

Turning it Down a Mare

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Chapter 1

The afternoon sun shone brightly across the small town of Ponyville, there was barely a cloud in the sky. It seemed to be yet another lazy spring day with nothing really going on. That was until a strong gust blasted across the fields of Sweet Apple Acres. Heavy winds blew the large apple trees, making their branches sway. Rainbow Dash was doing yet another time trial around the Apple Family's property. The breezy spring weather was welcoming as it rushed through her rainbow colored mane. A great big smile could be spotted on her face. No matter what situation she was in, she was always happy to go fast. She smoothly slowed up and rested on a fluffy cloud, smirking as she looked down at her friends Applejack and Fluttershy.

"Ha! Told you I could clear a lap around your ranch and make it back in record time!" A sharp breeze rushed through her colorful mane as it finally caught back up with the darting pony. She hadn't had a smile this big since the day she'd finally got to meet her heroes, the Wonderbolts. To her, going fast was the only thing she truly showed passion for when she wasn't clearing the skies.

"Well shucks Rainbow! Ah knew you were quick, but where the heck did that speed come from?" Applejack said in excitement.

Fluttershy, on the other hoof, was not so enthusiastic. Her ears were folded down and she was softly biting her lip. The timid pony had always admired her brash friend's flying abilities, but lately Dash's reckless pursuit of more and more troubling feats was really starting to bother her. From her multiple Sonic Rainboom attempts to showing off at the ranch, Dash's stunts were becoming more dangerous. It wasn't that Fluttershy didn't enjoy watching the athletic pegasus zip around the clouds, but she worried for her safety. Sweet Apple Acres wasn't like the open, rolling fields that Fluttershy was used to. With all the obstacles scattered around, Rainbow's twists and turns had to be razor sharp to keep up her high speeds without getting seriously injured. The thought alone caused Fluttershy to shudder.

“That little barn run of yours was pretty easy! I could have nailed this record with my eyes shut!” Dash strutted over to Fluttershy, giving her a playful nudge. “I think your course is getting old.” she turned to Applejack with a taunting smirk on her face. “The hay stacks are way too easy to swing around, and all the scenery has been getting boring.” The adrenaline in Rainbow Dash was pumping quickly.

“Are ya tellin’ me that flyin’ around my property is as simple as findin’ a gem in a pile of coal? Applejack gave her a quick frown.

“Yes!” Rainbow Dash nodded condescendingly. “Whatever that means.” she followed up with a quick laugh.

It didn’t take long for Applejack’s eyebrow to descend in a frown. She had a good amount of pride in her family’s property and she wasn’t going to let some showoff pegasus talk down about her farm in any way. She silently began to scan her entire acreage. After moving her head in every direction possible she nodded and smiled. “Alright then,” she looked at Rainbow Dash. “If you think you’re so quick, then you can easily loop around the well, rise up from the barn’s open sun roof until you reach that gray cloud and dive down to the opening of the apple tree orchard in less than a minute.”

Dash’s eyes had a bit of a glint in them as she looked at how high she was about to drop down. She knew going that high meant that she was going to be quick at the drop. Seeing the narrow opening she was going to dive into made it even sweeter. Without hesitation, she puffed out her wings and jumped right back into the air. “You’re on! I’ll have this course done in less than a minute.”

Fluttershy had a sickly expression on her muzzle as her stomach turned. She looked at the steep drop that Applejack was about to send her friend blazing through. “Um, Rainbow Dash...” Fluttershy took a bit of a gulp as she pulled at her rainbow colored tail.

Dash ceased her day dreaming about her fast-paced lap and turned to her meek friend. If there was anyone that she was willing to listen to, it would be Fluttershy. Even through their differences, they had been best friends since Flight School.

“Don’t you think this might be a bit.....dangerous?”

“Don’t be such a scaredy cat,” Dash laughed a bit, landing back on the ground, finding her question to be absurd. “You’ve seen me fly over a hundred times. Whaddaya think could go wrong?”

“Well...” Fluttershy’s eyes looked around the entire course to find any flaw that would stand out as dangerous. Her eyes finally caught a glimpse of the crowded orchard. Most wondered how the Apple family could fit in so many trees in one place. There was hardly any room for a carriage to fit through. Rainbow Dash burning through the path was the last thing that should be happening down there. “What if you fly into a tree?”

Rainbow Dash screwed her face up, trying her best not to burst out into an obnoxious laugh. “Good one, Fluttershy! What are they gonna do? Drop their apples on me?” Her snickering made Fluttershy’s cheeks burn from humiliation.

“Are you gonna do this or are you just going to prance around like a peacock with a fancy new set of feathers?” The apple-bucking work-horse grew tired of her boasting. “We’re not going to be waiting all day for you to show off again.”

“Keep your horseshoes on!” Rainbow Dash gave a huge grin as her wings sprung open, ready to launch.

“Alrighty then. Take your mark, get set...” Applejack told Rainbow Dash as the pegasus lowered her body down to a sprinting stance.

Warm air came pouring from Rainbow Dash’s nostrils as she let out a deep breath. Just like before every run, she had a moment to gather her racing thoughts. All of her weight was on the tips of her hooves, anticipating Applejack’s command.

“Go!” Applejack shouted, Not even having enough time to look at Rainbow Dash’s launch as Dash had already blasted away.

Fluttershy flew up a bit and looked above the hill to follow her. “Please be careful...” she mumbled to Rainbow Dash under her breath.

Hearing Fluttershy's whimpering, Applejack's hoof gently patted Fluttershy's side and she smiled at her, "There there sugar cube. I'm sure Rainbow Dash knows what her limits are." Applejack didn't take long after to turn away as she lowered the brow of her hat. "At least I hope so."

Rainbow Dash was in the midst of the first part of her new course. She hugged around the stone brick well as she zoomed past the horseshoe pit and flashed through the entrance of the barnyard door. She cut upwards as she felt the warm rays of the sun, they indicated the opening of the sun roof. She then targeted the gray cloud and stuck her hooves out towards it. Small beads of sweat began to run down her face as she could feel herself getting closer to the hot sun. The gray cloud was now in the midst of her grasp. It was small, but about the right size for Rainbow Dash to flip the opposite direction and kick off of it to get a bit of a boost. The cloud instantly exploded when she made contact with her hind hooves on the way back down. *Alright, now just to rush through AJ's apple orchard*, Rainbow thought to herself. She dashed towards the entrance.

Along the orchard passage were three young fillies who called themselves as The Cutie Mark Crusaders. The orange pegasus, Scootaloo, was again attempting to fly.

"Come on Scootaloo. You can do it!" Sweetie Belle let out another cheer.

This pushed the feisty pegasus to flap her wings even harder. She could barely arch her back up as she huffed in exhaustion. "It's no use," She sighed. "I'll never get off the ground."

Applebloom gave her a big smile to help soothe her frustration. "You can't give up now! You're so close!"

"Just think about it." Sweetie Belle chimed in again. "With you flying, we might be able to come closer to finding our special talents!"

Scootaloo put on a smile as the girls squealed out in excitement. "Well okay. One last time though. All this flapping is making me tired!"

Entering the narrow confines of the orchard posed little problem for a flier of Rainbow Dash's skill. However, once beneath the verdant canopy,

things became much less certain. Branches weighted down with their burden of nearly-ripe fruit forced her to use every inch of available space to weave and dodge. It got her worried. She felt a bit of a need to slow down as Fluttershy's small voice continued to echo in her head. It was becoming annoying to her. Dash shook her head, clearing out everything that Fluttershy spoke of earlier. She then sped up her pace in order to feel that she wasn't giving in to Fluttershy's begging. Leaves danced behind her. Apples began to fall down from the trees. Nothing stood in the way of her speed.

As Rainbow Dash made it over a hill, she found three foals at the bottom playing. Her eyes widened as she yelled out, worried that she was going to knock into one of the kids. This time she wanted to stop, she wanted to listen to Fluttershy. Her options were limited and there was little amount of time for a decision. One of the kids could get seriously hurt. Her eyes glanced at all available directions. Going above them would mean she would get stuck in the thick canopy of the trees. *There's barely any room for me to fit through...* Rainbow Dash's mind raced. There was always the choice of stopping as well, but it would be the end of her record breaking time trial. *I can't stop. There's no way!* Her stubbornness prevented her from slowing down.

Rushing over to the side of the road, Sweetie Belle and Applebloom noticed that Scootaloo wasn't by their side.

Scootaloo was too busy concentrating on getting off the ground for her to notice Rainbow Dash at all. Not even the loudest shriek could be heard by the small filly.

With little time remaining before collision, Rainbow Dash's only option was to zoom between Scootaloo and the trees. Already being a few inches from the tree trunks, it proved to be a pretty tight squeeze, but Rainbow Dash didn't hesitate and swung her entire body to the left. She closed her eyes. *It's just gotta stick. I'm not gonna crash.*

It wasn't destined to be.

KKRACK!

She felt her left wing crush against a large tree trunk. There was an audible snapping sound followed by the agonized scream of a pegasus. Falling face first into the ground just slightly off the path, the mare rolled onto the side of her stomach and continued her howling as blood seeped from her nostrils.

The Cutie Mark Crusaders stared in disbelief as the grounded pegasus lay there aching and crying in pain.

“Oh no, Rainbow Dash!” Fluttershy exclaimed as she heard the plaintive cry.

Applejack and Fluttershy immediately ran towards the bawling and found their friend pounding her hoof against the ground, “My wing! My wing!” The yelping from Rainbow Dash seemed to be never ending. Her face was going a shade of purple as the bruises started swelling. Red blood joined with the warm tears that streaked down her gentle face. Her entire left wing was drastically offset from her back. Feathers seemed ruffled up from the hit and even fell off as they laid scattered against her side.

The sight of Dash made Applejack rush her hoof to her mouth. Her stomach began to feel a bit queasy. The apple fritter she ate earlier suddenly did not settle too well.

“Oh my! What do we do?” Fluttershy squeaked seeing the mangled form of Rainbow Dash, tears forming in her eyes, “I told you this wasn’t such a good idea.”

Applejack finally took a big swallow and breathed a bit. She looked over to her younger sister. “Applebloom! I want’cha to rush on over to Big Macintosh and tell him to bring a cart over here. This is an emergency!”

Applebloom nodded to her friends as they were just staring at the wounded Rainbow Dash. “Right!”

She turned to her two friends and they nodded, "Cutie Mark Crusader rescue squad away!" The three yelled out at the top of their lungs as they ran off to find Applejack's older sibling. They were in such a hurry they even left their capes scattered on the ground. Scootaloo stopped for a moment and looked back at Rainbow Dash, worrying and hoping that she would be ok

"Hurry up!" Applebloom yelled at her grabbing Scootaloo by the hoof and pulling her away from the crash site.

Fluttershy eyed Dash and looked around in a fluster. She grabbed one of the discarded capes and pushed it gently against the bleeding nose of the sky-blue pegasus, "Oh, Rainbow Dash. This was the exact thing I was worrying about. You should have been more careful."

Rainbow Dash remained silent as she fought through the pain. The last thing she wanted to do was cry in front of her two friends. Being more of a pride thing, she didn't want to lose what she considered 'a tough personality', even if it was under the most ridiculous situation. It was killing her inside. Her wing felt as if it were shattered into a thousand pieces. The numerous scrapes and even the bloody nose couldn't stand up to how awful the pain in her wing felt. She kept her face covered by one hoof until Macintosh came with the cart.

Rainbow Dash was taken over to Ponyville's local medical centre located in the middle of town. She was laid down on a long bed with soft white sheets. Rainbow Dash lay in her bed, frustrated and angry, her hooves hanging off the metal edge. Her body felt sore. Her friends had stuck by her side to help comfort her. It helped ease a bit of the pain, but she was hardly in the mood for a visit.

"Where exactly did this happen?" Twilight Sparkle asked as she gave Nurse Redheart a roll of bandage wraps.

"It was in one of the groves over by Sweet Apple Acres." Applejack replied.

“She must have been horsing around again seeing how fast she could go.” Rarity declared knowing her impetuous nature. She was in a sour mood due to canceling a pedicure appointment once hearing about an emergency. When she learned that it was just an accident caused by Rainbow Dash attempting to break another speed record, Rarity turned red in the face. “When is she ever going to learn?”

“Um guys, I can hear everything you three say.” Rainbow Dash growled from the bed that she was lying on. Her voice a bit off as her nostrils were filled with tissues covered in dry blood.

“Sorry, Rainbow Dash.” Twilight bit her lip turning to her. “We’re just not used to seeing you like this.”

“Well the less you guys comment about me, the better.” Rainbow Dash snapped. “At least Fluttershy knows when to stay quiet.”

As the pegasus mentioned her name, Fluttershy walked back into the room. She shut the door quietly. “Well... Are you feeling better?” she asked.

Her question made Rainbow Dash frown, and she narrowed her eyes. “What kind of question is that? If I was feeling better, I’d be flying again.” Her face scrunched up in anger as she paused a bit and took a deep breath. She wasn’t upset at her friends. She was more upset at herself for getting into this situation. “It’s bad enough that I know I won’t be able to fly. There is no need for anyone else to rub it in.”

With the sudden crash, the door burst open. “Rainbow Dash!” the overly wound up pony known as Pinkie Pie exploded into the room, knocking Fluttershy to the side.

The yellow pegasus landed face first on the floor, her eyes sent violently spinning as the hit made her dazed for a moment.

Rainbow Dash moaned even more, digging her face into the pillow that she was resting on.

“Oh my gosh! You have no idea what was going through my mind when I heard you got hurt!” Pinkie Pie rushed over, barging through every pony in her way.

“Like I have any idea what is going on in your mind anyways...” The mean remark from Rainbow Dash was left ignored by the perky pony as she didn’t catch on to it at all.

“I couldn’t believe it! When Fluttershy came to tell me you were hurt, I was like, ‘Dashie never gets hurt, especially when she is flying! Why she’s the fastest flyer in all of Ponyville!’ But then she told me what happened and I was like, ‘Oh my gosh, no way!’ so I ran here as fast as I could. I had to come here and see it for myself. I had to see you actually injured from a crash!”

Rainbow Dash’s mouth screwed up as she put her head down. “Thanks, Pinkie Pie. That makes me feel a whole lot better.” She mumbled sarcastically. She felt even worse than before now.

Nurse Redheart entered the room and approached Dash’s back, placing her hooves across her body. “Please hold still,” she calmly told her.

“Ow. Ow. Ow. OW!” Rainbow Dash felt a tug against her back as Nurse Redheart snapped her wing back into place. Her friends watched closely as Rainbow Dash dug her hooves into the soft flat bed while clenching her teeth, groaning at the pain that she was feeling. It was critical that the nurse align every piece of her wing perfectly. A simple misplacement could corrupt the entire healing process.

“You shouldn’t feel too bad.” Nurse Redheart smiled down at her, “Most stallions that I see here mope and whine much louder than you do.” the nurse pony said to her in attempt to lighten up the mood.

Rainbow Dash just rolled her eyes as Nurse Redheart began to delicately wrap her wing with a strong white bandage wrap. Dash didn’t find her amusing.

“This is the first in a long time that I’ve seen a fractured wing. Most pegasus ponies are taken to Cloudsdale’s Medical Center.” Nurse Redheart said.

Dash was starting to get both bored and annoyed with having to lay still on this stretcher. “Can I leave yet? I just want to know if it will be about one

or two days of healing.” she commented while blowing at her rainbow colored mane out of her face.

Nurse Redheart frowned at the comment, not completely sure that she knew how severe of an injury this is. “Deary, do you know how important a pair of wings are when one of them is in this kind of condition? I’m afraid it will be about two to three months of not being able to fly.”

The news left Rainbow Dash shocked as she picked her head up immediately. “What? That can’t be! It’s impossible. I can’t believe you’re saying that! I can’t be grounded!” Emotions ran wild in her head. Her eyes turned glassy. The gentle breeze that was given by the cool fans had suddenly disappeared. Only the burning feeling of her cheeks remained as they began to turn red. Her eyes began to tear up as she closed them holding all tears back. “I can’t be flightless for that long!” Dash replied to her arching her entire body . It let out a stinging feeling in her back as she yelped out and began to violently pound her hoof into the bed.

Nurse Redheart immediately called out to her assistant, Nurse Tenderheart, as she rushed out to hold Rainbow Dash down. Redheart followed up with a wooden stake and an extra layer of bandage wrapping to help support her wing. The cast would also stiffen the bone and keep it from moving.

Applejack felt bad for her friend but wasn’t completely sure if she was overreacting or not. “So, is this whole ‘breaking your wings’ thing considered normal for pegasi?” Applejack turned to Nurse Tenderheart as they watched Pinkie Pie begin to stare at some of the medical tools that Nurse Redheart used. She shooed the overly excited pony away but figured that Pinkie Pie wasn’t going to leave.

“As normal as a chicken hatching from an egg.” Replied Nurse Tenderheart, “No matter how strong of a flyer one may be, the wings are still a crucial part. If they get banged up, they can snap as easy as a twig.”

“This cannot happen! I can’t be out of the sky for this long. What am I going to do?” Panicking was practically the only thing Rainbow Dash could do at this point. “I can’t fly, I can’t go fast and I won’t be able to work. I’m going to be as slow as Fluttershy during these three months!”

A fixated glare was the unspoken reply from Fluttershy who took a bit of offense from her comment. She then looked down a bit feeling upset. She didn't want Rainbow Dash to lose her speed, but her one wish was that she would slow down sometimes to enjoy the little things that happen in life.

Rainbow Dash looked at her glare and blushed a bit. "Sorry. Didn't mean to sound so harsh."

Breaking the awkward silence, Twilight took a step towards her and looked down at her injured friend. "There is a lot you can do Rainbow Dash. You're a true and loyal friend who has many unique talents that you don't have to use your wings for. I'm sure any pony would appreciate your help."

Rarity then perked up with a large grin on her face. "I got it! How about you come and assist me at my shop. I could use an extra hoof around the place."

Rainbow Dash could only bite her lip just thinking about exactly what she would want with her. Modeling outfits, sewing and gem polishing. All really feminine things that she was really not interested in.

Pinkie Pie then cut into her discussion with an idea of her own. "Oh oh! You could help me at Sugar Cube Corner! It will be so much fun baking cakes, cookies and even lots and lots of cupcakes!"

"Spike is away doing a job for Princess Celestia. I could use a bit of help in the library as well." Twilight then added in.

Rainbow Dash closed her eyes feeling a bit overloaded from all the potential things she could be volunteering her time with. "Okay! Okay! I get it!" she growled at them. "I'll try and help you all out."

Cheers from the ponies filled the room as they felt it was going to help out Rainbow Dash a lot.

"We promise, you won't regret this!" Twilight added in cheerfully.

Rainbow Dash rolled her eyes as she muttered under her breath. She just wanted the day to end.

Evening began to roll into Ponyville. It took a while but they finally were able to limit Rainbow Dash's squirming just enough to get a strong cast on her wing. Even the slightest bump wouldn't bother the firm support.

Redheart watched as Dash stormed out of the medical room where she spent her afternoon. Fluttershy wasn't too far behind. "Now don't go roughing up that wing and get plenty of rest." the nurse smiled at the pegasus. "I'll see you in three months."

Rainbow Dash huffed and thrashed her healthy wing down to her side as a sign of anger. She began to walk, feeling as if she was dragging a mountain behind her. Any pony could tell her expression by just looking at her. Her tail dragged against the ground, not caring if her vibrant rainbow colored hair became dirty. The beaming smile that she used to show was reduced to a miserable-looking frown.

Growing concerned for Rainbow Dash's situation, Fluttershy galloped to her. "Rainbow Dash, wait!" she quietly called out.

"Not now Fluttershy." Dash sighed to her friend without even turning. "I just want to go home."

Fluttershy gulped a bit. "How are you going to get back home if you can't fly?"

It then occurred to Rainbow Dash that she couldn't even go home. She lived in the clouds. In rage, Dash stomped the ground with her hooves, kicking up a small dust storm. She turned to Fluttershy huffing warm air from her nostrils. They felt a bit congested still from the earlier bleeding.

Fluttershy was spooked by her random outburst of rage, sending the shy pony to turn her head away and shut her eyes.

Rainbow Dash immediately softened, feeling a bit guilty for scaring Fluttershy. Becoming more serene, the light blue pegasus placed her hoof on her side. "Sorry." she shamefully said.

Fluttershy just grew a weak smile and put her hoof against her side. "It's

alright.” She was a very forgiving individual. Even if she didn’t seem like it. “You need a place to stay. I can’t just let you go without some pony looking over you. Stay over my place as you heal. I insist!”

Dash easily gave into the kind smile of her friend. “Staying at your place sounds nice. Thanks.”

“Oh, you’re welcome!” Fluttershy nodded as they walked back silently to the cottage just outside of the Everfree Forest. Most of the animals had already tucked themselves in so it gave Fluttershy more time to get Rainbow Dash settled in. Feeding her, preparing a warm bath, and even setting up a small place to sleep, Fluttershy’s kindness showed no end.

After shaking off from a quick rinse, the injured pony walked out to the living room. She slowly gazed at the entire living space as Fluttershy dusted off another bird house. For Rainbow Dash, it seemed a bit cramped. Being much smaller than the open skies which she considered her home.

“Oh good! You’re done with your bath,” said a small voice, which caused Dash to look behind her. Fluttershy’s smile practically lit up the entire room. She was happy that she was able to take care of her best friend. For Fluttershy, she felt this was a big relief off of her chest. Ever since she was a filly, Rainbow Dash has always taken care of her. Whether it was protecting her from bullies or teaching her new things, being able to finally take care of Rainbow Dash was like repaying a life time debt.

“Yeah. You wouldn’t believe how hard it was to bathe with this stupid thing on.” Dash looked over to her cast and began to yawn. “So where am I sleeping?”

“There!” Fluttershy pointed at her couch, made out to be a bed.

Eyeing the neatly prepared bundle of pillows and blankets, Dash went the aggressive route and jumped into them violently, as she gave out a light groan. Her body was still sore from earlier.

Fluttershy jumped with shock watching her jump into bed. “No Rainbow. You need to be more careful with your wing.” She walked over shaking her

head. "You wouldn't want to hurt that wing again would you?" she placed the blanket over her. It looked silly seeing her wing push out from the blanket.

Rainbow Dash frowned as she looked back at Fluttershy. "Right." she sighed, forgetting for a moment that she was injured. Rough housing would have to be put on hold for a while. "Thanks for being a pal."

Fluttershy blushed a bit. "You're welcome." she said. "Now get some sleep. You had a rough day," She said turning off the lights and entering her bedroom.

"Tell me about it." Dash rolled her eyes and grumbled to herself. It was going to be quite an adjustment for her. The pegasus then closed her eyes and began to quietly drift asleep, as for now, the only place she could fly was in her dreams.

Chapter 2

Rainbow Dash felt the wind flying through her mane yet again. Looking below she could see hundreds of spectators watching her as she looped around a floating pedestal. Her body decked out in a blue suit with a lightning bolt pattern across her chest. She led a blazing charge in the sky with five similar looking ponies forming up behind her. The roaring from the crowd could be heard from miles away as they chanted Rainbow Dash's name. She was a star. The Pegasus then looked down and waved over to her many fans. PHOOM! A small piece of a cloud smacked right into her face causing Dash to shake her head a bit. "Weird. Clouds don't normally do-" PHOOM! Another one hit her in the face. PHOOM! PHOOM! PHOOM! More followed making this strange occurrence appear endless. Realizing that this wasn't going to end, she had no choice but to begin to wake up. "I really don't want to though. This is the only time I will be able to fly!" she sighed trying to avoid all temptations of waking herself up but the hits began to bother her. She had little to no choice but to try and open her eyes. Dash's eyes began to see some light as opening them gave her a bit of a blurry look. That was when she was smacked in the face again. This time she jumped up. She looked all around a bit startled to see what spooked her. Looking over to her flank, she saw a small white rabbit armed with a large pillow in his hands.

Angel had a frown on his face as he was still upset over Fluttershy giving Rainbow Dash one of his blankets. He was never any good with sharing things with others.

The sky-blue pegasus wasn't going to take any of this as she narrowed her eyes and grit her teeth. "Beat it pipsqueak!" she shouted smacking the small bunny with the backside of her hoof sending him across the living room.

Angel rolled across the rug in her room coming to a stop at the edge of Fluttershy's chimney. Angel brushed the soot off himself and taunted Dash by sticking his tongue out and hopping into the kitchen hoping Fluttershy would be in soon to give him something to eat.

Dash was furious for being rudely awoken, though it wasn't worth beating up Fluttershy's pet, especially when it wasn't going to get her to go back to sleep. The sun was shining so bright that it made it hard for her to doze off. She looked around Fluttershy's living room. It was quiet with the entire room being clean. Only Angel's filthy tracks kept the room from being completely good looking. The only thing she was hearing were the birds chirping and her friend humming merrily to herself. Rainbow Dash leaned over to open the window.

Fluttershy was tending to a group of river otters as she carried a basket of freshly caught fish. With her hooves completely muddy and bits of chicken feed scattered through her hair, it was obvious that she was already in for a day's work. Every morning she would feed all of the animals that she was taking care of. Not once has she overslept or forgotten to feed one of them. "Oh Rainbow Dash, good morning. Did you have a nice sleep?" Fluttershy smiled throwing a trout over to a young otter. Even through the humid mornings, she still remained pleasant to everypony.

"It was alright." Dash replied yawning, stretching her leg. The sting in her back didn't allow her to fully reach back. She glanced down at the small mammal munching on the small fish. "I always wondered about that." she asked while pointing her hoof towards the little animal.

Fluttershy looked down not understanding what she meant. "What is it? Did I do something wrong? I made sure I gave him a big enough fish that wasn't too much or too little for him to eat."

Rainbow Dash shook her head with a small smile. "No, No. I mean, if you take care of all the animals that you see. How come you are feeding one animal to another?" Rainbow Dash felt kind of bad that the fishes last moments were in the teeth of a larger animals.

"Oh," Fluttershy began to think about it, putting a hoof under her chin. Not sure how she could answer this. "You see. Some animals feed on other animals in order to live. If you look at a food chain, the otter is above-"

"Fluttershy!" Rainbow Dash sharply called out to her. What she was hearing wasn't the answer she was expecting at all. "I just want to know why aren't you showing the same care to the fish as you are the otter. Isn't

your job to care for ALL the animals?" She sighed after explaining to Fluttershy. It annoyed her a bit that she took that long to understand.

"Gosh." Fluttershy's eyes directed towards the fish and then back to Dash. "No pony has ever asked me a question like that. Of course I feel a bit bad for the poor fish," her ears fell flat seeing the otters nearly finished with their meal. "But what else am I going to feed these little river otters. I guess that's why it never crossed my mind." The small river otter limped out to the other side, revealing to Rainbow Dash his broken leg. He was unable to hunt for his favorite food, so Fluttershy had been taking care of him while he healed.

Rainbow Dash quickly noticed the leg as she glanced over to see her bowed out cast. She bit her lip a bit seeing that Fluttershy had no choice but to care for him.

"Oh, don't mind Abel's leg." Fluttershy smiled to her sensing Dash's sympathy towards it. "He just sprained it when showing off to all his friends."

Rainbow Dash folded her ears back seeing the injured animal. Fluttershy didn't have a choice but to tend to that creature. "I guess you do what you have to do. An otter gotta eat ya know." She said, hoping the conversation would cease. She wasn't up for seeing anything that would remind her of the broken wing she suffered from. "I'll catch you later though. I need to head off to Rarity's place. Got some helping out to do. See ya!" She gave a quick smile and began to trot off.

"Wait." Fluttershy called out to her, flattening Rainbow Dash's smile.

"What?"

"I need to stop by and pick up Opal from Rarity." Fluttershy turned to Rainbow Dash after giving the last animal its breakfast. "Today is when I do her weekly grooming and it would be nice if we were able to walk together. Could you..um..wait for me to clean myself off before going? That way we can go together..." Fluttershy ducked her head down a bit and smiled weakly.

As much as Rainbow Dash wanted to go alone, she just couldn't resist having such a good friend by her side. Waiting for her was the least she could do, especially when Fluttershy was giving her a place to stay. "Ok then, but make it quick will ya?" she called to her with the best smile that she could put on her face.

"Well.....I guess I could try..." Fluttershy sighed as she looked at herself in the river. Most of the mud on her coat would take a while to clean off. She flew through her house to limit the amount of mud she could track in. "Are you sure you still want to wait?" Dash laughed. "No problem. How long could it be?"

About thirty minutes passed as Rainbow Dash was beginning to grow irritated with waiting. She laid across a hollow log and watched as a blue jay couple played in the air. Her eyes followed them as they looped and rolled around the tree branches, envying their ability to fly. Dash's head lifted up when she saw Fluttershy's door swing open. "Finally!" she growled to herself.

"I'm so sorry I'm late!" Fluttershy flew over to her panicked, begging to have her apology excepted. "My shower was only giving half of what it normally was giving and then Angel wouldn't leave me alone and then I had-"

Rainbow Dash put her hoof over her mouth. "I get it. All you have to say is sorry." Rainbow Dash turned after seeing a shy nod from Fluttershy. "You ready?" She asked looking back, putting on the best grin that she could put on.

They both walked along the thin dirt path that connected Fluttershy's house to both Ponyville and the Everfree Forest. There wasn't much conversation along the way. They would look at one another once in a while, but Dash's expression made Fluttershy a bit nervous to talk to her as she walked by her side. Fluttershy was very considerate in not flying in front of Rainbow Dash. She knew Dash would hate it. "Isn't this path nice? I love walking through here." Fluttershy said pointing out a flower that had just bloomed right in front of them.

A huff in frustration was the only response that Rainbow Dash gave as she flicked her tail behind her.

“Please. Do you have to be so upset? Don’t let the bad things overshadow the good things.” It was beginning to seem that everything that Fluttershy said to Rainbow Dash began to make her become more stressed.

“Why are you so apologetic?” Dash snapped to her. “I never said you did anything wrong! The last thing I want to do is even be here right now.”

Fluttershy’s ears remained flat as she began to think of things that she could say to cheer her friend up. “Being here in Ponyville isn’t so bad. Just think of all the little animals you will be passing by that you normally can’t see flying.” She put on the best smile she could come up with for she found it difficult to smile at someone who was constantly frowning. “And then there are the flowers and the young colts and fillies playing with one another, it’s actually really calming to see.”

“Why even bother sugar coating this situation? It’s not like I care to see any of those things anyways.” Rainbow Dash rolled her eyes as they began to enter Ponyville. She quickened her pace to a smooth trot, hoping it would cease conversation with Fluttershy. She was obviously not in the mood to talk. “Besides, I can’t even return home.”

“Well, at least everyone you work for is compensating the work that you do for them.” Fluttershy rushed back up to her, she didn’t think Rainbow Dash knew how to get to Carosuel Botique. The only time Dash had even gone there were either by following her friends or crash landing there. Plus it wasn’t like Rainbow Dash was a frequent visitor there.

“Yeah yeah, but what about my actual job?” she stopped for a moment and pointed her hoof up to the clouds. “If I don’t do my part, then I’m fired for sure.”

Fluttershy smiled a bit. “Oh, I took care of that for you. I got Gusty to take care of your weather duties until you feel better.” Fluttershy responded when there was a break in Dash’s words.

“Gusty!?” Rainbow Dash shockingly turned her head, turning Fluttershy’s proud smile into a surprised expression. “But she is such a snail! She is going to take for-EVER clearing out the sky.” Looking up, she noticed the white bodied, green haired Pegasus lightly patting down a soft cloud till it was completely gone. She would then double check every spot to make sure no small puffs strayed away. It made Dash red in the face to see her job being done by someone who was moving so slowly. She wondered how someone could be so proud of doing a job so slowly. Going at that speed all day would make Dash pull out her mane.

“Well you’re just going to have to deal with it.” Fluttershy seemed a bit sterner now. She could only take so much of Dash’s rotten behavior. Though seeing her friend glare at her made Fluttershy tuck her head down into a meek position. “Please...”

The injured pegasus sighed looking at her broken wing and then back to her. “Sorry. I guess I’m being a bit ungrateful.” She felt a bit guilty for turning down all the nice things that her friend has done for her. But it didn’t stop the fact that Dash was still angry. She had never felt so angry before in her life and it was all over a simple fracture.

Keeping Dash comfortable was turning out to be one of the hardest things that Fluttershy had ever done. She finally gave out a sigh of relief when she saw Carousel Boutique, “*At least I can have some time to myself.*” She smiled to herself.

“Now remember. A young mare such as you shouldn’t have to come on so pushy to getting the attention of a stallion.” The stylish Rarity had been dealing with customers ever since she opened the doors. It was one of the busiest days her shop has had all month. “All you need to do is show that you are a fashionable lady with a charming personality.”

“Is that really how easy it is, I just feel so nervous whenever I see him.” A light blue unicorn tensely replied. She seemed a bit stiff as Rarity walked around her, hoping to seek some advice in wooing a male that she likes.

“Silly. Don’t just crawl back into your shell when that happens.” Rarity laughed as her horn began to glow, levitating a small of pearl earrings over to her. She peered through her red brim glasses, checking to see if she had

missed any small scratches or dirty surfaces. All of her merchandise needed to be perfect if she wanted to keep a reputation as 'Ponyville's Fashion Expert.'

They perfectly matched the unicorn's blue and white mane as her eyes lit up seeing how breath-taking they looked. "Wow. So pretty..."

"Yes. These will help you grab his attention." Rarity nodded to her acknowledging her excitement. "But it's your duty to seal the deal and get yourself on a date. Getting this stallion to like you is going to be a breeze!" Rarity winked at her, sending the blue unicorn into giddiness.

"Oh thank you, Miss Rarity!" the mare jumped up with glee. She felt just like a filly stepping into Sugar Cube Corner for the first time. "Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!" she rushed out the door with a large grin on her face, nearly running into Fluttershy and Rainbow Dash who had just walked in.

Rainbow Dash watched her leave and just shook her head. She wasn't the type of mare who was into jewelry or anything considered 'girly'.

On the other hoof, Fluttershy giggled to herself, seeing how happy the unicorn was.

"Fluttershy, Rainbow Dash!" Rarity then turned to them, lowering the brim of her glasses. "So glad you could stop by!"

"You have no idea how glad I am to be here." Rainbow Dash smirked in a sarcastic manner, looking over at all the outfits being designed. Many unfinished saddles, dresses and even fashion accessories laid neatly organized to the side.

Rarity was too focused on running another piece of fabric through a sewing machine to pick up on Rainbow Dash's sarcasm. "I wouldn't know what to do if you didn't decide to help me out. My hooves have been tied up all day. That last customer wasn't going anywhere till I filled her up with confidence. Something, I believe, every lady should have." Rarity walked over to the back room where her pet cat was sleeping.

"Opal dear, Fluttershy is here to take you for your weekly grooming."

The cat had no interest in seeing Rarity as it just calmly walked over to Fluttershy, nuzzling her leg with adoration. Opal showed much more affection to her groomer than she did to her actual owner.

Fluttershy's cheeks burnt up from the warm fur rubbing against her leg. "This week, I'm going to give her a full brush over after the bath and see how that looks. You are just going to look so cute!" Fluttershy nuzzled the cat back with a squeal in her voice.

"Do whatever you please!" A cheery reply came from Rarity as she opened the door behind her, watching as Opal followed Fluttershy out. Rarity felt a bit miffed that her own pet would adore her groomer over herself, but it wasn't the end of the world to her either. She easily let it blow by. "Alright, bye bye!" she gave a small laugh as they left. She shut the door and turned to Rainbow Dash, who was eyeing Rarity's latest dress in the making. "Now, what shall I do with you?"

"Just do whatever. All this girly stuff is all the same to me." Dash replied dryly as her attention was on other things. There are so many other things that seem to catch Rainbow Dash's interest over Rarity's fashionable dresses, especially the welcoming scent from Sweet Apple Acres. How Rainbow Dash envied going over and taking a bite out of one of Applejack's freshly picked apples. Though Applejack scolded her every time she would steal an apple or two, she still couldn't resist its juicy taste.

Rarity replied with a chuckle as she patted Dash's neck with her hoof. "You've always been a bit rougher than most girls I know."

"Being all fancy and trying to stay pretty isn't that fun. It's boring!" she told Rarity as she nudged a plastic model which Rarity wasn't using. Though no outfit was on it, it would easily shatter against the floor if it fell face first.

Rarity's horn began to glow as she halted its wobbling. "Well, Rainbow Dash. You are entitled to your own opinion and I fully support whatever you believe in." Leading Rainbow Dash to another room, Rarity then commented, "That is, if they are constructive and not detrimental to you or anypony else."

“Believe me, I care for myself just as much as the next pony.” She claimed as her broken wing bumped right into the side of the slim door. She grimaced a bit from the pressure put on it. Dash figured it would be a bit awkward, but she was sure she would make it through. “Well, sort of...” Rainbow Dash replied, dropping her ears down a bit.

Rarity smiled admiring her honesty. “Let’s see what you can do...” she put her hoof up to her chin and examined the room around her. Her face immediately lit up as she rushed over to a small box of dirty gems. “Here we are!” she said rushing the box over to Dash, who was surprised in seeing her throw the box in front of her. “Sapphire Shores has been requesting these for a while.”

Rainbow Dash peered into it figuring it would be something interesting but had her expectations fall flat yet again. “It’s a box of rocks.” She disdainfully commented. “What good is there in this? Wouldn’t some pony who is, less girly keep these in their place?”

Rarity laughed some more as she picked one up with her magic. “They aren’t rocks dear.” A wet wash cloth flew over as well, as it began to gently wipe all the dirt and grime off. “They are gems.” Rarity finished up in about a minute as the grimy surface had vanished, showing off the gems true radiant exterior. “I wonder how Spike always manages to dig up the filthiest gems. Although, I guess I’m the one pointing them out to him.” She pondered for a moment before handing the soft wash cloth over to Rainbow Dash. “Here you are! Please clean up every last gem I have and I will pay you for the hours you work.” She began to leave to the other room.

Rainbow Dash looked down into the small wooden crate. *“This shouldn’t be too bad, there are probably at least a hundred in there. I could get this thing done and be out of here in less than a half hour.”*

Rarity then popped her head back in. “Oh and Rainbow Dash! Don’t forget the ones in the closet. They aren’t hard to find.” She pointed her hoof over to the closet door.

Rainbow Dash walked over expecting to find another crate as she began to open the door, flipping on the light switch. Her jaw fell seeing nearly a hundred more boxes and crates stacked on top of one another all of them being filled to the brim with the same amount of dirty gems. “Maybe I spoke

too soon..." Dash mumbled to herself, heaving another crate out of the closet.

Rainbow Dash began to scrub the stone's rough surface finding that getting most of the dirt off was harder than Rarity made it out to be. She was starting to get more and more frustrated with herself, huffing and growling to herself aloud. Her frustration was beginning to grow even more as the only thing she continued to think about was the accident that got her into this situation. *"I've been at this for an hour and only managed to get twenty of them done. There has got to be a faster way of doing this."* She then lifted her hoof up, looking at the small gem and it's halfway finished green surface. *"Why do I need to make it sparkling? All the dirt is off. It may not be sparkling but it still looks nice. What does it matter that it isn't clean. I'm just going to start doing it this way instead."* She then threw the gem back into it's crate. For the next half an hour, Dash had hundreds of crates filled with half way finished gems as a smile grew on her face. She flipped the last on top of its pile. "Hey, Rarity!"

"Thank you very much." Rarity replied to another pony as she began to look over the newly received letters that came in the mail. "Yes Rainbow Dash, what is it?"

"I'm all done with those gems you wanted shined." She had a big smile on.

"Already?" Rarity was already more shocked than excited hearing the news. "Normally that would be an afternoon's work. But nothing to take away from you, let's go see how you did."

Rainbow Dash led Rarity back up to the room as she walked up to the closest stack of crates. "There! Every single one finished!" she smiled.

Rarity put her red brim glasses on and began to look at a handful of them. A slight frown grew on her face as she examined the first box. "Rainbow, these are nowhere near being finished." She said witnessing the flattening expression on Dash's face.

"What do you mean?"

“What I’m saying is, that none of these gems are even close to being fully polished.” A bit of dirt sprinkled on her hoof as she picked up a blue one. “You knew you had to clean them with water, didn’t you?”

“I did!” Rainbow Dash claimed. “I used the entire bucket.”

“You weren’t supposed to re-use all the water in the bucket.” Rarity’s brow slightly lowered. “That way it wouldn’t continue to carry filth.” Twisting her hoof to the side, inspecting every face of the gem. “On another note, why are these things so sticky?”

“Oh that.” Rainbow Dash looked at Rarity. “When I ran out of water to re-use, I ended up just giving the rest of them a spit shine. It went by much faster that way too.”

Rarity’s face scrunched up as she let out a loud screech, throwing the gem to the side. She rushed over to a nearby sink and washed out her hoof. She didn’t have to think twice that Rainbow Dash was too lazy and too impatient to go over and refill the small bucket of water. “You spit on all of these?! B-but, why didn’t you just refill the bucket when you ran out of water?!” Rarity finally calmed herself down from being at her boiling point to just a sigh in frustration. “I’m sorry Rainbow Dash, but I simply cannot accept these gems in their condition. I want you to do them all over again.”

“Wait! But why?” Rainbow Dash became more feisty and confused. “I cleaned them all up.”

The brow on Rarity lowered. “You didn’t fully scrub them, you continued to use dirty water and you even managed to spit on half of them. I wouldn’t even bother trying to sell these to a customer, let alone give them away for free.”

Rainbow Dash was shocked from her criticism and even gritted her teeth over it. Her one wing puffed out in anger while the other one, stopped by the hardened brace, tried so hard to do the same. “Forget it! If you aren’t grateful for what I have done, then why bother doing it again!” She replied storming out of the room.

“It’s the craftsmanship that counts Rainbow Dash. Thought can only go so far!” Rarity yelled back trying to get her to come back.

“Yeah yeah. What do you know?” Rainbow Dash said knocking her wing into the same door frame. She grimaced a bit from how mildly that hurt, but still managed to flick her tail at Rarity and storm out of the room.

The crashing of the door made Rarity shake her head and frown, while looking down at all the gems that have yet to be completely cleaned.

Rainbow Dash blew open the door to Carosuel Boutique, nearly knocking into Berry Punch and Bon Bon as she could only feel anger inside of her. *“Rarity is nothing but a neat freak. It’s not like she is an expert in this kind of stuff. I shouldn’t worry about it anymore. I did my part. That’s all that matters...”*