

# Soaring Hearts

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# Table of Contents:

Chapter 1	3
Chapter 2	17
Chapter 3	35
Author's Notes	52

# Chapter 1

Rainbow Dash closed her eyes and took a deep breath, only focusing on the wind in her mane, and the soft sound of the air beneath her wings. It was a warm Summer night just after the Gala, and she was on her way back home to Ponyville. The rest of her friends had hopped in the carriage Twilight had made for them, but for some reason even Rainbow Dash herself did not understand, she wanted to fly home. She handed her dress to Rarity, thanked her for her hard work, and then promptly took off. The winds were calm, the temperature was perfect...

"A perfect night for flying" she said to herself. She glided for several minutes, occasionally flapping her wings with an audible "flumf" to keep her at her current altitude.

*"If only I had someone to share it with..."*

The Pegasus focused on the quiet howl of the wind as it passed by her ears, and the brisk cool on her face as she flew. *This* is why she loved flying. It was the ultimate sense of freedom anypony could ever experience. She wondered briefly how unicorns and earth ponies could stand not being able to fly. Not being able to feel that sense of joy that came from soaring through the clouds, with the wind in your mane and the view of the world from on high. Flying made her feel *alive*.

*But still, something was missing. It was so... Solitary.*

Dash decided it was time to open her eyes to check if she was on the correct bearing home. She must have been tilted to the left, as she was now facing the majestic mountains that stood to the side of her home. She corrected herself with a small tilt of her wings and once again closed her eyes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rainbow let out a large yawn and stretched her front legs out to the side. Dash had been up for nearly 24 hours. Her and her friends stayed out late

in Canterlot, talking with each other and Princess Celestia. In fact, Applejack was already asleep in the carriage when her friends departed.

She didn't know what time it was, she just wanted to get back to her soft, warm bed of clouds at her home in Cloudsdale.

Subtle warmth began to sweep across her face. She opened her eyes to see the sun rising over the hills to the East of Ponyville, casting beautiful rays of golden-yellow light over the landscape.

Rainbow Dash was awestruck with the beauty of it all, and became absorbed in the scenery. So much so, she didn't notice the deep, thunderous growl of something approaching her from behind until it was extremely close. Rainbow Dash snapped out of her trance and turned her head around to see what was behind her, but as soon as she did, a dark gray column of cloud bolted by her face.

Rainbow Dash whipped her head forward to see what just passed her in the sky. The long, gray cloud dispersed and revealed a dark blue maned stallion clothed in a blue and yellow suit, wearing blue shaded aviation goggles.

She recognized the signature suit of the Wonderbolts immediately. He wasn't much older than Dash was, making this Soarin the Wonderbolt.

"Y-you're Soarin! From the Wonderbolts!" she stammered.

"And you're that mare from the Gala, right? The one who saved my pie!" he said with a goofy smile "I almost didn't recognize you without your dress!"

*"He knows who I am!"* Rainbow said in her mind.

"Uh, yeah!" She said, trying to act as cool as possible.

"Although..." He said "You forgot something"

Soarin reached over and poked the golden laurel around Rainbow Dash's ears and smiled again.

"Oh..." Rainbow Dash blushed and let out a nervous laugh.

"I actually think it's quite becoming of you, Miss....?"

"The name's Rainbow Dash!" She answered, smirking and sticking out her chest a bit.

"Rainbow DASH, eh?" the Wonderbolt repeated. "Let's see if you live up to your name!"

With that, the stallion blasted off into the purple sky, leaving a trail of thick dark clouds.

It took Rainbow took but a split second to gather her whits.

"Oh, It's ON!"

Rainbow took off along the Wonderbolt's trail, leaving her own Rainbow colored one behind her.

The loud rushing wind filled her ears and stimulated her senses and woke her up immediately.

After a lazy glide, her muscles were rather stiff, but she wasn't about to be bested by ANYPONY. Even if it WAS one of her idols. The trail of clouds curved upward in a steep incline, but Rainbow Dash followed it perfectly, dipping the tip of one wing into the cloud itself. Adrenaline flooded her brain as she focused on the blue suited Pegasus in front of her.

*"I'm closing in on him..."*

Suddenly, and without warning, Soarin extended his wings and came to an abrupt stop in mid-air. Rainbow Dash tucked her wings close to her body and tilted out of the way as to not collide with him, but despite her efforts she felt her left cheek graze the tip of his right wing, cutting her slightly, although she didn't notice it until later.

Rainbow unfurled her wings and looped around in a short arc, returning to Sorin who was now stationary in the air.

"What was that all about?! I thought we were having a race!"

The Wonderbolt was silent.

“Soarin? Is everything ok?” Rainbow Dash started to feel concerned.

“I need to know something” He said at last, in a deathly serious tone.

“W-what? Is everything alright?”

He turned his head slowly and looked directly into Rainbow Dash’s eyes. Even through the tinted goggles, she could feel his eyes staring into her very fabric of existence.

*“What could he possibly be so serious about? Did I do something wrong?”*

“I need to know...”

He paused.

“Where that DE-LISHOUS smell is coming from!” he said with a huge grin.

Dash was taken aback by this sudden change of attitude from Soren.

“Eh... What?” Rainbow Dash replied, confused.

Soarin raised one eyebrow and tilted his head to one side, peering at Rainbow Dash inquisitively.

“Uhh, I was wondering where that smell was coming from?” He smiled childishly at Dash.

Rainbow Dash floated there for a moment, unsure of what to think of this small turn of events.

Soarin seemed.... bipolar almost..

She was about to speak when Soarin moved forward with one stroke of his muscular wings, came within inches of Dash’s face, and held a hoof up to her lips. With his free hoof, he flipped up his flying goggles, revealing stunning emerald eyes.

Rainbow didn't even know how to react, so she simply stared into the vast

pools of green that were Soarin's eyes.

He directed his gaze to her cheek and moved the hoof that was keeping her silent to the small wound. He gently wiped away a solitary drop of blood that smeared her blue coat of hair.

"You're hurt..."

Rainbow Dash looked down at his hoof that was between them; a streak of red staining his uniform.

"It's nothing. Just a scratch." she said, waving her hoof in dismissal. "I've had worse"

Soarin looked into the other Pegasus's magenta hued eyes, scanning for an ounce dishonesty, but finding none, he gave a quick nod, serving both as acknowledgement and to flip his goggles back down over his eyes.

"Hey Dash." He said, smile returning.

"What's up?"

"*threetwoone GO!*"

The wonderbolt retracted his wings back close to his body and dropped towards the ground, unfurling his wings and propelling himself closer to the earth below. Rainbow Dash saw his plan and immediately shot downward after him. Rainbow Dash flew as fast as she could and was only *barely* catching up.

"How fast *is* this guy?! He's even faster than I thought he would be!" she said in her mind.

Soarin looked back to the slowly approaching Rainbow Dash

"You even tryin' miss Dash?" He stuck out his tongue in a playful jab.

"Is that a challenge?" she retorted

"You bet your tail it is!"

When Dash heard this, she redoubled her efforts to pass the Wonderbolt. She flew faster and faster until a white cone of vapor formed around her body.

"There's no way he could beat *this*. I'm the *only* one that can do a Sonic Rainboom" she said to herself, although she could barely hear herself think over the immense din of the wind roaring past her ears. Rainbow Dash was tempted to look back and see how far ahead of Soarin she was, but she knew that would only slow her down.

But Dash didn't even have to look back.

In her peripheral vision, she thought she saw another Vapor Cone... She immediately dismissed it as nothing more than blurry vision.

"I'm the only pony who can do a Sonic Rainboom... *right?*"

"That's right!" a voice said, barely audible over the noise of the rushing wind.

"But us Wonderbolts always have a little trick up our hooves!"

Soarin came into Dash's field of sight, directly to her left. He had somehow gone fast enough to create his own vapor cone. Rainbow Dash wondered what would happen if he broke through... Could it be something similar to her Sonic Rainboom?

"Watch this!" he shouted, competing with the noise of the wind around them. He came even closer to Dash and rested his right wingtip on her left wingtip.

"When I say 'GO' I need you to do a Sonic Rainboom, understand?" he shouted "Just like that time when you saved my flank at the best young flier competition!"

"Got it!" Rainbow Dash replied



“It’s imperative that you do it RIGHT as I say. Or else we could...” His voice trailed off. Rainbow Dash wasn’t sure if it was the noise of the wind, or if he cut himself off intentionally. Either way, it didn’t matter. She understood the gravity of the situation.

“3... 2.... 1.... NOW”

Both ponies pressed as hard as possible on their barriers. As they were approaching the threshold, the two separate cones of vapor merged into one gigantic funnel.

A deafening “CRACK” split the air, and their speed increased 10 fold . They had breached the Sound Barrier... together. And the effects were astounding.

A blinding rainbow colored bolt of lightning zagged violently behind the two pegusi, with smaller bolts arcing off in all directions, sure to be seen and heard from miles in any given direction.

Something like this had never been done before in all of Equestria, and these two young fliers made history during a friendly race before breakfast.

Rainbow took her eyes off the momentous sight and looked forward, and what she saw frightened the horse apples out of her.

Up ahead lay Sweet Apple Acres, hurdling towards them and intense speed. If they didn’t pull up immediately, they would be killed the moment they impacted the trees.

Neither of them even needed to speak, pure instinct and years of flying took over and they both slowed their momentum and broke off from one another, pulling up and leveling out just above the trees. Rainbow Dash looked over and saw Sorin glide slowly towards the old red barn that sat in the middle of the land. Rainbow made her way over to the now grounded Pegasus.

Rainbow Dash’s hooves gently landed on the earth, damp from the morning dew, and walked over to where Soarin was waiting

“T-that was A-AMAZING!” she yelled, unable to control her excitement about what she just accomplished.

"You're telling me!" Soarin replied " I never knew we could even DO that! That was just pure AWESOME!"

Rainbow Dash was still shaking from the pure adrenaline rush, causing her voice warble a bit.

"Wait.. Y-you're telling m-me that you had NO CLUE what was going to happen?!"

Soarin stiffened and gave a nervous laugh

"What's life without a few risks, right?"

Rainbow Dash was no stranger to risk, having almost died many times while practicing a new trick or doing something stupid, but she was still shocked at the tenacity of the stallion that stood before her.

Dash shook her head and laughed.

"You're even crazier than I am!"

"I'm the craziest Wonderbolt out of the bunch!" he said  
" and I take great pride in that, too!"

"Jus' what in the hay is goin' on here?"  
a familiar voice asked

"I come back ta put away all my apple treats, then all I see is a great big ol' light in the sky, and you two shootin' the breeze like t'was nuthin'!"

Rainbow Dash turned around to find one of her best friends, an orange earth pony named Applejack, standing a few feet away next to her apple cart.

"Oh, sorry AJ!" Rainbow Dash said.  
"Sorin and I were jus-"

"AHHHhh, so *THAT'S* what smelled so

good! Say, you're the one who sold me that AWESOME Apple Pie, aren't you?"

"Ah' sure as sugar are!" Applejack replied.

"Excellent! Can I still get my hooves on a pie?"  
Soarin now looked.... Hungry. The awe from the Lighting Rainboom had apparently worn off, and his sweet tooth took over.

"Yep! I still got plenty left over...." she finished with the annoyance at her poor sales evident in her speech.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thanks a bunch for the pies, miss Applejack!"

Soarin said, leaning down to pick up the bag of fresh baked apple pies that sat before him

"Not t'all sugarcube, come on by if ya need anymore!"

He walked up to Rainbow Dash who had sat down and was leaning against a fence post, almost asleep.

"And thank *you* for one of the best flying sessions I've had in a long time!"

"It was an Honor!"  
Rainbow said, half yawning

Soarin was spreading his wings and was about to take off when Rainbow Dash stood up behind him and tried to walk, but stumbled after two steps.

"You alright there, Dash?"

"Y-yeah. I'm just a bit tired..."

Rainbow Dash let out an immense yawn, one far too large for being "just a little tired".

Soarin knew she couldn't fly home by herself, not without injuring herself or

anypony else.

He walked over to where the blue pegasus had tripped and helped her up.

“Come on Dash, this is stupid.” He paused for a second, reflecting on the many stupid things he’s done. “Not the *good* kind of stupid anyway. You’re going to get hurt, ya know? Let me help you home”

“No thanks, I-I’m fine-”

She was interrupted by a hoof on her chin, directing her head to look up at the Wonderbolt.

“Actually, miss Dash. That’s wasn’t a suggestion.”

The wonderbolt’s eyes were sweet, yet firm. An interesting contrast to his typically goofy personality.

Looking into his eyes, Dash felt a sense of safety. Maybe it was because they were her heroes in everyday life, she didn’t know. But she did know that she felt secure with him, and that’s something she wasn’t accustomed to. Rainbow Dash had a tough fillyhood, and because of it, she was very careful with whom she trusted.

“A-alright... I guess I don’t have much of a choice though, do I?” Dash said with a smile

“No, not really” he replied with a sweet chuckle. Soarin looked over his shoulder and hollered to Applejack

“I’ll be back later to pick up those pies, is that alright?”

“Sure thing! They’ll be here waitin’ for ya!”

The Wonderbolt put a wing under Rainbow Dash, and in one fluid movement, put her on his back, being sure that she wasn’t hindering his wing movement.

“Come on now, let’s get you home, shall we?”

Rainbow Dash was utterly wiped out from the past 24 hours, but she

though she had enough energy to make sure she wouldn't fall off of Soarin's back as they returned to her home.

She lightly wrapped her forelegs around his neck, closed her eyes, and rested her head on his unusually soft mane. She felt the subtle spike in G forces as they took off, but despite them she still managed to drift off to sleep on her idol, and new friend's, back.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rainbow Dash awoke to the sound of Soarin's voice...

"Hey Dash, sorry to wake you, but I need you to tell me where to drop you off at."

She groggily opened her eyes, and looked around briefly. Even with blurred vision she immediately recognized her home in the clouds. She lifted one of her forelegs, pointed at it, and once Soarin turned in that direction, she let it flop lazily at her side.

The Wonderbolt made his way over the the sky mansion and landed on the front step.

"Well miss Dash, We've arrived."

"Mhmm... Alright..." she replied, still half asleep. She nuzzled her face into his mane even further

"Just five more minutes..." she muttered.

"I ain't your momma, Dash" He chuckled.

"I think it's best we get you inside, you know, on a *real bed*? I'm sure it would be a bit more comfortable."

"Yeah, I'll be right there, ma... "

"... You'll have to get off for that, Dash"

Rainbow Dash snapped awake at this, just now remembering the situation she was in.

Afraid she was being a nuisance she started gushing apologies.

"Oh! I'm so sorry!" She slid off his back and walked towards her home.  
"I hope I wasn't too heavy or anything.. was I?"

"Not at all! You were Light as a feather." he said.

Dash began to feel heat rush to her face...  
"*Why am I blushing?*" she thought to herself.

"Uh, thanks for the ride.. I was never any good at endurance races" she said to Soarin with a little laugh.

"Pshh, don't get me started on those... I'm terrible! "

The two ponies laughed harder than they should at this stale attempt at humor, a side effect of exhaustion.

After a moment, Soarin spoke again.

"Hey, if you're ever in Cloudsdale near our HQ, don't hesitate to stop by. I'll put you on the Very Important Pony list." Soarin said.

"You mean it?! You'd really so that?!"

"Sure thing! Besides, I like your style"

Rainbow Dash ran forward and gave him a one "armed" hug

"ThankyouThankyouThankyouThankyou!!"

Soarin returned the hug for a few seconds, then they both turned to leave.

"Oh and Dash?"

"Yeah?"

He reached one light blue wing out and touched the area around the cut on her face.

"Be sure to take care of that. I don't want it to get infected."

Dash smiled and looked in his eyes.

"Will do, Soarin. Although, it's just a scratch..."

Rainbow turned and began to walk to her front door.

Soarin hadn't noticed it before when they were flying, but Rainbow Dash was an extremely attractive mare. Her frame was petite, yet toned, and her face was just one of those types that struck his fancy. Not to mention he'd always had a "thing" for Maroon eyes.

"I wouldn't want that pretty face getting scarred now!" he added as he trotted towards the edge of the cloud.

Rainbow Dash paused for a moment, feeling heat once again find its way to her face and turned around, surprised that one of her idols had complimented her looks.

"Wait, what did you..."

But her voice was met with the open sky, now blue and filled with rays of light from the still rising sun.

Soarin had already taken off.

Rainbow Dash gazed off into the amazing sight for a minute, thinking about what Soarin said, but sleep deprivation was taking its toll on her.

Rainbow slowly shuffled her way up the steps to her room, opened the door and tossing the golden laurels from her mane on the dresser directly adjacent to her, and flung herself upon her bed of clouds.

Her eyes were shut before her head even landed on the pillow.

The last thing the Pegasus thought about as she drifted off to sleep were Soarin's emerald green eyes.

"I've *always* been a sucker for green eyes..."

Within moments, she was fast asleep.



# Chapter 2

Rainbow Dash opened her eyes groggily, and flopped over on her right side.

She wanted to go back to sleep, but the sun had other plans for her this morning.

The Pegasus gave in and sat up in bed, mane tussled and droopy eyed and looked to her left where she kept her magic sun dial, although she could have guessed at the time. Same time every morning, 7:45 AM sharp.

Rainbow Dash rubbed her eyes briefly then somnolently flopped back onto her pillows.

“What to do today.... What to do...”

She thought of yesterday, of the gala, the Lighting Rainboom...

And of Soarin. His emerald green eyes, his light blue coat... The scent of his mane as he carried her home... As well as his invitation to her before he departed.

Rainbow Dash sat up once more, exited at the prospect of being able to hang out with her idols. They had a big show coming up, so she might be able to watch them practice, IF she was lucky.

But her mind quickly wandered back to the one Wonderbolt that captivated her... That showed her something *Amazing*.

Letting her mind continue down the path of memories of last night, she pondered Soarin's parting words.

*“Wouldn’t want that pretty face getting scarred now!”*

Rainbow Dash felt a strange sense of warmth invade her chest... A feeling almost completely foreign to her.

The flight home may have been brief, but it was spectacular. She remembered burying her muzzle into Soarin's flowing dark blue mane.

Once she opened her eyes, she found she was hugging her cloud pillow tightly against her face.

Immediately, Rainbow Dash flung the pillow at the wall, impacting with a soft thud.

“What in Equestria am I *doing?*” she said, annoyed at her own foolishness. She rolled off her bed, landing on all four of her hooves simultaneously, and made her way over to her bedroom doorway.

“Acting like one of those mushy-gushy mares... Ridiculous!” Rainbow Dash huffed as she walked down the stairs, forcing her own thoughts out of her mind.

As she descended the staircase, she looked at her home...

It was a beautiful house by any standards, but despite all its glorious furnishings and decor, the place somehow felt... Empty. Much like the sky felt when she was flying home from the Gala, until Soarin caught up with her at least.

Rainbow Dash didn't want to stay couped up all day in such a melancholic setting, so she decided to take Soarin up on his offer to join him at the Wonderbolt HQ.

Rainbow Dash trotted over to her front door, and nudged it with her nose, opening noiselessly.

The blue Pegasus stepped outside with her wings above her forehead, shielding her eyes from direct sunlight.

The blue Pegasi slowly opened her eyes, forcing herself to adjust to the harsh sunlight, and once she was mostly accustomed to the brightness, she lowered her wing from her forehead, accidentally pulling her bangs in front of her eyes.

She examined the frazzled strands of hair for a moment, flipped them back into place, and returned her gaze to the sky in front of her. Out in the distance, miles and miles away, she spotted some violent looking thunderheads. She briefly debated whether or not to risk trying to get to the Wonderbolt HQ and back or not.

As she was contemplating, the young Pegasus let out a small yawn and walked towards the edge of her cloud, bouncing a bit to stretch out some of her leg muscles.

Rainbow looked over the edge expecting to see the green earth and town of Ponyville below, but instead found herself standing above something completely different.

Only 20 feet down, a sea of thick alto-stratus clouds were rolling past at a startling speed.

“I don’t remember seeing any of this in the weather report at the weather factory...” she said to herself.  
“Unless....”

Rainbow Dash brought a hoof to her face, just above her eyes with an audible “clap” sound as she realized the reason for the unexpected weather occurrence.

“They put Ditzzy Doo\* in charge today...”

She sighed, removed her hoof from her face, and looked over once more. Rainbow Dash shrugged and simply walked off the edge and aimed herself toward the dark river of fog below her, wings tucked close to her body to gain velocity.

She ploughed through the fog and within seconds emerged on the other side, drenched and spreading her wings to slow her already slow fall. Once she came to a mid-air stop, she shot back up into the dense cloud. The cold water served as a makeshift shower and also served to jolt her awake.

She shot out of the cloud once again, creating a plume of vapor behind her as she skyrocketed past her home and into the open sky. After several meters, Rainbow Dash slowed herself and hovered

As the sun beamed down upon her, the water in her mane and tail refracted brilliantly, creating a spectacular rainbow glow around her entire body. She looked over her shoulder in the direction where she saw the rainclouds, then turned back to the direction where the Wonderbolt's Headquarters were and smirked to herself.

"I'm the best flyer ever born! No dumb rainclouds can stop me!"

Rainbow Dash stuck her tongue out at the thunderheads as if taunting them and bolted off towards Cloudsdale, a spectacular rainbow flowing behind her.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Wonderbolt's Main HQ was absolutely massive. Rainbow Dash had always admired it whenever she flew by, but standing directly before it, about to enter felt surreal

As Rainbow Dash stood in front of the coliseum sized building, she took time to study the huge Doric style columns stretched up almost out of sight, and the expert cloud craftsmanship on the door frame.

She took a deep breath, trying to quell her nervousness in her chest as she clip-clopped her way up the steps. She was *actually* going to *hang out* with her idols at last!

When she got to the door, there was a large button beneath a speaker to the right, and nothing else. Seeing no other course of action, and for her own curiosity's sake, she pushed the button. Rainbow Dash released pressure on the button and stepped back. Moments later the speaker crackled to life.

"Hello?" A deep male voice said.

"Uh, yeah, Hi. I'm here to see Soarin, I'm on the VIP list."  
Rainbow Dash gave herself a mental buck.

*"To see Soarin? What the hay is wrong with you, girl?!"*

"Name?"

She shook herself out of her daze.

"Rainbow Dash"

There was a brief moment of silence over the intercom as the colt presumably checked the VIP list.

"Alright, come on in."

The door to the left of the box began to open...

\*\*\*\*\*

Rainbow Dash walked down a long gray cloud hallway, stepping ever closer to a white light at the end of the corridor. She was just visiting, but she still felt exhilarated nonetheless. She was going to spend the day with the Wonderbolts, every Pegasus's dream! Maybe she'd even get to watch them practice, if she was lucky.

Rainbow Dash squinted as she emerged from the dark tunnel into bright sunlight, allowing for her eyes to adjust to the brightness. When she was able to open her eyes fully, she saw a large, oval shaped racing track with stadium seating, and right in the middle, the Wonderbolts were standing around a water trough chatting. She saw Soarin doing various wing stretches a few feet away from the group. She lifted off the ground and glided towards them.

A Wonderbolt with an ice blue mane noticed her approaching and stopped his conversation with the other female member of the group and turned to Rainbow Dash.

"Helloooo cutie! How you doin'? I'm Glacier Breeze... And you are?"

Rainbow Dash was surprised at the forwardness of the stallion; she had heard that he was a fillyizer, but hadn't expected him to hit on HER.

"Thanks, but I'm here to--" She didn't get to finish her sentence.

Glacier Breeze's face went from suave stallion to terrified school colt

instantly.

"Oh Celestia, not another one... I can't keep paying these Foal Support checks!"

Rainbow Dash didn't know what to say, didn't know how to respond... She began to slowly back away from the now crying Wonderbolt, but bumped into someone standing directly behind her.

"Don't worry... He's always like that. All those wild parties after shows catch up with him about eleven months later (2)." Soarin's chuckled from behind.

Rainbow spun around to face her friend and apologized for bumping into him.

"Heh, sorry about that..."

Soarin waved a dismissive hoof.

"Don't mention it. Come on, I'll introduce you to the rest of the gang!"

He began walking down the strip of cloud where the Wonderbolts were, introducing them one by one as the two Pegusi walked.

Rainbow shook hooves with each and every member of the Wonderbolts, all the while trying not to squeal from pure fan-mare excitement.

"And last, but not least, Spitfire! You remember her from the Gala, right?"

Spitfire extended a hoof out and Rainbow took it.

"Heya Rainbow! How ya been?"

Rainbow Dash wanted to jump up and down in joy and scream at the top of her lungs how happy she was to meet all of her idols, but simply shook the hoof and returned the shake.

"Say, RD. We were about to practice for a show, you wanna-"

"Watch? That'd be awesome!"

Spitfire chuckled and shook her head.

"No Rainbow, I was wondering if you wanted to fly with us. Maybe a friendly race or two?"

Rainbow Dash froze. Spitfire actually wanted her to practice with the Wonderbolts... To *fly with the Wonderbolts*. The reality of this stuck her like a ton of bricks... This was her chance to show them that she was worthy of becoming one of them... A chance she'd been waiting for for years and years. A chance she *gladly* took.

A sudden spark of passion flickered in Rainbow Dash's eyes, but a looming feeling of nervousness crept inside of her. This could be her big shot.... She would prove herself to the Wonderbolts... But would she prove that she was inadequate at flying, or skilled enough to ascend to their ranks?

Rainbow Dash looked Spitfire in the eyes, and accepted the invitation with a resounding "Hay. Yes."

\*\*\*\*\*

Rainbow Dash was struggling to control her breathing; she wanted to gasp for precious oxygen, but she knew keeping a steady breathing rate was vital to top tier performance.

Her practice with the Wonderbolts was much harder than she imagined it to be, in fact, several of them had already landed, and were resting on the sidelines. Out of the original eight Wonderbolts, only Soarin and Spitfire were left.

Her heart skipped a beat in disbelief as she realized... This wasn't some practice or friendly flying session.

"...This is an examination... There's now way we'd be flying THIS long and hard if it wasn't."

She said to herself out loud; or so she thought.

"That's right." a voice said behind her, making her skip yet another beat.

Dash turned to see Spitfire hover a few feet away, drenched with perspiration and breathing heavily.

“I’m surprised you didn’t catch on sooner.”

Rainbow Dash said nothing, her sweat was getting into the open cut on her face. she had forgotten to take proper care of it as Soarin suggested, and didn’t notice it until now. the salt in her sweat made her wince as it made contact with the small yet painful wound.

Then Spitfire folded her wings and let herself fall a short distance, then unfurled her wings and glided over to Soarin who was already making his way over to the pair.

“She’s all yours.” she said.

Soarin’ only nodded, looked up at Rainbow Dash, and took off vertically. She had earned a break, she flew hard today.

The pair climbed higher and higher, breaking through layer and layer of thick, curling cloud, higher than either of them usually go. The two emerged from the final cloud drenched in condensation and beheld the gorgeous sight before them.

Up here, far above Cloudsdale, the turbulent clouds melded into a flowing silver sea, reflecting the glorious sunlight shining down from above, tantalizing their eyes to look on into eternity. Up here, the two were mere spots of color between a crushing universe of gray, and a blinding world of light.

Soarin raised his flight goggles from his eyes, and looked at his companion, gleaming in a rainbow hue her mane and tail naturally emitted in the sunlight.

Rainbow Dash looked over, and their tired eyes met.

At that moment, everything fell away; clouds didn’t exist, the sun grew dim, and fatigue was nonexistent.

Up here, it was just Soarin and Rainbow Dash, adrift in their own reality, far away from any distractions.

Soarin needed not say a word, but simply fly, and Rainbow Dash would follow. Throughout his aerial tricks, he could feel her matching his every



move. They became one in flight. They were no longer two different Pegusi, but flowed as if they were one entity.

This was the feeling Rainbow Dash had been longing for. She hadn't just wanted someone to *share* the sky with, she needed someone to be one *with* her in the sky.

The two slowed their speed and glided into a backwards arc, aiming themselves at the plateau of silver flowing in front of them. The two ploughed through the clouds, leaving two pony sized holes where they exited. The holes slowly filled back up, and the silence once again flooded the now vacant expanse of sky.

The two plummeted down for what seemed like minutes before they finally broke through the ever-thickening clouds, and the two pegusi eventually landed on the coliseum floor.

Most of the other Wonderbolts were nowhere to be found, but Rainbow Dash spotted Spitfire at the entrance to the stadium and trotted over to her, Soarin right behind.

"Impressive flying out there, Dash." Spitfire said as the trio made their way down the long hallway Rainbow Dash had entered just a few hours earlier.

"Thanks." was all she could muster, she was so exhausted.

The three Pegasus ponies stepped outside, and all were taken aback by the drastic change in temperature.

The skies had grown cold and desolate, no longer the beautiful ocean of cloud it was earlier. Swirling thunderheads threatened to strike with all their might, and long ominous cirrus clouds foretold a violent storm in the near future.

"I gotta get myself home." a shivering Rainbow Dash said. "Thanks for letting me hang out with you guys today. It was awesome!" She forced herself to say those words with as much enthusiasm as possible, but her energy levels were so sapped it came across exactly so: Drained.

"No problem, Dash!" and equally tired Spitfire replied.

"We'll be in touch."

Rainbow smiled and gave a quick nod, then turned and arduously walked down the steps she had so eagerly leapt up a few hours prior.

Soarin appeared to her left, spreading his wings.

"Here, let me fly with ya'. I wanted to talk with you about something, anyway."

\*\*\*\*\*

The two Pegusi landed rather sloppily on the cloud where Rainbow Dash's mansion rested.

"Gah, all this water is messin' with my balance!" Soarin said, sloppily fighting to retract his wings in the vicious wind.

"Same here! We should get inside, where it'll at least be dry!"

She stumbled over over to her door, pushed it open, and then turned to motion Soarin to step inside.

Soarin hesitated to follow.

"I don't wanna impose or anythin--"

Without warning, a blinding flash of light illuminated the pair of Pegusi, accompanied by an immense sound of nearby thunder, causing Soarin to jump a bit in surprise.

He looked up to the turbulent gray skies. He couldn't possibly get home in this. He knew it, and he bet an experienced flyer like Dash knew it as well.

Soarin then turned his gaze to the rainbow maned pony, standing in the doorway with an amused smile on her face.

"Come on" she said. "Just 'till this storm lets up."

Rainbow Dash turned and walked into her dark home, swishing her tail playfully as she went.

Soarin half trotted and half stumbled over and followed her up the steps, and inside.

Once he was inside, he took notice of the lavish interior... Much nicer than your average weather pony could afford. He figured that her parents must have paid for the house.

Soarin let out a short whistle.  
"Some place you got here, Dash."

Rainbow Dash was over in her kitchen, which consisted of a large cooking area and a large pull-out box of cool, dark clouds serving as an ice chest. The contents though, were meager. She wasn't much for cooking, as she preferred delivery.

"Yeah, sure is..." she said, a tinge of sadness haunted her words, remnants of unpleasant memories. She cleared her throat and continued with her typical tone.  
"Feel free to make yourself at home."

The cyan pony shook out her mane and tail once more, then stooped to open aforementioned ice chest. She looked at the few items of food she had. Not much, but there was enough to whip up something in a snap.

"You hungry?" she asked.

"Starved!"

Soarin's reply sounded like it was coming from another room in the house, but she couldn't tell where...

"Say... You wouldn't happen to have any apple pie, would ya?"

"No, Soarin, I don't have any apple pie" Dash chuckled. "I do have some apples, though, if you want."

"Sweet, thanks."

His voice came from just over the low counter top wall separating the kitchenette from the main living quarters. Rainbow Dash stood back up and was about to reply when she saw Soarin, not in uniform.

"I hope you don't mind, I hung up my suit in the bathroom. Don't want to catch a cold the day before a big show."

Without his suit, Soarin looked completely different. The first thing she noticed was his coat. It was almost the same color as her own, possibly a few shades lighter. Even though she saw his wings and tip of his nose through the holes in the uniform, it was very different than seeing the entire image. His cutie mark was that of an apple pie being struck by a large yellow lightning bolt.

*"How fitting"* she thought.

Soarin's face was incredibly handsome and smooth. Rainbow Dash was taken aback by the stunning colt standing in front of her.

"What? Do I have something on my face?"

Rainbow Dash, suddenly realizing she had been staring at him and felt heat make its way to her face in embarrassment.

*"I can't let him know I was just staring at him...."*

She decided to roll with it, and motioned for Soarin to wipe his face with her own hooves, a prank tactic Pinkie Pie had taught her just recently.

Soarin was wiping both sides of his face with one hoof, trying to brush off any imaginary crumbs that may have been on his muzzle.

"Yeah, you got em!" she said, still snickering at herself.

"Sweet! Oh, and by the way..."

Soarin bent down, out of her sight and returned a second later with a First Aid kit in his teeth.

"Leph tak car uf det cuu!" He said, still holding the box of medical supplies.

Rainbow Dash didn't even try to stifle her laughter now.

"What are you trying to say?" she managed to squeak out in between fits of giggles.

"I said 'let's take care of that cut!'" he said once more, but this time he wasn't muffled.

Soarin looked down at the open box of simple medical supplies and realized what let him speak with so much clarity, causing his face to turn a dull red.

"Aww horseapples..."

Rainbow Dash brought a hoof up to her mouth in some attempt to hide her laughter, but it was no use.

"Yeah yeah, now are we gunna take care of that cut or not?" Soarin said, slightly annoyed.

"Oh fine. I still think it's not that big of a big deal, though..."

She sat up on the ground, placing her front hooves on the floor between her back legs to support her as she leaned forward.

Soarin walked around the low wall and sat on Rainbow Dash's left side where he would easily be able to treat her wound.

"Alrighty then, I'll be just a minute. Just relax and I'll be done any minute."

Rainbow Dash did as she was told and sat still, allowing Soarin to clean and disinfect the wound on her cheek, all the while admiring the gentle care he took as to not cause any pain.

But as he took care of the small wound, she couldn't help but back to yesterday yet again.

*"Don't want that pretty face getting scarred now!"*

Soarin's words rang out in her head.

Rainbow Dash felt a nervous lump rise up in her throat, and she swallowed it immediately.

"H-Hey Soarin?"

"Eyaah?" came the muffled reply. Soarin was removing the sterile wrapper of a bandage for the wound he just dressed.

"I uh... I've been wondering about something you said yesterday..."

Soarin brought his wings around and took the bandage between the tips of his wings and moved to place it on his friend's cut, but said nothing.

"About my... 'pretty face' getting scarred.."

Soarin's wings were close to her face and stopped briefly but he continued, ignoring the brief hitch and began to gingerly smoothed the bandage over her cut.

"W-What did you wanna know?"

Rainbow Dash shifted her large magenta eyes to look at a nervous Soarin.

"Well.. I was wondering if you... Uh... T-thought I was... P... Pretty..."

Rainbow Dash didn't know why she was asking, but she felt like she needed to know...

No. She knew why. It was the reason she kept denying to herself over and over again. Something so obvious to her, and something she shouldn't be afraid of.

She *liked* Soarin.

Soarin looked into her prodding magenta eyes his wings no longer holding a bandage, but now gently running along the soft contours of her face.

"I... Think that... Y-you're..."

Her heart was beating at what felt like a million beats per second and it was increasingly difficult to keep her breathing from intensifying.

Soarin moved his left wing tip to the right side of her face and gently turned her towards him.

He drew nearer and nearer until he was only scant inches away from her face, as if he was asking permission for what was about to come.

Rainbow Dash finally gave in to what her heart had been telling her, and let go of any inhibition she had about liking Soarin. She leaned in and her lips met his in the dim room.

The two pegasi embraced for several moments, but something felt off.... Soarin was holding back.

The two slowly broke the rendezvous and returned to where they were moments before, both not quite sure what had really just happened. Soarin had a look of regret on his face, causing Rainbow Dash to jump to the conclusion that she somehow had caused this.

"L-look, Soarin, I didn't mean to make you do anything you di--"

"No Rainbow, it's not that... It's all my fault..."

A look of regret melded into a look of self condemnation.

He looked into her eyes. They looked... Worried about him, but at the same time *hurt*. He couldn't continue with the burden he had been carrying any longer.

He let out a heavy sigh and explained everything.

"The Wonderbolts have been observing you for quite some time now, and I'm sure you noticed today was no ordinary flying session."

Rainbow Dash nodded, unsure of where he was going with this.

Soarin continued in a hushed tone comparable to a whisper, as if someone were listening in on their conversation.

"Well... I'm not supposed to tell you this yet, but... We want you to become a Wonderbolt."

“What?”

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. Had she really reached her lifelong goal just like that? The one thing she wanted most in her life, achieved?

“Yep. We want you you to join us, but the thing is...”

Any fatigue or weariness or strange, foreign emotion immediately disappeared from Rainbow Dash's body, and she leapt off the kitchen floor and shot all around her spacious living quarters. She had forgotten about the kiss, the conversation they just had, the grim tone Soarin painted with his words, and was simply overjoyed at the invitation to join her dream team. Her *idols*.

“OHMYGOSHOHMYGOSHOHMYGOSHOHMYGOSHOHMYGOSHOHMYGOSH!!!!”

Soarin looked up at the ecstatic mare, jolting around with an expression of pure joy plastered on her adorable face. But that made what came next even harder.

“Rainbow Dash, that's not all....”

At hearing her name, she immediately landed in front of Soarin and gave him a huge, two “armed” hug, standing on her back hooves to compensate for the slight difference in height.

“THANKYOUTHANKYOUTHANKYOUU!!” she squealed, still not hearing what Soarin was saying.

“Rainbow!”

Rainbow Dash brought her joyous face in front of his, with her forelegs still crossed across his neck.

“Yeah?”

Soarin closed his eyes and drew in a large breath and let out what he was



trying to tell her in one, rushed sentence.

“WonderboltsAren’tAllowedToBeRomanticallyInvolvedWithTheOtherWonderboltsOrElseThey’reKickedOut!”

He paused after saying these words, desperately hoping this situation would all go away and he wouldn’t have to hurt Rainbow Dash. Hoping that Rainbow Dash didn’t like him, for her sake... But it was not so.

He opened one eye slowly, praying that Rainbow Dash wasn’t sad, but again, things seemed to be working against him.

He was inches away from Rainbow, so he could see every detail of her disappointed face. The quivering lip, the teary eyes, and the sound of her upset breathing, despite her best efforts to hide it.

Rainbow Dash released Soarin from the hug and stepped back.

“Well, it’s not the end of the world. We’re just friends... Right?” He said, desperately trying to smooth over the situation.

“Yeah... Just friends”.

Rainbow’s reply was heavy with disappointment and sadness, and Soarin realized his best efforts didn’t help this hurt any less for her, in fact, they only seemed to make it worse...

The silence that hung between them was so crushing Soarin felt as if he were in the deepest part of the deepest ocean in Equestria. Rainbow Dash needed to be alone to think stuff through, but he knew he still couldn’t fly home.

“I-I should go... It looks like you need to think about some stuff.”  
He said as he opened the door and stepped out into the gale.

No reply came from Rainbow Dash, only a brief nod as she turned and began to slowly walk towards the stairs.

Soarin’s heart sank as he watched her shuffle off. Without another word, he shut the door and stepped out onto the cloud.

*"It's all my fault... Every time I let my guard down, I get hurt..."*

These were the thoughts than filled Rainbow Dash's mind as she ascended the stairs to her room, just as she did the night before. But instead of contentment, all she could feel was regret at her own actions. Soarin was right. She needed to just think...

Soarin sat on the edge of the cloud, dejected and angry at himself. He caused a mare he was beginning to genuinely like to hurt. Now he felt he'd be lucky if she ever spoke to him again. He may have only gotten to really know her two days ago, but it felt like they were old friends. The way they flew together was unlike anything he had ever experienced before in his life....

He looked up at the bleak skies pouring frigid rain down upon him.

Warm invisible tears flowed down his cheeks and melded with the stream of rain water flowing down his body, and disappeared into the darkening white cloud below his hooves.

There he would sit for several more hours, waiting until the clouds blew away and it was safe to make the long, lonely return to Cloudsdale. All the while he muttered the same words over and over again.

"I'm sorry... I'm so sorry..."

# Chapter 3

Soarin sat at the white table in the corner of a well lit room, an alfalfa sandwich sitting untouched before him. He craned his neck down and took a bite of the lunch item, but his appetite was almost non existent.

He chewed the morsel laboriously, willing himself to eat the piece of his favorite food. Up until a few days ago he would have powered through the meal as if it were nothing, but he just didn't have the appetite...

The sky blue Pegasus jumped when he felt a feathery object lightly touch him on his left shoulder. He turned to find out what it was, heart still pounding. There standing next to him was a pony he'd known for many, many years.

"Geeze, Spitfire! You nearly gave me a heart attack!"

"Sorry about that." the light yellow equine said with a light smile. "But I couldn't help but notice... You've been acting rather down recently. What's on your mind?"

Soarin turned back to his practically untouched sandwich and sighed.

"It's nothing really, I'm ok..."

Spitfire walked over to the other side of the circular table and sat.

"Come on now, Soarin, I know you too well. You should know by now you can't get anything past me."

Soarin looked at his friend, then looked down at the table. He pushed his sandwich out of the way and scooted closer. He and Spitfire were always able to talk to each other about problems they faced, but typically Soarin was the one in need of advice.

He knew it would be useless to try and hide it.

“Well, you see..” began Soarin, eyes floating around the room, trying in vain to ease the awkwardness of the situation.

“Ah, Mare problems. Shoulda known. “ Spitfire interrupted.

The blue Wonderbolt began to protest when Spitfire shot him a disarming look, reminding him once more that she only wanted to help.

But Soarin couldn't relax yet.... he basically knew what Spitfire's immediate response would be, and he was NOT looking forward to it.

"Well, you know that one filly, the one with the rainbow hair? Well, I.... We... I kinda..."

The stallion, and consequently the rest of the Wonderbolt's cafeteria, was silenced by a deafening bang of furious hooves on the table.

“YOU *WHAT*, SOARIN?” Snarled the furious Spitfire.

All other members of the aviation team fell silent, stood up from their various places in unison, and hurriedly yet quietly vacated the room. Spitfire didn't earn her namesake for nothing.

Soarin sat at the table, head hung in shame at himself, face burning with embarrassment, not wanting to look up at the furious mare.

The two sat alone, the dull hum of the light above their heads being the only noise for minutes. Minutes that stretched on for what seemed like miniature eternities.

Spitfire was the one to break the silence.

“Listen, Soar. You gotta colt-up and figure out a way to fix this. A mares heart can be a fragile thing.”

She paused, and Soarin raised his eyes to rendezvous with her gaze, knowing what she was eluding to. He wanted to look away, but he found it impossible.

The young mare's eyes had a tinge of sadness, remnants of a greater sorrow that dissipated over time, but would never fully extinguish.

"I would know." Spitfire finished the words devoid of emotion.

For a moment, her eyes weren't gold. They were maroon. And her coat wasn't golden, it was a beautiful light blue. Suddenly, he found himself standing in front of Rainbow Dash, in her home. Those same hurt eyes peering at him through a mist of tears.

Soarin closed his eyes, and opened them a moment later to find he was back in the Wonderbolt's dining area, alone.

"Her eyes..." He thought "Her eyes looked exactly like Rainbow Dash's.."

After several solitary minutes of deep contemplation, The Wonderbolt rose from his spot and solemnly walked towards the door.

He walked through the empty hallways and exited the main building, and sat himself down at the edge of the cloud in the direction of Rainbow Dash's home.

Soarin knew what he wanted to happen, but didn't even know if he had the courage to accomplish it.

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Rainbow Dash was sitting on her bed, staring up at the open twilight sky in front of her, a few stars dotting the sky so many miles up.. Her cyan cheeks were streaked with dried tears that seldom stopped rolling down her face, but at the moment, all was calm and quiet, and she felt almost content. Rainbow Dash hadn't cried for many months, but now she remembered how therapeutic it was for a mare to have a good, long cry once in a blue moon. Even her.

She sighed, filling her lungs with cool, evening air and opened her wings, stretching every muscle as she did. Once she was ready, she lifted herself off the miniature cloud, up and out of the hole in her roof she used to have

easy access to the sky. She wanted to avoid her living quarters; she wanted to avoid the spot where she allowed herself to get too close.

Rainbow Dash closed her eyes during the slight decline to the earth many miles below. The scent of salty tears shed the previous nights and the lofty scent of cloud pillow filled her nostrils as she inhaled.

But despite her efforts to keep her mind off of last night, the thoughts kept sweeping into her head like the wind rushing of wind through her ears. She shook her head, trying to rid herself of them.

"I'm acting like a total foal..."

She brought her legs up to her face, wiping as much of the salty residue of tears away as she could from her eyes and cheeks. When she opened her eyes again, she noticed she was pointed in the direction of the same mountains she flew past on her way home from the Grand Galloping Gala a few days prior.

She remembered the golden yellow light radiating off the mountains in the morning light, promising a beautiful new day; but now they were a depressing shade of orange, growing less vibrant each second as the sun sank lower into the sky.

Rainbow Dash watched as the last sliver of light evaporated off the face of the mountain, sinking Ponyville in a calm dark evening. One by one, each one of the familiar stars of the Summer sky began to fill the vast expanse of sky.

The cyan mare was growing weary, and wanted to rest, but having drifted away from her home, the mountains were closer than the mansion of clouds. She didn't want to return anyway. What was there to return to? Unpleasant memories and reminders of a more recent incident? To hazy with that.

Rainbow Dash glided towards the mountains at a slow decent and spotted a lone cave on the face. She changed direction, headed directly for it, and landed.

The young mare turned herself about and promptly lay down at the edge of the cave mouth on a rock, scant inches away from a sheer drop.

"This always happens." she said to herself yet again. "I always fly too close to the sun."

At this, her eyelids began to flutter, and her mind became fuzzy. She didn't fight sleep, in fact, sleep was the only solace she could find. The Pegasus laid her head down in between her front hooves, and within moments drifted into unconsciousness.

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Soarin stood at Rainbow Dash's door, hoof hovering in front about to knock, when he heard a slight ruffling of Pegusi feathers above. The colt looked up and saw Rainbow Dash flying towards Sandalwood Mountain.

Had she seen him and fled? OR was it coincidence that she was leaving just as he arrived.

Soarin took a deep breath, dissipating the worry in his chest, and took off after her, keeping his distance. He followed her, and saw Rainbow Dash land in a small cave overlooking a darkened Ponyville.

Despite what his heart demanded, he kept flying, up to the peak of the mountain. He landed and immediately began to pace, trying to figure out what to say to her once he drummed up enough courage to speak to her. *If* he decided to say anything.

The young colt walked down a slight slope absentmindedly and found himself in a field of incredible flowers surrounding a small pond, brightly illuminated by a still rising moon. As he walked around, he thought about picking a few for the Cyan pony below, but decided against it.

"She isn't that kind of mare." he chuckled to himself in the silence.

He sat down and listened to the absolute still that blanketed the area. Not a creature was stirring, not wind was blowing. Just silence.

“Then again, she’s unlike any other mare I’ve ever met... She’s cunning, strong willed and gorgeous.”

The colt looked at the cool, still water, painted silver in the light of the moon, and saw his own reflection. He wondered for a moment how he ever got Rainbow Dash to like him. To *kiss* him.

“... and that’s why she’s too good for me. I’m stupid, weak and ugly.”

He melancholically threw a hoof in the water, sending ripples throughout the small pool.

The ripples extended to the edges of the mass of water, and bounced off the dirty edge returning to the point of origin. Slowly they died out, losing their force as they went.

Soarin rolled over on his back, his mind a chaotic jumble of emotions, thoughts and worries. He liked Rainbow Dash alot, but at the same time, flying was the only thing he was good at. The only thing he'd known for as long as he remembered was the joy of flight. Whenever his mother and her coltfriend would fight, he would leave the house for hours at a time and just... Fly.

He became so good at it he joined his High School Flight Team and eventually earned a Scholarship to Cloudsdale University by his senior year. He would travel all over Equestria to compete against other teams of aviators for the honors of being top in the Nation.

At each major event, the Wonderbolts would observe and note the most promising candidates for drafting.

One day, after an especially long and grueling competition, the Leader of the Wonderbolts at the time, Captain Thunderhead, approached him and asked him if he wanted to become one of the best. To become a Wonderbolt.

Naturally, the young colt jumped at the opportunity. After all, it was what he wanted more than anything. From there he went to a special flight camp, and competed against other candidates for the position, some even his best friends since childhood.



Throughout it all, he noticed one thing. The other candidates were utterly consumed with the position. It was their drive. Their *sole* focus. But Soarin never lost sight of his first love. The love of flying

One by one, the other candidates were dropped. And at the long, brutal end of it, only he and Spitfire remained. During the probationary period the two had started dating, but due to regulations they were forced to end their relationship.

Something Soarin regretted fully. He wished he never gave up on one dream for the other. He had even talked to Spitfire about quitting and returning to the way things were, but the mare didn't want to go back again, only to get hurt once more. She let a past pain rule her life.

But, it seemed as if history was doomed to repeat itself. He had begun to fall in love all over again, with a mare that loved the gift of flight as much as he did.

Soarin stared up at the millions of stars, formulating and thinking. He closed his eyes, but immediately rolled back over on his stomach, wide eyed and hopeful.

"Maybe..." He said. "Maybe it's not too late! Maybe I CAN fix this!"

The young colt thought he knew what he had to do, but now there wasn't a shadow of a doubt. Come what may, He couldn't lose sight of the joy that came from flying, and no matter what, he couldn't let Rainbow Dash lose sight of it either.

Soarin looked to the crisp, cool night, and took a deep breath, filling his lungs with his favorite scent; sky.

He knew what he had to do. And now, he finally had the courage to do it.

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Rainbow Dash opened her eyes slowly, allowing herself to adjust to the harsh morning light reflecting off the clouds passing in front of her. She

raised her head, yawned, and twisted her head side to side, cracking her vertebrae to relieve pressure, as was her daily morning ritual.

"Man, that rock was comfy...." She said aloud. still in a half awake state.

She paused. Rocks weren't comfy last time she checked, so she decided to check again.

Rainbow Dash looked at the boulder she had risen from, and to her complete surprise, a Wonderbolt's uniform had been folded up and placed under her head like a makeshift pillow.

She looked around the cave for a moment, searching for what she knew she'd find.

There, in the back, was a drooling Soarin. He was out of uniform and completely asleep..

She didn't quite understand what was going on, or exactly why he was here. All she knew was she had flown out here to get away from it all, but somehow it found her, even this far away from home.

Heat flooded her face, but the heat was from frustration. She picked the wadded up flight suit in her teeth and flung it across the cave, hitting the sleeping colt on the back of the head with a flop.

"What in the hay are you doing here, Soarin?!"

The male pony immediately rose from his spot and turned to face her. He began to explain himself, but was abruptly cut off by the fuming Mare.

"Didya just want to tick me off more? 'Cause it's sure working. Man, you really know how to treat a girl, dontcha?"

He took several small steps forward, stuttering around for the right words to say. For each step he took, Rainbow Dash took one step back.

"Rainbow, look, I'm sorry..."

"Oh, you're sorry! That makes it all better then."

The words she spoke were paired with a tone of biting sarcasm and a venomous look.

Soarin looked down at his front hooves, unsure of what he should say next. But he knew he had to say *something*...

Rainbow Dash shook her head, turned, and walked out to the front of the cave, spreading her wings in preparation for flight.

Soarin watched as she walked away. Something about her back as she walked screamed out "Don't follow me". But he knew if he didn't act now, he'd run the risk of losing her forever.

He mustered up the new found courage he obtained the night before and ran to her. His hooves couldn't carry him to her fast enough. The colt skidded directly past her and stood directly in front of the mare, wings spread to their full span, denying her access to the sky.

Rainbow Dash waited for him to speak, waited for some sort of desperate apology to rush from him, but none came. Instead, Soarin threw his front legs and wings around her in a hug.

But it wasn't just a hug. She could feel the remorse and sincerity emanating from every fiber of his body.

"Rainbow, listen to me for just a second. I know I'm the last pony you want to see right now, but I'm *begging* you, just come fly with me. We don't even need to speak."

Rainbow Dash gave no response.

Soarin released the embrace and looked in her eyes. The maroon eyes that were filled with pain only two nights before were cautiously hopeful, but he doubted their owner knew it herself.

The stallion turned to the edge of the cliff and walked right off, spreading his large blue wings and leveling out above the thick layer of rain clouds, golden in the light of the sun. Much to his dismay, the light sound of

Pegasus wings following close behind were not heard. Soarin had one final card to play.

“Hey Dash!” He called out. “Try to keep up!”

Not two seconds later, a lightning fast light blue blur raced past him, rainbow trail in tow.

Soarin let a wide goofy grin stretch across his face, and a hearty chuckle escape his mouth.

“Rainbow Dash hasn’t lost that spark after all...”

With that, the Wonderbolt bolted off in pursuit.

The two pegasi tore through the sky like they never have before, letting their emotions of frustration and remorse give way to joy and excitement, blasting through clouds at blistering speed.

Soarin eventually took the lead and shot directly up with Rainbow Dash close behind. The pair flew higher and higher, until the Wonderbolt preformed a loop-de-loop and leveled out, parallel with the earth, and slowed. Rainbow Dash pulled next to him and poked his side with her hoof.

“Getting tired there?” she playfully jabbed.

Soarin laughed. “Not just yet. Hey, you remember what happened that first night we flew together?”

Recent memories of the spectacular Lightning Rainboom they preformed came back to her instantaneously.

“Hey yeah! What about it?”

“Let’s do it again.”

Rainbow Dash stopped flapping for a moment, until she noticed herself declining in altitude, then corrected herself and returned to her position.

“Are you crazy?! I don’t even know if we’d be *able* to pull that off again!”

He looked over at Rainbow Dash, multi colored mane wildly whipping about in the strong wind. Her beautiful blue coat almost melding in with the endless late morning sky. Her eyes, ready, wanting to alight with joy and passion again. But she still needed that extra push.

"So, you're scared to take a chance, then?" Soarin said, knowing exactly what she needed to get her going.

No hesitation came from her.

At that moment, her eyes reignited, screaming at him, saying that she wasn't going to let anything keep her down. She was ready to take another chance.

"Oh, *you're on*, flyboy!"

The two pulled up vertically, facing opposite directions, back to back, wing to wing. Each stopped flapping their wings and allowed themselves to float in midair for a brief period of time. To both pegusi though, the moment was of pure euphoria.

The two ponies surrendered themselves to gravity, and let themselves beginning their rapid decent.

No communication was needed between them. They were as one entity. They turned as one, they rolled as one and they flew as one.

Rainbow Dash and Soarin hit a string of billowing thunderheads, gathering energy and spare electricity on their coats as they plummeted towards the Equestrian ground ahead.

As they exited the final cloud, a large vapor cone formed around the two, signaling the near penetration of the Sonic Barrier. Any mistake or miscalculation at this point could prove disastrous.

The two passed the point of no return and pressed into the cone vigorously as the ground neared them. They were running out of time, and space!

But neither thought of that; it was only them against the odds now.

Rainbow Dash could tell she was at the threshold, but waited for Soarin to give the word. If she breached the barrier even a fraction of a second before him, he probably wouldn't survive. This maneuver required absolute synchronization.

"Three...." Soarin yelled over the incredible noise, signaling the beginning of the countdown. "Two.... ONE!"

The world fell silent. There was no noise of the wind, or a loud boom from the sound barrier being shattered. It was only Him and Her, ripping through the sky, and ploughing through the immense layer of golden clouds covering this part of the world, emerging in a much darker environment.

Both ponies looked back at the astounding sight behind. Several colossal rainbow colored lighting bolts fanned out from the duo as they continued rocketing towards the ground. The first time they did a Lightning Rainboom, the skies had been clear. But this time, their spectacular feat had drawn electricity from the clouds around them, creating a much larger spectacle.

Soarin tore his gaze away from the sky and redirected it toward the ground, and much to his horror, the ground was closer than he thought it would be.

"DASH! BRAKE, NOW!"

She got the hint, and the two pegasi broke off from one another, and braked harder than either of them had in their lives.

Soarin saw that Dash wasn't stopping as fast as she needed to. If he didn't do something, she would be in a world of hurt. The colt immediately tilted his wings and glided under the mare, positioning himself so that he would break her fall.

The pair impacted a grassy hill overlooking a meadow with a wet thud. As they slid toward the base, the deafening roars of the Lightning Rainboom still resounded through the sky, and the massive bolts of lightning continually lashed randomly outwards.

When they came to a halt, Rainbow Dash opened her eyes, which were shut tight in the moments during impact, and noticed where she lay.

She was on Soarin's chest, his eyes were closed and his breathing was shallow. Immediately she thought the worst.

"...Dash?" the Wonderbolt said with labored breathing.

Rainbow Dash couldn't tell if the water running down her face was rain or tears.

"Y-Yes?"

Soarin coughed viciously, retching violently.

"I need you t-to... Do me a favor.."

Rainbow Dash drew closer to his face, as his voice was growing dimmer by the moment, drowned out by the sound of falling rain.

"Anything." she said, her voice trembling from the sorrow that was now welling up inside her.

"I need you to... to... get off my chest..."

"What was that? You need to get something off your chest?" she asked. Soarin nodded with great effort and squeaked out his words.

"You."

Rainbow Dash hurriedly tried to decipher what he was trying to say, thinking this might mean life or death, and then it hit her.

He literally meant off his chest.

The mare slid off the colt and lay beside him, holding his hoof in hers, hoping desperately he would be alright. There was a slight pause, followed by several sharp inhalations and a chuckle from Soarin.

"So, I take it you don't hate me again?"

Rainbow Dash looked at his face, his signature grin smeared across it from ear to ear.

Immediately, she let go of his hoof and sat up, slightly annoyed and blushing.

“S-So... You’re not dying?” she asked.

“Not that I know of.” Soarin replied.

“Do your ribs hurt?”

“No, why?”

Rainbow Dash delivered a soft jab into his ribs without warning, causing Soarin to arch and roll over in surprise.

“That’s for making me worry, numbskull!” Rainbow Dash said, scoffing at the colt.

The colt rolled back over, laughing, and winced.

“Thanks.” he said, chuckling. “But couldn’t you have found a less painful way to show affection?”

The two looked at the ridiculous state they were in; covered in mud, in the middle of nowhere, and sopping wet.

Rainbow Dash began to laugh along with him. Both ponies began laughing harder and harder, until they both fell over in the meadow, side by side, in a fit of hilarity.

Once the cachinnation came to an end, the two caught their breath while staring up at the sky, still flickering alive with rainbow colored bolts of lightning.

The two lay there for several long minutes, just enjoying the company of one another, watching a rare phenomena in the sky. They listened to the dying growl of the thunder and pitter-patter of the rain falling.

The result of when two individuals come together and accomplish something *extraordinary*.



"Hey Dash?" Soarin said, breaking the relative silence.

Rainbow Dash said nothing but flopped over on her side, facing him, squishing the wet grass beneath her.

"I got something for ya'..."

"Oh? What is it?" asked the curious mare.

The sky blue colt paused for a moment, as if contemplating a serious quandary. At last, he took a breath and let it go.

"I want you to have my spot on the Wonderbolts."

Rainbow Dash was stunned at what she just heard, so much so, she didn't even know if she heard him correctly.

"Waitwaitwaitwait.... what?"

"I'm quitting the Wonderbolts." He said once more, matter-of-factly.

Rainbow Dash sat up and leaned over the supine colt, giving him a confused look.

"But why?! You're part of the most awesomest team ever! Why would you want to quit?!"

Soarin smiled sweetly at the girl. He had finally found *something* worth doing anything for. Or rather, *someone*.

"I've had my fun. Now it's your turn. You've always wanted to become a Wonderbolt, now's your chance. Besides..."

Soarin slowly sat up as Rainbow Dash moved out of his path. He then turned to face the mare, caked with mud and blades of grass, and gave her a long hug, tossing his head over her shoulder and holding her close to his equally filthy body.

"I don't need the Wonderbolts to be happy." He said softly

"I've already found the most awesomest team ever."

Rainbow Dash paused, reflecting on what he was saying. He was willing to give up his career to simply be with her.

She then closed her eyes and returned the embrace whole-heartedly, leaning her head against Soarin's, hugging him closer with her hooves.

She let herself become consumed in the moment. The glorious moment when the rain relents, and the sun shines golden light through the silver clouds, promising a bright new day once more.

The beautiful moment when she was in the arms of someone that loved her no matter what.

She raised her lips up to his ears and softly whispered

"I think I did too."



## Author's notes

When I started this fic, I was hoping for a 4 star, at best, seeing as how my Braeburn/Twilight Sparkle Fic was a 3 star. I didn't think for a moment it would become a 5, almost 6 star fic. There is still room for improvement (alot actually), so I'm flattered this got as highly rated as it did.

Thanks to the loyal few who checked the page for updates and urged me to continue this story. As you can imagine, my free time is nearly zero, as I am training for the Fire Department (Firefighting bronies... Do we have any already?).

I had fun writing it, and I have plenty of ideas left in my noggin'. Some shipping, some sad, but mostly shipping.

Anyway, the ending was a bit of a cliff hanger I suppose. I'm leaving the reader to draw their own conclusion. Did Rainbow Dash finally achieve her goal of becoming a Wonderbolt? Or did she realize that being with Soarin is really all she wanted? Again, that's all up to you.

I'd also like to thank my Brony community from Bungie.net, nearly 500 strong, for giving me advice and critique.

And finally...

I want a cheeseburger.