs.'

Makes sense. Now, 'How fwuffies get tu hav babbehs?'

'Nu can hav babbehs tiww-'

'Wuby knu!' You stop her. 'Jus wan knu.'

'Oh, sowwies,' she says, then answers the question. 'Smawty onwy wan gud fwuffies in hewd, and nu wan hav tuu many babbehs,' how can there be such a thing? 'So, he say fwuffies nee du weawy gud ting fow hewd if day wan hav babbehs.'

'Gud ting?'

'Uh-huh; wike find wotsa nummies, ow fight munstah an bad fwuffies!' Your friend tells you. 'An nee du gud ting gain if wan mowe babbehs.'

So many rules!! You want to yell about how dumb it all is, but you force yourself not to. 'So, can fwuffies stiww be speciaw fwends if nu du gud ting yet?' You ask.

'Uh-huh,' she says. 'Dat am otay.' Interesting... 'Wai Wuby fwend wan knu?'

'Uh, cause Wuby nu wan make Smawty maddies gain.'

'Otay.' Your friend says. 'Oh, Fwuffy see wotsa twee fwuff! Dis way!'

#

You've got a plan, part of one at least.

First, you need a special friend; but, you have to find the right one. Not just one who's pretty, though it is important; you need a stallion who won't talk to the Smarty or anyone else when you tell him what you have planned. You're not worried that they won't like you though, not with your pretty fluff; even the Smarty and his big meanie toughies look at you! The problem is finding time to talk to the stallions in the herd.

Once first brighttime nummies are over, everyone gets straight to work; anyone who doesn't get sorry hoofies from the toughies. There's a rest at next brighttime nummies and another at soon darktime, but they aren't much, especially compared to how long the brighttime is. You try and talk to the stallions you run into while you're in the forest, but it doesn't work too well.

'Hewwo,' you tell some nummie finders walking past you and your friend, 'Fwuffy name am-'

'Fwuffies nu can tawkies nao!' One says. 'Nee get nummies back tu safe pwace!'

The same thing happens the next time, and the one after that; you keep trying until your friend bops you on the smelly place. Before you can ask why she talks, no, yells at you!

'Wuby stahp twyin make tawkies so much! Nao!!'

'Wai fwend sound so meanies?'

'Cause Wuby nu am duin wowkies!' She says. 'Fwuffy nu wan du ewyting; dat nu faiw!!'

'Otay Fwend, Wuby am sowwies.'

You stop then; it would be a bad idea to lose the only friend you have. Since you can't talk to stallions while you work, you'll have to do it when the herd rests. Lucky for you, your friend likes to take a break at next brighttime nummies. Not many other fluffies do though, but you'll have to make do. You and your friend get some nummies from one of the dens and join a small group under a tree. You get lucky, and meet a dark orange stallion with a blue mane and tail. He's really pretty, so you introduce yourself and it's not long until you're talking.

'Fwuffy's famiwy wive in hew fow wong time,' he tells you. 'Mummah's Mummah wived in hewd wif owd Smawty!'

'Owd Smawty?'

'Uh-huh, he was Smawty's daddeh.'

'Wat was he wike?'

'Fwuffy nu knu dat.'

'Nu tawkies boud dah owd Smawty,' a mare says. 'Smawty nu wike dat!'

Is there anything that doesn't make him mad? Well, then the pretty stallion tells you about his adventures in the forest.

'One bwighttime Fwuffy was in fowest wookin fow nummies, bud find bawkie munstah!!'

A wave of scardies go all over you; you hate barkie monsters, especially the ones that look like fluffies from far away. 'How nyu fwend wun way?'

'Dat was easy!' He says. 'Dewe was bwack wock, so Fwuffy wun ovah id! Bawkie munstah nu fowwow, an Fwuffy wun way!!'

He escaped a barkie monster by running over a black rock? He's so brave!! You want to have babbies with him sooooo much! Think of how brave and pretty they'll be! They'd be the bestest babies the herd's ever-

'Sowwies nyu fwend, Fwuffy nee teww Tuffy sumtin!' He gets up and trots over to a toughie. You can't hear what they say, but you don't need to. You get a sad dropping feel in your tummy; your plan won't work with him. For all you know, he'll turn around and go to the Smarty if you tell him you want babbies. And he's so pretty...

'Sowwies nyu fwend,' he says when he gets back. 'Fwuffy teww stowie boud meanie hoomins nao!' You sit there and pretend to listen, but you're much more interested in finding a different stallion for your plan.

####

'Dis way Wunnie; nu make woud tawkies.'

'Otay Daddeh.'

You lead Runny through the forest on your search for nummies. It's been a lot of brighttimes since those meanies gave him hurties, and he can walk properly again. Since he's gotten bigger as well, you take him out to find nummies some brighttimes instead of Kerry; it gives her a break, but more important it'll teach Runny to be a nummie finder, if he wants to be one.

'Hewe,' you lead him to a bushie, 'dis am gud bewwy bushie.'

'Bud id nu hav any bewwies.'

'Daddeh knu dat Wunnie,' you tell him, 'bud Wunnie nee knu wat day wook wike. Nummie findahs nee knu dese tings.'

'Otay Daddeh,' Runny says.

'Dis way nao,' you tell him, 'cud be nummies ovah hewe.' You lead him away from the bushie and through some small trees. 'Wook,' you point at a tree a little bit away. 'Dat am fwutie nummie twee.'

'Fwutie nummies? Wat am does?'

'Day am wike bewwy nummies, bud day am biggah.'

'How biggah?' Runny asks.

'Can be wots biggah ow wittwe biggah,' you tell him. 'Dewe wotsa diffawent fwutie nummies.'

Runny goes closer and looks up at the tree. He stares at it for a while, then turns to you; 'Wunnie nu see fwutie nummies Daddeh.'

'Dat am cause day go way befowe dah coud times.' You explain. 'Day be back aftah coud times go way. Hewd wike tu have babbehs when day cum back; day am bestest nummies fow soon mummahs.'

'Ohh.' Runny says.

Snap

You get tingles all over, and your tummy goes tight.

'Daddeh? Wai wook so-'

'Shh!!' You look around. You don't see anything, yet. 'Fowwow Daddeh,' you say with little wordies. Even though Runny looks scardies, he nods and does what he says. You lead him to a thick patch of bushies and crawl inside. 'Nu make tawkies.'

You feel Runny nod, and you wait.

Snap

Rustle

There's something out there, but what? A monster? What kind, and is it looking for you and Runny? Even though it's hard, you have to keep your scardies under control. If you don't, well, you've seen what happens to fluffies who can't. Runny shakes and shivers, but doesn't make any noise.

'Where the fuck are these things?' A human! 'We've been out here for hours man, and we haven't seen shit!'

'Fucking Christ Tom, do you remember anything I tell you?' Another one!! 'Forest ferals aren't like ally rats. They don't come running if they hear you!'

'Then why the fuck are we out here instead of bagging some of them?'

'Because fuck stick,' they're closer, 'forest fluffies are better; they're stronger, smarter, and healthier cause they don't eat out of garbage bags all the time.'

'Bullshit, Frank.'

'What, you never heard of evolution? Trust me; all we need to do is bag a few stallions and mares from out here, and we'll be breeding quality foals in no time. Now, would you kindly shut the fuck up?'

The humans stop talking, and the noises they make get smaller and smaller until you can't hear them anymore. 'Otay Wunnie,' you still use your small wordies. 'Fowwow Daddeh.' You leave the bushie, slowly, so you don't make much noise. The last thing you need is those humans to hear and come back. 'Dis way.' You lead Runny away from the bushie, through some patches of forest which look hard for a human to get through.

Along the way, though, you notice Runny's really upset. You look around again; when you're sure it's safe, you stop and give him some huggies. 'Id am otay Wunnie,' you tell him. 'Hoomins am gone. Day nu find Wunnie an Daddeh.'

'*Sniff* Scawies huhu.' He says. '*Sob* wat day wan Daddeh?'

It's hard to say; humans come out here for lots of reasons, and most of them aren't good. Some come to find fluffies so they can give them horrible, horrible hurties! Others come with the magic forever sleepies sticks, and some, like the ones you hid from, take away any fluffies they find. You don't know where they take them, and you don't plan to find out.

But the scariest humans, the ones who give you the worstest bad sleepie pictures, are the ones who destroy safe places and give herds forever sleepies. You remember the last time the herd ran into them; you're probably only here because some babies ran away from the safe place while no one was looking. Their screams let the rest of the herd know what was coming, but there wasn't enough time to save all those poor soon mummahs. Or your brother...

'Daddeh? Wai nu-'

'Daddeh am otay Wunnie.' Then, 'Nu knu wat hoomins wan. Cum on, dis way.'

#####

Your search isn't going well. It's easy to find stallions without special friends, but finding one who won't tell the toughies or the Smarty what you have planned has turned out to be much harder. So far, every stallion you've met is friends with the toughies, and one of them *was* a toughie! Why is it this hard to find the right stallion for your plan? And another thing, why don't they ask *you* to be their special friend? You have the prettiest fluff ever!

It's not fair.

#

'When Fwuffy was wittwe babbeh, was onwy Mummah an Daddeh; nu hewd.' It's the soon darktime, and you and your friend are walking to a nummie den to get some darktime nummies. Your friend tells you about her life before she was in the herd while you walk. 'Nu was bad time; had wotsa nummies, an pwayed wif bwuddas an sissies. Bud...' She gets some sad water in her see places. 'One bwighttime Mummah an Daddeh go tu find nummies, an Mummah nu cum back.'

'Wat happen?'

You see more sad water in her see places. 'Daddeh say dat, *sniff* dat hoomin *sob* hoomin take Mummah way.'

That's horrible! 'Wai meanie take yuw Mummah way?'

'Daddeh say hoomin take Mummah way cause she had pwetty fwuff. Daddeh twy stahp him bud hoomin giv him huwties. HUUUU,' more sad water comes out. 'Fwuffy newa see Mummah gain!'

'Dat stowie am biggest saddies ewa!' You say. 'Wuby hav does heawt huwties tuu!' You stop and give her huggies. When she's better, you keep walking to the nummie den. You're about to go in, but a voice comes from inside.

'Wet Fwuffy oud fiwst!' You step back, and a fluffy comes out; he has all his leggies, but he has a dummy walk like Trinket did. It looks like one of his back leggies doesn't work properly.

'Wat am wong wif dat fwuffy?' You ask your friend.

'Dat fwuffy hav dummeh weggie,' your friend says.

'Wat happen?'

'Nu knu; he cum tu hewd wike dat. He nu tawkies much.'

Hmm. 'Dat am saddies; Wuby tink shud go tawkies tu him.'

'Weawy?'

You look at your friend. 'Wai fwend say dat?'

'Cause he nu wike oda fwuffies much,' she says. 'Can twy, bud Fwuffy nu tink id wowk.'

'Weww, Wuby wan twy. Wuby nu wan fwuffy be aww awone.' You'll show her.

#

Whoever this fluffy is, he's harder to find than you thought he'd be; you didn't see him around that soon darktime, and for the next few brighttimes. Then one soon darktime while everyone rested and had their darktime nummies, you saw him next to a bushie away from everyone else; it was your chance. You get up from your spot and walk over to the strange fluffy. 'Hewwo, Fwuffy name am-'

'Wat yu wan?'

The maddies in his voice throw you off; 'Uh, W-wuby wan-'

'Wat yu wan dummeh?!' He says even more mad. 'Wai yu nu weave fwuffy awone?!'

You get down on your tummy an hide your hear places; 'Pwease nu be maddies, Wuby jus wan tawkies!'

He stares at you for a while. 'Wai?'

'Cause, Wuby nu wan yu be awone an saddies-'

'How yu knu Fwuffy am saddies?' He asks. 'Maybe Fwuffy wike bein awone!'

'Huu pwease nu be maddies, Wuby nu mean id!' you make some sad water, which isn't hard because he scares you a little. Hopefully, it'll make some of his maddies go away.

The fluffy stares at you for a little longer, but then his face changes. '*Sigh* Fwuffy sowwies. Nu mean id.' Some of his maddies go away. 'Fwuffy nu tawkies much.'

'Wai?'

He's quiet for a few moments. 'Cause, hewd nu tawkies tu Fwuffy much.'

'Wai?'

'Nu knu.' More of his maddies go away; now he looks a little sad. 'Fwuffy nu knu...'

'Du Fwuffy wan tawkies tu Wuby?'

He looks at you for a while. 'Otay, Fwuffy tawkies. Wat wan tawkies bout?'

Hmm, what should you talk about? Oh, easy! 'Wat du fwuffy du in hewd?' Why does he look mad again?

'Fwuffy dig.'

'Dig wat?'

'Poopie howes. Fwuffy dig poopies howes.'

'Eww, wai fwuffy-'

'Cause dat am wat Fwuffy can du!' You hide your hear places again, and soon after, his maddies go away.

'*Sigh* Sowwies...' He looks down. 'Fwuffy dig poopie howes; id am onwy ting Fwuffy can du.'

'Cause, Fwuffy hav dummeh weggie?' You're scared you'll make him mad again, but he nods.

'Dummeh weggie nu wet Fwuffy wook fow nummies, ow be wookie fwuffy ow tuffy.' You see him make sad water. 'Can onwy dig...'

'Du fwuffy wan huggies?'

He looks at you like you asked if he wanted to eat poopies! 'W-wat?'

'Du fwuffy wan huggies?' You say again. 'Wook wike hav bad saddies.' You're ready for him to stare at you for a long time; instead, he starts to nod really fast. You rush over and give him huggies. He stays still for a moment, then hugs you back really hard and makes more sad water! It's like he-

'*Sob* tank yu huhu! Fwuffy nu hav huggies fow wong time huhuuu!'

'Dat am otay nyu fwend.' You give him huggies for a while, longer than you meant to at first; he mustn't have had huggies for a *really long* time. In the end, you have to push him off you, but gently so he doesn't get upset.

'Sowwies.' He says. 'Fwuffy miss huggies wots.'

'Dat am otay nyu fwend.' You look around and check how close the darktime is. Looks like you still have a few little whiles left, so you can stay and talk to your friend. This time he asks you a question.

'So, wat Wuby du in hewd?'

#

Later in the darktime, you think about how lucky you are; this fluffy you met is perfect for your plan! Well, it would be nice if he didn't have a dummy leg, and his fluff could be prettier. But what's important is he has almost no friends in the herd. So, if you get him to like you a lot, he won't want to tell on you to the toughies or the Smarty!

You're one step closer.

#####

The cold times are really close, so close you can *feel them*. The good news is every fluffy in the herd has done their job properly so far; the nummie piles get bigger every brighttime, the nesties and dens have been made warm, and your rules have been followed. Even Ruby the new fluffy; you haven't heard anything from the mares she lives with since you had your little talk, or from any other fluffy. Good, you like it when a problem is solved before it gets big.

But it's not all good.

Word from the nummie finders is berries are nearly all gone; at least, ones close to the safe place. There still might be some deeper in the forest, but if you send the nummie finders too far in, they might not come back! So far the herd hasn't lost many, one or two since you told said the cold times were coming. You don't want to lose more, not now.

More worrying is what Kerry's Special friend told you about his run in with the humans; the good thing is the humans weren't like the ones who destroyed the safe place you had before the last one. The thinkie place pictures make you so mad; dummy humans, what did you ever do to them? You keep the herd in the forest, never bother them, and they still come after you!

'*Sigh*' You shake your head; it's useless to try and understand humans. What's important is these humans don't know where the safe place is, which is good. To move the herd again, you'd have to leave behind most of the nummies you've all worked so hard to find. The nummie finders could never make up for it before the

cold times arrive, and you don't want to think about what it would mean for the herd. Or what you'd have to do.

No, you'll only move the herd if you know *for sure* humans are on their way here. For now, you've told the nummie finders and any other fluffy who goes out into the forest to be extra careful. You've also told some lookie fluffies to go back to their normal job; so far, they haven't brought bad news.

Right, enough thinkie place work. You get up and walk to one of the nummie dens. You nod at the toughies as you walk in and check the piles inside; they all look nice and big, with plenty of berries, ground nummies and grassie nummies. When you see the piles up close, it makes you feel better; it gives you a reason to think the herd will get through this cold time like the last one, and the one before.

Some fluffies won't make it though. Usually, it's the older fluffies; they go to sleep and don't wake up. Sometimes, fluffies or babbies leave their den and get lost in the cold fluff. Then, of course, every so often, a fluffy decides not to follow the rules; they either break lots of little ones or a really big one. If it's big rules they break, you don't warn them, not in the cold times; you can't afford it.

'Hewwo Smawty.'

You turn around; it's one of the nummie finders. 'Hewwo. Yu hav mowe nummies?'

'Yes Smawty, bud onwy gground nummies.' She says.

'Dat am otay, day stiww am nummies.'

'Tank yu nice Smawty.' The nummie finder walks past you and puts the ground nummies in one of the smaller piles. While she does, you leave the nummie den and head back in the direction of your den. On the way, you see one of the mares who finds tree fluff for the nesties, and Ruby's with her. She looks at you for a moment, then looks away. Good. You don't care if she likes you, only that she does what she's told.

####

You were bringing warm stuff back from the forest with your friend! You didn't do anything to make the Smarty look at you in such a meanie way!! That Smarty, he makes you so mad! The only reason you don't hate him as much as Trinket or Mummah Mummah is he didn't make your Mummah go away. But, you still feel a little happy; he doesn't know you have a way around his rules. At least part of the way, and the rest shouldn't be hard.

'Hewwo!' Your friend says to an older fluffy. 'Du fwuffies nee wawm tings fow nestie?'

'Yes,' the old stallion says. 'Nestie nee wawm tings, bud fwuffy hav tuu many huwties tu get dem.' The old fluffy grabs some tree fluff and other stuff off your friend's back. While he does, a mare who must be his speical friend and a smaller fluffy come out of the den.

'Wait Speciaw fwend, wet Fwuffy an Babbeh hewp.' She and the little fluffy help the stallion take the stuff into their den. The stallion comes back out for a moment to say thanks, and you move on.

'Am dat babbeh dose fwuffies' babbeh?' You ask your friend.

'Wai Wuby wan knu?'

'Day wook tuu owd tu hav babbehs.'

'Oh. Nu, he am dewe babbeh's babbeh.' She tells you.

'Wat dat mean?'

'When hewd was cumin hewe, dewe babbeh an hew speciaw fwend got wost, and den...' she stops. '*Sigh* nu wan say. Tuu saddies.' Something really bad must have happened; well, at least one baby is safe. When you have your babbies, you won't let anything bad happen to them! You'll help them grow up to be the bestest prettiest strongest babbies ever!

For the next little while, you take the warm stuff you've found around the safe place and give bits of it to fluffies who need extra for their nesties. It's boring work, but it makes you feel good; it's not so bad helping the other fluffies, and this way they'll probably like you more. Also, it'll keep the Smarty off your back. When all the warm stuff has been given away, it's the soon darktime. Great, time to have nummies and talk with your new friend.

#

'Wat was Wuby fwend's owd housie wike?' Your new friend asks you.

'Hmm,' It's a harder question than it sounds. 'Owd housie was gud fow wittwe time,' you tell him. 'Wuby hav wotsa fun wif Mummah an pwetty sissie.' Jewel was okay, at least when you were little babbies. 'Mummah giv wotsa huggies an songies an miwkies.'

'Bud den wai am Wuby hewe?'

'Cause dummeh bwudda wuin ewyting!' You say a little louder than you meant. 'Dummeh bwudda Twinket make Mummah Mummah take Mummah way!'

'How?' Your new friend asks.

'He make Mummah du bad tings dat make Mummah Mummah maddies!'

'Wai yuw bwudda du dat?'

'*Sigh* Wuby nu knu.' Trinket must have been jealous he wasn't a bestest baby like you, Snow and Jewel.

'*Sniff* Miss Mummah.'

'Dat saddies.' He says. 'Fwuffy wive wif meanies tuu.'

'Waway?' You ask. 'Whewe fwend cum fwom?'

'When Fwuffy was babbeh, wived in oda hewd. Fwuffy had dummeh weggie den tuu, an oda babbehs wewe meanies. Bud Mummah an Daddeh an Bwuddas nu cawe; stiww wub Fwuffy.' He goes quiet again, and you see some sad water. 'Den, when Fwuffy was awmost big babbeh, dah Smawty say dat...' he takes some deep breaths, 'Smawty say dat Fwuffy was dummeh babbeh an... An had tu be nummie babbeh.' He shakes a little, and you're not surprised.

'Dat am biggest saddies!' You say. 'Wai owd Smawty du dat?!'

'Hewd had wotsa soon mummahs, bud nu hav nummies fow aww of dem.' He makes more sad water. 'Smawty say dummehe babbehs onwy gud fow nummies tu make gud babbehs an *sob* an Mummah was dummehe fow nu nummin Fwuffy when was chirpy babbeh.'

You give him some huggies. You feel so bad for him; it's no wonder he doesn't have any other friends. All the more reason to make him part of your plan; imagine how happy he'll be when-

'Dah Smawty an tuffies twy take babbeh way, bud Daddeh giv dem sowwie hoofies an teww Mummah an bwuddas tu wun way!' He says. 'Wun intu fowest an way fwom hewd!'

'Wat happen den?'

It takes a moment for him to answer. 'Mummah find nyu nestie, an twy find nummies fow babbehs. Was hawd time...' He goes quiet again, and it feels like he's about to cry.

'Id am otay fwend. Nu nee say wat happen.' You give him more huggies.

'*Sob* Tank yu.' After a little while, some of his saddies go away, and he keeps talking. 'Fwuffy wive in fowest fow wong time, den dis hewd find us. Day wet us in cause Mummah an bwuddas gud at findin nummies. Bud, day nu waned Fwuffy.'

'Cause yu hav dummehe weggie?'

He nods. 'Nu cud find nummies ow be wookie fwuffy ow tuffy. Bud Mummah an bwuddas say Fwuffy cud dig. So, dat wat Fwuffy du.'

'Am yuw Mummah an Bwuddas stiww in hewd?'

He shakes his head. '*Sob* Nu. Mummah nu cum back fwom fowest one bwighttime, big bwudda get fowewa sweepies fwom kitteh munstah, an wingie bwudda get fowewa sweepies twyin sabe his Speciaw fwend *sob* Fwuffy am awone...'

His story gives you really bad heart hurties. 'Nu be saddies fwend, yu nu am aww awone; Wuby am yuw fwend nao!'

'*Sniff* tank yu huhu.' He hugs you really tight. 'Tank yu.'

'Dat am otay fwend,' you hug him back. It's strange; at first, you only talked to him because you wanted him to give you babies. You still want that, of course, but the more you talk to him, the more you like him. Part of it's his fluff which you've come to like more, and part of it is how he doesn't like the Smarty. But, it's also because of how sorry you feel for him; he's had so many saddies and heart hurties, and you can make it better!

Once he's your Special friend and gives you babies, he'll be a Daddeh and have a family again; imagine about how happy he'll be? No way the Smarty can say you've done a bad thing, especially since he didn't even want-

Subtle wind noises

Tight prickly feels go all over you, and your fluff stands on end; no, not again!

'Bweezie munstah!!' Someone yells.

'Huwwy babbehs!!'

'Whewe am Fwowah?!'

Your thinkie place feels like it's going really fast, and not working at the same time!! How far are you from the mare den? Can you get there before the breezie monster finds you? Oh no, what if you've already spent too much-

'Dis way Wuby fwend!! Huwwy!!!' Your friend leads you there as fast as his dummy leggie will let him. 'Wuby hide in Fwuffy's den!' The two of you crawl inside; it's a tight fit, but you don't care, not when a breezie monster is outside!!

Loud wind noises

'Huuhuhuuuu!' You get more and more scardies the closer the breezie monster gets; it'll get you this time, you know it!!

'Nu be scardies Wuby fwend!' Your friend gives you the biggest huggies he can. 'Fwuffy keep yu safe fwom bweezie munstah! Nu wet bweezie munstah huwt Wuby fwend!!' You hug him back and hold on tight so the breezie monster can't pull you out!

Louder wind noises

The breezie monster roars and yells outside, angry because it can't find any of you. A couple of times it tries to reach into your friend's den, which nearly makes you do scardie pee-pees! But your friend holds on tight. Over all the scardies you feel something else, a really nice warm feel. Even though it's small, you know it's because of your friend's huggies, and the way he keeps you safe from the breezie monster. After a while, the breezie monster goes back to the meanie place where it lives.

'Am Wuby fwend ok?' Your friend asks.

'*Sniff* yes, Wuby am otay,' you tell him, 'Tank yu fwend.' You don't plan what happens next, it sort of happens by itself. You rub your face on your friend, and poke him with your smelly place; you've seen other fluffies do it, and it feels right to do. Even if it isn't, your friend really likes it; he does it to you as well, and it feels so nice! The warm feels from earlier seem to get better, and you get this strange feel like you need to do pee-pees.

You and your friend do the face and smelly place rubbing thing, you think it's called nuzzling, for a while. You're not sure for how long exactly, but you don't pay attention to the time; you could do this all-

'Wuby? Whewe am yu?! Am Wuby otay?!' That's your friend from the mare den!

You're about to call back, but you stop yourself at the last moment; you don't trust her enough to let her know you hid from the breezie monster down here, even if everyone would understand. You can't take the risk yet.

'Wuby nee go nao,' you tell your friend. 'Bud pwomise tawkies gain soon.'

'O-otay fwend,' You can tell he doesn't want you to go, and you don't really want to either; it feels so, nice to be close to him. But for now, you have to get back to your den. 'Bai.'

'Bai fwend.' You crawl out of his den and walk in the direction you think your mare friend is in. It's not quite darktime yet, but the sky ball is gone and its hard to see. 'Wuby am hewe fwend!' You call, and a few moments later she runs over.

'Wuby!!' Your friend gives you really big huggies. 'Whewe Wuby go?! Fwuffy so scardies! Tink dat bweezie munstah get yu!'

'Wuby hide undah bushie,' you tell her. 'Hide dewe tiww bweezie munstah-'

'Nu mowe tawkies!' Your friend starts to pull you away. 'Nee get back to den; bweezie munstah cud cum back!!'

That's all it takes to convince you; you run back to the mare den as fast as your leggies will take you. Once you're back in the safety of the nestie, you can use your thinkie place properly and plan what you'll do next.

####

'-when yu find fwuffy yu weawy wike, yu can ask dem tu be speciaw fwend.' Big Red, Runny and Flower sit in front of you. 'Den yu hav tu du gud ting fow hewd, wike find wotsa nummies, ow keep hewd safe fwom munstahs ow bad fwuffies.' Runny and Flower shiver, but Big Red doesn't. If anything, he looks excited. 'When yu du dat, Smawty wet yu hav babbehs!'

'Oh, otay!' Big Red says. 'Big Wed undewstan.'

'How fwuffies find speciaw fwend?' Runny asks.

'Hmm, Daddeh nu knu Wunnie.' The truth is, you don't have a good answer.

'Bud, how yu find Mummah if yu nu knu?' Runny says.

'Weww, Daddeh nu was wookin fow speciaw fwend,' you tell him. 'Was twyin tu find nummies, an Mummah hewp Daddeh get in hew Daddeh's yawd-'

'Wat am yawd?'

'Mummah hav Daddeh? Wat he wike?'

'Babbehs!' You say, 'Wet Daddeh tawkies.' When they're quite again, 'Mummah hewp Daddeh get in, an den...' You ask your thinkie place how to explain what happened next, but it can't come up with anything.

'Mummah am back!' Kerry comes into the den with darktime nummies on her back. 'Wat am Speciaw fwend an babbehs doin?'

'Daddeh tewwin babbehs how he find Mummah!' Flower says. 'He say yu wet him intu yuw Daddehs y-yawd.'

'Uh-huh.' Kerry comes over and pulls the nummies off her back. 'Daddeh was wookin fow twash can so he cud hav speciaw fwend.' She comes over and nuzzles your neck, 'Bud, he find Kewwy.'

'Wat happen den?!' Flower yells. 'Fwowah wan knu!!'

'Weww,' how to explain; she's still little. 'Daddeh tink dat Mummah was pwetty fwuffy, an-'

'Daddeh teww Kewwy he wan be speciaw fwends,' Kerry takes over, then nuzzles you again. 'An Kewwy say yes.' Your thinkie place takes you back to the brighttime in her Daddeh's yard, when you hugged and nuzzled each other, then went in her outside housie to have special huggies for the first-

'When Mummah an Daddeh hav babbehs?' Runny asks.

'Uhhh...'

'Weww,' Kerry takes over again. 'Mummah an Daddeh had wotsa wub, so had speciaw huggies.'

'Speciaw huggies?' Big red says. 'Wat am-'

'Day am onwy fow speciaw fwends.' You tell him.

'Was dat when Daddeh put Fwowah an Bwuddas in yu?'

'Uh-huh.' Kerry nods. 'Daddeh put Fwowah an Big Wed an Wunnie an...' Kerry stops all of a sudden, and you could swear you saw some saddies on her face. 'An... An den yu was in tummeh, an nao yu am hewe.'

'Dat am pwetty stowie!!' Flower says. 'Fwowah wan be mummah an teww pwetty stowie tu babbehs!!'

'Nu wowwie Fwowah,' you tell her. 'Daddeh tink yu be big fwuffy when cowl times am ovah. Den yu can be Mummah.'

'Yay!!' She dances a little bit. 'Fwowah be mummah den! Gun be Mummah befowe bwuddas am daddehs!!'

'Huh?'

'Fwowah aweady hav speciaw fwend!!' She tells Runny. 'Fwowah gun be-'

'Nu be meanies, Fwowah!' Kerry says.

'Sowwie, Fwowah nu mean id.'

'Hewwo? Bestest tuffy wan tawkies.'

You feel some scardies; you can't help it with him. You walk out of the den. 'Yes, nice Bestest tuffy?'

'Yuw babbeh Big Wed Stiww wan be tuffy?'

'Uh-huh,' you nod. 'He wan be tuffy mowe dan anyting.'

The Bestest tuffy nods, and you think you see a little smile on his face. 'Gud. Teww him go tu Bestest tuffy's nestie nex bwighttime.' He says. 'Id am time tu make nyu tuffies.'

'Otay, tank yu nice Bestest tuffy.'

He nods and walks off. You rush back into the den to tell your family the good news. Kerry might not be happy, but Big Red will be the happiest he's ever been!

####

'Wuby fwend?'

'Hmm?'

'Fwuffy wan knu sumtin.'

It's another soon darktime, and you're having darktime nummies with your new friend.

'Wat fwend wan knu?'

'Weww, Fwuffy... Uh,' he tries again. 'How... How much du Wuby wike Fwuffy?'

'Wuby wike bein fwend wots,' you tell him. 'Fwend am nice fwuffy!'

He gets a funny look on his face. 'T-tank yu! Bud *gulp* du... Fwuffy tink dat maybe, maybe Fwuffy an Wuby cud be...' His wordies hide again.

'Wat am id fwend?' You've got a pretty good idea what he wants to ask. 'Fwuffy can say; Wuby nu be maddies.'

'Fwuffy *cough* Fwuffy wan knu if Wuby wud wike be *gulp* speciaw fwends!'

'Weawy? Yes! Wuby wub be speciaw fwend!'

Your friend gets the biggest smile on his face; he jumps forward and gives you some of the biggest huggies you've ever gotten! You hug him back and hear him make, sad water? No no, this must be happy water. 'Tank yu huhu *sob* Fwuffy so happies!'

You give each other huggies for a long time because you don't *want* them to stop! You feel so warm and tingly, and then there's the strange not pee-pees feel! After a while, though your friend lets go. He has lots of happy water in the fluff under his see places, but he's not crying anymore.

'So *Sniff* Fwuffy tink dat Wuby nee weawn how be nummie findah.'

Huh? What's this about? 'Wat fwend mean?'

'*Sigh* If wan hav babbehs, nee du gud ting fow hewd.' He gets really sad; 'Fwuffy nu can dig nuff tu du dat. Bud Wuby can!' He says. 'Wuby can du gud ting fow hewd. Den, Wuby an Fwuffy can hav babbehs when cowl times am ovah!'

'Dat soun gud Speciaw fwend, bud,' it's time, 'wai hav wait tiww cowl times am ovah?'

'Cause, dat am wat Smawty say. Wai... Wai Speciaw fwend say dat?'

'Wuby an Speciaw fwend nu nee wait,' you say with little wordies. 'Can hav babbehs nao!'

Your Special friend goes quiet, then gets some scardies on his face. 'N-nu, nu! Nu can du dat!'

'Wai?'

'Cause, dat am wat Smawty say. Dat... Dat am his wuwe.' Your Special friend says that, but you can tell he doesn't believe it; you *know* how he feels about the Smarty.

'Wai yu wan du wat Smawty say? He nu waned yu in hewd,' you remind him. 'An he nu keep yuw famiwy safe.'

He twitches, and some sad water comes out.

'Smawty am big meanie; wai yu wan fowwow his wuwes?'

'Cause, cause...' He tries to come up with a reason, but you can tell he doesn't have any; except maybe for 'Onwy cause nu wan huwties,' he says. 'Smawty am meanie who giv big huwties tu fwuffies dat bweak his wuwes.' He goes on to tell you about what he's seen the Smarty do to bad fluffies.

He kicked a fluffy in the special lumps *really hard* because he was lazy, bit off a big baby's special lumps and no-no stick after he tried to have bad special huggies with another big baby, and made a fluffy who did bad poopies in the safe place eat them! The older mare didn't play sillies after all. The more your Special friend tells you about what the Smarty does to fluffies who break his rules, the more scared he gets. You watch them get bigger and bigger until he says 'Nu, Fwuffy an Speciaw fwend nu can du dis! Smawty giv us wowstest huwties! Giv babbehs wowstest huwties!!'

No! You can't let it slip away like this, not when you're this close!! Think, think!!! There's got to be something you can say! Wait, of course!! 'Wisten Speciaw fwend!!' you yell. He actually stops. 'Yu see Smawty huwt soon mummahs?'

He goes quiet for a while, probably to use his tinkie place. 'Nu,' he says.

'Did Speciaw fwend see Smawty huwt wittwe babbehs?'

'Nuu...' He looks at you. 'Wat Speciaw fwend sayin?'

'Id am easy! Wuby an Speciaw fwend jus nee be sneakies!' You tell him. 'Smawty nu huwt Wuby if am soon mummah, an nu huwt wittwe babbehs.'

'How Wuby knu?'

'Speciaw fwend jus say yu nu see Smawty du dat!' You tell him.

'Bud, bud he cud. He am big nuff meanie tu-'

'Hewd nu wet him!' You say.

'Huh?'

'Hewd nu wet him huwt soon mummah ow wittwe babbehs!'

'How Wuby knu dat?' He asks.

'Wud yu wet oda fwuffy huwt soon mummahs an wittwe babbehs?'

'Nu!'

You smile at him. 'See; if Smawty twy giv Wuby huwties when am soon mummah, ow twy huwt wittwe babbeks, hewd nu wet him!' You're sure of it; no matter how scary the Smarty is, there's no way the herd will let him hurt a soon mummah, let alone babbies! Everyone loves babbies!! Your Special friend stays quiet for a while, a long while.

'*Sigh* Fwuffy stiww nu knu; wat boud nummies?'

'Dah nummie piwes am so big!' You say. 'Dewe be pwenty fow Wuby when am soon mummah!' Even if you have to eat more than usual, there's no way you'll use up too many nummies. Your friend nods, but he stills seems unsure. Well, there's one last thing to try. You walk close and nuzzle him; 'Du fwend wan speciaw fwend an famiwy?'

He nods.

'Fwend wan hav babbeks an be Daddeh?'

He nods again.

You lean closer, so you talk right in his hear place; 'Speciaw fwend wan giv Wuby speciaw huggies?'

He nods really, really fast. You look around to make sure no one's watching; 'Dis way.' You lead your Special friend, away from the rest of the herd to the safe baby place; no one goes there, especially not in the soon darktime. As you lead him over, you can barely contain your excitement! Excited your plan's come together as well as it has, excited you'll get your babies at last, and excited to finally try special huggies.

Chapter Sixteen

'Bein tuffy am impowtant job in hewd!' The Bestest toughie stands in front of you and the other little fluffies who want to be toughies. 'Tuffies nee keep hewd safe fwom munstahs an bad fwuffies, make suwe hewd fowwow Smawty's wuwes, an giv sowwies tu dummehs dat nu fowwow wuwes!'

You and a few others nod; that's exactly what you want to do!

'Cause tuffies hav impowtant job, hav impowtant wuwes. Tuffies keep hewd safe, awways!! Tuffies wun *tu* munstahs an bad fwuffies, nu wun way fwom dem!' The Bestest toughie looks at a fluffy who has scardies. 'Tuffies nu can be scawdies when munstahs cum. Bud, dah biggest wuwe fow tuffies am awways du what Smawty, Bestest tuffy an Nex bestest tuffies say! Yu undewstan?'

'Yes Bestest tuffy!!' All of you yell.

'Gud. Nao, am time fow make nyu tuffies!'

You're so excited! What will they make you do first? More toughie games? Will you get a chance to fight your friend again? Maybe you'll win! Imagine how strong the Bestest toughie will think you are if you beat-

'Wittwe fwuffies wisten tu Bestest tuffy!' You snap out of it and pay attention. 'Bestest tuffy say sit hewe an wook at Bestest tuffy, tiww Bestest tuffy say nu du id nu mowe!'

Huh? What's that meant to do?

'Bud how dis-'

'Shud up!!' The Bestest toughie yells. 'Yu du wat Bestest tuffy say.'

You and a few others nod and watch the Bestest tuffy like he said. No one talks, no one moves, no one does anything. More little whiles go by, and you get bored. You shift about on your hoofies when they get hurties. What's this for anyway? Your thinkie place can't work out what it has to do with-

'GAAAHHHHHH!!!'

'WAAAAAAHHHH!!!!'

'SCREEEEE!!!'

The screams take you by complete surprise; all down the line little fluffies panic and scream, you included. You know you should look to see where the yells are coming from and what's making them, but you lock up! You fall on your tummy and cover your see places with your hoofies, way too fast to stop yourself.

'Stahp nao!' Like that, all the screams stop except for one or two little fluffies. You get up and see what happened; you notice some toughies who weren't here before. That would mean they came out of those bushies while you... Oh.

'Dummehs,' the Bestest toughie says. 'Yu wet hewd go fowewa sweepies!'

'Wha?'

'Yu wet munstahs get in safe pwace, an eat aww dah babbehs an soon mummahs! Yu am aww bad tuffies!!'

'Bud woud noises wewe scawies!!' A little fluffy yells.

'Yu tink munstahs nu am scawies? Yu tink munstahs say when dah cumin?! Munstahs an bad fwuffies cum when day wan! Tuffies nee be weady aww dah time!!' He nods at the other toughies, and they walk back to the bushies. 'Yu dummehs twy dat gain. Nao, wook at Bestest tuffy.'

You grit your teethies and stare at the Bestest toughie; *No gun be scardies gain, no gun be scardies gain!!* You say in your thinkie place. *No gun be scardies gain!! No gun be-*

'REEEEEEEEEE!!!!'

####

You didn't know happies could get this big! You shouldn't be surprised though, cause there are so many things to make you happy!! You've almost done it; you convinced your Special friend to go along with your plan, and he's given you tummy babbies! You can't feel them yet, but you know they're there! Not to mention, the special huggies were *soooo much fun!* You wish you didn't have to be so quiet and careful, then you could have them all the time!!

But, it's not over yet. And you've got new problems.

The first one you need to solve is how to get out of the mare den. The longer you stay there, the more likely one of the meanies will figure out you're a soon mummah. Even though you're sure the herd won't hurt a soon mummah, those meanies might get the Smarty to kick you out. But, if you keep your babbies secret

until they come out, it'll be too late for them to do that! Once they see how cute and wonderful they are, there's no way you'll get hurties or be kicked out of the herd!!

So, you have to get out of the mare den and move into your Special friend's den. But you need to know if that's allowed, and the only fluffy you trust enough to ask is your mare friend. Usually you ask her about stuff while you collect tree fluff with her; unfortunately, for the past few brighttimes other fluffies have come along too. You don't want to ask her questions while they're around; who knows who they'll tell. You have to wait until it's just the two of you again. All the while you're scared the meanies in the mare den will figure it out, but finally, you get the chance.

'Wuby wan knu sumtin fwend.'

'Wat am it?' She says as you work your way past some bushies.

'Can speciaw fwends wive in same nestie?'

'Hmm,' your friend goes quiet for a while; you hope it's a good sign. At least she didn't say no right away. 'Fwuffy nu knu,' she says. 'Soon speciaw fwends nu can hav speciaw huggies ow babbehs, bud Fwuffy nu tink Smawty say day nu can wive in same nestie. Wai Wuby wan knu? *Gasp* Yu find speciaw fwend?'

'Uh-huh.'

'Who?'

'Dah fwuffy who hav dah dummeh weggie.'

'Weawy?' She looks at you funny. 'Wai dat fwuffy?'

'Cause he am nice fwuffy. Am nice tu Wuby.'

'Oh. Otay den.' The way your friend talks, it's like she thinks there's something wrong with you. At least she doesn't ask too many questions. 'Wai wan wive in his nestie?'

'Cause Wuby nu wike id in mawe den nu mowe.'

'Wai?'

'Cause day am meanies, an nu wike Wuby. You tell her. 'Day giv Wuby sowwie hoofies, an Wuby nu du anything!!' A couple of darktimes ago you go into a fight with some older mares. You don't know what it was about, all you know is you don't want to be around them anymore.

'Oh, otay.' Your friend knows what you mean, at least. She's tried to get the other mares to like you, but it didn't work. '*Sniff* Fwuffy undewstan.'

'Pwease nu be saddies fwend,' you give her some. 'Wuby stiww hewp fwend find twee fwuff; fwend am nice fwuffy!'

'Tank yu.' She hugs you back. Your friend has been so nice, and given you lots of good advice; you couldn't have gotten your plan this far without her. How can you make it up to her? Of course!

'Fwend can hav wawm tings fwom Wuby's nestie,' you tell her.

'Weawy? Bud does am Wuby's wawm tings!'

'Fwend can hav dem. Fwend am nice tu Wuby, an Wuby wan fwend be nice an wawmies!'

'Tank yu Wuby fwend! Am bestest fwend!' She hugs you harder, and her wordies make you so happy! You are a good friend! You can make other fluffies happy if they let you! 'Bud be cawefuw,' she says. 'Nu twy hav babbeks befow Smawty say yu can.'

'Nu wowwie fwend, Wuby pwomise.' It feels bad to play tricks on a friend, but if only she knew!

#

'-an nao giv gwound stompies, wike dis!' Your Special friend gives the dirt on the floor of the den stompies until it goes hard and flat.

'Otay.' You walk over to a patch of loose dirt and give it stompies like your Special friend did. It's boring work and hurts your hoofies, but to make it fun your thinkie place tells you the dirt is Mummah Mummah and the Smarty, and Trinket.

'Dat am gud Speciaw fwend.' He still calls you soon special friend in case anyone hears; you don't want them to tell the Smarty.

'Tank yu Speciaw fwend,' you go over and give him huggies. 'Wuby wub biggah nestie,' you switch to really little wordies. 'Id am gud pwace fow hav babbeks, an speciaw huggies.' He shivers, and you hope the herd goes back to their nesties quickly this darktime; then, you two can have some special huggies!

'Nu can wait Speciaw fwend,' he says in little wowdies. 'Gun hav bestest babbeks hewd ewa hav.'

'Ewa.' You nuzzle him a little.

#####

You sit and look at the Bestest toughie. The surprise scream game has gone on for two and two brighttimes so far, and some of the little fluffies aren't here anymore. They couldn't handle the scardies, so the Bestest toughie said they couldn't be toughies. You're still here, though; you won't let a few screams stop you! You know the toughies will come out of the bushies any moment, and you'll be ready this time!! You won't be scardies, and you'll show the Bestest toughie and the other toughies -

'WAAHHHHHH!!!!'

'AAEEEEEEEE!!!!'

Once the screams start you try get up, ready to fight! But, it doesn't quite work out the way you want. You sort of freeze up, then trip and stumble! It's your stupid scardies, they messed you up again!!

'Dat was otay.' The Bestest toughie says. 'Bud yu, yu, an yu,' he points a hoofie at you, 'nee du bettah.'

You nod and bite your tongue, so a little bit of sad water doesn't get out. You sit back down, and the Bestest toughie tells the others to hide again. You grit your teethies and breath lots and lots. This time, *this time* you'll get it right! You'll get up properly, and charge at the toughies! You'll show the-

'AAIIIIIIIIII!!!'

'REEEEEEEEEEE!!'

'AHHHHHH!!!' You jump onto your hoofies, spin around and charge at the toughies! But, for some reason, you shut your see places. 'AAAHHHH-kohoo!!' You run into something, or something runs into you, and get knocked to the ground. Finally, you open your see places. '*Cough cough* Owwww...' At least your special lumps didn't get hurt.

'Am yu otay?' You look up and see one of the toughies; he must be the one you ran into.

You nod. 'Big Wed *cough* am otay.'

'Wai yu nu hav yuw see pwaces open?'

You really wish you knew.

'Am he otay?' The Bestest toughie asks.

'Yes Bestest tuffy,' the other toughie tell him. 'He was onwy dumme.'

You get back on your hoofies and face the Bestest toughie; he gives you some scardies, but you don't let them show. At least you hope you didn't. 'Dat was bettah.' He says, then turns to the other little fluffies. 'Yu du dis one mowe time, den yu go hewp yuw famiwies gain.' All of you get back in position; while you wait, you tell yourself over and over to *keep you see places open*.

#

'Fwuffy tink Big Wed am bettah nao,' your friend, the Bestest toughie's baby, says while you walk to the nummie dens. 'Yu nu get big scawdies nu mowe.'

'Tank yu fwend.' But, something still bugs you. 'Wai fwend nu get scawdies?'

'Wat Big Wed mean?'

'Fwend nu get scawdies when oda tuffies cum oud of bushies. How du dat?'

'Oh, Fwuffy stiww hav scawdies,' he says, 'jus nu show dem.'

'How?'

'Daddeh wan Fwuffy tu be tuffy when was onwy wittwe babbeh.' He says. 'He teww Fwuffy how tu nu wet bad fwuffies an munstahs knu Fwuffy hav scawdies.'

You can see why his daddeh would do that; your friend is extra big like you are, maybe bigger. When you're both big fluffies, you'll probably be as big as the Bestest toughie. That would make you bigger than Mummah and Daddeh too, which is kinda funny.

'Fwends!' Some small fluffies run over, the Smarty's wingie baby and Flower among them. 'Fwends wan go hav nex bwighttime nummies?'

'Otay.' You and your friend join them, and together you walk to one of the nummie dens. The toughies let you in a few at a time, and you go in with the Smarty's baby and Flower. While you pick out some nummies from the piles, you hear giggles from behind. The Smarty's baby talks into Flower's hear places with little wordies. She giggles, then nuzzles him like Mummah and Daddeh do. You roll your see places; it's so stupid, even though it makes them really happy...

You shake your head. Stupid, strange saddies, you get them every time you see them together, and other fluffies who are special friends or close to it. Runny feels the same way, and you wish he were here instead of in the forest with Daddeh, then you'd have someone to talk to about-

'Wai bwudda nu movin?'

You snap out of it; Flower and the Smarty's baby are over by the way in.

'Huwwy up, fwuffies wan go hav nummies!'

'Uh, cumin!!' You grab some nummies and join them. The Smarty's baby picks out a spot by some bushies to have next brighttime nummies.

'Fwuffy nu can wait fow be Smawty,' The Smarty's baby says.

'Huh? Wai?' The Smarty has so much to do every brighttime, and he never seems happy.

'Cause am gun hav biggest bestest tuffies!!'

What does he... Oh, he must mean you and the Bestest toughie's baby! You didn't think of yourself as a Bestest toughie, even a Next Bestest toughie. But, now he mentions it...

'Hewd nu nee be scawdies of munstahs ow bad fwuffies den; hewd be safe fowewa!' He looks at Flower, 'Safe fow Speciaw fwend an babbeks.' He nuzzles her, and Flower does her really silly laugh again; urgh. Then, he looks at you. 'Du Big Wed wan speciaw fwend?'

'W-wah?'

'Hewd nee mowe big fwuffies wike Big Wed, so Big Wed shud hav speciaw fwend nao!' The Smarty's baby says. 'Den nu nee wait wong time fow make babbeks!'

'Uhhh...' You try to think of something to say, but before you can, he looks at his sissie, the one white fluff and an orange mane.

'Sissie nu hav speciaw fwend; yu wan be Big Wed's speciaw fwend?' Her hear places hide and she looks at the ground, and you don't feel much better. The thinkie place pictures give you all sorts of funny crawly feels, especially in your tummy. Sure, you'd like her to be your speciaw fwend, who wouldn't? But she's way too pretty for you, and she's one of the Smarty's babbies anyway! It's not like you've got a chance. She probably doesn't like you anyway; why else would she look at the ground instead of-

'Next bwighttime nummies am ovah!' A toughie yells. 'Aww fwuffies nee wowkies gain!'

The crawly feels go away; now you can go help Mummah with the den, or Daddeh and Runny when they go back to the forest! You get up right away, but don't pay attention to where you're going. 'Oof!'

'Eee!'

You step back, and all the crawly feels come back; you ran into the Smarty's white baby. 'S-sowwies...'

She nods a little. 'D am otay.'

You both turn and walk, no, run away at the same time. You really hope her brother doesn't talk about this the next time you see him.

####

You can feel them!! 'Tummeh babbeks am movin!'

You noticed it a couple of brighttimes ago, a strange squirmie wriggly feel in your tummy! At first, you thought they were tummy hurties, but they weren't in the right place. Then you wanted to smack your head on a tree; how could you be so silly? It was your babbies!!

'Day am movin Speciaaw fwend!' you tell him one darktime. 'Feew!'

He puts his hear place on your tummy, close to your milkie places. Then, he gets the biggest smile ever!

'Fwuffy feew dem! Am soon daddeh nao!'

'An Wuby am soon mummah!'

You're so happy! Every time you feel your tummy babbies move, it makes you happier! This must have been how Mummah felt when she had you in her tummy! You still wonder where she went sometimes; wherever Mummah is, you hope she still gets to have babbies! But, as happy as you are, you've got a new problem to deal with; tummy hurties.

They've gotten bigger every few brighttimes, and you feel them earlier and more often. It must be because of your tummy babbies; they've got tummy hurties of their own, and you have to eat for them too! There's no question about it; you need more nummies! But, you can't take more from the nummie dens; the toughies who guard them check how much each fluffy takes when they leave.

'Dat am tuu many nummies,' they said when you tried to take a little more than usual. 'Put sum back.'

You wondered if could hide some nummies in your nummie place and sneak them out that way, but another fluffy must have tried it already. One brighttime the toughies start to check fluffies' nummie places when they leave! Your Special friend gives you some of what he gets from the nummie dens; it helps, but it's not enough. In the brighttime, you sneak grassie and leafy nummies when no one looks. They don't taste pretty, but any nummies are good nummies. You have to make sure you tummy babbies get enough, so they grow into the biggest and strongest babbies ever!

#

'Wai Wuby an fwend nee go oud so fah?'

'Cause nee find mowe twee fwuff!' Your friend tells you.

'How much twee fwuff du hewd nee hav?'

'Wots,' she says. 'Cowd times am cowd!'

Well duh! You know you shouldn't complain much; these trips with your friend have been really useful. But, it doesn't change the fact everyone must have enough tree fluff by now! Going out this far gives you hoofie hurties, and bigger tummy hurties! Well, at least you can grab nummies on the way, so long as they're grassie or leafy nummies. All other nummies have to go back to the piles because of the Smarty's rules, of course.

'Wait,' you friend says. While your friend uses her thinkie place, you eat some leafies and grassies. 'Hmm, Fwuffy tink Wuby shud wook ovah dewe,' she points with her hoofie, 'an Fwuffy wook ovah hewe.'

'Wai?'

'Cause dis way can wook bettah,' she says. 'Nu nee be scawdies Ruby fwend, Fwuffy nu go tuu fah way.'

'Otay...' You walk the way she said, slow and careful. You don't like this; it brings back thinkie place pictures of when you were alone in the forest. All the scary noises, no nummies and dirty poopie coloured water. Still, this shouldn't be so bad; all you need to do is find some tree fluff, and you can go back! Or, maybe go back and say you didn't find any! Would your friend believe you? Would she check to make sure you didn't lie? She probably wouldn't, but-

'*Gasp*!'

Right in front of you, there's a small bush full of berries! It looks like there's enough to take care of your tummy hurties until the darktime! You look around and use your hear places; when you're sure there's no one around, you run over and eat the berries.

'*Chew chew chew*'

They're *so* good! Much better than the dry ones from the nummie dens! You eat the berries as fast as you can and push the bushie around with your smelly place to get all of them. It doesn't take long to eat all the nummies off the bush, and then you lick all the berry milkies from around your nummie place! It would have been nice if there were more, but it was so good to have so many nummies to yourself. And, all your tummy hurties are gone! At least, for now.

With all the happies you got from the berries, the search for tree fluff isn't so bad. You find a few bits, then head back to your friend.

'Fwend, Wuby find sum twee fwuff!' A little bit later, she finds you; it looks like she's found a little bit more than you did.

'Dewe nu mowe twee fwuff ovah dewe?'

'Nu,' you tell her. 'Wuby onwy find dis much.'

'Dat am otay,' your friend says. Then, she turns and leads you a little further into the forest. 'Fwuffy an Wuby wook ovah hewe fow wittwe time, den go back tu safe pwace.'

'Otay fwend.' You follow her a little further into the forest and manage to find some more tree fluff. After that, you go back to the safe place like she said. On the way, you run into some nummie finders; the red stallion who brought you back to the herd, and a smaller blue fluffy who must be one of his babbies.

'Bud Wunnie find dem Daddeh! Day wewe dewe!!'

'Id am otay Wunnie, Daddeh nu tink yu wie.'

'Huu whewe does bewwy nummies go? Wunnie find dem...'

####

'Wittwe fwuffies wisten tu Bestest tuffy!'

You and the other soon toughies sit and look at the Bestest toughie. There's a few less of you now; some couldn't take the screams and yelling, even though they did ok for a while. You're still here, though.

'Yu aww wememba dah tuffy game in safe babbeh pwace?'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy! A lot of you say.

'Gud. Yu am gun pway nyu tuffy game nao!'

A new toughie game? Oooh, you're so excited! But, you make sure not to jump and yell; that's not what a good toughie would do.

'Wittwe fwuffies use heaw pwaces gud; Bestest tuffy onwy say dis one time!'

You use them really hard, almost hard enough to give you hurties!

'Dis bushie,' he points at it with his hoofie, 'am safe babbeh pwace.'

'Bud safe babbeh pwace am-'

'Yu tawkies when Bestest tuffy am tawkies gain,' the Bestest toughie yells, 'an Bestest tuffy make yu eat poopies aww bwighttime!! Nao, dis am safe babbeh pwace. Sum wittwe fwuffies am gun twy get tu id; day am munstahs. Oda wittwe fwuffies nee stahp dem; day am tuffies. Yu dummehs undewstan?'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy!'

'Gud. Nao den,' The Bestest toughie splits you into two groups; you end up as one of the toughies, and your friend goes on the side, the monsters. Good, you'll get a chance to get him back for the last time he beat you! The Bestest toughie takes the monsters away behind some bushies, so you can't see them. Then, he comes back.

'When Bestest tuffy say so, dah bad fwuffies gun twy an get tu safe babbeh pwace. Yu nee stahp dem! If day get tu bushie, yu wose.'

You want to ask what will happen if you lose, and so must everyone else. But you don't want to risk having to eat poopies all brighttime, and neither does anyone else.

'Yu undewstan?'

'Yes!'

'Gud.' The Bestest toughie walks away behind some bushies.

'Wat fwuffies du nao?' A blue and yellow fluffy asks.

'Wait fow munstahs dummeh!' Another fluffy says.

'Fwuffy nu mean dat dummeh!'

'Den wat dummeh mean!?'

'Shud up!' You yell. What's needed here is a leader, and it might as well be you! 'Fwuffies go aww wound dah bushie! Den dah munstahs nu can be sneakies!' No one argues.

'Otay! Dat am gud pw-pwan!' Someone says. All of you spread out around the bushie and watch for the monsters. Where will they come from? Will they all come from the same way? Which would be better for... No, stop using your thinkie place so much! Focus! You keep your see places on the bushies ahead of you and wait for-

'GET DEM!!'

'AAAHHHH!!'

'DAY AM HEWE!!'

Those yells are behind you; that's where the monsters have come from!! You go to get up and join the others, but wait!! What if some of the monsters come from this direction when you're not looking?! You don't see any, but what if they-

'Whewe am Big Wed?!' someone yells. 'Nu can staph Bestest tuffy's Babbah!'

You have to go help! You run around the bushie, and sure enough, the monsters are there, among them your friend! Two fluffies from your group are fighting him, but your friend is strong enough to beat both of them! You run over and tackle your friend, and try to force him to the ground. But he's ready and pushes back! He tries to wrap his leggies around your head, but he's done it too many times before, and you know what to do!

You tuck your head and push your friend as hard as you can; he stumbles and trips, but only a little! He digs in his hoofies and pushes back; just what you needed to happen!! You jump back, and your friend isn't ready for it!

'Eeeee!' He trips forward and stumbles; before he can get better, you put your head down and charge!

'Ahhhhhhh!!!'

'OOOF!'

You run into your friend and hear him fall over; you've got him! You give your friend a bunch of sorry hoofies to keep him down.

'Eeee!!' He he wriggles around to get away; you try to keep him where he is, but your friend kicks at your special lumps again, and you can't help but pull back! It gives your friend the chance he needs; he gets back

on his hoofies, but instead of turning back, 'Wun way! Wun way!!' He and the other monsters run back the way they came.

'Tuffies win!! Win!!!!' Someone yells.

'Tuffies did id! Sabed safe babbeh pwace! Am bestest!!'

Everyone cheers and hugs; you've got the biggest happies ever! This is one of the best brighttimes of-

'NAO!!'

You look up; by the time you realise what's happening, it's too late. The monsters run toward the safe baby place from a few different bushies. You and the others try to stop them, but there's not enough time! As you get to your hoofies and pick who you'll fight, the monsters make it to the safe baby place.

'Stahp nao!' The Bestest toughie walks out from a bushie. 'Munstahs go dewe, tuffies go hewe.' You go to where he points and sit down; you already know what he'll say...

'Yu dummehs,' he says to your group, 'am bad tuffies! Yu wet munstahs get tu safe babbeh pwace an eat aww dah babbehs!! Nao hewd nu hav babbehs nu mowe!!'

'Bu-bud,' someone tries, 'dat was nu faiw! Day nu fowwow-'

The Bestest toughie knocks him over. 'Shud up dummeh!! Yu tink munstahs am faiw? Tink day fowwow wuwes?! Yu am dummeh!!!' He looks back at the rest of you. 'Yu dummehs wose. Nao,'

You shiver; what will he make you do? Please, please don't let it be numming poopies!

'Cause yu dummehs wet munstahs eat aww dah babbehs, yu gun dig poopie howes fow dis bwighttime, an nex bwighttime!' Some fluffies complain and cry, but you feel a little better. At least you won't be- 'Dummehs go tu poopie pwace nao!!' You get up and run there as fast as your leggies will go!

#

'Fwuffy hate dis!'

'Nu smeww pwetty...'

It smells so bad here! It's bad enough when you have to use one of the poopie holes; now they're all around you! What distracts you enough to dig, is how mad you are because you fell for their trick! Some others from you group feel the same.

'Hachew dummeh,' a dark yellow fluffy, says to another while he digs. 'Yu make fwuffies wose!'

'Nu was Gwassie's fauwt!' The green fluffy says back.

'Was tuu!! Yu was sayin we win fiwst!!'

'Yu was tuu dummeh!!!' Grassie jumps out of his hole and walks over to the yellow fluffy. They're about to fight when,

'Yu dummehs keep diggies!!!' The stallion who normally does this yells. 'Ow, Fwuffy go get tuffies!!' Grassie jumps back in his hole, and there's no more complaining. At least, none the stallion can hear. Later, you finish the hole and climb out. That makes two and one, one more than he told you to dig. Hopefully, the stallion will let you go; you're sooo sleepies!

'Nice fwuffy,'

'Hmm?'

'Big wed make two an one nyu poopie howes,' you tell him. 'Can *haf* Big Wed go nao?'

'Hmm, otay; yu can go.'

'*Sigh* Tank yu nice Fwuffy.' You walk off in the direction of the den; all you can think of is lying down in the nestie to have a nice little sleep, or a big sleep! Unfortunately, you don't pay attention to where you're going.

'BIG WED, WOOK OUD!!'

'Huh?' You turn to look. 'Wook oud fow-waahhh!!' You fall forward, and turn your head back in time to see what you've fallen into; 'NUUUU-'

Splat

You thrash about madly; you have to get out of here!!! 'SCREEEEEE!!! REEEEEEE!!!' Somehow you find the edge of the hole and drag yourself out! But your problems have just begun!! WAAHHHH!!' Your see places don't work and have the worstest stingy hurties! You've got the worstest worstest taste in your nummie place, and the smell!!! THE SMELL!!!

'*HUWWWURRKKKK*' You make sickie waters, more than you ever have before!!

'*Hurrrk hurrrk! Kaff kaff, hack!!* Waaaaahhhhaahhh!!!' See place; gotta get it out of your see places! You rub your face on the ground and open and close your see places lots and lots of times!! It seems like forever until they work again; when they do, you see all the other fluffies looking at you.

'Huhuuu hewp! Pwease hewp huhuuu!!'

They're quiet; then, 'HAHAHAHAHHH!!!'

'BIG WED AM BIG POOPIE NAO HAAHAHAHAH!!'

'BIG DUMMEH HEHEHEHHHEE!!'

You'd have lots of bad heart hurties if it weren't for the smell!!! 'HEWWP!!' Most of the fluffies keep laughing, but one of your friends walks over.

'Dis *heck* dis way! Huwwy *eh-kaff kaff*' He leads you to one of the dirt patches everyone uses to clean themselves. There are some fluffies there already, a family with smaller babbies. 'Wun way! Wun way!!' Your friend yells. At first, they don't know what he's on about; then they see you.

'Dis way babbehs, huwwy!'

'Stay way fwom poopie fwuffy!'

The family get away from the dirt patch just in time; you throw yourself onto the patch and wriggle all around, rubbing every body part you can! After a lot of rubbing and shaking, it feels like a lot of the poopies are out of your fluff. But, the smell isn't any better!! 'Dis way Big Wed!' your friend leads you away from the dirt patch to the long water. He takes you to a spot outside the safe place, away from where everyone drinks.

You don't need to be told what to do; you run into the water and roll around. Water might be bad for fluffies, but it can't be as bad as fluff full of poopies! Like the dirt patch, you roll and shake over and over; the water around you looks like dirt and poopies, but gets carried away to somewhere. After a while, you stop and check yourself; it doesn't look or feel like there are any poopies left in your fluff, but there's still a little bit of poopie smell. It'll have to do.

You run out of the long water and shake to get all the water out of your fluff. You shake until you've got hurties and sleepies from it, but there's still some water left. Still, better to have water than poopies in your fluff.

'Am big Wed otay?' Your friend asks.

You nod.

'Du Big Wed wan huggies?'

'Nu,' you say. 'Big Wed jus... Jus wan sweepies. Tank yu, fwend.' You leave your friend and walk off in the direction of the den. On the way, you make yourself promise you will never ever lose the toughie and monster game again.

####

Your tummy hurties have gotten worse.

You feel them more often, they're bigger, and it takes more nummies to make them go away! You eat what you can when you're in the forest, but you have to be careful; fluffies might ask questions if they see you eat more than usual. Your Special friend gives you more of his share, but it isn't enough, and you don't want him to have bad tummy hurties as well. Plus, you need him to stay strong.

These last few brighttimes, you and your Special friend have managed to sneak a little extra nummies out of the nummie dens. Sometimes, you eat a little from the piles while you're in there. It's hard to stay hidden, and you've nearly been caught a couple of times. But, it still isn't enough, which gives you scardies! If you have bad tummy hurties, your tummy babbies will have them too! If you don't get them enough nummies, then they won't grow up to be strong and brave and pretty!!

You need more nummies, and you've got an idea on how to get them. It's risky, but you and your Special friend are smart enough to make it work!

#

'Am Speciaw fwend weady?'

He nods. 'Am weady. Wememba, wait tiww tuffies go way!'

'Wuby knu Speciaw fwend.' You give him one last hug before he leaves. A little later, you leave and walk the same way you would to go to the poopie place. But, when you get to a part no one can see, you turn and head for some bushies. You walk carefully to not make noise, like how you and your friend walk in the forest. You hind behind the bushies, wait for a short while, then peak around. There's only one toughie outside this nummie den, so it'll be the easiest to get into.

You wait behind the bushie for your Special friend to do his job. It's hard, and you get more scared the longer you have to wait. What if another fluffy comes by and asks what you're up to? Would they believe you if you said you got lost on the way to the poopie place?

'Screeeeee!!!'

You peak out to see if the toughie heard; he's looking in the direction, but he hasn't moved! Come on!

'Munstahs!! Muunstaahss!!! Screeeeee!!!'

That did it! The toughie runs for the forest, and it's time to do your part! You dash out from the bushies and into the nummie den; it's hard to see in the dark, but you can find the nummies by how they smell. You put as much on your back as you can, then grab a bunch in your nummie place and run straight back your den! More toughies have come out, but they don't notice you. Soon, you're back in your den safe and sound. You stash the nummies in a little hole, then chew and swallow what's in your nummie place.

All that's left is to wait for your Special friend to come back. It takes a while, but he comes back. '*Haf haf* did Speciaw fwend get *haff* nummies?'

'Yes, Speciaw fwend,' you tell him. 'Id wowked.'

'*Haff* gud.' He comes over and curls up with you on the nestie. 'Nao tummeh babbehs hav mowe nummies.'

'Yes, babbehs can gwow big an stwong gain!'

'Gun hav bestest babbehs,' he nuzzles your tummy. It really tickles! 'Nu can wait fow meet babbehs; Fwuffy gun be bestest daddeh ewa!'

'Bestest Mummah an Daddeh ewa fow bestest babbehs ewa,' you say. '*Yawn*' You cuddle up close to him. With a tummy full of nummies and the happies from pulling off your plan, it's easy to go to sleep.

Chapter Seventeen

You and the others didn't fall for the monster team's tricks again; you lost a few more times, but sometimes you won! Other times you had to play as the monsters, which felt weird. Even if it wasn't real, it didn't feel right to be a monster. The Bestest toughie made you play the toughies and monsters game for a few more brighttimes, and then he said it was time for something new.

'Wittwe fwuffies nee weawn wat tuffies du in hewd,' he says. 'Nao, yu am gun be with oda tuffies. Fowwow dem an du wat day say. Undewstan?'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy!'

'Gud.' He puts each of you with a different toughie; you go with one of the toughies who helped save Runny from those meanie fluffies.

'Am yuw bwudda otay?' He asks.

'Yes, nice Tuffy; he go wif Daddeh intu fowest.'

'He wan be nummie findah ow wookie fwuffy?'

'Nu knu. Wat wookie fwuffies du?'

'Day go intu fowest an wook fow munstahs, an bad fwuffies, an hoomins.' he tells you. 'If day get tuu cwose tu safe pwace, dah wookie fwuffies cum back an teww dah tuffies.'

'Otay.' You hope Runny will be a lookie fluffy now; it would be fun to work with him to keep the herd safe.

'When hewd nee move tu nyu safe pwace, dah wookie fwuffies wook fow nummies, wawa, an nyu safe pwaces,' the toughie goes on. 'An if fwuffies get wost, day-'

'Yu du wat Tuffy say!'

You both look to where the yell came from.

'Bud, nu wan huwt Siss-'

'Tuffy say giv bad fwuffy sowwie hoofies! Du id nao dumme!!'

'Dis way,' your toughie leads you over. There's another toughie with the little fluffy he's teaching, and some others who have bad saddies and scardies. 'Wat happen?' Your toughie asks the other.

'Dese bad fwuffies twy an steaw nummies fwom nummie den.' He says.

'Fwuffies sowwie!' One of the bad fluffies say. 'Tummeh huwties wewe-'

'Shud up!!' the toughie yells. 'Tuffy teww dis dumme,' he points at his little fluffy, 'tu giv dem sowwie hoofies. Bud he nu du id.'

'Nu wan huwt Sissie!' The little fluffy yells. 'Sissie nu am bad fwuffy! Nu wan-'

'Yuw sissie twy steaw nummies!' Your toughie yells. 'Dat make hew bad fwuffy. Nao du wat tuffies say an giv hew sowwie hoofies!'

The little fluffy goes quiet; he looks at his sissie, then back to the toughies. 'Nu.'

'Du id, dumme.'

'Nu! Fwuffy nu giv sissie huwties!!' He puffs his checks up at his toughie; has his thinkie place gone sillies? This will get him the worstest sorry hoofies ever!

His toughie looks at the little fluffy for a while; you're sure he'll give sorry hoofies at any moment. And then, 'Yu nu can be tuffy.'

'Wh-wha?'

'Yu nu can be tuffy!' The toughie says again. 'Yu nu du wat tuffy say; dat mean yu nu can be tuffy. Go way.'

You see some sad water in the little fluffy's see places. 'Bu... Bud-'

'Nao!!'

The little fluffy runs away before anyone sees him cry. His sissie tries to follow, but the toughies block her.

'Yu stay dewe dummeh.' Your toughie says, then looks at you. 'Big Wed, giv dis bad fwuffy sowwie hoofies.'

You look at the bad fluffy; she's making lots of sad water, and you can tell she has bad scardies. She's smaller than you; it would be easy to give her bad hurties if you're not careful. But, you want to be a toughie, which means you have to do what you're told. You walk over to her.

'*Sob* Pwease huhuhu,' she gets down on her tummy and hides her hear places. 'Pwease nu giv huwties! Fwuffy sowwies huhuhuuu!'

For a moment, you can't move. You don't want to do this, she reminds you of Flower!

'Nao!'

But you have too. '*Sigh,* Big Wed am sowwies, bud yu am bad fwuffy!' You raise your hoofie.

#####

It's the darktime; you and your Special friend are ready to get more nummies. Like last time, your Speical friend sneaks into the forest, and you wait close to a nummie den. You've picked a different one this time; it has two toughies out front, but that's not a problem. You peak out from behind the bushies and wait for the distraction.

'Screeeeee!!! Munstahs!! Munstahs!! Hewp!!!'

Both toughies look at the forest, then run toward the noise when your Special friend screams again. You rush into the den and take as many nummies as you can! While you're in there, you eat a few bits and pieces too; your tummy babbies need all the nummies you can give them. With the nummies you came for, you crawl out of the nummie den and head for yours. You sneak past some bushies and small trees, a sneaky path to keep you hidden. But it doesn't work.

'Hey! Who am yu?'

Bits of your fluff stand on end, but you fight the scardies and speed up. You can tell by the sound he's far enough away for you to-

'Hey! Tuffy ask yu sumtin!! Who am yu!!?'

You move faster; a few nummies drop off your back, but it's more important you get back to the den!!

'Dis way!! Tuffy nee hewp!!'

You dash around a few more bushies; it's not far to your den, but you can hear the hoofies behind you. All kinds of scary thinkie place pictures go through your head; if they catch you with these nummies, you'll be in

the biggest trouble ever! It's not far to the den, but you can't go any faster cause you'll drop the nummies! Then your tummy babbies won't get what they need, and it might lead them right to you!

'Whewe day go?'

'Dis way!! Huwwy up dumme!!'

Not far now; round this bushie, past the small forever sleepies tree, there! You run inside and go right down the bottom. As quick as you can, you dump the nummies in the hidie holes and curl up in the nestie. If anyone comes in, it's better to look like you're asleep.

'Whewe dat dumme go!?'

The voices are outside, but they're not close to the den.

'Nu knu! Yu go dat way!'

The voices and hoofie steps go away; for a moment you think it's the end of it, but it's not. Your Special friend comes back, but not long after you hear more voices outside; scary voices.

'Wat happen? Am dewe bad fwuffies in dah safe pwace?!'

'Tuffy nu knu Smawty!'

'Yu bettah find oud dumme!!!'

'Y-yes Samwty!!'

'Bestest tuffy!!'

'Yes, Smawty!'

'Go tu nesties an ask hewd if day see anyting! NAO!!'

Both of you lie still and pretend to be asleep, and hope they don't come to your den. After a while though,

'Yu fwuffies tawk tu Bestest tuffy nao!'

'Speciaw fwend stay hewe.' Your Special friend says in the smallest wordies he has. He gets out of the nestie and walks up the tunnel out of the den. 'Yes, nice Beste-'

'Yu see anyting?'

'W-wat Bestest-'

'Yu see anyting?!'

'Wai Bestest tuffy so-'

'Shud up dumme!!' The Bestest Toughie screams. 'Dewe am munstahs in fowest, an cud be bad fwuffies in safe pwace!!! Did dummehs SEE ANYTING!?!'

'Nu! Fwuffy nu see anyting nice Bestest tuffy!!' Your Special friend cries. 'Nu see anyting! Was sweepies! Fwuffy nu wie!!'

It's quite for a long time; somehow it's worse than the screams. You use your hear places really hard to figure out what's happening. After a while, your Special friend comes back down to the nestie and curls up; you notice he's making sad water and trying not to cry.

'Am Speciaw fwend otay?'

'*Sob* Yes Speciaw fwend,' he says. '*Sniff* am jus *sob* jus scawdies.'

You lean over and give him big huggies; 'Id am otay Speciaw fwend, meanies nu am hewe nu mowe.' Stupid meanies; you wish you could give all of the worstest sorries hoofies. Maybe when your babbies are all big and strong, you can!

####

There are only a few times in your life when you've been as mad as you are right now!! Some are for yourself; you should have done *much more* the first time there were screams about monsters in the forest! It's happened again, and nummies were stolen from a nummie den!! You weren't sure the first time, but you and some other fluffies checked all the nummie dens extra careful. Now you're sure nummies were stolen the first time too!

The question is, who did it? The obvious answer is bad fluffies. It makes sense; some stayed in the forest and screamed to distract the toughies, and the rest came in and stole nummies. There are plenty of dummy fluffies who don't know how to get ready for the cold times and go around trying to steal nummies smart fluffies like you and your herd find. But, a lot doesn't fit.

The nummie finders and lookie fluffies haven't seen many strange fluffies, and none close to the safe place. You'd know if anywhere close enough to do something like this, especially if they knew where the nummie dens were! The more you use your thinkie place, the more it tells you fluffies from another herd couldn't have done this.

You get a tight, sharp feel in your tummy, and even more mad when you realise it had to be a fluffy from the herd!! It makes you want to scream! Whoever they are, how DARE THEY!!! Steal nummies the herd worked so hard to find, and maybe not leave enough to make it to the end of the cold times?!? When you find who did this, you'll rip their tummy sketties out in front of EVERYONE!!!

Ok ok, calm down; you'll never find who did it while you're still mad. Even worse, you might get the wrong fluffy. No, you need to be calm; you need to be smart, like the Smarty you are. It's the only way you'll figure out who did this and why. Part of you, a little part, still hopes it was fluffies from another herd, but either way, *nothing* will stop you finding out!

But before you can really get into it, there are things to take care of.

#

Once the next brighttime starts, you gather the Bestest toughie and your Next bestest toughies. To make sure no one hears, you meet in the forest.

'Dewe am nyu wuwes fow tuffies nao,' you tell them. 'Tuffies dat keep nummie dens safe nu can weave dem nu mowe! Day stay at nummie dens tiww Smawty, ow Bestest tuffy, ow Nex bestest tuffies say. Yu undewstan?' They all nod. 'Gud. Bestest tuffy,'

'Yes, Smawty.'

'Hewd nu can make nyu tuffies tiww we find bad fwuffies.'

'Am dat gud ting Smawty?' He says. 'Hewd nee mowe tuffies fow coud-'

'Tuffies nee find bad fwuffies!!' You yell. 'Den can make nyu tuffies gain!'

'Yes Smawty,' He nods. 'Bestest tuffy undewstan.'

'Gud.' You look at all of them. 'Teww dah tuffies wat day nee du, an keep wookin!' You look each of them in the see places. 'Yu see ow heaw sumtin dat nu am wight, yu teww Smawty! Undewstan?'

'Yes, Smawty.' They say.

You nod. 'Go back tu hewd.'

#####

'Wai tuffies nu showin fwuffies how tu be tuffies nu mowe?' You ask your friend. When you woke up, you went to the Bestest toughie's den, like you've done for the last lot of brighttimes. This time though, he told you there'd be no more toughie games or lessons for a while. 'Du day nu wike soon tuffies nu mowe?'

'Nu,' your friend says. 'Daddeh say dah Smawty nee aww tuffies fow sumtin, bud he nu say wat.'

'Am day wookin fow does bad fwuffies?'

'Tink day cud be, bud fwuffy nu knu.'

'*Sigh*' You flop down on the ground. A little bit after, you see the Smarty's baby on this way somewhere. Of course, Flower with is with him. 'Maybe cud ask Smawty's babbeh?'

'Nu. Smawty nu teww him anyting boud id.'

'Wai?'

'Cause he nu teww him anyting boud it,' your friend says again. 'Smawty nu nee say wai.'

'Den wat fwuffies du nao?' You ask.

'Cud hewp famiwies an oda fwuffies fow coud times. Ow,' he looks at you, 'Fwuffy an Big Wed can pway tuffy game gain!'

You get back on your hoofies and smile at your friend.

#####

Maybe if they hadn't seen you the last time you took nummies from the nummie den, you could have done it a few more times! You're a little mad at yourself, but you're more mad at the toughie who saw you, whoever it

was. Why didn't they go to stop the monsters? Why stay in the safe place if someone says there are monsters in the forest?

Now the toughies outside the nummie dens won't leave until another toughie says they can go, and there's always one outside each. You're back too sneaking extra nummies when you're in the forest, and when you have to use the poopie and pee-pee place in the darktime. That's hard, though, because there are more toughies around in the darktime. Looks like your Special friend's trick worked *too* well.

#

'Aftah dis bwighttime, we nu wook fow twee fwuff nu mowe.'

'Wai?' You ask your friend.

'Dah Smawty wan aww fwuffies dat can find nummies tu du dat,' she says 'cause bad fwuffies take nummies fwom nummie den.'

'W-weway? Du day, tink id was fwuffies fwom hewd?' You ask.

'Nu tink so. Dewe am wotsa oda hewds in fowest; sum of dem nu am gud!'

Great, they don't think it's you! 'Meanies! Wuby hope tuffies giv dem bad huwties!'

'Fwuffy du tuu,' your friend says. 'Takin nummies when coud times am cummin am wowstest ting can du, sept fow givin babbehs fowewa sweepies!! Bud nu mowe tawkies,' she leads you to a spot in the forest you haven't searched yet. It really pays off; 'Yay! Dewe wotsa twee fwuff hewe!' Your friend runs to a tree and pulls off a bunch of fluff, then puts it on her back. 'Cum on Wuby fwend, get sum twee fwuff!'

You pick out a tree and grab some fluff from it, then some more and more again. By the time you and your friend have gotten all of it, you both look like you're made of tree fluff! You carry it back to the safe place to share it out, then go back for more. After a few more trips, you and your friend get some nummies (under very close watch from the toughies), then find a bushie to rest under. Part way through, she asks you a question that gives you bad scardies.

'Am Wuby fwend otay?'

'Uh-huh. Wai fwend tink Wuby nu am otay?'

'Cause Wuby's tumme hoo biggah.'

Oh no!

'Du Wuby fwend hav tumme sickies?'

'Uhh...' come on thinkie place, make something up! 'Uhh... id am cause, cause Wuby am makin mowe fwuff!'

'Huh? Wat Wuby fwend mean?'

'Wuby am makin mowe fwuff so... So nu get coudies when owd times cum!' Ok, this isn't so hard.

'Can Wuby fwend show fwend how du dat?' She ask. 'Dat wud be bestest ting ewa! Can show aww dah hewd how du id! Dat cud be yuw gud ting fow hewd!!'

Uh-oh. 'Ahh, Wuby wub du dat, bud...' Do your job thinkie place, 'Wuby nu can.'

'Huh? Wai?' Your friend almost sounds mad.

'Cause, Wuby nu knu how du id.'

'Bud, how? Fwuffy nu undewstan! How can Wuby du dat, bud nu knu how?'

'Id am cause... Cause of speciaw miwkies dat Mummah giv tu Wuby when was onwy wittwe babbeh!'

Your friend looks at you funny. 'Speciaw miwkies?'

'Uh-huh! Mummah make dem wif speciaw magic nummies!'

'Du Wuby knu wat kind of nummies? Maybe can find dem in dah fowest!'

'Wuby am sowwie fwend, bud Wuby nu knu!' You put on a saddie look. 'Mummah was gun teww Wuby wat nummies she make speciaw miwkies wif, bud Mummah Mummah make hew go way befowe she cud! Wuby am sowwies fwend.'

'Nu be saddies Wuby fwend, dat nu am yuw fauwt.' She gives you some huggies. '*Gasp* Fwuffy knu; if Wuby teww hewd boud id, den aww dah hewd can wook fow does nummies!'

'Ah, yes fwend! Bud nu tiww cowl times am ovah!' You tell her. 'Nu am safe fow hewd tu du dat in cowl times!'

'Oh, oday. Wuby fwend am wight!' She says. 'We teww hewd aftah cowl times; den hewd hav bettah wawmies fow nex cowl times!'

'Dat am wight fwend,' you say. 'Nao, wets go find mowe nummies fow hewd!'

#####

After next brighttime nummies, you and Ruby went back to the forest to look for nummies to replace what the bad fluffies took. There wasn't much though; all the berries are gone, so it's down to ground nummies and long grassie nummies. Even then, you didn't find much. It would be nice if you could eat tree fluff, there's plenty! No, that wouldn't work; how would you make nesties warm then?

When you and Ruby get back to the safe place and put the nummies you found in one of the nummie dens, it's the soon darktime. You both grab some nummies and leave, but Ruby goes to sit with her Special friend. Fair enough, she spent all brighttime with you after all. You walk around the safe place and try to decide if you want to have your darktime nummies out here, or in the mare den. In the end, you settle for a spot under a little bushie.

While you have you darktime nummies, you can't help but think about the special nummies Ruby's mummah used to make the special milkies. What would they look like? Could they be a kind of berries? What about fruit? You really, really hope they're not mushrooms! Some are good, but most give fluffies really bad tummy hurties. Some even give forever sleepies, the worstest forever sleepies!!

As you enjoy your nummies under the bushie, you notice a fluffy in the corner of your see place. When you look properly, you see it's a toughie! You get a few scardies, but not much cause he's nicer than some of the others. 'Hewwo nice Tuffy.'

'Hewwo,' he says. 'Fwuffy see anyting wong ow bad?'

'Wike wat?'

'Bad fwuffies neaw dah safe pwace, tawkies in dah dawktime, does tings.'

'Hmm, nu nice Tuffy, Fwuffy nu see anyting wike dat.'

'Dat am otay. Bai.' He turns to go, but as he does your thinkie place reminds you about the special nummies Ruby mentioned, and says you need to tell the toughie. Should you? Ruby said you shouldn't tell the herd about them until the cold times are over. But, it doesn't make any sense! The toughies and the Smarty are some of the smartest fluffies in the herd, if not the whole world! If any fluffies can figure out what those nummies might be, it'll be them! It'll be such a big help for the herd!

'Wait!'

The toughie turns back.

'Fwuffy nee teww yu sumtin!'

####

'Fwuffy wan widies!' Your littlest baby says to your wingie baby. 'Widies!'

'Otay!' Your wingie baby gets down on his tummy, and his little brother crawls onto his back. Your wingie baby stands up and trots around in circles.

'Yay! Widies! Wub widies!!' Your littlest baby cheers. Your white and orange baby follows them in case your littlest baby falls off. It makes you a little happy when you watch them, which you really need. When he was born, you though your littlest baby was a dummy baby. But when your Special friend cleaned him, she said he was good. You weren't sure, but your littlest baby grew up like his brother and sister, and all the other babbies.

You're happy your littlest baby has grown up properly; he tries so hard to do good for the herd, and help out around the den. The ride game is good too, cause it helps make your wingie baby stronger; it'll help a lot when it's time for him to be the Smarty. And, it's also nice they have something to make them happy.

'Smawty.'

You turn your head and see the Bestest toughie; you get a few tight feels in your tummy, because this never means good news.

'Smawty be back soon.' You get up and follow the Bestest toughie to some bushies. 'Wat am id?'

'Dewe am tuffy dat nee tawkies tuu yu.' He says.

'Am id boud dah nummie dens?'

'Cud be.' The Bestest toughie leads you to the toughie.

'Wat yu wan teww Smawty?' You ask him.

He takes a breath before he starts; 'Id am boud dat fwuffy Wuby.'

#

What the toughie told you didn't do much, not at first. The longer your thinkie place worked on it though, the more scared and mad you got. The more your thinkie place works with what else you know about Ruby, what's happen the last couple of darktimes, what you've heard about her moving out of the mare den, and...

'Nu...'

You don't want to believe it. You don't want to believe a fluffy could be such a dummy, and you couldn't see it sooner! The same feel you get when you have to make sickie waters creeps up from your tummy, and your head gets fuzzy. Before you can stop it, your thinkie place flashes up the one old thinkie place picture you want to forget more than all the others.

You see the old Smarty, your Daddeh, come into the den and tell your Mummah they have to-

'Smawty?'

You turn and look at the Bestest toughie.

'Wat Smawty wan du?'

Normally you hate it when someone, even him, interrupts when you're using your thinkie place; but this isn't normal. He brings you back, away from the old thinkie place picture. Everything seems clear, and you know exactly what to do.

'Teww Nex bestest tuffies go tu Smawty's den when hewd am sweepies.'

####

When the sky ball goes away, and the darktime starts, you and your Special friend go back to the den and cuddle up on the nestie.

'How wong tiww tummeh babbehs cum oud?' He asks.

'Wuby nu tink id be wong time Speciaw fwend,' you tell him. 'Day am movin wots; dat mean day gettin biggah an stwongah!'

'Fwuffy so happies.' He shifts around and puts his face against your tummy. 'Fwuffy can feew dem Speciaw fwend!' He says. 'Yu tink day can hewe Fwuffy?'

'Nu knu,' you tell him.

'Fwuffy wan twy. Hewwo tummeh babbehs,' he says to them. 'Am yuw Daddeh! Nu can wait tu see you!'

You get really happy; he'll be the bestest daddeh the herd's ever seen!! You'll be the bestest family, with the bestest smartest babbies! Maybe one of your babbies will turn out to be strong and smart enough to be the new Smarty! You can't wait!!

Your Special friend shifts back to were he was and cuddles up close. 'Wub yu speciaw fwend,' he says.

'Wuby wub yu tuu Speciaw fwend.' You nuzzle him for a while, then close your see places and settle down to sleep. Almost as soon as your see places are closed, you have sleepie pictures of your babbies; you see them when they're little, when they're bigger, and when they make the dummy Smarty go away forever.

#####

After your family goes to sleep, you wait by the entrance of the den for the Bestest toughie and Next bestest toughies to arrive. The darktime sky ball isn't here, so it's really dark. But, with what has to happen this darktime, it's for the best. While you wait, you try to keep your thinkie place quiet; if you let it work and talk to you about everything, or show you the old pictures-

'Daddeh?'

You whip around fast with your hoofies ready, but it's your wingie baby. He looks scared, but goes on.

'Wat am wong Daddeh? Wai yu nu in fwuff piwe?'

You look at him for a while and try to think of what to say. He's big, but not big enough to know about this; not all of it at least. 'Daddeh nee go du sumtin,' you tell him.

'Am Daddeh gun giv dah fwuffies dat take nummies way sowwy hoofies an hwties?'

'...Yes.'

'Can Fwuffy cum tuu? Fwuffy wan hewp Da-'

'Nu.'

'Bud-'

'Nu! Babbeh stay hewe!' He's a good baby, a good fluffy. But he still sees being Smarty as a game too much to let him in on this. He, he doesn't understand yet.

'Pwease Daddeh, Fwuffy wan hewp!'

'Wat am wong Speciaw fwend?'

You look up and see your Special friend out of the nestie. 'Smawty nee go du sumtin Speciaw fwend,' you tell her. 'Take wingie babbeh back to nestie.'

Your Special friend's doesn't know what you're about to do, and she won't ask. But, she's known you long enough to know when you're about to do, bad things.

She nods and looks at your wingie baby. 'Babbeh, yu nee cum back tu nestie wif Mummah.'

'Bud-'

'Nao babbeh,' she tells him. Daddeh be back soon.'

After another little bit, your wingie baby gives in and follows your Special friend back to the nestie, but not before he runs over and gives you some huggies. 'Be cawefuw Daddeh.'

You watch them walk back down the tunnel into the den. 'Daddeh wiww be, Babbeh.'

'Smawty.'

You turn back around; they're here. It's time to get this done. 'Fowwow Smawty.'

#

You stand at the way into the den for a while after you get there. Part of it's to get ready, but also to figure out who can fit. You won't have any problem, but the Bestest toughie won't fit.

'Bestest tuffy stay hewe,' you say. 'Nu wet any oda fwuffies in, ow oud, tiww Smawty am dun.' You turn to your Next bestest toughies; 'Yu an yu stay wif Bestest tuffy. An yu,' you look at the last one, 'cum wif Smawty.' He nods, then you take a deep breath and walk into the den. You go slow, careful not to wake them until they can't get out. Still, it isn't long until you're in the den proper. It's dark, but your see places work well enough that you can see Ruby and her Special friend curled up on their nestie.

Now you're up close, and there's no mistaking it; special milkies and magic nummies, how dummy does she think you are? There's only one thing in the world which makes a mare's tummy get big like Ruby's is. Again, your thinkie place asks how you didn't notice, but you shut it up; there's no time for that.

'Wake up.'

They stir a little.

'Wake up nao, dummehs.'

They shift a little more and start to murmur and yawn. Ruby's the first to wake up. '*Yawn*' she looks around the den. 'Who am dat? Wai make Wu-' Once she sees you, she shuts up.

'Wat am wong Speciaw fwend?' Her Special friend looks around too and stops cold when he sees you. Even in the dark, you see the biggest scardies ever on his face. You look at the two of them for a moment, and fight the erg to kick and stomp their heads until there's nothing but boo-boo juice.

'So, yu wie tu Smawty?' you tell Ruby. 'Yu say was gun fowwow Smawty's wuwes, an nu be bad fwuffy gain. Bud yu wie.'

'N-nu, Wuby nu wie! Wuby nu knu wat Smawty say-'

'Yu stiww tink Smawty am dumme?' you cut her off. 'Tink cud bweak wuwes, an Smawty nu find oud?! Steaw hewd's nummies,' you look at a hole in the side of the den wall with some grassies poking out of it, 'an hav babbehs when Smawty say nu mowe babbehs tiww coud times am ovah?!' You stare at Ruby. 'Wuby am dumme; Smawty find oud. Smawty awways find oud.'

All sorts of things go over Ruby's face, mostly scardies. But then, to your surprise, she gets mad. 'Nu! Wuby nu am dumme, Smawty am dumme! Wuby find oud how get past dumme Smawty's wuwes!' She gets

louder. 'Wuby make Speciaw fwend happies when hewd was big meanies tu him, an Wuby an Speciaw fwend find oud how twick dummeheh meanie tuffies an take nummies!

'Wuby nu am Dummeheh, am Smawty! Am mowe Smawty dan Smawty am, an babbehs am gun be bestest pwettiest and Smawtest babbehs dummeheh hewd ewa hav!! Day gun be Smawty aftah yu dummeheh!!!' You can't believe this; she puffs her cheeks out at you, then smiles. 'Wuby beat yu dummeheh!! Yu wose!!!'

For a moment, you don't know what to do; there's so much to be mad at, you don't know where to begin! Then, your hoofies decides for itself; before you know it, you've raised it up and-

SMACK

'SCREEEEEE!'

Ruby curls ups, and tries to cover her head with her leggies.

'NUUUU!!!' Her Special friend jumps up and tackles you. He manages to get a few hits in, but you're a much better fighter, and have him on the ground and under your hoofies before your Next Bestest toughie can join in. You've got Ruby's Special friend pinned, and you want to stomp his neck until he goes forever sleepies! You're so mad; after you took him and his family into the herd, and kept him around even though all he can do is dig poopie holes, he goes and does this!!

'Dummeheh meanie!!'

You lift your head and look at Ruby; she still has her leggies over her head, but glares at you.

'Wuby nu cawe if Dummeheh Smawty giv huwties!! Wuby stiww beat yu; gun hav babbehs soon, an yu nu can du anyting! Hewd nu wet yu giv dem huwties!!'

You almost want to laugh; Ruby's so dumb she doesn't know how big of a dummy she really is, or how much trouble she's in. 'Dummeheh Wuby am wong,' you say. 'Hewd nu am hewe nao, an Smawty du *anyting* tu keep hewd safe!' Before she can talk, you call back up the tunnel; 'Nex bestest tuffies cum hewe nao!' They come into the den right away; it's crowded down here, but that's the least of anyone's problems. 'Nex bestest tuffies,' you look Ruby right in the see places, 'make hew tummeheh babbehs cum oud.' Before she can get away, your Next bestest toughies run to either side of her. They line up with her tummy, then,

'SCREEEE!'

one stomps on her tummy, and the other head butts it.

'NUUU!!!' Wuby scrabbles at the ground and tries to get away, but your last Next Bestest toughie runs over and pins her down. 'NU HUWT TUMMEH BABBEHS!!! SCREEEEEE!!'

'SPECIAW FWEND!!' The stallion tries to get up, but you've got him pinned. He can't get away, but you stomp him in the chest and tummy a few times to make sure. '*Wheeze wheeze, kahff...'

'NU SOWWIE HOOFIES!! AM BAD FOW TUMMEH BABBEHS!!!'

You stare at Ruby. It can't be much longer.

'MUMMAH! MUUMMAHH SABE WUBY!! SCREEEE!!'

Any moment now.

'SCREEEE!! EEEEEEE!! BIGGEST POOPIEEEEEEEE!!!'

'Nu stahp!' you tell the toughies. 'Get dem aww oud!'

'NUUUUU!! BABBEHS TUU WITTWE!!! STAY IN BABBEHS! SQUEEEEE!!'

Your Next best toughies kick, stomp and headbutt Ruby's tummy. You can't see what's happening, but you can smell Tummy water and boo-boo juice. It's working.

'SQUEEEEEEE!! NUUHUHUUUU BAAABEEHHSSS!!'

'Go back tu nestie nao, ow Bestest tuffy giv yu owgies! NAO!!'

You can't help but wonder who's out there, not that it matters.

'Smawty!' One of the Next bestest toughies yells. 'Tink aww hew tummeh babbehs am oud!!'

'NUUUUU!!!'

'Nex bestest tuffies can stahp nao.' They give Ruby one last kick each; one of them kicks her in the chest, which makes her screams a little quieter. They get off her and walk back outsidie. Once Ruby's free, she turns around to see her babbies.

'Babbehs *kaff, hurk* babbehs!!' You watch as she scoops up a couple in her leggings and gives them huggies, like it can fix them. 'Babbehs! Babbehs pwease be otay! Make chiwpies fow Mummah, pwease!!' You can see some of the babes from where you are; they're pink and covered in tummy water, with no fluff at all.

Ruby starts to push the babbies she has against her tummy. 'Go back in tummeh babbehs, back in tummeh!!' Her Special friend struggles more, so you let him go; there's nothing he can do anyway. He crawls and stumbles over; maybe he's trying to decide if he should give huggies to Ruby or their babbies.

'NUUUUU!!!' Ruby shrieks. 'BAAABEEHHSSS!! NUUUHUHUHUUUUU!!!'

There's so much more you could do to her, but you've made your point. When the brighttime comes you'll kick them out of the herd, but they can spend the rest of the darktime in here with the babbies they wanted so much. You nod at your Next Bestest toughie and turn to leave.

'WUBY HACHEW! HAACHEWW HUHUUUU!!!'

Like you've ever cared who hates you.

'DUMMEH SMAWTY AM MUNSTAH!!! MUNSTAH!!! YU MAKE BABBEHS GO FOWEWA SWEEPIES!!! AM YUW FAUWT!! YUW FAUWT!!!'

The tingle starts in your leggings, and your hear places start to buzz. You shake your head and try to keep-

'YU MUNSTAH!! YU MAKE BABBEHS GO FOWEWA SWEEPIES!!!! YUW FAUWT HUHUUUU!!!! HACHEW!!!'

The tingles and buzz gets stronger and louder, then things get slow and blurry. You stop, but don't notice until your Next Bestest toughie asks what you're doing. You turn around and walk back to Ruby and her Special friend, though it doesn't feel like you're the one doing it. Before you know it, you're right in front of her. Ruby turns; you think she screams, but you can't hear it. Next thing you know, you rear up as far as you can and bring your hoofies down on Ruby..

'SCREEEEEE!'

You knock her to the ground; before she can get away you rear up and bring your hoofies down again. There's a snap, and a loud scream!

'NUUUUUUU!!!'

You sort of feel Ruby's Special friend crash into you, but for some reason it hardly does anything. He tries again, but then your Next Bestest toughie pushes him away. While your next Bestest toughie deals with Ruby's Special friend, you rear up and stomp her.

'SCREEEEEE'

again,

'EEEEEE!

and again,

'SKREEEE-AKFF-EEEEEE'

and again. The more you stomp her, the more the blur in your thinkie place clears. As it does, maddies come in! Stupid dummy mare; if she'd listened to you,

STOMP

if she'd followed your rules,

STOMP

if she did what she was told to do,

STOMP STOMP

none of this would have happened! This isn't your fault!

STOMP STOMP STOMP

Not your fault!!

STOMP STOMP STOMP

Not your fault, not your fault, not your fault!!

STOMP STOMP STOMP

It wasn't your fault!! It wasn't your fault!! IT WASN'T YOUR FAULT!!!

STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP STOMP

IT WASN'T YOUR FAU-

'SMAWTY!!!!'

The scream breaks through somehow, but it's still a few moments before you stop. Things go back to normal; you notice how hard you're breathing, the wet spots under your see places, and how loud Ruby's Special friend is crying.

'SPECIAW FWEND! SPECIAW FWEND NU!!'

You look at Ruby and... Oh, what a mess. Usually it takes barkie monsters and forever sorry sticks to make a fluffy look like this. Wow, there's a lot of boo-boo juice here...

'Nuuuhuhuhu! Speciaw fwend!' Ruby's Special friend crawls over and gives her huggies. What a dummy thing to do; huggies can't fix this. 'Uuuhuhuuuu pwease!! Nu be fowewa sweepies!! Fwuffy nu wan be awone gain!!' You better fix this; you rear up one last time, and stomp on his neck.

SNAP

There we go, all quiet again; now you can use you thinkie place properly. 'Nex Bestest tuffy.'

'*Gulp* Y-yes Smawty?'

'Wets go. Dis am ovah nao.' You lead him out of the den, where the others are waiting. They all look scardies.

'Smawty?' the Bestest toughie asks. 'Am, ewyting otay nao?'

'Yes.' You tell him, 'Dis am ovah.' You go to leave, but then you think of something; you can't leave the den open. It's a mess down there, and the little fluffies might see it. 'Tuffies, make dis den go way.' After a moment, they run to the ground on top of the den. They jump up and down and stomp the ground as hard as they can. It takes a little bit, but the ground starts to fall down. The toughies get out of the way and the ground turns into a big wide hole.

There, all fixed; everything is fine, and you can go to sleep. You turn and head for your den.

'Smawty, wait!'

You turn back and look at the Bestest toughie. 'Wat?'

'Dewe am... Yu hav boo-boo juice on yu.'

You look at one of your leggies, then smell it to make sure. Hmm, he's right. Well, easy fix. 'Tank yu Bestest tuffy.' You say. 'Yu aww go back tu den nao.' You turn and walk to a spot on the long water where really dirty fluffies wash. You get in and wash as best you can; you wouldn't want to get boo-boo juice in the nestie after all. It takes a while, but you get it all off and walk back to your den.

Your family's asleep when you get there, so you're extra careful when you get in the fluff pile. You close your see places, but before you go to sleep-

'Daddeh?'

Hmm, it's your white and orange baby. 'Yes Babbah?'

'Am, am Daddeh otay?'

You look at her. 'Yes Babbah. Go sweepies gain.'

'Bud, bud Daddeh nu sound otay; an, smeww wike-

'Go sweepies gain Babbah. Id am sweepies time nao.'

'O-otay, Daddeh...'

'Gud babbah.' You close your see places again, and try to go to sleep. It's been a very long brighttime, and you need a good sleep.

A good sleep.

Chapter Eighteen

'Nu Speciaw fwend!' Mummah screams. 'Pwease nu make Fwuffy du dis! Babbahs nu am-'

'Shud up dumme!!' Daddeh cuts her off. 'Bestest babbah nee miwkies fow gwow big an stwong, so can be nex Smawty!'

'Bud babbahs nu am nummies! Nu wan eat mowe babbahs, pwease!!!'

'Peep peep!!' Deep in Mummah's fluff, your sissie holds on to you as hard as she can. 'Hewp Bwudda! Peep!! Babbah nu wan be nummies!!'

You try to talk, but your wordies are all fuzzy and dumb.

Smack 'Screeee!!'

He... Daddeh gave Mummah sorry-

'Dumme mawe eat dumme babbah, ow Smawty giv yu wowstest stompies den make yu eat dumme babbah!!'

Please don't do this Mummah! Not again!! You beg and scream with all your might, but it's like you're not even there.

'Huuuhuuuu *sob* Babbah huhuhuuu!' The soft, warm barrier around you and your sissie relaxes, and she starts to panic.

'PEEP PEEP!! NUUU!' Your Sissie holds you with all her strength; if she doesn't let go, she can stop Mummah from-

'Huuuhuuuu Mummah am so sowwies Babbah...'

'SCREEEEEE!!!' Your Sissie's scream hurts your little hear places! You watch her squirm and wriggle in Mummah's nummie place.

'NU! NU NUM SISSIE!!' You try to jump and grab hold of her, but your leggings won't do what you tell them! Then, Daddeh plucks you out of Mummah's fluff. 'NUUUU!! NUUUHUUUU!!!' He carries you away, but you can still see it all. Your Sissie struggles to get out of Mummah's nummie place; Mummah puts her on the floor of the den and pins her down. 'SPEEEEEEE!!! NUUUHUUUU!!!' Your Sissie cries and screams; she knows what's about to happen. She lifts her head and looks at you, the fluff under her see places is full of sad-water. 'HEWWP BWUDDA! PEEEP!! BABBEH NU AM NUMMIES!'

'*Sob* Sowwie Babbeh,' Mummah lowers her head. 'Mummah wub yu...'

'SABE BABBEH!! SABE BABEEEEEEEE!!!!' Mummah bites your Sissie on the back. 'SPEEEEEEE!!!! REEEEEEE!!!!' The screams give your hear places the worstest hurties. You watch your Sissie struggle in vain as Mummah bites off a piece of her, chews and swallows.

'Babbeh nu taste pwetty huuhuhuu...'

'SQUEEEEE!!!' Your Sissie looks right in your see places. 'WAI!!! WAI BWUDDA NU SABE SISSIE?!?! SQUEEEEE!!!!'

You shut your see places, but they won't stay closed! They open again and instead of your Sissie, it's one of your friends from the baby den!! 'WAI!!!' He screams as Mummah rips off his leggie. 'WAI FWEND DU DIS!! WAI NU WUB BABBEH?!?!'

No!! You didn't!! You didn't do this!! Your Daddeh forced his mummah and daddeh to-

'SCREEEEEE!!'

You flinch and close your see places. When they open again, 'SCREEEEEE!! REEEEEEE!!!!' No! Not your wingie friend too!! Stop, please!!!

'Uuuuhuhuhuuu am bad Mummah huuu,' Mummah cries. 'Am munstah fwuffy huuu.' She reaches down and closes her nummie place around your wingie friend's head; you can't watch! You close your see paces again and-

'SPEEEEP!'

'PEEP PEEP PEEEEE!! SKREEEEEEEE!!!'

NOOO!!!

'*Sob* Fwuffy am so sowwies Sissie huuhuhuuu *sob* nu wan du dis huhuhuuu!'

Not your Mummah's Sissie's babbies too!! They just come out!! They haven't even had milkies yet!!

'SCREEEEEE!!!'

'NU NUM BABBEH!!'

'MUMMAH!! MUUMMAHHHH!! SQUEEEEE!!!'

'Dummeh babbeh!!'

That's your friend's-

'Yu make Babbah be nummies!! Hachew!!'

'Dummeh bestest babbah make oda babbahs into nummies!'

'Hewd nu hav babbahs nu mowe!! Yu giv aww dah mummah's wowstest heawt huwties!! Yu wowstest babbah!! Yu am Munstah! HACHEW!!!!'

NO! IT WASN'T YOU!!

'DUMMEH BABBEH!!!!'

You didn't mean it!! You didn't mean to be born in the cold times when there weren't enough nummies! You didn't mean to be your Daddeh's bestest baby!! You didn't mean to make him take all the other babbies in the herd and make them into nummie babbies!!

'DUMMEH!!

'MUNSTAH!!'

'HACHEW!!'

'SCREEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!'

MAKE IT STOP!! MAKE IT STOP!!!

'NUUUUUUUUU!!!!!! NU MEAN ID!! NU MEAN ID!! BABBEH AM SOWWIES!! AM SOWWIEESSSS!!!!'

'Speciaw fwend?'

That voice, it's not from-

'Wai Daddeh make woud noisies?!'

'Wakies Daddeh! Pwease be wakies!!

The world starts to shift and blur around the edges, then all of a sudden it goes away, and you're back in the den. But part of you is still in the sleepie picture. 'Nuuuhuhuhu sissie!! Nuuuu!! Nu mean id!! Am sowwies!!!!'

'Speciaw fwend!' Your Special friend wraps her leggings around you, and so do your babbies. 'Id am otay nao Speciaw fwend! Pwease!'

'Daddeh! Daddeh pwease nu be scawdies nu mowe!!'

'Dummeh scawdies, weave Daddeh awone!!'

Your family's huggies snap you out of it at last, and you can tell what's real again. You feel lots of sad water under your see places, you're breathing like you ran from one side of the forest to another, and you... You need to get out! Get out!!

'Daddeh? Daddeh wait!'

'Speciaw fwend nu!'

Your family tries to stop you, but you shake them off. 'Wet Smawty GO!' you yell. 'WET GO!' You break free and run out of the den into the dark.

'Daddeh wait!!' Your wingie baby yells.

'Nu babbeh, stay hewe!!' Your Special friend says. Hopefully, she's quick enough to stop him; you don't want your wingie baby to run around in the dark trying to find you. But, there's only a little bit of you worried about that.

You run out of the safe place into the forest; somehow your thinkie place reminds you not to go too far in so you don't get lost. You find a patch of bushies and dive under them to catch your breath, and hide. In the bushies, you breathe lots and lots to make the scardies go away, and wait for everything go back to normal. But, you can't quite manage it. As your scardies go away, saddies replace them; they fill every part of you until it's hard to feel anything else.

You can't stop yourself; you curl into a ball and cry. '*Sob* uuuhuhuuuuu *sob* Smawty am so sowwies Sissie huhuhuuu!' Sad water pours from your see places. 'Am so sowwies fwends *sob* huuu am sowwies, Smawty nu mean id huhuhuuu.'

Why did you have to be the bestest baby? Why couldn't it have been you instead of your friends? You instead of your Sissie? Why'd your dummy Daddeh have to put you in Mummah when it was the cold times, and let everyone else have babbies when he *knew there weren't enough nummies!!* Why?!

'*Sob* huhuhuuu.' Your friends, your Sissie, your Mummah's Sissie's babbies. They all went forever sleepies, because of you. Mummah nummed them and turned them into milkies, which Daddeh forced you to drink. He made you *drink them*, because you were his bestest.

Then, after all the nummed babbies and heart hurties, he went and-

'Smawty?'

You lift your head a little.

'Smawty? Smawty whewe am yu?'

'*Sob* H-hewe...'

A few moments later, you hear the bushie get pushed away. You look up and see the Bestest toughie. 'Am Smawty otay?' He asks gently. All you manage is to shake your head. He leans down and hugs you. 'Id am otay fwend,' he says. 'Id am ovah. Bad fwuffies nu am hewe nu mowe. Yuw Daddeh nu am hewe nu mowe. Hewd am safe gain.' You manage to nod. Then, he gets up and looks at you. 'Get up fwend,' he says. 'Dah hewd dah Smawty.' He looks right in your see places. 'Yuw famiwy nee dewe Daddeh.'

He's right. Your Sissie, your friends, they're gone; forever. Making sad water in the bushies, all darktime won't change any of it. At least Daddeh paid for what he did; *you made sure he did*. You nod again and step out of the bushie. '*Sniff* Tank yu, fwend...'

He nods, and together you walk back to the safe place. When you get there it's still quiet; everyone's still asleep, or at least they're pretending to be. Good. You'll have to tell them sometime, but not yet. Your Bestest toughie leads you back to your den. When you get inside your family, hugs you as hard as they can.

'Daddeh am sowwies,' you tell them. 'Nu mean wun way.'

'Id am otay,' your Special friend says. 'Fwuffy an babbehs nu am maddies.'

You nod. 'Daddeh knu.' You look at all of them; 'Famiwy go back tu nestie nao.'

####

Something big happened last darktime.

When you heard the yells and screams, you thought it was a bad sleepie picture. Then, Flower asked 'Wat am dat? W-wai am fwuffies makin woud noises?'

'Am dat dah bad fwuffies?' Runny asked. 'Ow *gulp* m-munstahs?'

'Daddeh nu knu babbehs,' your Special friend said. 'Jus stay in nestie.' A few moments later, there were more really loud screams. Flower started to cry, so you hugged her into your chest fluff. 'Big Wed,'

'Yes, Daddeh?'

'*Gulp* Fowwow Daddeh.'

Sharp cold feels went through you. 'Whewe Speciaw fwend goin?'

'Nu am gun weave den,' he said, 'jus goin hewe.'

He took Big Red to the front of the den and sat down in front of the tunnel. If there were something scary out there, they'd keep it out of the den. Or at least try. A few little whiles passed, but it felt like a lot more. Finally, you heard a toughie outside.

'Ewyting am otay,' he called into the den, 'dewe am nu munstahs ow bad fwuffies in safe pwace.'

'Tank yu nice Tuffy fwend. Back tu nestie nao Big Wed.'

'Otay...' Big Red almost sounded disappointed he didn't get to fight; that's what worries you about him. You hope if he ever has to fight monsters or bad fluffies, he doesn't regret it. They got back in the nestie, and you all went back to sleep.

#

In the brighttime, everything seems normal, for a little while.

On the way to the nummie dens, you see the Smarty. Something about how he walks and looks gives you a really bad feeling; you look away before he notices. At little bit later you see the Bestest toughie, and he has it too! He doesn't have quite the same look as the Smarty, but there's something there. Is it, scardies? What could make him scared? You try to figure it out, but stare at him a little too long. The Bestest toughie turns his head and looks you right in the see places.

'Wat?'

Your hear places hide, and you barely manage to not lie down on your tummy. 'N-nuting nice Bestest tuffy!'

He looks at you for a little bit longer, then walks away. Your Special friend comes over and hugs you; 'Am Speciaw fwend otay?'

'Wat happen Speciaw fwend? Wai dah Smawty an Bestest tuffy wook so... so...' You don't have the wordies for it.

'Nu knu Speciaw fwend, bud nu ask dem,' Your Special friend nudges you. 'Cum on, wets jus get nummies.' You get some brighttime nummies and take them to a spot near the den. While you have them, Runny and Big Red talk about last darktime.

'Id was bad fwuffies,' Big Red says. 'Day du dis befowe; day make woud noises, den twy steaw nummies. Dat am wat fwends say.'

'Dewe nu bad fwuffies!' Runny tells him. 'Daddeh an Wunnie nu see any oda fwuffies in fowest.'

'Yu nu see aww dah fowest dumme!'

'Nu tawkies wike dat!' You say, but neither of them pays attention.

'Oda nummies an wookie fwuffies nu see oda fwuffies tuu dumme!' Runny yells. 'Was jus fwuffies havin bad sweepie pictuwes.'

'Den wai Smawty wook so maddies?'

'He awways wook maddies!!'

'Nu tawkies wike dat babbehs!!' You yell. Big Red and Runny stop and look at you. 'Nu make make meanie tawkies!'

'Sowwie Mummah,' Runny says.

'Big Wed nu mean id.'

You're about to make them say sorry to one another when,

'Hav fwuffies seen Wuby?'

You turn and see a green mare. 'Huh?'

'Hav yu seen Wuby fwend?' She says with a few more scardies. 'Nu can find Wuby fwend! She awways hav bwighttime nummies wif fwuffy!'

'Sowwies,' your Special friend says. 'Fwuffy an famiwy nu see hew.'

'*Sniff* Tank yu...' The mare says, then walks away.

You look at your Special friend. 'Wat tink happen Speciaw fwend?'

For a moment, he stays quiet. 'Nu... Nu knu.'

Your thinkie place says there's something he didn't tell you. You want to go further, but can't bring yourself to do it. Instead, you try to ignore it and focus on your nummies. Not long after the mare leaves, some little fluffies come over.

'Wunnie!'

'Wat?'

'Dis way, huwwy!'

'Wai?'

'Jus huwwy!!'

Runny gets up and follows his friends to wherever they're going. Part of you worries a little, but Runny's not a little baby anymore; he can take care of himself. The rest of you finish brighttime nummies and get ready to do your jobs. You're pretty excited to get to yours; a few of brighttimes ago, some mares got together and said the safe baby place should be fixed, so it's ready for when the cold times are over. The Smarty didn't agree at first but then said yes, so long as all they did was get the big branch out and clean up a little.

One of your friends asked if you wanted to join in and you said yes. Working in the safe baby place was great fun, and you want it to be fixed. Flower found out and asked to join in too, and you said she could. It'll be nice to do something with her since you haven't had many chances lately.

'Mummah, how fwuffies gun get big bwanchie oud of safe babbeh pwace?' She asks while you walk over.

'Hmm, Mummah nu knu Fwowah. Bud Mummah's fwends say sum tuffies am gun hewp.'

'Dat am gud ting,' Flower says. Then she asks 'Am Mummah an Daddeh gun hav mowe babbehs when cowl times am ovah?'

'Hmm...' You haven't thought about having more babbies, or talked about it with your Special friend. Now that Flower mentions it... Well, the biggest poopies and the, other things, weren't fun. But all the stuff after was lots of fun, even though it was hard work. You wouldn't mind doing it again; actually, you'd love to, especially since your Special friend can do it with you this time!

'Mummah? Wai nu taw-'

'An jus tinkin Fwowah.' You say. 'Mummah tink hav mowe babbehs. Jus hav ask Daddeh boud id.'

'Otay. Maybe Mummah can hav babbehs when Fwowah hav babbehs!' Flower says, 'Den can both be Mummahs!'

It still gives you odd feels to think about Flower having babbies. But, it'll be so much fun to help her be a mummah for the first time. You want to make sure she knows everything you know, and all the stuff you wished you knew when-

'Get way fwom dewe dummehs!!!'

'Fwuffies sowwies!!'

'Nu huwties!!'

You turn your head and see a toughie chase after some little fluffies; it's Runny and his friends! What's going on?

'Wunnie!' You call, but he doesn't respond. Either he can't hear you or doesn't want to stop. He follows his friends around some more bushies, and you lose sight of them. The toughie stops near you. 'Wai nice Tuffy chase does fwuffies?' You ask.

'*Haff haff* day go neaw a den dat nu am safe,' he says. 'Smawty say fwuffies nee stay way, ow id give dem huwties.'

'Otay,' You go to walk away, but Flower keeps talking.

'Wat happen? Wai am dat den nu safe nu mowe?'

'Cause id nu am.' The toughie says.

'Bud wat happen?!' Flower asks again, with scardies this time. 'Wat make den nu safe? Am dah fwuffies dewe otay?! Wat if oda dens-'

'Shu... Stahp makin tawkies!' The toughie looks at Flower and you. 'Tuffy nu can say wat happen; Smawty nu say. Jus teww Tuffy tu keep oda fwuffies way.'

You nod. 'O-otay nice Tuffy. Cum on Fwowah.' You push Flower away from the toughie and lead her to the safe baby place. She asks questions all the way there.

'Wai dat tuffy nu say wat happen? Wai Smawty nu wet him?' Her scardies sound like they're getting worse. 'Wat happen? Am famiwy's den nu safe nu mowe?!'

'Nu Fwowah, den am stiww safe.' Your Special friend knew what he was doing when he made it. Nothing's gone wrong since you've lived there, and it even keeps the sky water out! Most of it at least.

'Huuu...' Flower whines.

'*Sigh* nu cwy Fwowah, ewyting am otay.' You stop and give her a few huggies. 'Nao am time fow fix safe babbeh pwace, an make id bestest safe pwace fow soon babbehs.'

Flower makes some sad water, but nods. '*Sniff* Otay Mummah.'

'Gud Fwowah.' You lead her the rest of the way to the safe baby place and get to work.

#

The work turned out to be harder than you thought it would. The hardest part was getting the big branchie out; the bushies had to be given more hurties, so it's good they can fix themselves. With you and the other mares all working together, you managed to drag the branchie back into the forest. After, you and some others tried to fix the rest of the safe baby place, but the older mares said the bushies had to fix their owwies and hurties first. With nothing more to do, you went to next brighttime nummies.

You sit with some of your friends under one of the trees with your next brighttime nummies and talk about stuff. At first, you talk about the safe baby place, but then someone brings up last darktime.

'Did oda fwuffies heaw noises?'

'Uh-huh,' another mares says.

'Wat tink happen?' The first mare asks.

'Id was does bad fwuffies fwom oda hewd!' Another says. 'Day twied steaw nummies gain, an tuffies giv dem huwties!'

You and some other mares nod. But one, an older one with dark yellow fluff shakes her head. 'Dat nu wat happen.'

'Wat fwuffy mean?' The first mare asks.

'Yeah, how fwuffy knu dat?'

'Tink boud id,' she looks at you all. 'Yu see dat mawe Wuby?'

You're all quiet for a moment; a few mares shake their heads.

'Wat boud dat fwuffy wif dah dummeh weggie who dig dah poopie howes?' More head shaking. 'Id nu was fwuffies fwom oda hewd dat steaw nummies; id was dem.' You and the others are quiet; some get really scared and sad looks on their faces.

'Wat... Wat happen tu dem?' The first mare asks.

The older mare looks at the ground with a sort of sad and mad look on her face. 'Dah Smawty du wat he hav tu.'

A few mares ask her what she means, but she won't say more. No long after, next brighttime nummies ends. You and Flower go help some fluffies with their dens and nesties, but something about what the old mare said bothers you. When you think about it more, you get some scardies, the heavy kind which sits in your tummy all brighttime. You try to ignore it and get on with your work, but it's hard.

Later on in the brighttime, you see the Smarty again. When you do, the scardies in your tummy get worse. You don't know how you figure it out, but you know he had something to do with what happened, and it wasn't nice.

#

The next brighttime, you're coming back from helping a friend with her nestie when the call goes out.

'Dah Smawty wan say sumtin!'

Everyone stops what they're doing and goes to the talkie place. When you get there, the Smarty's on his rock. Your Special friend and Flower find you after a little bit, but Big Red and Runny must be somewhere else. As soon as the herd's in place, it starts.

'Hewd wisten tu Smawty! Smawty knu hewd makin tawkies bound wat happen two bwighttimes go. Smawty am gun say wat happen!' The Smarty pauses for a moment, and you think you see him take a big breath.

'Two bwighttimes go, Smawty find oud who was takin nummies fwom nummie dens! Id nu was fwuffies fwom oda hewd, id was bad fwuffies in hewd; dah poopie howe diggah, an dah dummech mawe Wuby!'

There are gasps all around.

'Day bwoke big wuwes; day steaw nummies, an...' the Smarty stops again. You see him take a deep breath. 'An day twy hav babbehs when dah coud times was cummin!!'

More gasps from the herd, and a few cries of "dummechs" and "bad fwuffies."

'Smawty teww dem tu get oud of hewd!' The Smarty yells, 'Bud day twy tu giv Smawty an tuffy huwties an fowewa sweepies! So, Smawty had tu giv dem fowewa sweepies!!!'

The whole herd goes quiet; no one even moves.

'Smawty had du id,' he says. 'Day make hewd nu safe!'

'Wat boud dewe babbehs?' A fluffy somewhere in front says.

'Wat boud dem?'

'S-smawty say dat dummechs twy hav babbehs. Wat, wat Smawty du tu-'

'Smawty did wat had tu!' The Smarty cuts off the fluffy. 'Smawty nee keep hewd safe!! Id am easy dummechs; nu bweak wuwes, nu get huwties!! Wat wuwes du!?!' He yells.

'Wuwes keep hewd safe!' You say, along with everyone.

'Wat day du!?!'

'Wuwes keep hewd safe!!'

'Dat am wight!!' The Smarty stares at the herd for a long time. After a while, he relaxes. 'Dat am aww.' He jumps off his rock and walks away. A few moments later, the herd breaks up and goes their separate ways.

You walk back to the den with Flower and your Special friend for a rest, but the heavy tummy scardies are back and worse than before.

You know the Smarty gives big hurties to bad fluffies. You're shocked he gave those two fluffies forever sleepies, but they were really bad and tried to give the Smarty forever sleepies. At least, according to him.

But, what if they didn't just *try* and have babbies?

#####

Something's wrong with Kerry, and you're pretty sure you know what. She's acted funny since the Smarty told the herd what happened on the darktime with all the screams. Or, at least what he *said* happened. She's gone quiet and doesn't pay as much attention to what's going on. Flower's also upset but, well... You don't want to be mean, but *everything* upsets Flower.

Kerry, on the other hand, you need to talk to her.

#

When the brighttime's jobs are done, you meet up and walk to the nummie dens. When you get your darktime nummies, the babbies try to lead you to the safe place where most of the herd is. 'Yu go babbehs,' you tell them. 'Mummah an Daddeh nee tawkies, awone.' They look at you for a moment, then nod.

'Otay.' Runny nods and goes to find his friends; so does Big Red and Flower. You look at Kerry; she looks scared and sad, but nods and follows you back to the den. At least she wants to talk; it'll make this easier. Back in the den, you put your darktime nummies to one side, then go over and give Kerry big huggies.

'Speciaw fwend?'

Kerry doesn't talk.

'Speciaw fwend wook wike hav bad scawdies an saddies,' you look at her. 'Speciaw fwend wan tawkies boud id?'

Kerry nods but doesn't say anything for a while. You sit back and give her time, and more huggies when you think she needs them. At last, Kerry takes a really big breath and asks in little wordies 'Speciaw fwend, yu tink Smawty giv babbehs fowewa sweepies?'

'Wat Speciaw fwend-'

'Does bad fwuffies, he say day twy hav babbehs,' Kerry cuts you off. 'Bud, wat if day had dem? Wat if day had tummeh babbehs, ow wittwe chiwpie babbehs?' You can hear the saddies and scardies in her voice. 'Wat *gulp* w-wat Smawty du den?'

You know the answer, but you don't want to tell Kerry. For a housie fluffy she's fit into the herd really well. But, there are things she hasn't seen done yet. Things that need to be done sometimes.

'Speciaw fwend?'

You snap out of it, but before you can talk Kerry keeps gong.

'Pwease teww Kewwy; wud... Wud smawty giv babbehs fowewa sweepies?'

You said you wanted to talk, so you better give her an answer. You take a deep breath. 'If dat wat Smawty nee du tu keep hewd safe,' you swallow hard, 'yes, Smawty du dat.'

Kerry's see places go wide, and you see all sorts of scardies in them. Sad water comes out, and she says, 'W...w-wai? Day, day am onwy wittwe babbehs...'

You give her more huggies. 'Fwuffy knu Speciaw fwend, bud-

'Day nu du anyting, day nu how nu bweak wuwes,' Kerry says, but not to you. 'How can day be bad? Wai giv dem fowewa sweepies?!' She starts to breath faster. 'Du, he make tuffies du dat tuu?'

'Speciaw fwend-'

'Wat if he twy make Big Wed-'

'Speciaw fwend, pwease!' You yell to get her attention. Kerry's stops and looks back at you. You've never seen her so scared and sad before; it gives you awful heart hurties, but you ignore them. 'Fwuffy nee teww yu sumtin boud Smawty.'

Kerry swallows hard. 'W-wat?'

'Wai he am... Wai Smawty am wike Smawty am.'

#

A long time ago when you and what was left of your family came to the herd, the Smarty wasn't the Smarty. Back then, his daddeh was.

At first, you didn't think the Smarty was the old smarty's baby; they were hardly seen together, and seemed to hate each other. It was a big surprise when you learned the Smarty was not only the Old Smarty's, baby but the bestest baby! Or at least, he had been. When you first came to the herd, the Smarty's daddeh had another bestest baby with exactly the same colours he did; orange fluff and a black mane.

The Smarty hated his daddeh and little brother, and a lot of the herd seemed to hate the Smarty just as much. You thought it was because the Smarty turned out to be a bad baby, and his daddeh decided to have a new bestest baby to be the new smarty when it was time. As you made more friends and learnt about the herd, you found out what the real story was.

The cold times before the last had been one of the worst the herd had ever been through. It was even worse because the herd hadn't found enough nummies, and the Smarty's daddeh didn't stop fluffies from having babbies as the cold times got close. One of your new friends, an older fluffy, told you the Smarty was born in those cold times, and his daddeh declared he would be the next Smarty.

Because the Smarty was the bestest baby and the next leader of the herd, he had to make it through the cold times no matter what. When they found out there weren't enough nummies for the big fluffies and mummahs with little babbies, *and* to make sure the Smarty grew up big and strong, the old smarty did a terrible thing. He forced the herd to give up their babbies so his special friend could make milkies for the Smarty. Chirpy babbies, talkie babbies, even a couple of big babbies; the Smarty's daddeh took them all. And it wasn't quite enough.

'An when dah cowd times had dah biggest cowdies, dah Smawty made his speciaw fwend eat hew oda babbeh.'

The other baby was the Smarty's sissie. Apparently, she was the only sissie, and friend, he had. No one was sure if his mummah's other babbies were dummies, or if she nummed them. Either way, the Smarty was alone. There were hardly any babbies left when the cold times ended; the Smarty had no friends, no sissie, and not long after, no mummah. One darktime, she disappeared.

Then, after all that, it turned out the Smarty wouldn't be the next smarty after all. Not long before you came to the herd, his daddeh found a new special friend and had babbies with her. One became the new bestest baby, and the new next smarty. The story shocked you, but at least it explained why the Smarty hated his daddeh and little brother so much. You didn't expect him to do anything about it though; it was sad and mean, but that's how things were.

The Smarty didn't see it like that, though.

You remember the darktime as clearly as you remember when Mummah was taken by a monster, and when you first met Kerry. You were asleep in the den with your brother and sister, and then lots of yells and screams outside woke you up. You and your brother ran out to see what was happening.

Outside, you saw lots of fluffies running somewhere; you and your brother followed them to the old smarty's den. There was the Smarty with some of the toughies outside his daddeh's den, keeping the other fluffies away. Horrible screams and cries came out of the den, and a lot of fluffies asked what was happening, but the Smarty wouldn't talk. A few moments after you arrived, someone came out of the den.

It was a fluffy you'd never seen before, and he was huge!! You never thought a fluffy could get as big as he was! The big fluffy dragged out the old smarty, or what was left of him. While the herd screamed and yelled, the huge fluffy let go of the old smarty and went back to the den. A little bit later, he came back.

'Wet bestest babbeh go!! Wet go dummeh munstah fwuffy!!'

In the huge fluffy's nummie place was the old smarty's bestest baby; he tried as hard as he could to get away, and even from where you stood you could see how big his scardies were. The huge fluffy walked over to the Smarty and dropped his little brother in front of him. The Smarty stared at him for a few moments, then stomped his head into the ground. As everyone gasped and screamed, the Smarty looked up and yelled over all of you.

'Hewd wisten tu Smawty!!'

#

'Aftah dah Smawty did dat, dah hewd got bettah,' you tell Kerry. 'Had mowe nummies an tuffies tu keep hewd safe. Was bettah! Smawty stiww giv huwties, bud onwy tu bad fwuffies.'

Kerry's still has sad water in her see places, but it looks like she understands a little better.

'Famiwy nu nee be scawdies of Smawty, Speciaw fwend,' you tell her. 'If am gud an fowwow wuwes, Smawty weave us awone.'

Kerry stares at you, then starts to cry again. 'Huuuhuhuuuu *sob* huuuu.' You give her more huggies and wait for her to get better.

'Fwuffy knu Speciaw fwend, knu Smawty am scawies. Bud, he am gud fow hewd.' You tell her. 'In dah fowest, dewe nu am nummies when id am dah coud times. An dewe am munstahs an bad fwuffies dewe! Smawty can keep famiwy safe.'

Kerry keeps crying, but you feel her nod.

'Mummah?' You turn and see Big Red. He walks over and looks at you. 'Wat am wong Daddeh? Wai Mummah hav bad saddies?' While you think about how to explain, Big Red keeps talking. 'Am Mummah saddies cause wat Smawty say? Am...' he stops. Some saddies and scardies go over his face. 'Am Mummah scawdies dat Big Wed... Dat Big Wed gun be meanie?'

You fell Kerry move; she breaks away and launches herself at Big Red, then gives him the biggest huggies she can. Big Red nearly falls over, but he manages to stay upright.

'Mummah? Mummah pwease nu be saddies!' Big Red gets scared and sad too. 'Pwease Mummah! Big Wed nu knu wai Mummah saddies, bud pwease nu be nu mowe!'

You run over and give both of them huggies; not long after, you feel two more fluffies join in. You, Flower, and Runny hug Kerry until she stops crying.

'*Sniff* Tank yu.' She says in little wordies. 'Mummah am otay nao.'

'Du Mummah wan tawkies?' Flower asks. 'Maybe can-'

'Nu babbeh,' Kerry says. '*Sniff*, Mummah jus wan sweepies nao.'

'Otay Speciaw fwend, wets go tu nestie.' You lead your family to the nestie and get in a fluff pile, with Kerry in the middle. More of her saddies go away, and it's not long until she goes to sleep. The babbies follow soon after, but it takes you longer. You're worried about Kerry and her scardies, but you think you've helped her understand the Smarty better; that's good.

If these cold times are like the last ones (and why wouldn't they be?) giving those fluffies forever sleepies won't be the last scary thing the Smarty and toughies have to do.

#####

It's been a few brighttimes since Mummah and Daddeh had their talk; since then they've told you more about why Mummah was so upset. It had nothing to do with you being a toughie, which made you happy. Turns out Mummah was scardies because the Smarty gave those bad fluffies forever sleepies, which she hasn't seen or heard about before. You guess it makes sense; after all, it's different for Mummah.

Sometimes you forget she's not like Daddeh and the other fluffies here; she spent a lot of her life as a housie fluffy, so there's still stuff out here that shocks her. It feels weird to think about Mummah that way, especially since you're one of her babbies. But, you guess that's how it is. Anyway, she's been much happier the last few brighttimes, which makes you happy too. You're also happy because toughie training is back on!

It's great to be back with your toughie; he's taught you so much stuff about how to be one and what it's like. He's got lots of great stories too! You've also had to give more bad fluffies sorries; it doesn't feel nice, but knowing it helps keep the herd safe makes up for it. After you spend the first part of the brighttime with your toughie, you join your friends for next brighttime nummies. You talk about a few different things, but it's not long before everyone starts to talk about what the Smarty did to those bad fluffies again.

'Wat yu tink Smawty du tu dem?' Someone says.

'Dah Smawty say wat, dummeh,' a dark blue fluffy says. 'He giv dem fowewa sweepies!'

'Bud how?'

'Fwuffy tink knu,' a dark grey and green fluffy says. 'Fwuffy tink Smawty giv dummeh mawe's tummeh stompies tu make hew babbehs cum oud!' He says. 'Den, he giv dah babbehs fowewa sweepies, an make

dah dummeh mawe eat dem!!' He's so wrapped up in what he's saying he doesn't notice all of you have gone quiet, and have scardies on your faces. 'Den he bweak aww hew weggies, an-

'*Cough*

The fluffy turns around; you wonder if he wishes there was a monster in front of him instead of the Smarty. He starts to shake. 'F-fwfwuffy am s-sowwies nice Smawty,' he manages. The Smarty stares at him. You and the others don't dare speak, or even move; what will the Smarty do?

It's a long time until the Smarty talks. 'Who nee du poopies?'

Right away, two of your friends stand up and say 'Fwuffy du!' at the same time.

The Smarty points at the ground between him the grey fluffy. 'Du dem hewe,' The two fluffies run over and do their poopies as fast as they can, then get out of the way. The Smarty looks at the grey fluffy and points at the poopies. 'Num dem. Nao.'

The fluffy jumps forward and nums the pile of poopies; you feel bad for him since you know how bad poopies taste. But, he should have been more careful with his wordies. The Smarty watches the Grey fluffy until all the poopies are gone. 'Be mowe cawefuw.' He says, then walks away. As soon as he's gone, the grey fluffy runs away, probably to make sickie waters.

You and the others look at each other, and know you're all thinking the same thing; don't talk about what happened anymore.

#

'Wittwe fwuffies wisten tu Bestest tuffy.'

You and the others who've made it this far sit and listen to the Bestest toughie.

'Dis am wast ting yu nee du. Yu am gun pway munstah an tuffy game.' None of you asks why; you go to your groups and get in place. First up, you play as the toughies. The monsters run at the safe baby place, and you and the other toughies rush to meet them. You beat them up and drive them back, then go back to the safe baby place and wait for them to attack again. They do, two and one more times, but lose every time. You feel really happy, but keep it inside. You can celebrate when the monsters stop.

'Tuffies an munstahs be oda tings nao!' The Bestest toughie yells. You and the others swap places and play as the monsters. This time, you hide in the bushies and run at the safe baby place when it looks like the toughies are sleepy or bored. You fight as hard as you can, but you can't beat the toughies and get to the safe baby place; you have to run back to the bushies. You try again, but it's like when you were the toughies; no matter what, you can't get past. But you keep going until the Bestest toughie says to stop.

'Wittwe fwuffies cum hewe nao.'

All of you run over and sit in front of the Bestest toughie. He turns his head back and says, 'Wat Smawty tink?'

Before you have the chance to be surprised, the Smarty steps out from the bushies and stands next to the Bestest toughie. He looks at all of you for a while, and you do your best to hide any scardies or saddies you have. After a long while, the Smarty says 'Day am aww gud tuffies.'

The happies you feel are so big, they're almost big enough to get out; almost.

'How many Smawty wan?' The Bestest toughie asks.

'Aww dem.' The Smarty says. 'Smawty wan hewd tu be stwongah, an hav mowe tuffies fow coud times.'

'Yes Smawty,' the Bestest toughie says. 'Yu heaw Smawty, yu am aww tuffies nao!' Before any of you can cheer and celebrate, 'Yu go find yuw tuffies, an hewp dem ewey bwighttime nao!'

You and the others get up and run off to find your toughies, but before you get far,

'Big Wed!' You stop and turn around. The Bestest toughie walks over to you. 'Yu nu find yuw tuffy; yu am gun be wif Bestest tuffy an Bestest tuffy's babbeh.'

Your see places go wide. 'Weawy?'

The Bestest toughie nods. 'Yu am biggah an stwongah dan oda fwuffies, wike Bestest tuffy an babbeh am.' He smiles a little. 'Yu nu be wike oda tuffies; Big Wed gun be one of hewd's biggest an bestest tuffies.'

You're so happy, and you can't keep it in anymore! 'Tank yu nice Bestest tuffy! Big Wed pwomise be Bestest tuffy can be!!!'

The Bestest toughie nods. 'Gud. Nao, fowwow Bestest tuffy.' You follow the Bestest toughie and his baby for the rest of the brighttime. Not much happens, but it doesn't matter. You can't wait to tell your family about this; they'll be so happy!!!

#

'-an nao Big Wed am gun hewp Bestest tuffy!' you tell your family. 'Big Wed am gun one of hewd's biggest and bestest tuffies!!!'

'Yay!' Runny cheers. 'Bwudda am big tuffy fwuffy!!' He jumps up and down and flaps his wingies.

Flower runs over and gives you big huggies. 'Fwowah am so happies fow bwudda!!' She says. 'Big Wed gun be Bestest tuffy fow Speciaw fwend when he am Smawty!!'

Daddeh has happy water in his see places. 'Daddeh am so pwoud, *Sniff* am so happies hav babbeh wike Big Wed!'

You have so many different types of happies, and feel like you want to make happy waters too! This is great, the bestest, bestest brighttime of you're entire life!!! But, there's someone who hasn't spoken yet. You look at Mummah; she sits a little bit away and has some sad water in her see places, but also a very big smile on her face. 'Am Mummah happies?' You ask.

Mummah nods. 'Yes, Big Wed *sniff* Mummah hav wotsa happies. Mummah knu Big Wed was gun be big an stwong fwuffy. Mummah jus, *sniff* j-jus thinkin boud when Bid Wed was onwy wi-wittwe babbeh...' Mummah makes more sad water, but she still smiles. 'Mummah *sob* am so pwoud of Big Wed!'

You run over to Mummah and give her big huggies. 'Pwease nu be saddies Mummah,' you tell her.

'Mummah nu am *sob* saddies,' she says. 'Am ha-happies fow Big Wed babbeh. Jus miss when was wittwe.'

You hug Mummah harder; you didn't realise watching you get big and strong would made Mummah sad.

'Id am otay Speciaw fwend,' Daddeh gives Mummah huggies too. 'Id am otay, Big Wed awways be Kewwy an Fwuffy's wittwe babbeh.'

You feel Mummah nod. You hope she feels better, cause there's something you need to ask her. 'Mummah?'

'*Sniff* Yes?'

'Mummah nu am saddies dat Big Wed am tuffy nao?' You swallow hard. 'Nu, nu tink am meanie?'

Mummah hugs you. 'Nu Big Wed, nu tink yu am meanie. *Sob* Mummah was jus dummeh.' You want to tell her she wasn't, but instead, you hug her along with Flower, Runny and Daddeh. You stay like that for as long as you can. It reminds you why you wanted to be a toughie in the first place, and why you'll be the best one you can be.

Keep your family safe, so you can have more times like this.

####

Daddeh didn't scream or cry like last time. Instead, he woke up breathing very loud and hard. Mummah, your brother and sissie woke up too, but Daddeh told them everything was okay.

It doesn't take long for them to go back to sleep, but you stay awake and wait to see what Daddeh does. He lies still for a while. But instead of going back to sleep, he gets up and leaves the den, carefully so he doesn't wake anyone. A few moments later, you get out of the nestie and follow him. Even though it's the darktime, the darktime sky-ball is out which makes it easy to follow Daddeh; his fluff is darker than the darktime is. He leaves the safe place and walks into the forest. The forest is scary in the darktime, but you're the Smarty's baby! If you want to lead the herd, you can't let the forest, or anything, give you scardies.

You take a big breath, tell your scardies to go away, and go in after Daddeh. You lose sight of him a couple of times, because the trees block the darktime sky-ball. Your hear places still work though, and you figure out where Daddeh is by the sound of his hoofies. You follow, careful not to make too much noise. Daddeh doesn't go far; after a few moments, the noise from his hoofies stops and soon after you hear, crying?

It, it can't be! Daddeh doesn't cry, smarties don't cry! Over anything! You have to see what's up. As quick as you can without making noise, you walk toward the sound. Behind a bushie, you find Daddeh, the herd's Smarty, crying.

'*Sob* Sissie...'

He's not crying *that* much, but it still gives you strange feels and scardies. You have to know what's wrong! You walk closer and take a deep breath. 'Daddeh?'

Daddeh moves so fast it nearly makes you scream and fall over. He spins around with a raised hoofie but stops when he sees its you. His maddies don't go away though; 'Wat babbeh doin hewe!?' He yells. 'Wai yu nu in den!?'

You tell your scardies to go away and take a deep breath. 'Fwuffy... Fwuffy wan knu wai Daddeh am saddies.'

Daddeh puts his hoofie down, then stares at you for a while. 'Go back tu den.' He goes to turn back around.

'Nu.'

Daddeh stops. 'Wat?'

'Nu! Fwuffy nu goin back.'

Daddeh gets madder. 'Jus cause Daddeh wub yu, nu mean Daddeh nu giv yu huwties if yu nu du wat Daddeh say!'

'Fwuffy knu, dat wai Daddeh am Smawty!' You tell him. 'Daddeh am bestest Smawty, an du wat nee du! Dat wai yu nu nee be saddies boud id!'

Daddeh's maddies go away for a quick moment; while they're gone, you see strange looks on his face. 'Jus... Jus go back.'

'Nu! Fwuffy nu wan Daddeh be saddies nu mowe! Nu nee be saddies cause yu giv fowewa sweepies tu bad fwuffies; day steaw nummies, twy hav babbehs an twy giv yu huwties!!' You puff out your cheeks. 'Day wewe bad!!'

Daddeh goes quiet again and shakes his head. 'Babbeh nu undewstan.'

'Yes! Fwuffy du undew-'

'NU!' Daddeh's yell takes you by surprise. 'Nu, Babbeh nu undewstan. Day... Does fwuffies nu twy hav babbehs, ow giv Daddeh fowewa sweepies.'

Now you're confused. 'Wat Daddeh sayin?'

He stares at you for a while; as he does, a sad look goes over his face, and his hear places hide. '*Sigh*, Daddeh nu waned say dis tiww Babbeh was biggah.' He looks you right in the see places. 'Wisten tu Daddeh.'

Daddeh tells you about the darktime he gave the bad fluffies forever sleepies, except this time he says what really happened, and doesn't leave anything out. He tells you how he made the toughies kick and stomp Ruby's tummy until her babbies came out, how he gave her and her special friend forever sleepies, and why he did it. The reason why he doesn't let anyone have babbies when the cold times are close.

You feel empty, and cold all over. You... You didn't know. You knew Daddeh gave them forever sleepies, but you thought it was because they tried to hurt him first! You didn't know they already had tummy babbies, or what happened to Daddeh when he was-

'Babbeh?'

You snap out of it and look at Daddeh. He's got a strange look on his face.

'Yu knu wai Daddeh say dis?'

You shake your head.

'Babbeh nee undewstan; bein Smawty nu am game, and nu am fun.' Daddeh's face gets more saddies. 'Smawty nee keep hewd safe. Dat mean Smawty nee du bad tings; tings dat make oda fwuffies hachew, tings dat munstahs du.'

Some of his saddies go away. 'If Smawty nee du bad tings, nu can cawe wat hewd tink. If nee make a soon mummah weave dah hewd, du id. If nee move dah hewd, du id.' His face twitches. 'If nee giv tummeh babbehs fowewa sweepies, du id. Id am fow hewd. Hewd bein safe am mowe impowtant dan if hewd wub yu.'

Daddeh leans close. 'Babbeh, if yu nu can du dose tings, yu nee teww Daddeh nao. Hewd nee gud Smawty when Daddeh go way.' Daddeh's wordies give you big heart hurties and saddies. Part of you wishes you'd stayed in the den, and waited until you were bigger to hear all this!! But you're here now, and you need to let Daddeh know you can be the Smarty when he... When he isn't anymore.

Thinking about what he said makes the heart hurties worse! It hurts so much to think about your friends hating you because that's what it took to keep the herd safe!! But, it hurts so much more to think about them getting hurties and forever sleepies, or their babbies going through what Daddeh did because you couldn't do what had to be done.

You look up at Daddeh; you've got sad water in your see places, but when you talk it feels truer than any wordies you've said before in your life; 'Fwuffy can du id Daddeh! Fwuffy can keep hewd safe when Daddeh go way!!' The saddies and heart hurties melt away. 'Fwuffy keep hewd safe!! Fwuffy nu wet wat happen tu Daddeh happen gain!! Ewa!!!'

'Babbeh nu cawe if yuw fwends hachew?'

'Fwuffy... Fwuffy nu wan fwends tu nu wub Fwuffy, bud nu wan dem tu hav huwties ow fowewa sweepies mowe dan dat!!'

Daddeh stays quiet for a while; you hope you convinced him you can still be the Smarty. Then he does something he almost never does, even when he's with you and your family; he smiles. 'Gud Babbeh.' He walks over and gives you huggies, big huggies. You hug him back; even though you try your best, you can't stop yourself crying.

'*Sob* F-fwuffy wub yu Daddeh *sniff*'

'Daddeh wub yu tuu babbeh.' He says in little wordies. 'Daddeh awways wub yu.'

#####

prod

'Mnnff *zzzzzz*'

Prod prod 'Wunnie, pwease be wakies.'

'*Zzz* eh-huh?' Runny opens his see places and looks at you. '*Groan* Wai Sissie make Wunnie wakies...'

'Fwowah nee du pee-pees!' You say in little wordies.

'Den go du dem,' Runny curls back up and close his see places. 'Sissie knu whewe poopie pwace am...'

'Bud am tuu scawies in dawktime, an Big Wed nu am hewe! Pwease!'

Mummah wakes up just long enough to say 'Nnnnn Wunnie hewp Fwowah, *Yawn. Zzzzz.*'

'Nao Bwudda nee hewp Fwowah, Mummah say so!'

Runny makes mad noises and gets up. He leads you out of the den and over to the poopie place; all the while, you keep your see places open and search for monsters. You know there's a lot of toughies in the safe place, but still.

'Dewe,' Runny says when you get to the poopie place. 'Huwwy up.' He walks away and waits behind a bushie. You walk into the poopie place and find a good spot, then lift your tail and do your pee-pees. As you finish, something lands on your back. Before you can figure out what it might be, the spot where it landed gets cold, really cold!

'Eeeee!!' You're more surprised than scared, but it still makes Runny come after you.

'Wat am wong?'

'Dewe sumtin cowl on backsie!' You tell him.

'Wat Fwowah mean?'

'Dewe was cowl ting on-' Whatever it was, another lands on your head as you try to explain. 'Screee!' It feels worse.

Runny looks around and tries to spot where the thing came from. 'Whewe am yu, dummeh cowl ting meanie?' He says. 'Nu huwt Sissie gain!! Gah!!' He yelps and jumps to one side.

'Wat happen?'

'Meanie cowl ting get Wunnie tuu!' If he has scardies, he hides them very well. Then you see something. You don't get a good look at it because it's small, and moves past your see places fast; the dark doesn't help either. But then you see another; it's hard to know for sure, but it looked white. 'Wat am dose?' You feel a little better; if Runny can see them too, your thinkie place hasn't gone silly.

You look up and see more of the strange things fall from the sky. You lock your see places on one and follow it down until it lands on your face. 'Eeee!!' Now you know what make you cold; these things! But what are they?

'Id am cowl fwuff.'

You and Runny turn around; it's a toughie.

'Wat?' You ask.

'Cowd fwuff.' He says again. After a few moments, your thinkie place puts it together, and a wave of scardies goes over you.

'Du, du dat mean...'

'Yes,' The toughie looks up at the sky. 'Dah cowd times am hewe.'

Chapter Nineteen

'Wat am dis?' There's a small pile of it outside the den; it's white, with some leafies and twigs in it. Plus, it looks like it's turning into water. You reach out with a hoofie and 'Eee!' pull it right back; it's cold!!

'Dat am cowd fwuff!' Flower runs up beside you. 'Tuffy say dat mean cowd times am hewe nao!' Before you can talk, Runny comes up the other side of you.

'Dat am wight! Cowd fwuff mean-'

'Mummah knu Wunnie,' you stop him. 'Id mean cowd times am hewe.' They told you last darktime when they got back from the poopie place, and when you woke up a little while ago.

'Nu go in dah cowd fwuff,' your Special friend says.

'*Sigh* Kewwy knu, Speciaw fwend! Am jus wookin!'

'Otay, Fwuffy nu mean make Speciaw fwend maddies.' He turns to Runny and Flower. 'Wets get bwighttime nummies.' They walk off and leave you to look at the cold fluff. It's really strange and... Wait a minute, you've seen this stuff before! It fell in Daddeh's yard when the cold times were on, but he didn't call it cold fluff. What was the name he gave it? It was, s-snow? Snow! Yeah, that's it! Now you've remembered, you don't want to look at the pile anymore.

You turn and walk toward the nummie dens to catch up with your Special friend and babbies. On the way you see Big Red come back from watching the safe place in the darktime. 'Hewwo Big Wed,' you say. All he does is mumble; looks like the job made him really sleepy. You hope they won't make him do it a lot, or-

'Dah Smawty wan say sumtin!'

Couldn't he wait until brighttime nummies were done? Well, better get there. You walk to the talkie place; your Special friend, Runny and Flower meet up with you, but Big Red's probably asleep by now. Should you go get him? Hmm, maybe they already told him what they're-

'Hewd Wisten tu Smawty!' The Smarty waits for the herd to be quiet, which doesn't take long. 'Dewe am cowd fwuff in safe pwace. Dat mean cowd times am hewe!' A lot of fluffies nod; some look sad, others have bad scardies. 'Hewd am gun be safe, but nee fowwow cowd time wuwes!' the Smarty yells. 'Nu take tuu many nummies fwom dah nummie dens! Nu weave dah safe pwace awone!' He looks around the herd. 'If see fwuffies yu nu knu when yu am in fowest, nu teww dem anyting boud hewd! If yu see dem cwise tu safe pwace, yu teww Smawty an tuffies!' The Smarty pauses. 'Wat am wast wuwe?' he asks the herd.

'Du wat Smawty say when Smawty say!'

The Smarty nods. 'Hewd can hav bwighttimes nummies nao. Den, tuffies say wat du.'

####

You lead Runny and a couple of your friends through the forest. There's not as much cold fluff on the ground out here, because it's up in the trees. That's dangerous; if you're not careful it can fall on you and... Well, you don't like to think about what can happen then. Anyway, there are more important things to worry about; for the next few brighttimes, all the nummie finders and lookie fluffies are on one last search for nummies. Then, no one leaves the safe place unless they have to.

'Daddeh?'

'Yes, Wunnie?'

'Wat nummies am-

'Gwound nummies.' Your green pointy friends says. 'We wook fow dose, den go back.'

'O-otay...'

You know when your babbies are upset, but you can't talk to Runny when there's a job to do. 'Ovah hewe!' You lead your little group to a patch of ground near some bushies and dig. It takes some work, but you find what you're looking for; 'Gwound nummies!'

'Day wook smaww.' Runny says.

'Day am stiww nummies.' Your pointy friend picks some out of the hole and puts them on his back. All of you do the same, then move on to another spot; it has some more ground nummies, but they're not any bigger. You guess all the big ones are gone.

'Am dis nuff?' Runny asks.

'Daddeh tink so,' you say. 'Wat fwends tink?'

'Uh-huh.' Your dark orange friend says.

'Wud be nice if find mowe,' your pointy friend says, 'bud bettah get back tu safe pwace.' He looks up at the trees. 'Fwuffy tink mowe coud fwuff am cumin.'

'Otay, wets go.' You lead Runny and your friends through the forest. As you pick your way around a clump of bushies-

'Hewwo.' You stop and turn your head; not far away are a couple of fluffies. One of them has dirty grey fluff with a brown mane, and the other is all dark yellow. The herd has a lot of fluffies, but you don't know these two. The Grey one steps forward. 'Hewwo,' he says again. 'Am fwuffies otay?'

'Yes.' Your body feels stiff. You concentrate hard to keep your scardies in check. You're not so brave, but you have to look like you are. At least you're not alone.

'Fwuffies hav wotsa nummies,' the yellow fluffy says.

'Uh-huh,' Your pointy friend says. 'Fwuffies find dem.'

'Dat am wotsa nummies fow onwy two an two fwuffies,' the grey one says.

'Cause am coud times dumme,' your pointy friend says. 'Nee hav wotsa nummies.'

If the grey fluffy is mad your friend called him a dummy, he doesn't show it. 'Fwuffies suwe nu am fwom hewd? Yu wook wike nummie findahs.'

'Nu,' you say. 'Nu hav hewd. Am jus fwuffies.'

'Wat boud speciaw fwend?' The yellow one looks at Runny, which makes hot maddies flash through you. 'Yu hav babbeh dewe, dat mean-'

'He nu am Fwuffy's babbeh,' you say, 'he am Bwudda's babbeh. Bwudda an his speciaw fwend go fowewa sweepies wong time go. Onwy cud sabe dis babbeh.' You hope Runny goes along with it.

The two fluffies stare at you; do they believe you? Part of what you said was real, maybe it'll hide the parts which aren't real. 'Dat am saddies,' the grey one says.

'Yes. Fwuffies nee go nao,' you tell them.

'Can fwuffies shawe sum nummies?' The yellow one says.

'Nu,' your orange friend says. 'Yu nee find oda nummies.'

'Pwease nu be meanies!' The grey one says, but his voice doesn't sound sad or scared enough. 'Fwuffies have speciaw fwends at-'

'Den yu nee go find nummies!' You yell. 'Nu stay hewe an make tawkies!'

'Fine!' the grey one yells. 'Wets go,' he says to his friend, 'Weave dese dumme meanies awone.' They walk into the forest; you and your friends go the other way.

The four of you walk for a while, then Runny says 'Daddeh, dis nu am-'

'Shh!' You say to shut him up.

'Wai Daddeh-'

'SHH!' You lean close to his hear place. 'Knu nu if does fwuffies am fowwowin. Jus du wat Daddeh say.'

'*gulp* Otay Daddeh...'

You walk through the forest in a windy path for a long time. You use your hear places really hard to find anything that isn't you or your friends, anything that might be following you. Every so often you look at Runny; he's doing what you told him, but he looks scared. So are you; you're not a brave fluffy, never have been. You wish Big Red were here; maybe the Bestest toughie will let him come out with you next brighttime.

'Fwuffy tink id am safe now,' your pointy friend says in little wordies. 'Wat fwends tink?'

'Fwuffy tink so,' your orange friend says.

Your pointy friend looks at you; 'Wat fwuffy tink?'

Part of you wants to walk a while longer; you don't want to lead bad fluffies to the safe place, even with all toughies the herd has and how scary they are. But, if you stay out here too long, more bad fluffies might find you. Plus, the herd needs the nummies you've found. You nod. 'Otay, back tu safe pwace nao.'

Your pointy friend turns and leads you all back in the direction of the safe place. Since you took such a long, curly walk through the forest, it's a while before you get close to the safe place. When you do, the first fluffies you see are toughies.

'Whewe yu fwuffies go?' One of them asks. 'Yu go way fow wong time.'

'Sowwie nice Tuffy,' your orange friend says, 'dewe wewe oda fwuffies.' He says in little wordies.

The toughie's face changes, and he nods. 'Take nummies tu nummie den. Den yu teww Tuffy boud oda fwuffies.'

Your friend nods, and you walk the rest of the way to the safe pace. You drop off the nummies you've found, and grab some for next brighttime nummies. 'Cum on Wunnie, wets go back tu den.' He nods. Back at the den, the two of you sit down to have your nummies. 'Am Wunnie otay?'

Runny nods. 'Yes, Daddeh.'

'Nu am scawdies of does fwuffies?'

'Was scawdies in fowest, bud nao am back in safe pwace wif tuffies. So nu am scawdies nu mowe.'

You nod. 'Dat am gud. Am Wunnie scawdies boud oda tings?'

Runny's quite for a while. 'Daddeh, du hewd hav nuff nummies fow cowl times?'

You hate this question, because there's never a good answer to it. '*Sigh* Daddeh nu knu Wunnie.'

'W-wat? How Daddeh nu knu?'

'Cause Daddeh nu knu-'

'How Daddeh nu knu?! Wat if hewd wun oud-

'Wunnie!' You wait until he's quite. 'Wunnie, Daddeh nu knu if hewd hav nuff nummies cause Daddeh nu knu how many nummies hewd nee fow cowl times!' You tell him. 'Nu fwuffy nu dat, not eben dah Smawty.'

'Bud, bud wai nu fwuffies knu?'

'Cause sum tings am tuu big fow fwuffies tu knu.' You tell him. 'Whewe du sky baww go sweepies? Wai bweezie munstahs hate fwuffies? Wai am sum hoomins nice, an odas wan giv fwuffies wowstest huwties?' 'Fwuffies nu can knu sum tings. Fwuffies can onwy get as many nummies as can.'

Runny looks at you, at the sky, then at the ground. His thinkie place must hurt like yours did when you used to try and figure out big things. 'Huuuu wai ewyting nee be so big an scawies?'

'Id am otay Wunnie,' you get up and give him some huggies. 'Daddeh knu id am scawies. Bud, hewd had nuff nummies fow wast cowl times.'

Sniff S-so Daddeh nu tink hewd wun oud of nummies?'

'Nu Wunnie, Daddeh nu tink dat happen.' It could, but you don't think it will; you and the other nummie finders have worked really, really hard! The nummie piles are bigger than most fluffies, and you've got lots of them! 'Bud if nummies du run oud, can eat dah bushies an gwassies.' You tell Runny.

'Weawy?'

You nod. 'Yes, Wunnie. Bud Daddeh newa hav du dat befowe.'

Some of Runny's saddies go away; *Sniff* Otay Daddeh. Am Daddeh an Wunnie gun go find mowe nummies?'

'Yes Wunnie, bud we go oda way so nu see does oda-'

Strong gust of wind

The breeze takes you by surprise, and you nearly yelp.

'Eee!' Runny jumps. 'Cowdies!' Yes, it was cold.

You look up at the sky; *Gulp* Those sky fluffies mean one thing, and it's not good. 'Fowwow Daddeh Wunnie!' You get up and dive into the den.

'Huh? Wai Daddeh-'

You turn around. 'Huwwy!!'

Runny gets up and follows you back into the den; not long after, Flower and Kerry run in. It makes some scardies go away; at least they're safe. You all run to the nestie and huddle together, which wakes up Big Red. 'Huh? Wat am happen-'

'Bweezie munstah!' Flower screams, 'In dah bwighttime! Bweezie munstah!!'

'Nu Fwowah,' you say. 'Dis nu am jus bweezie munstah.' You realise it was the wrong thing to say at the same time she grabs hold of you and starts to cry.

'Wat speciaw fwend sayin?' Kerry asks over Flower and the noise outside.

'Dis am diffawent Bweezie munstah!' You yell back. 'Dis one bwing wotsa cowd fwuff, wike dah ones dat bwing wotsa sky wawa!' Kerry gets big scardies on her face, but you tell by the nod she understands what you mean. As the cold fluff breezie monster outside gets louder, you and your family cuddle up close and wait for it to go away.

#

It felt like the breezie monster was around for much longer than it actually was, which is pretty normal. When you're sure it's gone, you get out of the fluff pile with Big Red and go see what's happened. The first thing you notice is the cold fluff which got into the den. It's not enough to be a problem, but you'll have to do a few things to make the den safer; there'll be more cold fluff breezie monsters, a lot more.

Big Red follows you up the tunnel. When you get outside, he gasps. There wasn't a lot of cold fluff before, hardly any; now there's a lot of it. You look up at the sky; there's still lots of sky fluffies. If they go away and let the sky ball through, it'll make some of the cold fluff go way. But until then-

'Am dis wat cowl times am wike?'

You turn to Big Red; he stares at the cold fluff, and you wonder how he feels. Maybe he's mad he can't give the cold fluff sorry hoofies and make it go away. 'Yes, Big Red,' you tell him. 'Cum on,' You turn around, 'Famiwy nee wait in nestie fow dis tu go way.'

#####

After the first cold fluff breezie monster came, there were a few brighttimes without another. There were sky fluffies, but no monsters. A lot of the cold fluff went away, and a little part of you thought the herd might not have to deal with more of it. Then, a few brighttimes ago, a bunch of cold fluff breezie monsters attacked all at once! They stayed all darktime and didn't let anyone get any sleep. You and Daddeh had to push cold fluff back out of the den all darktime.

The next brighttime, there was cold fluff all over the safe place! The whole herd had to stomp and dig paths through it, so everyone could get to the nummie dens and the poopie place. It was hard and cold work, and all anyone wanted to do after was sleep. But of course, there were jobs to be done, especially yours. You and the other toughies have watched the safe place and forest extra hard since Daddeh, and the other nummie finders saw those strange fluffies in the forest.

You hope the cold fluff breezie monsters got them already.

#

It's cold, and each brighttime feels a little colder than the last one.

Your fluff helps, but you feel the cold more in the darktime, especially when you're outside to watch the safe place; apparently, it'll get colder. That gives you a few scardies, but the herd's made it through other cold times, so it should be fine. Anyway, you can't worry about it too much; you've got to focus on your toughie job. This brighttime, the Bestest toughie's taken you and his baby into the forest a little bit away from the safe place. The three of you walk through the forest around the safe place. The Bestest toughie says it's one of the best ways to keep monsters and bad fluffies away. It's pretty smart when you think about it.

The Bestest toughie walks in front, while you and your friend walk behind and on either side of him. It's hard to keep your see places on both of them, especially when you have to step around trees and bushies, and watch the forest at the same time! But you keep at it; the Bestest toughie thinks you're good enough to go with him, so you won't make him think he was wrong!

So far, you've gone around the safe place three and two times. Or, is it three and three? For all you know it's three and three and one! Everything in the forest looks like everything else, so it's hard to tell when you've been all the way around to where you started. In fact, you can't even remember where you started. Maybe you shouldn't try to count. Better to focus on-

'Stahp.'

You freeze in place and try to figure out what the Bestest toughie's seen or heard.

'Cum hewe.'

Quietly as you can, you walk over to the Bestest toughie. When you and his baby are close, he says 'Yu heaw dat?'

You use your hear places really, really hard and close your see places.

snap

crunch

'Peep.'

You nod. The Bestest toughie lifts a hoofie; 'Big Wed hide in does bushies. Babbbeh, yu go dewe.' His baby nods, and you walk to where you were told. You've got tingles in your leggings, your nummie place has gone dry, and your chest feels so tight! Ok ok, stay calm. Remember what the games were like, and do what the Bestest toughie says.

Big Red can du dis!

#####

You stand still, and focus on the noises out in the forest.

rustle

crunch

Something is walking through the forest alright, maybe more than one. The good news is it's not loud enough to be a human. It's not a kitty monster either, you wouldn't hear it if it were. That leaves a few things; barkie monsters, bad fluffies, or maybe a-

'Peep peep!'

'Cheeep!'

'Nu wowwie babbhehs.'

The voices are small, but they're there. It's good news in a way; if this is what you think it is, it'll be easy to solve with three toughies. You hide behind a tree, slowly, so you don't make much noise. You poke your head out a little and wait.

'Whewe am nummies Speciaw fwend? Twacy nee make miwkies fow babbhehs!'

'Pwease nu be scawdies Speciaw fwend, Fwuffy find nummies an safe pwace fow famiwy soon!'

Not here they won't. Through the trees and bushies, you start to see bits of colour. The voices get louder, especially the chirps and peeps. For a moment, you feel really mad. Dummies You say in your thinkie place. A little bit more, and the colours get clearer; now you can make out two fluffies. They're coming this way, almost right at you. Not yet, wait until they're right up close.

'Cheep cheep cheep!'

'Chiirp!! Cheep cheep!! Peeeeeep!!'

'Huuuhuhuuu,' the mare cries. 'Mummah so sowwies babbehs! Sowwies nu can fix tummeh huwties!'

'Id am otay Speciaw fwend! Jus a wittwe bit-'

You step out from behind the tree and walk in front of them. They stop in their tracks and get a look on their faces like there's a monster in front of them. In a way, there is. 'Who am yu?' You ask. The fluffies don't talk, but the babies on the mare's back peep and chirp loudly. 'Who am yu dummehs? Wat yu duin hewe?!'

'Pwease nu be maddies nice big fwuffy!' The stallion says, hear places hidden. 'Fwuffy an Speciaw fwend jus twyin find safe pwace an nummies fow babbehs!'

You stay quiet and look at the two fluffies; you're good at learning about fluffies by looking at them, maybe better than anyone else. First, you look at the mare; she's got dirty fluff, looks like she hasn't had nummies for a while, and she's made a lot of sad water. You look closer and, yep, the way the fluff is bunched up around her neck means she has a collar on; housie fluffy.

On the mare's back nestled in her fluff, there are three and two babbies. They give each other huggies to make their tummy hurties go away. They've gone without milkies for a long time. Next, you look at the stallion; he's young, not much older than your baby or Big Red. He was probably kicked out his herd or ran away cause he didn't want to follow their rules. If they weren't a bunch of dummies, it was probably rules about having babbies in the cold times.

'*Gulp* Pw-pwease nice big fwuffy...'

You look back at the mare; she cowers but keeps talking.

'Twacy nee find nummies! Nu can make miwkies fow babbehs, an day hav wowstest tummeh-'

'Bestest tuffy knu dummech,' you say. 'Bestest tuffy can heaw dem.'

'Den, den yu hewp Twacy an Speciaw fwend?' She asks.

'Nu.' You say. 'Dis am hewd's wand. Go way.'

'Hewd? Dewe am hewd hewe?!' The stallion says.

'Yes dummech, an dis hewd's wand! So go-'

'Pwease wet fwuffy an Speciaw fwend be in hewd!!' The stallion yells. 'Pwease!! Speciaw fwend nee nummies fow make-'

'Nu dummech. Yu go way nao.'

'Nu!! Pwease hewp!!' The mare called Tracy cries. 'Twacy an Speciaw fwend nu can find nummies oud hewe!! Babbehs nee miwkies!! Nu wan dem hav tu tummeh huwties nu-'

'Den wai you hav dem, dummech?' Maddies push their way back in. 'Wai yu hav babbehs when id was cowl times!'

'Dat... Dat nu am Fwuffies' fa-'

'Am tuu dummeh!!' You yell at the stallion. 'Yu giv hew speciaw huggies an tummeh babbehs when cowl times cumin! Dat make yu big dummeh!!'

'Speciaw fwend nu am dummeh,' Tracy yells. 'Twacy ask Speciaw fwend tu giv babbehs cause-'

'Den dat make yu biggah dummeh!! Biggest dummeh!!!' You scream. You pause to calm down. 'Hewd nu wan dummehs wike yu. Go way.'

'NU!!!' The stallion yells. 'FWUFFY NU WET YU MAKE FWUFFY AN SPECIAW-FWEND GU WAY!!' Even though he sounds mad you can see the sad water in his see places, and his scardies. Still, he puffs up his cheeks. 'F-FWUFFY CAN BEAT YU DUMMEH!!!'

It actually makes you smile; you could give two and one of him forever sleepies easy. You lean down; 'Dummeh tink can beat Bestest tuffy?'

'YES DUMMEH MEANIE!!' he yells. 'NU AM SCAWDIES OF YU!!'

You smile again, and point behind him; 'Dummeh tink can beat Bestest tuffy, an dem?'

Slowly, the stallion turns around; he didn't notice your baby and Big Red walk up behind him. They stand there with their cheeks puffed out, ready to fight. The stallion looks back at you, but before he can talk, you say 'Big Wed, if dis dummeh twy giv Bestest tuffy huwties,' you look at Tracy, 'giv dat dummeh mawe sowwie hoofies.' Big Red flinches a little, but nods and-

'NUUUUU!!!' The stallion jumps at you. 'NU HUWT SPECIAW FWEND!!! NU *GAHUK!*

He doesn't know when not to have babbies, so it's no surprise he can't fight; you move around and kick him hard in the side without even trying.

'Screee!!' You look up and see Big Red hit Tracy in the face. He goes to do it again, but you tell him to stop and hold down the stallion. He comes over and pins the dummy to the ground, while your baby watches the mare. You look at the stallion.

'Yu twy huwt Bestest tuffy when say was gun giv yuw dummeh speciaw fwend huwties if yu du?' You spit on him. 'Biggest dummeh ewa.' You walk over to Tracy; she holds her hoofies over her face but managed to keep the babies on her back. 'Dummeh mawe wisten tu Bestest tuffy nao.' She looks at you, see places full of sad water. 'If yu nu go way nao, Bestest tuffy giv yuw speciaw fwend an yuw babbehs fowewa sweepies.'

'Nuuuu!!' She cries. 'Nu giv-'

'Den weave dummeh, NAO!!!' Tracy gets up and runs back into the forest; somehow she keeps the babies on her back. You nod at Big Red to let the stallion up, and he stumbles after her. You wait a while after they leave to make sure they don't come back. When you're happy they've gone away, you look at your baby and Big Red. 'Dat was gud. Yu wewe gud tuffies.'

'Tank yu Daddeh.'

'Tank yu, Bestest tuffy.'

You nod. 'Id am awmost nex bwighttime nummies; Babbah an Big Wed can go back tu safe pwace. Bestest tuffy find yu.' They nod and head back to the safe place. As they go, you smile a little; when you're done with them, the herd will be safe from everything except for humans.

####

The Bestest toughie found you after next brighttime nummies and said you'd keep an eye on the safe place for the rest of the brighttime. It's not as fun as patrolling the forest; the truth is it's very boring. All you do is walk around the safe place, and make sure everyone follows the rules. You don't let the Bestest toughie know you're bored though; it wouldn't look good at all. Besides, it's still important.

The three of you walk from one of the nummie dens, down past the safe baby place and some of the dens. Along the way, you say hi to your friends, and Mummah when she goes past. You get to one end of the safe place close to the longer water, then walk back the way you came.

'Big Wed,'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy?'

'Yu hav saddies dat Bestest tuffy teww does dummehs tu go way?'

Damn, you thought you did a better job of hiding them!!

'Yu can teww Bestest tuffy; nu get maddies.'

Well, in that case... '*ulp* Yes Bestest tuffy.'

'Am id cause day had wittwe babbahs?'

You nod.

'Wai yu tink Bestest tuffy teww dem tu go way?' He asks.

'Cause day wewe dummehs,' you say. 'Hewd nu nee-'

'Dewe am oda ting,' he says. You use your thinkie place really hard until you think you've got it.

'Cause, cause den we hav giv dem nummies?'

The Bestest toughie nods. 'Maybe hewd hav nuff nummies fow dem. Bud wat boud oda fwuffies dat wan be in hewd? Wat happen if wet wotsa fwuffies be in hewd?'

'Hewd wun oud of nummies.' You say.

The Bestest toughie nods. 'Hewd nee wook aftah hewd in coud times, not aww oda fwuffies.'

'Yes Bestest tuffy,' You say. 'Big Wed undewst-'

'Screeee!!'

You whip your head around to the noise and see some fluffies run in the direction. 'Quick!' The Bestest toughie leads you and his baby toward the scream, and pushes slower fluffies out of the way. You get to

where the scream came from and find some fluffies crowded around a tree; there's a big pile of cold fluff that doesn't look like it was there before, and-

“*Gasp!*”

You drive into the cold fluff and bat it away with your leggings; the Bestest toughie's baby joins in, and not long after you uncover a little fluffy's head.

“*GASP*!” He takes a really really big breath. ‘HEWP! C-COWDIES!!!’

You dig away more cold fluff and push the fluffy out of the pile; he rolls down the side, and a bunch of fluffies crowd around him.

‘Take him back tu his nestie!’ The Bestest toughie yells. ‘Pud him in fwuff piwe an nu wet him weave!!’

‘Yes, Bestest tuffy!’ A mare says. ‘Cum on wittwe fwuffy.’ She and the other fluffies help the little fluffy up and take him to his den, wherever it is. You get out of the pile and shake off the cold fluff. There are a few wet spots on your fluff, but they're not big.

‘Dat was gud,’ the Bestest toughie says to both of you. ‘Dat am wat tuffies nee du.’

‘Wat happen? Wai cowl fwuff twy eat dat fwuffy?’

‘Id cum fwom dah twee,’ The Bestest toughie looks up. ‘Sum times id hide in twees, den twy eat fwuffies; nee be cawefuw. Cum on,’ he walks turns around, ‘dewe am mowe tings tu du.’

#####

“*Haff, haff, haff*”

‘Am Kewwy fwend otay?’

You shake your head; ‘Nu...’

Your chest has bad hurties, and so do your leggings; they're cold too. This brighttime you agreed to help some of the digger fluffies clear cold fluff from the paths after a cold fluffy breeze monsters came back. You thought it would be a nice easy job; the cold fluff isn't hard like dirt, so it's easier to kick and push away. It was at the start, but the more you worked, the harder it got. Then you got tired, and your leggings got coldies and hurties.

‘Kewwy can go back tu nestie,’ one of the digger fluffies says. ‘Fwuffy teww tuffies yu du gud job.’

‘Tank yu nice Fwuffy.’ You turn and walk back to your den. It's gotten colder, so the cold fluff stays for longer and makes bigger piles; it means the paths from the dens to the important places have to be cleared more often. Sometimes you worry if the cold fluff keeps coming, there'll be too much to clear from the paths. Then it'll get into the dens!

Your Special friend says he's never seen it get that bad though, and he has been through cold times out here before. It makes you feel better. The older fluffies say the same thing; it gets harder, but the herd's always managed to keep the safe place clear enough to get by. The old fluffies have other interesting stories about the cold times; the one which surprised you the most is some think the cold times are safer.

'Dah cowl times keep hewd safe fwom bad hoomins an munstahs,' an old stallion told you. 'Hoomins nu wike bein in dah fowest when id am cowl, an wotsa munstahs go sweepies. So, day nu twy giv hewd huvwies.' It makes sense. Still, it would be nice if it was warm with no cold fluff at the same time. It would also be nice if you had a big pile of blankies for the den, and if the forest had skettie plants like the ones in your slee-'

'Hewp! Hewp!!'

Shivers run down your back; you turn and run to where the yell came from, over a could of cold fluff piles until you find a path.

'Pwease!! Pwease be wakies Mummah Daddeh!!'

You run down the path until you find where the den where the yells come from. You run down the tunnel into the big space and find,

'Nu be fowewa sweepies Mummah Daddeh!! Pwease, PWEASE BE WAKIES GAIN!!!'

a small fluffy, not much bigger than Flower and Runny hugging an old fluff as hard as he can. The fluffy looks at you; he has really bad scardies and saddies on his face. 'Hewp!! Hewp Fwuffy!! Mummah Daddeh nee huggies!!'

You run over to give the old fluffy huggies, but pull back; he's cold.

'NUU! NU STAHP!' The little fluffy screams. 'MUMMAH DADDEH NEE HUGGIES!' He hugs the old fluffy as hard as can. 'BE WAKIES! PWEASE!!!'

'Wat happen?'

You turn around and see a couple of toughies run into the den, along with an old mare. 'Speciaw fwend?' She pushes past the toughies and you; 'Speciaw fwend? Speciaw fwend wat am-'

'NU BE FOWEWA SWEEPIES HUHUUUU!! PWEEEEASE!!!!'

'Move!' One of the toughies pushes the old mare aside. 'Hewwo? Hewwo!' He prods the old stallion's face. 'Can Fwuffy heaw Tuffy?' He puts his face close to the old fluffy. The toughie stays still for a while, and then you see his face change. He looks at the old mare; 'Tuffy am sowwies; yuw Speciaw fwend am fowewa sweepies.'

'NUUUUUHUHUHUUUUU!!!!' The little fluffy screams. 'PWEEEEASEEEEE!!!'

You can't see the old mare's face, but you can tell she has the worstest saddies by the way she nods. '*Sob* T-tank yu, nice Tuffy...' She leans down and hugs the old stallion. 'Gud... *Sob* g-gudbai, Speciaw fwend. *Sniff* F-fwuffy aw-awways wub yu-huhuhuuu.' She gets up and walks over to the little fluffy and gives him huggies.

'Tuffies!' The other tuffies walk over and grab the old stallion with their nummies places, then drag him out of the den.

'NUU!! NUUUUUUU!!!' The little fluffy screams. 'NU TAKE MUMMAH DADDEH!! SCREEEEEE!!!' He struggles to get away from the old mare, and it doesn't look like she's strong enough to hold him. She looks over at you, and you run over to help her hold the little fluffy. 'SCREEEEEE!!! MUMMAH DADDEH!! NUUUUU!!!'

'Move!'

You look up and see the Bestest toughie; he pushes one of the others out of the way and helps drag the old fluffy out of the den. With his help, it doesn't take long to get him out.

'WAAHHHHUHHUHHUHU!! NUUUUHHUHHUU!!!'

The little fluffy struggles for a while longer then gives up and cries into your fluff, while you and the old mare give hug him as hard as you can. A toughie comes back in. 'Am Fwuffy gun be otay?' One asks the old mare. She nods but doesn't talk.

The toughie nods as well, then leaves. Now it's you, the mare and the little fluffy; you don't know if you should stay or leave, but the mare looks at you and says 'Pwease nu weave!' You nod and stay with her. The little fluffy cries for a long time, so long he goes back to cheeps and peeps. Not long after, he falls asleep. You help the old mare take the little fluffy to their nestie and curl up with them for a while.

'Fwuffy knu Speciaw fwend fow so wong, nu can wememba when see him fiwst,' she tells you. 'Was wike he awways dewe. *Sniff* huuu.'

You give her more huggies. 'Wai wittwe fwuffy so saddies?'

The old mare looks at the little fluffy; he twitches and wriggles. What sort of sleepie pictures is he having? 'When hewd cum hewe fwom owd safe pwace, Babbah an hew speciaw fwend get wost,' she tells you. 'Wookie fwuffies twy find dem, bud *sob* day nu cud.'

'Nex bwighttime, a nummie findah cum back fwom fowest wif Babbah's babbah. He say he find Babbah an hew speciaw fwend bud... Bud *sob* munstahs get dem huuhuuu!' You give her huggies until she stops crying.

'*Sniff* Fwuffy an Speciaw fwend wook aftah Babbah's wastest babbah. He wose his mummah an daddeh, an his bwuddas an sissies. Nao, he wose his Mummah Daddeh tuu; dat wai he am saddies.'

You want to make sad water with her; this might be the saddest story you've ever heard. You lean over and give the little fluffy huggies too, careful not to wake him.

'Tank yu,' the old mare says. 'Tank yu fow stayin wiff Fwuffy an Babbah's babbah.'

'Dat am otay.' You say.

'Kewwy can go nao if wan; Fwuffy be otay.'

Part of you doesn't want to leave them alone, not after all they've been through. But it's late in the brighttime; it might even be the soon darktime. You should get back to your family. Slowly you get up. Before you walk away, you ask 'Du Fwuffy wan Kewwy tu get dawktime nummies fow yu?'

'Kewwy nu nee du dat.'

You turn around and see the Smarty, then take a step back without meaning to. The Smarty doesn't seem to notice, though. He walks over to the old mare and puts some nummies in front of her. 'Smawty am sowwies bud yuw speciaw fwend, he was gud fwuffy fow hewd.' The Smarty stops for a second, and you see some saddies on his face. 'Was, gud fwend tu Smawty.'

The old mare smiles a little. 'Tank yu nice Smawty.'

He nods. 'If yu nee hewp, teww Smawty.' He turns and leaves the den; you wait a few moments, then leave. You hoped he'd be gone when you got out, but instead, he's right outside. 'Smawty nu am maddies,' he says, 'Smawty wan say tank yu.'

'Fow wat?'

'Fow hewpin dat fwuffy. Day wewe gud tu Smawty when...' He looks away. 'When was wittwe.'

'Dat am oday,' You say. The Smarty nods then walks away. You go to the nummie dens, grab some nummies and head back to your den.

'Fwuffy heaw dat Speciaw fwend hewp dat owd fwuffy when hew speciaw fwend go fowewa sweepies.' Your Special friend says a little later in the darktime.

'Uh-huh.' You say, 'Hew babbeh's babbeh had wowstest saddies ewa.'

Your Special friend nods. 'Fwuffy knu. Dat wittwe fwuffy wose aww his famiwy.' He's stares at the den wall for a moment. 'Fwuffy was one dat find him.'

'Weawy?' You give him huggies and say how brave he is, but then you see the scardies go over his face. You remember what the old mare said about the monsters. 'Was id scawies?'

He nods. 'Weawy'

You give him more huggies, and he hugs you back.

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'Yu tuffies can go hav nummies nao,' the Bestest toughie says to the toughies near the tree.

'Tank yu Bestest tuffy.' They get up and walk away; you, the Bestest toughie and his baby take their place.

'Wat du nao?' You ask.

'Tuffies stay hewe an wait.'

'Fow wat?'

'Anyting dat wan huwt hewd.'

'Oday.' You find a spot without much cold fluff, then sit down and watch the forest. Of all the toughie jobs, this is the one you hate the most; it's important sure, but it's so boring. You have to watch really close so you don't miss anything, but after a while you get bored and sleepies. Your thinkie place starts to talk about other

stuff, which makes the problem worse! At least when you're with more than one toughie, you can talk to each other, which helps.

'Du fwend see anything?' You ask with little wordies.

'Nu.' He says.

'Gud.' Later you ask 'Fwend tink dewe sumtin in dat bushie?'

'Wat bushie?'

'Dah one ovah-'

'Shh!' The Bestest toughie shuts both of you up. 'Nu make tuu many tawkies.'

You nod, so he knows you understand, and sorry, without more wordies. Back to the forest. You pass your see places over everything you can. A few times you have to tell yourself to slow down-

snap

A little shiver runs up your back. The noise was small and far off, but you've heard it enough to know its not one the forest makes.

crunch

That was a hoofie on cold fluff, nothing else makes that sound! You do everything you can to point your hear places at where it came from. The herd doesn't send out nummie finders now, so the sound can only mean one thing!

Crunch

That was closer. You get up on your hoofies and stare into the forest; your body has tight shivery feels, and your nummie places is dry.

'Yu see dat?' The Bestest toughie says in little wordies. 'Dewe was fwuffy neaw dat big bushie.'

You try to find the bushie he meant, but stop; you've got to focus! The thing all those games were meant to get you ready for is about to happen.

'Get weady.'

The little whites seem to grow into whole brighttimes! You feel hot and cold, empty and tight, all at the same! All you can hear is your heart; it crawled up to your hear places. Just as well, cause the forest is quiet. But not for long.

'GET DEM!!'

'AHHHHHH!!'

'REEEE!!'

From behind trees and bushies come fluffies; three and three and... A lot! A lot of bad fluffies, coming right for you!!!

'Wait.' You glance at the Bestest toughie; he looks right at the fluffies, and he's bent down a little. 'Get weady.'

You dig your hoofies into the ground, grit your teethies and pick out which bad fluffy you'll fight first. It's like the games, but it's for real, and there's only the three of you against all these bad fluffies!

'WAHHHHH!!!!'

The bad fluffies run toward you and the safe place as fast as their leggies will take them! Everything gets slow and tingly; all you want is to run at them! Even if it's a dummy thing to do, at least it's something!!

'NAO!!!'

The Bestest toughie leaps at one of the bad fluffies! It seems to happen way slower than it should; he jumps so high it looks like he could jump right over you, puts his front hoofies together and aims at a bad fluffy up ahead of the others. The bad fluffy looks up at the Bestest toughie, flying through the air right at him! You can't help but watch as the Bestest toughie lands on the bad fluffy's back behind his head.

'SCREEEE!!' The Bestest toughie pushes the bad fluffy to the ground; his leggies go out from under him, and you hear a really loud snap sound. After he lands, the Bestest toughie falls forward and rolls! You're sure he's made some kind of mistake, but he rolls onto his hoofies, leaps back up and smashes into another bad fluffy!! You've never seen anything like it!!! How'd he learn to do-

'WOOK OUD!!!'

You snap your head back around; there's a bad fluffy in front of you, so close you can see his teethies! No time to think, you put your head down and run at him!! He smashes into you and pushes you back, but he screams and tumbles over at the same time. You jump back, then back at the bad fluffy and land on one of his leggies.

CRSNAP

'SCREEEEEE!!!' He tries to curl into a ball. You rear up to stomp him again, but as you bring your hoofies down, 'GAHH!' another fluffy knocks you to the ground!!

GET UP!! GET UP!!!! Your thinkie place screams at you; you scramble and jump to get back on your hoofies and turn to face the fluffy who crashed into you. His colours and face are familiar, you've seen him before!! But there's no time to worry about that. 'WAHHH!!!' You charge at him, but he's ready for it and rears up!! At the last moment, you jump up into his chest!!

'GAH!!'

You knock him over!!! The fluffy falls on his back, and you land on his chest; at the last moment, you put your hoofies together. They press down hard into the fluffy's chest, and you hear and feel some snaps and cracks sounds; the fluffy makes a strange breathing sound.

'HWArrk!!'

You rear up to stomp his chest again, but you get tackled by another fluffy, and he knows how to fight!! He wraps his leggies around you and lands on top; he's got you pinned to the ground!!! You kick and thrash about to break his grip; you've got to get up!! If he keeps you here, he'll be able to give you bad hurties and-

'SCREEEE!!' HE BIT YOU!! 'EEEE!' You thrash even harder to get away, or at least pull out whatever part of you he has in his nummie place! You kick out with your leggies again and again; if you could just get him in the special lumps!!!

'Pah! Hewp!! Giv dis dummeh fowewa sweepies!!'

Out of the corner of your see place, you see another bad fluffy run over. Sharp cold feels and hurties go all over you; you have to get up! Get up!!! If he gets to you, it'll be all-

'NUUU!!'

The Bestest toughie's baby crashes into the bad fluffy and knocks him to the ground! Then another toughie jumps in and together they stomp the bad fluffy!! You scramble to your hoofies and help until he doesn't move anymore. When it's done, you look around for another bad fluffy to fight and get a real surprise. The other toughies have arrived, and there are more of them than there are bad fluffies; two or even three toughies for each one! Soon it's all over.

'WUN!' A grey fluffy runs for the forest with the Bestest toughie right behind him. You never knew he could move so fast!! They run past some bushies; you hear a crash and 'SCREEEEEEEEEEewk...' The scream stops so fast it's scary. A few moments later, the Bestest toughie comes back. '*Haff haff* Who hav bad huwties? *Haff*'

With the fight over, all the tingles, sharp hurties and other strange feels go away. You feel some hurties in your leggies, head, and the spot where the bad fluffy bit you; nothing too bad. 'Nu Bestest tuffy!' You say, along with a few others. He nods, then walks over to one of the bad fluffies.

'*Wweeezzzz gasp weezzzzz* He's got bad hurties, and he can barely move. The Bestest toughie rears up and stomps on the fluffy's neck. *Crsnap*

You flinch, then again when the Bestest toughie does it to the next bad fluffy with hurties. After a few more he gets to the fluffy who's chest you stomped on; the stallion from a few brighttimes ago who tried to get into the herd with his special friend. The Bestest toughie looks at him for a little bit, gets a really mad look on his face and stomps the fluffy's head a few times.

'Bestest tuffy!!' The Smarty walks past a couple of toughies.

The Bestest toughie turns to face him. 'Bad fwuffies am fowewa sweepies Smawty.'

'Gud,' the Smarty looks at the forever sleepies bad fluffies. 'How dah nyu tuffies du?' He means you!

'Day wewe gud Smawty,' the Bestest toughie glances at you. 'Aww of dem.'

The Smarty nods. 'Gud, bud dis nu am ovah.' He looks at the Bestest toughie. 'Go find wewe dese dummehs cum fwom! If yu find mowe,' the Smarty's see places narrow, 'giv dem fowewa sweepies.'

'Yes, Smarty.'

The Smarty nods and walks off. Your thinkie place goes fast; toughies going out to find where the bad fluffies came from and fight any you find, even give them forever sleepies? It's scary, and exciting!! Strange tingles go all over your body; you feel scared, but at the same time you want to go!! More than anything in the-

'Big Wed,'

You shake your head and snap out of it. 'Yes Bestest tuffy!!' He'll ask you to come with him and the other toughies to fight the bad fluffies, you know it!!!

'Big Wed go wif babbeh an get nummies. Yu stay in safe pwace.'

W-what? 'Huh? Wat Bes-'

'Yu stay in safe pwace,' the Bestest toughie says. 'Yu hav dummeheaw pwace?'

'B-bud, bud wai Big Wed nu goin wif-'

'Yu am stiww wittwe,' the Bestest toughie says. 'Big Wed am gud tuffy, bud am tuu wittwe fow dis.' He must know you want you yell, cause he gets a mad look on his face. 'Gud tuffies du wat Bestest tuffy say!' After a few moments, he goes back to normal. 'Big Wed can go one bwrighttime when am biggah. Nao go.'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy.' You turn and walk away from the Bestest toughie and the other toughies, fast, so they don't see the sad water come out.

'Wait fow Fwuffy!' The Bestest toughie's baby follows. Behind you, the Bestest toughie picks out who he'll take.

'Yu an yu an yu. Nex Bestest tuffy, go find dah wookie fwuffies; Bestest tuffy nee two!'

#

'*Sigh...*'

'Wat am wong fwend?' The Bestest toughie's baby asks.

'Big Wed waned go wif tuffies...'

Your friend nods. 'Fwuffy knu. Bud Daddeh knu wat am doin.' He has some more of his nummies. 'Am stiww wookin after Fwuffy an Big Wed; he nu can du dat when wookin fow bad fwuffies.'

You guess he's right. Still... 'Big Wed wan be biggah nao.'

Your friend nods. Then asks, 'Wat famiwy tink boud yu bein in fight?'

'*Groan*' Not so great. Runny was excited to hear what happened, but Daddeh and Flower were scared bad fluffies tried to attack the safe place. And Mummah, well...

'Big Wed hav huwties!? Show mummah!! Mummah giv huggies!!!!'

She held you tight and tried to give you all the huggies in the world at once! No matter how much you told her you were fine, she wouldn't listen!! It took forever to make her calm down, and even longer to make her let you leave of the den.

'*Sigh* Nu am gun teww Mummah nex time.' After you finish telling your friend everything, you notice something's wrong. 'Fwend? Wat am mattah?'

He looks at the ground with a strange look on his face; they're like, maddies and saddies rolled into one. 'Big Wed shud be happies hav Mummah dat wub yu dat much.' When your friend speaks, it sounds like his face looks; mad and sad at the same time.

'Fwend? W-wat am wong?'

He stares at the ground for a while, then looks up. 'Tink Daddeh am back.' He gets up and walks to the edge of the safe place; you follow. Soon enough, you find the Bestest toughie and the group he took to find the rest of the bad fluffies. 'Hewwo Daddeh.'

'Hewwo Babbeh.' The Bestest toughie and his baby hug each other, and you stand there for a while. The other toughies and lookie fluffies walk past, probably for nummies or to see their families. There's something strange about them though. The looks on their faces are... You can't tell what it is, but it's like they've seen something, scary? What could scare them?

Your friend lets go of his Daddeh. 'Fwuffy am happies Daddeh am otay.'

The Bestest toughie smiles. 'Daddeh am happies Babbeh nu hav huwties tuu.'

'Uh, Bestest tuffy?'

They both look at you; for a moment, you wonder if you've made them mad. 'Yes? The Bestest toughie asks.

'Uh, Big Wed jus *cough* jus wan knu wat happen when yu find dah oda bad fwuffies.'

'Toughies deaw wif dem.'

'Bud, wat did-'

'Tuffies *deaw wif dem!*' The Bestest toughie says again. He's quiet for a while. 'Big Wed go back tu Famiwy nao,' he says. 'Id am awmost dawktime.'

He's right. 'Otay. Tank yu Bestest tuffy.'

He nods. 'Big Wed du gud ting dis Bwight-time. Bestest tuffy an babbeh see yu fow nex one.'

You turn and walk back to the den, but look back as you go. The Bestest toughie and his baby aren't looking at you; you hope you didn't make either of them mad. You also hope Mummah won't be as scardies as she was earlier.

#####

You and the toughies wait by a tree. Up ahead the two lookie fluffies, the best in the herd, search the forest. After a few moments, they come back. 'Dah bad fwuffies cum fwom dis way,' one says and turns back around. 'Fowwow fwuffies.' You follow behind the lookie fluffies in a line, as quiet as you can. They lead you past trees and bushies, over a dried up long water and some rocks. Every so often, they stop and look for the path the bad fluffies took; it never takes them long to find it.

The lookie fluffies follow the path through some bushies and lead you through; when you get to the other side, they stop. 'Wat am wong?' You ask.

'Bestest tuffy heaw dat?' One of them says.

You use your hear places hard; they're small, but somewhere ahead, you hear yells. 'Am dat weve fwuffies goin?' The lookie fluffy asks.

'Yes.' You look over you back at the rest of the toughies. 'Fowwow Bestest tuffy.' You trot through the forest toward the noise, as quiet as you can manage. The yells and screams get louder the closer you get, then get really bad. Some sound like the screams a... No, focus! You'll worry about what you'll find when you find it!

You trot past trees and bushies, the rest of the toughies behind you. The lookie fluffies will be near the back; they know how to take care of themselves, but you don't want them in the fight. Ahead, you see a spot with less trees hidden by some bushies; that's where you need to go. You trot faster toward it, and the other toughies spread out on either side of you. The yells and screams are much louder, but you ignore them and focus on the job you're here to do!

At least, until you get through the bushies.

You and the other toughies push through to a little clear patch. Even after all you've seen and done when you were on your own and with the herd, what you find stops you cold.

'Enf enf enf enf enf enf enf!!!'

"SKREEEEEEEP!! REEEEEEE!! SPEEEEEEP!!!!"

'Enf enf enf! Babbah make nu nu stick feew sooo guuuud!!!'

'NUUUUUUU!! BABBEHS TUU WITTWE!! BAAABEEHSS!!!'

'Enf enf enf enf! Dummeh mawe's speciaw pwace giv Fwuffy bestest enfie feews!!! Enf enf enf ENF!!!'

'SKREEEEEEEP EEEEEEEEE!!!!'

'Guud feewwss!!!'

'BAAABEEHSS!! HEWP SPECIAW FWEEENND!!!'

'Fwuffy wan nuda enfie babbah!' A fluffy gets up and walks toward a baby on the ground.

'Peep peep peep peep!!!'

'BABBEH AM TUU WITTWE!!! NU HUWT WASTEST BABBEH!!!'

'Go way dummeh!' Another fluffy blocks the one walking over to the baby, 'Dat babbah am Fwuffy's enfie babb-' He stops talking when he sees you and the other toughies. The other fluffies look up from, what they're doing; for a moment it's quiet, except for the screams.

'WAAAAAHHHHHH!!!!!!'

Maddies EXPLODE through you and the other toughies!! You charge the bad fluffies!!

'Screeeee!!' The fluffies turn to run; you pick out the closest one, jump and land on his back. 'SCREEEE!!! HEWP!!!' He cries as you both crash to the ground. You stand up and stomp him over and over!! 'SCREEEE!! NU HUWT FWUFFY!! The bad fluffy manages to roll over and exposes his neck; you're so mad, you can't help but lean down and bite it!! 'REEEE!!!! REEEEEEEEEE!!!' The fluffy struggles and thrashes about, but you have him pinned. You bite down hard and shake your head from side to side, let go and bite harder when you feel your grip go loose. You don't stop, not even when you taste boo-boo juice.

'SCREEEE!!!!!!'

'WUN WAY WUEEEEEEE!!!!'

'DUMMEH MUNSTAH FWUFFY!!! YU GU FOWEWA SWEEPIES **NAO!!!**'

'TAKE HIS WUMPS!!!'

'SQUEEEEEEEEEEE!!!!'

You shake your head back and forth as hard as you can! The taste of boo-boo juice is all through your nummie place, but you barely notice. There's a strange wet rip sound, and your head lifts away from the bad fluffy. You spit out whatever is in your nummie place, rear up and stomp the bad fluffy's head, over and over until you hear a crack and your hoofies go all the way to the ground. You look up to find another bad fluffy to fight, but every one of them has a toughie or two on top of them. They scream even louder than the babbies they gave special huggies to.

There's boo-boo juice, fluff, special lumps and no-no sticks all over the ground. Some of your maddies go away, enough for you to realise there's no point giving another of the other bad fluffies hurties. It's not long before their screams stop and all you can hear are the yells of your toughies, and the mare's screams.

'Stahp! STAHP!!' Your yell brings an end to it. The toughies stand up; every one of them has boo-boo juice on them, and they're breathing hard. Some walk toward the edge of the clearing and a few make sickie water. As for you, you walk around the bad fluffies' safe place; there's not much here, some nesties and a poopie place a little ways off. No nummie dens, which explains why they tried to get to the herd's nummies.

'BABBEH! BABBEH!!!'

You look at the mare, the one from a few brighttimes ago called Tracy. She looks bad; her fluff is even dirtier than when you saw her last, she has lots of hurties, and there's boo-boo juice around her special place. Tracy crawls over to one of her babbies, what's left of the poor thing, and tries to hug it better.

'BABBEH!! PWEASE BE OTAY!! MUMMAH GIV HUGGIES!!! PWEASE BE OTAY HUHUUUUU!!!'

You walk over to her; on the way you pass another of her babies. You try not to look too close, but you still see all the boo-boo juice and, other stuff, by its back leggies. It still moves and tries to make scardie peeps, but it's hurties and owwies are too bad. As you walk past a toughie comes over, and you hear a hoofie slam into the ground.

You walk up to Tracy and stand over her. After a few moments, she looks up at you, see places full of sad water and her face covered in dirt and boo-boo juice.

WAAAHUUUUUU!! SCREEEEEE!!!!!!' Tracey screams and cries so loud you flinch. She curls up in a ball, her baby clutched to her chest. You look at her for a moment; part of you understands, if you'd let her and her special friend into the herd, none of this would have happened. The other thing that would have stopped this is if she hadn't been such a big dummy!!

You rear up and stomp Tracy's neck. *CRSNNAP* The screams and crying stop, and she goes still. You step off her and walk away when you hear the last baby again. 'Peep peep peep! Peeeeeep!!' You walk over to it; the poor little thing wriggles around on his back, he's still too little to get back on his hoofies. Oh wait, she, not that it matters now. You look at the little filly, then lean down and pick her up. 'Spee! Eeep! Peep peep peep!!'

'Shhhh.' You hug her into your chest fluff. 'Id am otay wittwe babbeh, ewyting am ovah nao.'

'Peep peep! Peep.'

'Shhh. Nu make scawdie peeps, babbeh.' You say gently.

'Peep peep. Cheep.' You feel the little baby wriggle into your fluff, to get as close to you as she can. It must feel good to be somewhere soft and warm and safe again. 'Cheep cheep. Chirp.' She goes quiet, and you feel her give you little baby huggies. A little bit later, it sounds and feels like she's gone to sleep. Poor baby, it's not her fault.

It's not her fault her mummah was a dummy who ran away from her human housie. It's not her fault her daddeh was a dummy who put her in her mummah when there wasn't enough nummies. It's not her fault those dummies came to these bad fluffies for help. It's not her fault they decided her mummah couldn't stay here without giving them something. She's only a little baby, she didn't ask for any of this. None of you did.

You give the filly some huggies. 'Bestest tuffy am sowwie wittwe babbeh. Yu am gud babbeh.' You hear a little chirp come from your chest. Carefully, you lean down and put the little baby on the ground as gently as you can.

'Chirp? Cheep cheep?' She starts to cheep and wriggle around. 'Cheep? Pee-'

STOMP

You smash your hoofie down on her head as hard as you can, so hard it gives your leggie hurties. That's okay though, you had to get it right. You close your see place, then turn and walk toward the other toughies. Most of them are by some bushies a little bit away. They use piles of cold fluff to clean the boo-boo juice off, which you'll have to do too. Some toughies give each other huggies. One of them cries; '*Sob* W-wai? Wai du dat tu wittwe babbehs huhuuu!'

'Id am otay fwend,' the toughie he's hugging says. 'Bad fwuffies am fowewa sweepies nao.'

Toughies aren't meant to cry, but you'll let it go this time. You might cry too, if it wasn't for all you've seen and done. You find a clean patch of cold fluff and clean the boo-boo juice off. It's really cold, but you kind of like it; it takes your thinkie place off of what happened. After a while, you step away from the cold fluff. 'Du Bestest tuffy stiww hav boo-boo juice in fwuff?'

'Nu Bestest tuffy, Id am gone.'

'Gud.' You turn to the rest. 'Tuffies!!' You yell to get their attention, but can't yell the next part. '*Sigh* Back to safe pwace nao.' They nod, and fall in behind you and the lookie fluffies.

It'll be a long walk back.

Chapter Twenty

The worst part about the cold-times isn't the cold; it's terrible sure, but you've gotten used to it. No, the worst part is you have to stay in the safe place no matter what. After the last nummie finding trip, the Smarty said the only fluffies allowed outside the safe place are toughies and lookie fluffies. You wish you could go out with a lookie fluffy and learn to be one, like what Big Red does with the toughies; but, the chance won't come until the cold times are over. The lookie fluffies have too much to worry about, and can't teach new lookie fluffies properly.

So, you stay in the safe place and do whatever little jobs you can find; mostly it's clearing cold fluff from the paths. It makes you really cold and sleepy, but at least it's something! The cold fluff breezie monsters have gotten bigger and more dangerous, and come more often! You have to spend a lot of time in the den because of them; a few times, you've had to spend nearly the whole brighttime in there! It's horrible for a lot of reasons, one of which is Flower! You love her a lot, but you wish she'd *stop crying when the breezie monsters come!!* It doesn't make them go away, and how scary can they be now? You know what they do, and they can't get into the dens. Flower should be used to them already!

The other bad thing is you can't get to the poopie place when the cold fluff monsters attack. Leave the den when they're around, and you'll get lost in the cold fluff; so, you have to hold it. Daddeh made a little poopie place close to the den, so you don't have to walk all the way to the big one when the paths aren't clear. It's handy, but you all have to wait your turn for it.

With how boring life is at the moment, all you want to do is sleep; your sleepie pictures are the only way to have fun at the moment. In them, you can run as much as you want and don't have to worry about cold fluff or monsters, not even leggie and chest hurties! It's great, and you can also fly!! Why your wingies only work in sleepie pictures might be one of those things fluffies can't know, but you try not to worry and enjoy it.

The race starts; 'Wunnie am gun beat aww yu tu dah skettie twees!!' You and the other wingie fluffies run from the big bushie into the forest. Fluffies duck and dive around trees, jump over bushies bigger than the ones which made the safe baby place, even leap up through the trees and into the sky!! Well, you won't beat them if you stay on the ground! You jump and flap your wingies, shoot through the trees and fly into the sky, past the-

'Hewp! Hewp!!'

You look around; is someone in trouble? Have the birdy monsters come back?!

'Hewp!!'

Hang on, the voice isn't in your sleepie pic-

'Wakies Wunnie!!' You feel something prod you; the sleepy picture goes blurry, and you wake up.

'Huh? Wat am happen-'

'Get up, Wunnie!' Daddeh yells. 'Dewe am wost fwuffy! Famiwy nee hewp wook!'

You scramble out of the nestie and follow your family out of the den. It's earlier than when the herd normally wakes up; the sky ball isn't over the trees yet, and the safe place is still pretty dark.

'Wost Fwuffy was goin tu poopie pwace!' A toughie yells.

'Wunnie an Big Wed go dat way!' Daddeh points down one of the paths with his hoofie. 'Daddeh, Mummah an Fwowah go dis way!'

'Otay Daddeh!' Big Red leads you down the path; it's wide enough for two fluffies, and on either side is the cold fluff. It's almost as deep as your leggings but thinner in a few places, usually because there's a bunch of it in the bushies or trees above. 'Bwudda see anything?'

'Nu,' you tell Big Red; the dark makes it hard to see. It's not as bad as the proper darktime, but it's bad enough you can't tell who fluffies are when they're far away. How are you supposed to find one fluffy in particular? You don't even know who they are or what they look like!! Big Red leads you down the path, past a nummie den and some bushies. Now you're on the way to the poopie place and, hey!

'Stahp!'

Big Red stops and turns; 'Wat?'

'Wook!' You point at tracks in the cold fluff. 'Dah fwuffy go dis way!' Big Red comes over and looks; they turn off the path and go through the cold fluff. 'Huwwy, fowwow Wunnie!' You get off the path and follow the tracks; your hoofies get cold, but your fluff keeps your leggings warm. You have to be quick! Both of you follow the trail through the cold fluff; they go past a few bushies and close to a large tree-

'Dewe!!' Big Red yells and runs past you. He stops near a big pile of cold fluff by the tree and digs into it with his hoofies.

'Wat am Big Wed duin?' You run up next to him. 'Wai am-' Big Red bats away some more cold fluff, and you see a patch of green! '*GASP*' You dive in and help him dig away the cold fluff! 'HEWP!!' You scream in between. 'HEWP! FWUFFY AM HEWE!!' A few moments later, some toughies join in; together you bat and dig away the cold fluff, and free the fluffy trapped under it.

'Quick! Get fwuffy way fwom twee!!' The toughies and Big Red grab the green fluffy, and drag him through the cold fluff to a path. There, you and the others crowd around the green fluffy and give him lots of huggies. You give them as hard as you can, but the fluffy feels cold. And, he stays cold.

'Stahp,' One of the fluffies who dragged him out of the cold fluff says. 'Dis fwuffy am-'

'Babbeh? Babbeh!!' A mare runs down the path and pushes the toughies away. She grabs hold of the small fluffy and gives him lots of huggies. 'Babbeh! Mummah am hewe! Mummah giv huggies an make coddies go way!!' A stallion who must be the green fluffy's daddeh, and some small fluffies run up too; all of them give the green fluffy huggies.

'Daddeh am hewe Babbeh! Pwease, be otay!!'

'Bwudda! Bwudda pwease be wakies!!'

'Sissie giv huggies!!'

'Go way meanie coddies!! Nu huwt Bwudda nu mowe!!'

'Stahp id!' One of the toughies says. 'Huggies nu can wowk nao; dis fwuffy am-'

'NUUU!' The green fluffy's Mummah screams. 'BABBEH NU AM FOWEWA SWEEPIES!!'

The toughie and a few others try again, but the mare and the rest of the family don't listen; they give the little green fluffy huggies until the Smarty shows up.

'Stahp dis nao!!' The family looks up; they go quiet, but still make sad water. 'Smawty am sowwies,' he says, 'bud yuw babbeh am fowewa sweepies!'

'Nu! Nuuu!' The mummah cries. 'Babbeh nu am fowewa sweepies! He jus nee-'

'Huggies nu can fix him,' the Smarty says. 'He am fowewa sweepies.'

The Mummah goes quiet; even more sad water come out of her see places, and she collapses on top of the green fluffy; 'Waaaahuhuhuuuuu!!! Baaabbeehhh huhuhuuu!!' Her special friend and their other babbies cry over the green fluffy too; the Smarty leaves them be for a moment, then walks over.

'Tuffies nee move yuw babbeh nao,' he says gently. 'He nu can stay in safe pwace.'

The Mummah keeps crying but manages to nod and let go of her baby. She hugs her special friend tight, and their other babies hug them both while the toughies drag the green fluffy down the path towards the forest.

'Hewd Wisten tu Smawty!!' You look back around; 'Dis am wai yu nu go in dah codd fwuff!' He walks away to do, whatever it is he does in the cold times. You find Big Red, and together you walk to the nummie dens. Right now, you want to get your first brighttime nummies and try to forget about what's happened.

####

You're back in the forest with the Bestest Toughie and his baby; the cold fluff breezie monsters have stayed away for the last few brighttimes, and some cold fluff has gone away. The herd can move around a little more, but so can bad fluffies. The Smarty told lookie fluffies and toughies to be extra careful, and keep a closer look out for anything wrong.

'Stay way fwom dat twee Big Wed,' The Bestest toughie warns. 'Dewe tuu much codd fwuff in id.'

'Otay Bestest tuffy,' You walk around the tree, so wide you go to the other side of the Bestest toughie. It's only been three brighttimes since the little green fluffy got nummed by the cold fluff; a lot of the herd still has scardies from it, mostly the young fluffies. You don't want it to happen again, and you *really* don't want it to happen to you. When you're past the tree, you go back to your spot next to the Bestest toughie.

'Stahp!'

You all freeze in place; 'What am it Babbeh?' The Bestest toughie asks.

'Dewe sumtin in does bushies,' The your friend carefully points with his hoofie. You look too. It's far away, but he's right; there's something there, like a-

'Fowwow Bestest tuffy,' He walks toward the bushie; you follow, but not too close. Your heart starts to go fast, and you get the same scardies as when the bad fluffies attacked. The Bestest toughie walks up to the bushie; you get ready for a bad fluffy to jump out at him, and for others to come out of other bushies and from behind trees! But after no time at all, he says 'Id am nuting, jus wittwe babbies.'

The strange feels and scardies go way. It's disappointing you don't get to fight bad fluffies again, but... Wait, what? 'Wittwe babbiehs?'

The Bestest toughie nods; 'Day wook wike chiwpie babbiehs.'

The Bestest toughie gets out of the way and lets you see. There, under the bushie in a small nestie, you see a bunch of little babies in a nestie. None of them moves or makes any noise. You poke one of them with your hoofie; nothing happens, and it feels hard. You lean close, and touch your smelly place on a little pointy baby; the coldies make you pull back right away.

'Day am fowewa sweepies,' The Bestest toughie says. 'Dah cowlies du id.'

'Wai am day hewe?' You ask.

'Maybe dewe mummah make hew nestie hewe, den go oud tu wook fow nummies, an nu cum back.'

You see thinkie place pictures of the little babies in their nestie, giving each other huggies while they wait for their mummah to come back. You see them chirp and peep, and cry out for her as their tummy hurties and coldies get worse, until...

'Whewe dewe Mummah go?' Your friend asks; he sounds, odd. The Bestest toughie takes a while before he answers.

'Nu knu. Fowest am big pwace.'

'Wai she make nestie so cwise tu safe pwace?' you ask. 'Wai tuffies an wookie fwuffies nu giv hew scawdies?'

The Bestest toughie goes quite again. 'Maybe... Maybe she weave dem hewe su tuffies ow wookie find dem, so day can be safe.'

'Wud tuffies ow wookie fwuffies sabe wittwe babbiehs?'

The Bestest toughie doesn't say anything for, and doesn't answer your question when he speaks; 'Wets go,' he walks away from the bushie. 'Nee make suwe nuting cum cwise tu-'

A gust of wind shakes the trees; big clumps of cold fluff fall to the ground. You nearly have to jump out of the way of one.

'Wun! Fowwow Bestest tuffy!!' You turn and follow him. This has happened enough times for you to know what's happening; breezie monster!! You all run as fast as your leggies will take you, and it's almost not enough!

The breezie monster catches up; cold fluff starts to fly around, and you get horrible scardies!! But before it gets bad enough to trap you, the three of you make it back to the safe place! By luck, you're close to the

Bestest toughie's den; he leads you over, and you all run inside. Not long after, the monster roars really loud, and some cold fluff blows in. Scardies run through your body; you hope your family got into the den okay. Mummah must have even worse scardies because you're not there.

'Tink am gun be in hewe fow wong time,' your friend says. His Daddeh nods.

'Wat tuffies du?' You ask.

'Wait fow munstah tu go way.' Your friend says. Duh.

'Bestest tuffy am gun hav sweepies,' he walks over to his nestie and lies down. 'If Babbeh an Big Wed wan tawkies, use wittwe wowdies. *Yawn.*' The Bestest toughie curls up and falls asleep really fast.

You look at your friend; 'Big Wed nu am sweepies,' you say.

'Fwuffy nu am sweepies tuu,' He nods his head at a corner of the den. 'Dis way.' You follow him over and lie down on your tummy. For a while, you're both quiet. You look around the den; it's bigger than yours, probably because the Bestest toughie is so much bigger than normal fluffies. You and Daddeh might have to make the den bigger if you live there much longer. Otherwise, you'll have to make your own. But, it's not just the size you notice; you know what a den looks like when a lot of fluffies live in it. As far as you can tell, it doesn't look like any fluffies other than the Bestest toughie, and your friend live here.

'Wat am big Wed tinkin boud?'

You look back at your friend; he doesn't look mad, so maybe you can ask him. It's something you've wondered about for a while. 'Big Wed tinkin boud wai nu oda fwuffies wive hewe.'

'Big Wed wan knu wai Fwuffy nu hav Mummah, ow bwuddas an sissies?'

You nod, carefully. You still think he's not mad but, well, it's hard to tell with him. Your friend stays quiet for a while longer.

'Fwuffy had Mummah, bud onwy fow wittwe, wittwe time,' he says. 'Nu see hew, ewa. She go way.'

'Wai?' You ask. 'Did she go fowewa sweepies ow-'

'She weave Fwuffy,' he says. 'Nu waned Fwuffy. Nu knu wai.'

'Fwend sayin dat mummah weave yu wif daddeh?'

'Nu. Daddeh go way tuu.'

That doesn't make any sense; his Daddeh is right over-

'Bestest tuffy nu am Fwuffy's weaw Daddeh,' you friend says like he heard your thinkie place. 'He find Fwuffy when was wittwe chiwpie babbeh. He sabed Fwuffy, an wooked aftah Fwuffy.' Lots of questions go through your thinkie place, and it looks like your friend heard them; 'Fwuffy nu wan tawkies boud id nu mowe.' He says. 'Bud... Maybe teww Big Wed one bwighttime.'

You nod. 'Otay. Am, sowwies fow makin fwend saddies.'

'Dat am otay.' He says but doesn't look at you. There's a roar from the monster, and some cold fluff blows into the den. 'Cum on,' you friend gets up, 'nee get dat cowl fwuff out of den.'

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'Cum on Fwowah, time tu check on oda fwuffies.'

'Otay Mummah.' You follow her out of the den. The paths are clear again, but the cold fluff at the bottom still gives your hoofies coldies; they're not bad, but you hate them.

'Fwowah go dat way,' Mummah points down the path. 'Be cawefuw.'

'Otay Mummah.' You walk along the path toward the first den. Since a lot of fluffies stay in theirs for a lot of the brighttime, the Smarty asked some of you to go out each brighttime and up check on everyone. Mummah said yes, and so did you. Even if it's cold, you want to do stuff which gets out of the den. Lately, the more time you spend with your brothers, the less you like them; especially Runny.

This job gives you a chance to see your friends, sometimes even your Special friend! You also like it because it feels nice to help other fluffies in the herd; you get to hear their stories and meet new friends. It helps you forget about the cold times; you can't wait till they're over. Not long after you start walking, you come to the first den.

'Hewwo,' You walk into the den. 'Am fwuffies otay?'

'*Yawn* Hewwo,' Oops, looks like you woke them up. 'Famiwy am otay, tank yu.'

You smile; 'Dat am gud-'

'Wai dummeh wake up fwuffies?!' One of their babbies says. You feel some sharp saddies, and your hear places try to hide.

'Babbeh!' His daddeh yells, 'Nu be meanies! Nice Fwowah jus makin suwe famiwy am otay. Yu say sowwies nao!'

The little fluffy looks at you; 'Fwuffy am sowwies, nice Fwowah.'

'Dat am otay,' you say. 'Fwowah nu am maddies.'

The little fluffy nods and looks away. His mummah looks up; 'Tank yu Fwowah, yu am nice fwuffy.'

'Tank yu!' You feel some heart happies. 'Fwowah nee go nao.'

'Bai.' The family says as you walk out of the den. You get on the path and head toward the next one. You walk faster because you want to get there as quick as you can. The stallion who lives there is a digger, and a couple of brighttimes ago he got some owwies from a rock while he was getting cold fluff off the paths. Last brighttime he had some sickies, but his family gave him lots of huggies, so he should be better.

You get to the den; 'Hewwo!' No one answers. 'H-hewwo? Am fwuffies otay in hewe?' You get a few scardies; this isn't good. Part of you doesn't want to go in, but you have to see if they're okay. After a deep breath, you walk down the tunnel into the den. 'Hewwo? Am fwuffies otay?' You think you hear a groan. A few more steps

and something bad comes into your smelly place. It gives you strange scardies and makes you shiver, but you force yourself to keep going until you're in the den.

It takes a moment for your see places to work properly; when they do you see the family on their nestie all crowded around the stallion, and he doesn't look good. Your hear places hide, and you get more bad scardies. You shake and want to turn and run, but you manage to fight the scardies and walk closer. 'H-hewwo?' Finally, his special friend looks up; she has a lot of saddies on her face. Before she can speak,

'*Groan*' The stallion looks up at you slowly; '*Cough, groan...*' He looks bad; his sickies haven't got better at all. 'H...hewwo... *cough*'

'A-am... Am fwuffy otay?'

'*Cough* Nu...'

You have to take a moment to make your scardies go away again. 'Du, fwuffy nee hewp?'

The Daddeh nods. 'Can Fwowah pw-pwease get *cough cough* t-tuffy?' The Mummah makes a sad sound.

'O... O-otay,' you tell him. 'Fwowah go get tuffy.'

'Tank yu...' The Daddeh puts his head back down, and his special friend lies back on top of him. You leave their den and walk down the path; while you look for a toughie, your thinkie place talks about all sorts of scary things. Why didn't the huggies fix the stallion's sickies? Why does he want a toughie to come to his den? Can the toughie make the sickies go away? How? After a little bit, you find one; 'Nice Tuffy!' You run over to him.

'Wat am wong wittwe fwuffy?' He says.

'Dewe am fwuffy wif bad sickies! He say he nee tuffy!'

A look flashes over the toughies face, too fast to figure out what it was. 'Otay. Take Tuffy dewe.'

You lead the toughie back to the den. When you get there, he walks over to the family and talks to the stallion. 'Yu hav bad sickies?'

The stallion nods.

'Otay,' The toughie looks at you; 'Wittwe fwuffy nee go nao.'

'W-wai? Wat am-'

'Yu nee go, nao.' The toughie says again.

You nod and leave the den. But when you get to the top of the tunnel, you stop. Even though you're scared, you've got too many questions; you have to know what the toughie will do, and why they made you leave. As quiet as you can, and walk back down the tunnel, close enough so you can hear what they're saying;

'-ddeh wub yu babbehs *cough,* a-awways wub yu.'

'*Sob* Pwease Daddeh, pwease be bettah!'

'Huuhuhu wai huggies nu make Daddeh sickies go way?! Huhuhuu am bad fwuffy!'

'Nu... Babbeks nu am bad... Yu am gud babbeks.' You hear a long shaky breath. 'Babbeks, pwomise be gud an... An wook aftah Mummah.'

'Huuuhuuu *Sob* Fwuffy pwomise Daddeh *sob* wiww be gud!!'

'Pwomise Daddeh *sob* Fwuffy pwomise!!'

'Gud babbeks. Spe... Speciaw fwend,'

'*Sob* Fwuffy am hewe Speciaw fwend!'

'Fwuffy wub yu Speciaw fwend. Awways, wub yu...'

'*Sob* Wub yu tuu Speciaw fwend huhuhuuu *sob* wub yu fowewa huhu!'

There's lots of crying, then; 'Tuffy nee du dis nao. Yuw famiwy shud go.'

'Speciaw fwend, take babbeks way. Id am otay...'

'*Sob* huhuhuuu. C-cum on babbeks...'

You hear the family walk toward the tunnel; you turn and leave as quietly as you can, then run down the path to the next den. Outside it, you stop and breath hard for a while, mostly to make your scardies go away.

'Am wittwe Fwowah otay?'

You look around, and see a light grey mare come out of the den; she's one of Mummah's friends who looked after little babbies with her.

'Am ewyting otay?' She asks again. 'Fwowah wook wike hav bad scawdies.'

You try to think of what to say, but you're not sure you want to tell her what happened; then you hear crying. Behind you, the mare and her babbies walk up the path.

'Fwend?' Mummah's friend walks over to the family. 'Fwend wat happen?' The family doesn't say anything, all they do is cry. 'Wat happen? Wai fwend-' She stops; you look past them and see some toughies drag the stallion out of his den. 'Fwuffy am so sowwies fwend.' Mummah's friend gives the mare big huggies. You go over and help, and it's not long until you're crying too.

####

'Tuffies!!' You and your friend get up and run to the Bestest toughie; the others come too, and soon you're all crowded around him and a couple of lookie fluffies. 'Tuffies wisten tu Bestest tuffy!! Wookie fwuffies see oda hewd in fowest; day am cwise tu safe pwace!!' A few of the new toughies gasp, but most stay quiet. 'Nu knu if day knu safe pwace am hewe, bud tuffies nee keep dem way!!'

'Yes Bestest tuffy!!' Everyone yells.

'Tuffies fowwow wookie fwuffies intu fowest! If dat hewd twy get tu safe pwace, fight dem an make dem go oda way! If yu see fwuffy yu nu knu, giv dem fowewa sweepies!!'

A bolt of scardies goes through you, and you miss saying 'Yes Bestest tuffy!!' with everyone else. The toughies walk toward the forest; you and your friend join up with the Bestest toughie. The strange feel from when the bad fluffies attacked fill your body; hot and cold, tight and empty at the same time. You have tingles and itches all over, and-

'Wisten,' The Bestest toughie says, 'if wookie fwuffies fwom dat hewd find safe pwace, day go tu id. Safe pwace nu can hav two hewds in id!' He looks at the two of you. 'If yu see dewe wookie fwuffies, yu hav tu giv dem fowewa sweepies! Undewstan?'

You nod.

'Gud.' The Bestest toughie stops and points at a bushie. 'Big Wed go dewe. Nu weave tiww Bestest tuffy say, ow yu heaw big fight happen.'

'Yes, Bestest tuffy.' You go to the bushie, and the Bestest toughie and his baby go to find their hiding places. Right, now you wait. You sit behind the bushie and get to work watching; you use your hear places hard, peak around and through the bushie. Your heart beats really fast and loud, the strange feels get bigger, and you have to try really hard to breathe properly.

You shake your head a couple of times and take some really, really deep breaths. Focus, focus!! Whatever happens, you can't let any lookie fluffies from the other herd find the safe place; even if they've got the worst tummy hurties, there aren't enough nummies for them too! You have to keep the herd safe, you have to keep your family safe!!

Soon, the strange feels get a smaller, and your thinkie place starts to works better, just in time for you to hear something;

Crunch. That's a hoofie on cold fluff.

Crunch Again, closer this time!

Crunch. Whoever it is, they're coming this way. You peak through the bushie, and see something move;

Crunch, Crunch, Crunch. The fluffy comes closer; you can't tell much about him, but it can't be one of the toughies. He's walking the wrong way, and none of you would be out of place.

Crunch, Crunch, Crunch Closer; he has to be a lookie fluffy from the other herd!

Crunch, Crunch, Crunch

You hold your breath; things get slow, and the strange feels get stronger than they've ever been before! The fluffy walks to one side of the bushie; you try to follow him with your see places without making noise, so he can't sneak past and make it to-

Crunch, Crunch, Crunch

The fluffy walks into view; he's got dull orange fluff and looks like he hasn't had nummies for a while. He also looks sleepy, and like he has lots of hurties and... What are you doing?! He's getting closer to the safe place!! You have to stop him and, and...

Crunch, Crunch, Crunch 'Huh?' The fluffy stops and turns around. When he sees you, a lot of scardies go over his face; things seem to get even slower, so slow you can see his nummie place start to move. He's about to yell and bring the rest of his herd!!! Something takes over, and you leap at the lookie fluffy; 'Ooof!' You crash into him, and both of you fall into the cold fluff; you didn't land on his back, but you're still on top of him!

You stand and... and what now?! What do you-

'Gah!' The lookie fluffy struggles and kicks; 'H-hewp!' His yell wasn't loud, but the next one will be! 'HEguwrk!!' Before you can think, you press your hoofies down on the lookie fluffy's neck; it pushes both of you into the cold fluff a little, but you hardly notice. '*Hwark!! Urrk!*' The lookie fluffy struggles and kicks; cold fluff goes everywhere, and a couple of times you have to move, so he doesn't hit your lumps. But you keep your hoofies on his neck and push him deeper into the cold fluff.

The lookie fluffy shifts around and looks into your see places; you see all sots of scardies and saddies in them. '*Hrrrk, uuzz!* Pwuzzk!!' The look on his face and in his see places make you feel bad; you're hurting him! Maybe if you let him up, he'll promise not to... NO! The last fluffies who came to the herd brought back a lot of bad fluffies; he'll bring a whole herd! You press harder and close your see places, so you don't have to look.

'*Hwwrrk! Hurr...*' The noises the lookie fluffy makes get smaller, and he stops moving as much. At little bit later he stops moving at all and... Are those, poopies you can smell? You open your see places; the lookie fluffy isn't moving. His tongue hangs out of his nummie place, and his see places are red like there's boo-boo juice in them. You get off him and, yes you did smell poopies; the lookie fluffy must have done them when he, when he...

'*Gulp*'

He's forever sleepies, isn't he? You prod him in the face. Nothing. 'H-hewwo?' Still nothing. You feel something big and heavy in your tummy; he's forever sleepies, and you gave them to him. He was probably trying to say stop or no, begging you not to do it. But, you didn't; you stood on his neck and kept him pinned. You... You have to hide him, in case more lookie fluffies come by!

You grab his mane with your nummie place and drag him through the cold fluff behind a big tree. Then you go back to the bushie, sit down and try to get back on the job. But it's hard to forget about what happened, and what you did. You can still hear the noises he made, and when you blink your thinkie place shows you pictures of his face and see places! You shake your head, look really close at the bushie, and use your hear places hard.

Time gets really long again; you hear a few things, or maybe you only think you did. There's a strange empty feeling in your chest; no matter how much you breathe, it won't go away. You blink a couple of times; you could swear you felt some sad water. Why? You did a good thing, didn't you? The lookie fluffy... He would have told a great big herd of bad fluffies all about the safe place if he found it! But, maybe he wouldn't have. Maybe he'd have walked past, then gone back and told his herd there was noting too-

'Big Wed,'

Somehow you manage to not scream. You turn and see your friend.

'Wat happen?' He asks in little wordies. 'Wai Big Wed wook so scawdies? Did oda fwuffies cum hewe?'

You nod.

'Id am otay nao; wookie fwuffies say dah oda hewd am goin way; day nu knu whewe safe pwace am!'

'Dat, dat am gud...' You manage.

Your friend tilts his head; 'Am Big Wed otay? Wat happen?'

You can't say it, so you point your hoofie at the tree. Your friend walks over, looks behind the tree and steps back a little. After a few moments, he comes back and gives you some huggies. 'Id am otay fwend, yu did wat tuffies hav tu.'

You manage to nod, but your wordies still aren't working.

'Cum on fwend, tuffies am goin back tu safe pwace.' Your friend lets go, and you follow him back to the safe place. When you get there, the Bestest toughie comes over to talk.

'Am Babbah an Big Wed otay?'

'Yes Daddeh,' Your friend says.

'Dat am gud,' Then he looks at you. 'Big Wed? What happen?'

Your friend tells him what happened; 'A wookie fwuffy fwom dah oda hewd find Big Wed an he... He hav tu-'

'Babbah nu nee teww Daddeh,' he looks at you. 'Bestest tuffy undewstan. Big Wed can go back tu nestie.'

You nod, and walk away; but, you don't go to the den. It... You don't want to be around your family right now. Instead, you go sit by a smaller bushie.

Your thinkie place feels tight and empty for the rest of the brighttime.

####

You follow Daddeh along the path to the nummie dens. Around you, the shadows made by the trees and bushies are long and kind of scary. In some places, they come together and look like the darktime; maybe that's where it comes from. Some fluffies you know walk past; you say hi them, and stop and give huggies to one of your friends. But then, up ahead you see a fluffy you don't want to; the mare from a few brighttimes ago, the one who's special friend had the bad sickies, and got forever sleepies from one of the toughies! Because, he asked for it...

'Fwowah?'

You flinch a little, even though it's Daddeh. 'Y-yes?'

'Am Fwowah babbah otay? Wook wike hav bad scawdies an saddies.'

You stop and look at him; you don't want to talk about what happened at the den, but your wordies don't listen. You feel them force their way out, and know you can't stop them. All you can manage is to stay quiet

until the mare walks past; she doesn't look at either of you, which isn't a surprise. When she's gone you tell Daddeh everything. By the time you're done, the fluff under your see places is full of sad water, and you can barely talk. Daddeh gives you really big huggies; you hug him back and bury your head in his chest fluff.

'Daddeh am so sowwies Fwowah,' he says. 'Dat was saddie ting tu see.'

'*Sob* B-bud wai tuffy giv d... *Sob* Dat fwuffy f-owewa sweepies huhuu!' Your heart hurties are so bad. 'Wai? Nao his babbehs nu hav daddeh nu mowe!!'

'Shh, id am otay Fwowah, Daddeh am hewe.'

'Am yu fwuffies otay?' That voice sounds familiar, but you're too sad to figure out who it is.

'Yes nice Tuffy, fwuffies am otay.' No, you're not.

'Otay. Twy nu be hewe tuu wong; dawktime be hewe soon.'

'Yes nice Tuffy,' Daddeh says. You hear the toughie walk away. 'Fwowah, Daddeh knu yu hav bad saddies an heawt huwties fow dat fwuffy. Bud...' He takes a little bit to finish, 'Hewd, nee du dat.'

'Wat Daddeh? Du wat?!'

'Giv fwuffies wif wowstest sickies fowewa sweepies.'

What? 'Bu... bud wai? Wa-'

'Shhhh, nu nee be woud,' Daddeh says. 'Daddeh knu id am saddies, bud hewd nee du id. When fwuffy hav wowstest sickies, day nu can hewp hewd. Day hav wowstest huwties, an nu can fix dem.' He goes quiet for a moment. 'Wots go fowewa sweepies, eben if oda fwuffies twy an hewp. Dat am wai hewd du id.'

You take a while to think about what Daddeh's told you; it still makes you sad. Even if the poor fluffy had the worstest sickies and hurties, and even if nothing could help him, you can't help but think about his poor family! What will they do without him? It's strange how he does, but Daddeh seems to know what you're thinking.

'Nu be scawdies boud dat fwuffy's famiwy,' he says. 'Hewd wook aftah dem.'

'W-weawy?'

'Yes Fwowah, hewd awways hewp hewd.'

'E-eben if mummahs an daddeh go-'

'Yes Fwowah, hewd wook aftah famiwies; oda mawes giv wittwe babbehs miwkies if day wose dewe mummah, an hewp if dewe daddeh's go fowewa sweepies.' You look up at Daddeh; he's got some sad water in his see places but has a smile on his face. 'Dat am wat hewd du; am wat make hewd gud.'

Some more sad water comes out of your see places; you give Daddeh more huggies. '*Sob* F-fwowah undewstan Daddeh *sob*. W-wub yu *sniff*.'

'Daddeh wub yu tu Fwowah,' Daddeh says gently, then lets go of you; 'Cum on; wets get nummies an go back tu nestie.'

####

You hoped the strange feels you have about the lookie fluffy would go away after a few brighttimes, but they haven't. Maybe it was a dummy thing to think, but you want them to stop! When you do your toughie jobs, your thinkie place distracts you with pictures of what happened, and all the strange feels come back. It makes it hard to focus; one brighttime you ran into a tree because of it.

You wonder if you should talk to someone about it, but who? There's no way you can tell Mummah, it was bad enough when she heard you were in a fight! You can't even imagine what she'd do if you told her you gave a fluffy forever sleepies, even if he was bad. Daddeh might be better, but you can't risk Mummah finding out. If you told Daddeh, she would happen for sure; they tell each other everything.

That leaves your friends, but a lot of them are toughies. The ones who haven't given other fluffies forever sleepies wouldn't understand, and those who have might think you're a bad toughie! Toughies aren't supposed to feel scardies of anything, or feel bad about keeping the herd safe! Right? It gives your thinkie place tight sharp hurties; all you can do is try not to think about it.

#

You're watching the forest again, out in the forest not far from the safe place. As bad as it was before, now you have the strange feels and thinkie place pictures to deal with. Since there's nothing to distract yourself with, they bother you over and over! Your friend is with you, but the Bestest toughie is off doing something else; he said the two of you were big enough to be on your own more.

You want to talk to your friend about what happened, but a couple of things stop you; the first is you don't want the Bestest toughie to know you've got all these strange feels; he might think you're not a good toughie! The other is, well, you're not meant to talk; you have to watch the forest. Some time passes; all that happens is a little bird flies between the trees. Then, your friend coughs. You're about to ask if he's okay, but he starts to talk;

'Big Wed?'

'Yes?'

'Du Big Wed hav saddies boud dat wookie fwuffy?' A sharp cold feel runs up your back. Quickly, your friend adds 'Daddeh nu make Fwuffy ask yu, Fwuffy jus wan knu if Big Wed am oday.' His wordies make you feel a little better. It should be safe to talk to him then.

'Yes,' you say in little wordies. 'Big Wed hav saddies boud id...'

'Dat nu am bad ting,' your friend says. 'Daddeh say wotsa nyu toughies am saddies boud fist time day giv fowewa sweepies. Id nu mean Big Wed am bad toughie.'

You shake your head. 'Nu. Id... Id nu am dat...'

'Huh? Wat Big Wed sayin?'

It takes you a while to think of the right wordies. 'Big Wed nu am saddies boud givin fwuffy fowewa sweepies.'

'Bud...' Your friend scrunches up his face. 'Fwuffy nu undewstan...'

'Big Wed am scawdies cause nu feew saddies,' you say. 'Dat wookie fwuffy had wowstest huwties an scawdies, an... An Big Wed nu cawe boud id! Tink boud id, an nu feew saddies! Dat am wai hav saddies an scawdies!' You look at your friend. 'Big Wed nu knu wai nu feew saddies. Am... Am scawdies dat mean Big Wed am bad fwuffy!'

Your friend looks down and shakes his head. 'Fwuffy nu knu wat dat mean fwend. Am sowwies.' You're both quiet for a while. 'Bud,' He starts again, 'Big wed nu am munstah fwuffy.'

'How fwend knu?'

'Cause if Big Wed was munstah fwuffy,' your friend says, 'den Daddeh wud giv yu fowewa sweepies!' He goes, and his face changes. 'S-sowwies Fwend,' he looks down. 'Dat... Dat was dummehting. Big dummehting...' You know he meant it in a good way, but it really didn't help. Both of you look deep into the forest, and not at each other. You feel warm and tingly all over; it's not nice, but at least it takes some of your strange feels away.

Not longer after, you hear hoofies on cold fluff; but it comes from behind, so it doesn't worry you. A little bit after a toughie asks 'Wai yu tuffies makin tawkies? Dewe sumtin wong hewe?'

You both look at him; he's not mad, but you're not sure you want to tell him what the talking was about. Your friend mustn't feel the same way.

'Fwend was jus scawdies boud bad fwuffy he giv fowewa sweepies tu,' He explains. 'Big Wed am scawdies he am munstah, cause he nu feew saddies boud it.'

The toughie looks at your friend for a little longer, then at you. He's quiet, and you get some scardies.

'Du Big Wed wub famiwy?' He asks

'Yes! Big Wed Wub famiwy mowe dan-'

'Yu wub fwends tuu?'

'Yes!'

'Wat boud hewd?'

'Yes, Big Wed wub aww does tings!' you say. 'Wai Tuffy wan knu?'

He doesn't answer. Instead, he says 'Big Wed nu am munstah fwuffy.'

'W-wha? How du-'

'Munstahs fwuffies nu wub anything,' the tuffy says, 'dat am wai day munstahs. Id wai day du bad tings.'

'Bud, wai am Big Wed nu munstah fwuffy?'

'Tuffy jus say dummehting; yu wub tings. Yu wub famiwy, fwends an hewd.' He says. 'Yu nu am saddies boud dat wookie fwuffy cause yu nu wub him; yu nu nee wub oda fwuffies!' The toughie looks right in your see

places. 'Hewd am onwy ting dat am impowtant. Onwy ting dat mattah am if hewd am safe fwom munstahs an bad fwuffies. Big Wed undewstan?'

You think about it for a while; can you really love your family, friends and herd, and not feel bad about giving bad hurties or even forever sleepies? How does it work? How *can* it work?

'If Big Wed hav bad scawdies an saddies,' the toughie says, 'jus tink boud famiwy. Boud fwends, an hewd.' He looks at you; he's not smiling, but it's still a happy look. 'Dat make id bettah; Tuffy pwomise.'

You think about it for a little, and nod. 'Otay nice Tuffy, Big Wed du dat.'

'Gud. Nao, watch dah fowest! Nu make mowe tawkies!'

'Yes, Tuffy!' You go back to your job. When you feel the strange scardies and saddies, you think about your family and your friends. You remember the fun times in the safe baby place where you played the toughie game with your friends, and talked about all the monsters you'd fight when you were big. You think about the games you, Runny and Flower played with each other, and with Mummah way back when it was the four of you.

You remember when you huddled together to hide from the sky monsters, and even though it's hard to make your thinkie place go back so far, you think about when you were a really little baby. You remember all the huggies, milkies, and lickie cleans Mummah gave you. Back then, she kept you safe, and all you wanted was to be big and strong to keep her and the rest of your family safe. Well, you are big and strong, and you have kept them safe!

As the brighttime passes, the toughie's trick works better and better, until you hardy feel sad or scared at all. It's sad what happened to the lookie fluffy, but you had to do it. That's what you needed to do to keep the herd, your friends, and your family safe. Because you're a toughie, and you keep the herd safe.

####

'Am dis tuu many nummies?'

The toughie looks at the nummies on your back. It's annoying you have to do this every time you get nummies, but you understand; the last thing anyone wants is for the nummies to run out before the cold times are over.

'Nu,' the toughie says at last, 'Wunnie can go nao.'

'Tank yu nice Tuffy.'

'Bettah huwwy, tink dewe am cowl fwuff munstah cumin.' He warns.

'Yes nice Tuffy, wunnie du dat.' You head off for the den; the toughie was right, you feel a cold fluff breeze monster coming too! You walk as fast as you can without spilling the nummies off your back, but a little bit past the safe baby place the wind gets cold and strong way too fast. Not long after, you see bits of cold fluff fly through the air! Oh no, the monster's here!! You don't have time to get back to the den before it covers you in cold fluff!!

You have to find somewhere, anywhere to hide before the cold fluff breezie monster gets you! Not far from the path, you see a den and make a run for it; it feels like a few nummies fall off your back, but you'd rather have tummy hurties than get trapped in cold fluff! Lots more comes down, and all around fluffies scream and run for their dens. Just as the cold fluff gets really strong, you make it to the den and run inside.

“*Haff haff haff*” You made it!! You're safe from the cold fluff breezie monster!! But, you hope the rest of your family is safe. Mummah Daddeh and Flower were near the den when you left, but Big Red is out with the toughies; will he make it to a safe place in-

‘Who am yu?’

You look up and see a light blue fluffy with a grey mane about your size, sitting in a nestie. A few shivers run up your back; you shouldn't feel shocked or scared there's another fluffy in here, but...

‘Who am yu?’ The fluffy asks again. ‘Am dewe cowl fwuff munstah oudside?’

‘Uh-huh,’ you say. ‘Big one!’

GASP The fluffy gets off the nestie and runs for the tunnel before you can stop him. ‘Screee!’ He gets near the top of the tunnel, then runs back down with a bunch of cold fluff in his face. ‘Cowdies!’

‘Wait, Wunnie hewp!’ You run over to the fluffy and help him brush the cold fluff from his face. It's then you realise the fluffy is a mare, a pretty one; *Ulp*

‘Tank yu,’ she says, ‘Meanie cowl fwuff giv Fwuffy cowdies.’

‘D-dat am otay. Bud wai Fwuffy twy wun oud of den?’

‘Cause famiwy am stiww oud dewe!’ She says with big scardies. ‘Day am oud dewe wif cowl fwuff munstah!’

‘Nu be scawdies,’ you go to give her some huggies, but stop yourself. ‘Day find safe pwaces.’

‘Nice fwuffy tink so?’

‘Uh-huh!’ You nod. ‘Day be otay!’

The mare looks sad, but nods. ‘Otay...’ She looks over at the tunnel. ‘How wong Fwuffy tink cowl fwuff munstah gun be hewe?’

‘Nu knu,’ you tell your new friend. ‘Bud name nu am fwuffy; name am Wunnie!’

Her face changes; ‘Fwuffy knu yu; yu am Big Wed's Bwudda!’

‘Dat am wight! How yu knu Bwudda?’

‘Fwuffy watched Big Wed pway tuffy game in safe babbeh pwace!’ She gets a big smile on her face. ‘He was bestest sept fow Bestest tuffy's babbeh; was wotsa fun!’

‘Dat am wight, an he am weal tuffy nao!’ You tell her.

‘Fwuffy knu; heaw boud when he fight does bad fwuffies! Daddeh am tuffy tuu!’

‘Weawy?’

'Uh-huh,' your new friend nods. 'He go wif Bestest tuffy tu find whewe does bad fwuffies cum fwom!' The look on her face changes a little. 'Bud, he nu say wat happen.'

'Wai?' You ask.

She shakes her head. 'Nu knu, an Daddeh nu wet famiwy ask boud it. Can fwuffy ask sumtin?'

'Otay.'

'Fwuffy see Wunnie when dat oda fwuffy got nummed by dah cowl fwuff,' she says. 'Did, did Wunnie twy hewp sabe him?'

'Yes, Wunnie du dat.' You feel sad for the fluffy and his family. 'Wish cud hav sabed him...'

Your new friend, nods. 'Fwuffy knu. Bud, dat was stiww bwave ting.'

You look up; 'Weawy?'

'Uh-huh. Dat make Wunnie weawy bwave fwuffy!'

'Ah, t-tank yu,' Some hot feels run through you, and push out the saddies. You can't think of more to say. Lucky for you, your new friend fixes the problem.

'Wat du Wunnie wan du fow hewd?'

'Cud be nummie findah,' you say, 'bud Wunnie weawy wan be wookie fwuffy! Bud wookie fwuffies nu wan show Wunnie how.'

'Nu wowwie Wunnie fwend,' she says, 'cowl times be ovah soon. Den yu can weawn how be wookie fwuffy.'

'Wunnie hope so. Wat nyu fwend wan du?'

'Weww,' she scrunches up her face, 'tink wan hewp dah soon mummahs when hewd can hav babbehs gain, den hewp in safe babbeh pwace. Dat am how weawn how be gud mummah!' She pauses. 'Am Wunnie gun be Daddeh when cowl times am ovah?'

'Ahh...' You don't know, it's not something you've thought about, at all. 'Wunnie nu knu.'

'Du wunnie hav speciaw fwend?'

'Nu.'

Your friend looks surprised. 'Weawy?!'

'Wai fwend tawkies wike dat?'

'Cause, ah...' Your new friend looks away, and her hear places hide. 'Fwuffy jus tink Wunnie hav one cause Wunnie am nice an bwave, an...'

'Wat?'

'An... An am pw-pwetty.'

Pretty? You've never heard another fluffy, especially the fillies or mares, say you're pretty. Except for Mummah, but she doesn't count. Another warm feel goes through you; it's better than the last one, and you get some tingles as well. 'T-tank yu,' you say. Then, 'Wunnie tink dat Fwuffy am pwetty t-tuu!'

Her see places go wide. 'Weawy?'

You nod, but don't say anything. Neither does your new friend, but you do look at each other. Your new friend is really pretty and nice to talk to. And, you've kinda wanted a special friend for a while-

'Gah!'

You nearly jump into the roof of the den! Your friend turns to the noise, but she's not scared. 'Daddeh!' She runs over and helps get the cold fluff off him. You go and help too.

'*Haff Haff* Tank yu babbeh.'

'Wai Daddeh hewe?' She asks. 'Wai go oud when coud fwuff munstah am hewe?! Wat if id eat yu?'

'Daddeh am Sowwies Babbeh,' he says, 'Bud had tu knu if Babbeh was safe.' He gives her some huggies. When he's done, he looks at you; 'Who am dis?'

'Dis am Wunnie!' Your friend says. 'He hide in den when munstah cum,'

'Oh, Wunnie. Tuffy knu, yu am Big Wed's bwudda.'

'Yes, nice Tuffy,' you tell him.

'He am gud tuffy.' Your friend's daddeh looks back out at the tunnel; 'Tink munstah gun be hewe tiww dawk time am ovah.' He looks back at you. 'Wunnie nee stay hewe.' Out one corner of your see places, you see your new friend smile. To pass the time you, your new friend and her daddeh talk about all sorts of stuff; they tell you about their family, how long they've been in the herd, and other things. You tell them about that sort of stuff too, especially the time when it was Mummah, you, Flower and Big Red.

It's fun, and takes your mind off the monster outside, and how much cold fluff the herd will have to clear away when the brighttime comes. When it starts to get dark and harder to see in the den, your friend's Daddeh says 'Fwuffies shud go tu nestie nao.' He and your new friend walk there, but you stay where you are. Your friend stops and turns around.

'Wai am Wunnie nu cumin tu nestie?'

'Ahh...'

'Id am otay Wunnie,' her Daddeh says. 'Wunnie can sweep in famiwy's nestie. Hewd nee wook aftah west of hewd; dat am wat make hewd gud.'

'O-otay...' You walk over to the nestie and get in a fluff pile with your friend and her daddeh. It smells different and takes you a while to get comfortable, long enough that your friend's daddeh is already asleep by the time you're comfortable. You close your see places, but as you're about to go to sleep,

'Gud-nite Wunnie.' You feel your friend give you some huggies.

'Tank yu fwend,' you say. 'Hav nice sweepies pictuwes.'

'Tank yu Wunnie,' she gives you another hug. A little later, you hear her sleeping. You close your see places again, but it's hard to go to sleep. Strange tingles and warm feels keep you awake a while longer. When you do go to sleep, your new friend is in all your sleepies pictures. The two of you run through lots of grassies and flowers and through the forest. You even fly through the sky together, even though she's not a winge fluffy!

Other sleepie pictures are, different. In them, you and your friend give each other those odd not huggies Mummah and Daddeh always give each other. There's a few where you're together with a lot of little fluffies which look like... Are they, babbies? Then there are some which are blurry and strange. A couple of times, you think you hear talking. Even though a lot of the sleepie pictures are fun, it doesn't feel like you sleep very well.

#

'Wunnie? *Prod prod*

'*Zzzzz* geh... *Yawn* Am id bwighttime nao?'

'Uh-huh,' Your friend says. 'Daddeh nee hewp tu make cowl fwuff go way.'

'Otay...' You get out of the nestie and follow them to the tunnel; it's the least you can do after they let you hide in their den and sleep in their nestie. It's hard work, but you get the all the cold fluff away from the den. It gives you a lot of hurties, and you're happy you don't have much else to do in the cold times.

'Tank yu Wunnie,' your friend's Daddeh says. 'Yu am gud fwuffy.'

You smile and nod. 'Tank yu nice Tuffy.'

He nods and walks down the path, probably to go do toughie things. You look at your friend, and you're not sure what to say. You try a few times, but no wordies come out.

'Wunnie? Wunnie whewe am yu?'

Mummah! You better go tell her you're fine. 'Wunnie nee go, Fwend,' you say. 'Tank yu fow wetin wunnie stay in den.'

'Dat am otay Wunnie.' You're both quiet again, and you try to think of-

'Wunnie!!'

'Bai fwend!' You turn and head down the path toward-

'Wunnie, w-wait!' You turn back around; your friend's hear places are hidden, but she looks right at you. Before you can ask what's wrong, she says 'Du... Du Wunnie wan be Fwuffy's speciaw fwend?'