**TOP BOLT**

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Note: All ponies other than previously named characters are pegasi.

Prologue

(*Opening shot: fade in to the interior of a locker, the camera aimed toward the door as it swings open. An eager Rainbow Dash stands at it, wearing the bomber jacket she received upon joining the Wonderbolts in “Newbie Dash.” This is the locker room in the team’s compound. A pair of goggles and a set of saddlebags are visible among the items she has stowed away.*)

**Rainbow:** Spring training was awesome— (*picking up bags*) —but I can’t wait to see my friends!

(*She closes the locker; cut to the room’s benches. Across from her sits Misty Fly, in her flight suit and with goggles on forehead, to do a bit of stretching.*)

**Rainbow:** I’m gonna catch up on some Daring Do with Twilight— (*setting bags on bench*) —help Applejack make my favorite cider, and have a sleepover with Pinkie. (*She drops an item in.*)

**Misty:** We get it. You have a fun week planned.

(*As Rainbow gives a vigorous nod, Spitfire plods by in the foreground, out of uniform.*)

**Spitfire:** (*rolling eyes*) Meanwhile, I’m stuck here running Trials Week at the Academy.

**Rainbow:** But you love yelling and blowing your whistle. (*Spitfire stops at her locker and smiles fondly.*)

**Spitfire:** Yeah. I do.

(*The blue flying ace pops up into a hover, tosses her bags toward the ceiling, and positions herself so that they land neatly across her back.*)

**Rainbow:** (*saluting*) See you gals later!

(*She peels out, but inertia keeps the luggage right where it was and it thumps to the floor. A second later she doubles back to scoop the load up with an embarrassed laugh, trying to play off her re-creation of the classic “yank the tablecloth away without upsetting the flowers” bit. After she zooms off a second time, cut to a long overhead shot of the plateau and surrounding cloud barracks that serve as the Wonderbolts’ compound. It is daytime, and she streaks through the sky with a blissful sigh. Contentment is short-lived, though, as her cutie mark begins to flare—a summons by the map in the Castle of Friendship—and she stops to eye it.*)

**Rainbow:** Huh? (*Extreme close-up of it, zooming out to frame her face as she continues.*) Oh! The map!

(*It goes quiet as a copy floats free of her haunch and starts to drift ahead; instantly she ratchets up to fifth gear and rockets after it. Both she and it close in on the Castle; cut to the upper reaches of the throne room as it descends into view, and tilt down to follow it to the map deployed on the central table. Twilight Sparkle, Starlight Glimmer, and Spike watch as it begins to orbit the Wonderbolts’ winged lightning-bolt logo on a cloud, joined by Twilight’s mark. Destination: team headquarters.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) Hey, Twilight! (*Cut to her, entering through a window.*) So where am I going? The Crystal Mountains? Vanhoover? Here? Please say here.

**Twilight:** Well, the good news is, we both got called by the map.

**Rainbow:** Awesome! (*apprehensively*) Does that mean there’s bad news?

**Twilight:** No…well, not exactly.

(*She, Starlight, and Spike glance toward the map, the camera zooming in quickly between them to an extreme close-up of the marked spot.*)

**Rainbow:** (*groaning loudly*) I was just there!

(*Fade to black.*)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(*Opening shot: fade in to an expanse of thick clouds, which part to give a long overhead shot of the compound. Twilight and fly toward it, Rainbow having shed her jacket and bags, and stop short to avoid running into two cadets as they do a loop-the-loop.*)

**Twilight:** (*impressed*) Ooh!

(*Rainbow snaps her out of her reverie with a nudge and a clearing of the throat, and points down toward the runway plateau. Cut to her perspective: Spitfire, in her uniform jacket and sunglasses, is addressing a line of brand-new recruits.*)

**Spitfire:** All right, newbies! (*Close-up; a whistle hangs around her neck.*) Welcome to Trials Week for the Wonderbolt Academy! (*pacing; they straighten up one by one*) You’ll be judged on your speed, strength, agility, and technique, culminating in a final evaluation. Will it be hard? Yes! Will you cry? Maybe. Will you fly so much, your wings fall off? (*A moment’s thought.*) That has only happened once.

(*One of the mares, Angel Wings, addresses herself behind a hoof to the two recruits standing nearest to her in close-up. She has a pale grayish-pink coat, blue eyes, and a long pink mane/tail shot through with darker streaks that match the bow in her mane. Her cutie mark cannot be seen due to her folded wings.*)

**Angel Wings:** She’s just exaggerating to make a point, right? I mean, wings can’t really fall off…can they?

**Spitfire:** (*pacing*) You think you’ve got what it takes to be an elite flyer?

(*The camera cuts to a longer shot of the group during Spitfire’s query, picking out the two bracelets that Angel Wings wears on her left foreleg. A self-assured stallion at one end of the line speaks up next. This is Sky Stinger: dark blue coat with a green tinge; medium green eyes; prominent eyebrows in a shade darker than his coat; short, light green mane/tail with paler streaks. The mane is in a crew cut with the forelock styled to resemble a lightning bolt; this last feature is replicated on the end of his tail and the outer edge of his eyebrows. Like Angel Wings, he keeps his wings pulled in to cover his cutie mark.*)

**Sky:** Yes, ma’am!

**Other recruits:** YES, MA’AM!

**Spitfire:** Well, let me tell you. (*She rounds on a short, pudgy one.*) *You don’t!*

(*That gets the sweat glands working; she straightens up with a smug little smile as Twilight and Rainbow descend behind her.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sighing happily*) I remember when she said that to me.

(*She remains hovering as Twilight puts her hooves on the runway. Spitfire pulls her shades down to make sure she is seeing this right, while the recruits break into excited murmurs—all except Sky, that is. Once the hubbub dies down, Angel Wings is first to speak again.*)

**Angel Wings:** You don’t think Rainbow Dash is the pony whose wings fell off, do you?

(*The cocky stallion rolls his eyes wearily at her obtuseness. A whistle blast ends any further speculation, and all eyes face front.*)

**Spitfire:** Quit your whispering and give me five hundred laps! Go! Go! Go!

(*Sky is first to lift off on the end of this, the others following suit to leave Angel Wings standing alone. Instead of racing after them, however, she flaps slowly over to Twilight and Rainbow.*)

**Angel Wings:** Um, I just wanted you to know, you two are my favorite ponies in all of Equestria. (*She turns to find Spitfire hovering right behind her.*)

**Spitfire:** Well, isn’t that sweet? NOW GET GOING ON THOSE LAPS!

(*The star-struck mare lifts off in a blink to join the other recruits. With her charges all airborne, Spitfire adopts a much more casual tone.*)

**Spitfire:** Welcome, Princess Twilight. (*She touches down and looks/points to Rainbow.*) What are you doing back so soon?

**Rainbow:** Official friendship business.

**Twilight:** Have you noticed anypony having a hard time with their friends? (*Spitfire thinks for a second.*)

**Spitfire:** Not really. But it’s not my job to worry about their relationships. (*Recruits fly past.*) I’m here to make them elite flyers.

**Rainbow:** (*sighing*) Adorable. They’re so full of hope and competition.

(*They settle into a large, slow circular path; she looks up and voices a quiet groan.*)

**Rainbow:** Their technique could use some work, though. (*Cut to Twilight and Rainbow.*)

**Twilight:** You should tell them. I’m sure they’d appreciate any notes from you.

**Rainbow:** Nah. I wouldn’t want to mess with their confidence.

**Twilight:** But they’ll never get better if they don’t know what to work on.

**Spitfire:** (*from o.s.*) Sloppy wing placement… (*Long overhead shot of all three mares, watching the drill.*) …crooked lines…

(*She props her sunglasses on her forehead and turns to the Ponyville pair.*)

**Spitfire:** I’m gonna have to drill them on basic technique in the classroom portion. (*Stars instantly shine in Twilight’s eyes.*)

**Twilight:** Classroom portion?! (*Spitfire nudges her back; shades back in place.*)

**Spitfire:** Yeah. It’s everypony’s least favorite part of Trial Week, but it has to be done.

(*A short burst of pondering brings a big smile to the egghead Princess’s face.*)

**Twilight:** Maybe we *can* help!

**Rainbow:** (*puzzled*) We can?

**Twilight:** Absolutely! Between your flying skills and my teaching expertise, they could learn a lot! Plus, once they get to know us, they’ll be more comfortable coming to us with their friendship problems.

**Rainbow:** Count us in!

**Spitfire:** Great!

(*A shot from her whistle, aimed right into their faces, brings the recruits down so that they skid to a stop. They land in a line, the first few touching down neatly, the last several sliding into each other so that all but Sky, at the front, end up in a tangled heap. Angel Wings, at the rear, has her wings lifted so that her cutie mark can be seen—a pink heart with white wings.*)

**Spitfire:** (*walking away*) You have your work cut out for you.

(*Twilight throws a weak little grin at Rainbow, who thoroughly fails to reciprocate the sentiment. Clock wipe to the two crossing the compound; Twilight walks out front, levitating scrolls and papers, and a bored Rainbow flaps slowly along behind.*)

**Twilight:** Thank goodness I had time to whip up a few charts on flight patterns and wing symmetry.

(*They stop at the front door of one of the buildings constructed on the clouds surrounding the runway. A shield emblazoned with the Wonderbolts’ logo hangs overhead.*)

**Twilight:** It’s fresh in my mind from when I learned to fly.

(*She opens one scroll and pushes it into Rainbow’s face; in close-up, it depicts a rearing pegasus with spread wings, and small graphs and drawings run down both sides. This is pulled down after a moment to expose Twilight’s grinning visage.*)

**Twilight:** THIS IS SO EXCITING! (*Big squeaky grin; Rainbow’s blasé attitude does not change.*)

**Rainbow:** Maybe for you. I practically fell asleep when I went through this. (*smiling*) Tell you what. I’ll leave the teaching stuff to you, and I’ll just make sure they stay awake.

(*She demonstrates her strategy for doing so by pulling out an air horn and uncorking a blast into the academic’s face that causes her eyeballs to vibrate in their sockets.*)

**Twilight:** (*rubbing one ear*) I’m pretty sure their thirst for knowledge will keep them bright-eyed and bushy-tailed. (*Rainbow chuckles and puts a foreleg across her shoulders.*)

**Rainbow:** Good one, Twilight.

(*Cut to a classroom inside the building. The blackboard on the front wall is covered with notes and diagrams, and the recruits are in their seats for the day’s lesson. It starts in a most unconventional manner, with Rainbow bursting in through the door and sounding a one-note fanfare with her air horn. A round of yelps and gasps lasts just long enough for her to stop front and center.*)

**Rainbow:** Wake up, newbies! Class is in session!

(*Twilight walks in, floating some notes onto a lectern and standing behind it.*)

**Twilight:** Hello, students! I’m Twilight Sparkle, and this is Rainbow Dash. (*Rainbow tosses the horn aside and flies close to the recruits.*)

**Rainbow:** But you can call us “T-Sparks” and “the Dashinator”!

(*A slightly irked throat-clearing prompts her to back off with a sheepish laugh.*)

**Rainbow:** Just kidding. (*Close-up of Twilight.*)

**Twilight:** (*levitating chalk, drawing a bit on board*) And we’re here to go over basic flying technique.

(*She lets the chalk drop and gestures to Rainbow on the end of this line. A male voice utters a bored, drawn-out groan, souring the blue daredevil’s mood in a tick.*)

**Rainbow:** Who said that?!

(*Cut to frame the students; Sky, in the back row, raises a hoof. At normal speaking volume, his voice is the epitome of full-of-himself cockiness.*)

**Sky:** Me. I mean, we’re here because we’re amazingly awesome, crazy good flyers. We’re *way* past basics. (*Rainbow flies into his face.*)

**Rainbow:** What’s your name?

**Sky:** Sky Stinger. (*chuckling derisively*) You’ve, uh, never heard of me?

(*A white mare in the next seat over pipes up. Her mane/tail are long and wavy, striped in pastel shades of yellow, blue, and green, and her eyes are a light blue-green. This is Vapor Trail, whose wings and chair hide her cutie mark from view.*)

**Vapor:** He set the record for the fastest vertical acceleration rate! Five hundred feet in two seconds!

**Rainbow:** Huh. That’s pretty impressive.

**Vapor:** It’s amazing! (*Twilight clears her throat o.s.; cut to her, Rainbow backing up toward the front.*)

**Twilight:** (*dryly*) It is, and we can talk personal records after class, Ms. …?

(*Back to Sky and Vapor; now the mare’s mark is visible as a gold shooting star. She hunches down timidly into herself as Sky nudges her.*)

**Sky:** Vapor Trail. She’s my wing pony. I never fly without her.

**Rainbow:** But you’ll have to in the solo trials.

**Vapor:** (*fearfully*) There are… (*Gulp.*) …solo trials?

**Rainbow:** Yep. It’s a part of your final evaluation.

(*Sky blows out a breath to show just how little this fact concerns him.*)

**Sky:** We’ll ace that test with our wings tied behind our flanks.

(*Zoom out slightly; he gestures toward a group of framed pictures, each showing a different flight-suited Wonderbolt. Rainbow is among them, grinning stupidly and with her goggles on her forehead rather than over her eyes.*)

**Sky:** My picture will go right up there—next to yours.

**Rainbow:** That’s a mighty big claim, considering everypony here is an amazingly awesome, crazy good flyer. (*Close-up of Sky.*)

**Sky:** I know. (*Loud throat-clearing from Twilight’s direction; cut to her and Rainbow.*)

**Twilight:** Okay! (*Close-up.*) Let’s get back on track. Now who can tell me the best wing angle to achieve minimal air resistance?

(*The sound of a grating snore startles her, and the source proves to be Rainbow herself, now crashed out in an empty seat with all eyes turned to her. Not one to tolerate laziness of this magnitude, Twilight brings up the dropped air horn in her magical hold and lets one rip, scaring Rainbow into a flailing hover.*)

**Rainbow:** (*panicked*) Wake up, newbies! Class is in session!

(*Funny looks from the students, and a smirk from her teaching partner, who has let the noisemaker fall. Dissolve to the front steps of the classroom building; the door is closed, but it swings open to release a torrent of recruits who waste no time in flying out to the wild blue yonder. Twilight trots out after them.*)

**Twilight:** Well, there were a few hiccups— (*Rainbow flies out, rubbing her eyes.*) —but overall that went pretty well.

**Rainbow:** (*yawning, stretching*) Yeah. Nopony fell asleep.

(*An “Oh, really?” look from Twilight brings her up short.*)

**Rainbow:** What? I’m not a student.

**Sky:** (*from o.s.*) Hey! Teach! (*Cut to him emerging onto the front steps toward them.*)

**Rainbow:** Me or Twilight? (*Pause.*) Probably Twilight.

(*Close-up of the stallion. Enough of his cutie mark is now visible to establish it as an upside-down, gold lightning bolt.*)

**Sky:** Um, uh, both. About the solo test. I’m—I’m actually kinda worried about it.

**Twilight:** Aw, that’s all right. (*touching his shoulder*) We all have moments where we doubt ourselves.

**Sky:** (*pushing her back, chuckling*) No, no. I have absolutely zero doubts about myself. I’m a strong flyer—like, really, really, *really* strong. But this isn’t about me. I’m worried for Vapor. (*This catches Twilight and Rainbow off guard.*)

**Twilight:** Oh! Well, that is very…kind of you?

**Rainbow:** Tell you what. It’s almost time for your freestyle training. Why don’t you grab her and show us what you’ve got?

**Sky:** (*pumping a hoof*) Yes! (*hovering*) Prepare to be impressed. (*He zooms away, then returns.*) By me. (*Again.*) Like I said, Vapor still needs work.

(*He makes his third departure in five seconds, leaving Twilight to aim a hopeful little smile at a rather bemused Rainbow. Dissolve to him and Vapor in flight, swooping down low over the runway to pass Twilight and Rainbow standing/hovering on it. The sky-blue speedster has donned a baseball cap and hung a towel across her back. They watch the airborne pair execute a turn and continue flying, Vapor’s face betraying how much of a strain this is for her compared to Sky.*)

**Twilight:** Well, he may be full of himself, but I have to admit, Sky’s an excellent flyer. He must have shot up two hundred feet!

**Rainbow:** But did you see Vapor Trail? Her wing was under his. I think she gave him a boost.

**Twilight:** I guess I didn’t even notice Vapor. I was too busy watching Sky.

(*They glance up. Cut to Sky doing a series of loop-the-loops—and Vapor floating along at a lower altitude, flipped onto her back so she can gently flap her wings up toward him.*)

**Twilight:** (*from o.s., gasping*) I think you’re right! (*Back to her and Rainbow.*) Vapor just created a gust of wind that caught Sky’s wing at a forty-five-degree angle, propelling him into a flipping loop! (*Satisfied smile.*) Somepony paid attention in class.

**Rainbow:** Sky obviously has no idea he’s not actually amazingly awesome.

**Twilight:** And Vapor’s so busy making her friend look good, she’s not focused on her own flying at all. (*Gasp; an idea strikes.*) This must be our friendship problem! And there’s only one thing to do. (*Next two lines overlap.*)

**Twilight:** Tell them the truth.

**Rainbow:** Fix it without telling them.

(*Purple and red-violet eyes pop as their owners realize that they have managed to reach completely opposite conclusions from the same set of facts. Fade to black.*)

Act Two

(*Opening shot: fade in to Sky and Vapor performing maneuvers together and tilt down to Twilight and Rainbow.*)

**Twilight:** You don’t want to tell them?

**Rainbow:** Of course not. Flying is, like, thirty percent skill and seventy percent confidence. Can’t mess with a flyer’s confidence.

**Twilight:** But you can’t improve if you don’t think you have to. Besides, Vapor’s keeping a pretty big secret from Sky, and that can lead to trouble.

**Rainbow:** Yeah, but if we tell them that they’ve been holding each other back, that could be trouble too. (*Sky comes in for a landing.*)

**Sky:** Ah, I nailed that flipping loop. I’m actually surprised you’re still here.

(*What really surprises Rainbow is his casual appropriation of the towel on her back so he can wipe his face.*)

**Sky:** Thought I blew you away. (*Vapor lands behind him, out of breath.*)

**Vapor:** You were…great, Sky!

(*He tosses the used towel over his shoulder without looking and ends up knocking her to the tarmac with it. Here comes Spitfire, back in drill-instructor mode.*)

**Spitfire:** Come on, Vapor Trail! You’re gonna have to build up your endurance if you want a shot at the Academy! Wonderbolts don’t get winded!

(*She turns her attention to Angel Wings, who has donned a pair of goggles and is ineffectually bucking a cloud up above.*)

**Spitfire:** Angel Wings! You call that cloud-busting? That cloud barely knew you were there! (*She flies up, but doubles back to Twilight and Rainbow with a smile.*) I love my job.

(*Away she goes again; now Sky turns to Vapor.*)

**Sky:** We’ll keep working and…who knows? One day you might come close to being almost as good as me.

**Vapor:** (*standing, dropping towel*) Oh, I don’t think so. You were voted Stratusburgh’s most promising flyer! (*Gasp.*) I was voted Best Sneeze.

(*She proceeds to let one go—a very quiet, demure one at that.*)

**Sky:** You do have a really great sneeze.

**Vapor:** Thanks, Sky, but I don’t think I can sneeze my way into the Academy. (*Sigh.*) I’m pretty beat. I’m gonna hit the showers. (*She walks away; Sky turns to Twilight/Rainbow.*)

**Sky:** You *have* to help her.

**Twilight:** Actually, she’s not the one—

(*She never gets to finish the thought, as Rainbow claps a hoof over her mouth from behind and starts pushing her along.*)

**Rainbow:** Will do!

(*Wipe to an extreme close-up of the handle of a closed locker. Vapor steps into view, clamps her teeth on it, and pulls it open so she can start stowing her gear.*)

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s.*) Hey.

(*Zoom out; she and Twilight stand at the entrance to the locker room, and she has removed her cap.*)

**Rainbow:** You did great. You’re a really strong flyer.

**Vapor:** (*surprised*) Uh…me?

**Twilight:** Vapor Trail, we know what you’ve been doing. (*Again a blue hoof over the mouth.*)

**Rainbow:** (*with a big smile*) You’ve been doing great!

(*The Princess decides to exert a little royal prerogative by floating the blue pegasus off and setting her down a foot or two away. She then puts a hoof to her face with a fed-up groan.*)

**Twilight:** You’ve been helping Sky!

**Vapor:** (*suddenly flustered*) Uh, I don’t know what you’re talking about. Sky doesn’t need anypony’s help. He’s amazing.

(*Noticing Rainbow’s reluctance to elucidate, Twilight nudges her impatiently in the chest. The Wonderbolt rolls her eyes with an irritated groan.*)

**Rainbow:** Not without you. (*Twilight nods sadly.*) And it’s gonna be pretty obvious during the solo trials when he can’t get enough air to do a flipping loop.

**Vapor:** (*aghast*) Oh, no! I can’t let that happen! (*catching herself*) I mean… (*stammering a bit, hoof to face*) …aw, sugar cubes!

**Twilight:** Why are you doing this for him? (*Cut to Vapor; zoom in slowly.*)

**Vapor:** (*sighing*) It started when we were kids. You have to understand…

(*Wavering dissolve to an extreme close-up of Sky’s eyes. On the following line, zoom out to show him as a colt, hovering in the middle of a house’s fenced-in backyard and waving his forelegs eagerly. He does not have his cutie mark or heavy eyebrows at this point. Around him are a stallion and mare—his parents—and four sisters who range in age from a few years above him down to a toddler in a sandbox. Toys and playthings litter the yard.*)

**Vapor:** (*voice over*) Sky had a lot of siblings. It was tough.

(*A ball is tossed from hoof to hoof, starting at his father and always arcing over the colt’s reach.*)

**Vapor:** (*voice over*) He was always trying to get his parents’ attention. (*Sky eventually gives up and slumps in midair.*) Meanwhile…

(*Tilt up to her own filly self, gazing fondly but sadly down from the edge of a cloud.*)

**Vapor:** (*voice over*) …I was an only child who hated all the attention I got from mine.

**Mare voice:** Vapor Trail, where are you?

(*The white filly turns her eyes glumly away from the scene and trains them on a house below and behind her, built in the clouds. Her own parents are in the front yard, and her mother is the one who just spoke.*)

**Mother:** Do you need a snack? Do you want to do homework?

**Father:** Or we can just spend some time together. All day is never enough!

(*They embrace, but Filly VT just sighs wearily at the overly sappy display.*)

**Colt SK:** (*from o.s.*) Mom! Dad!

(*She turns away and spots him now hovering several yards above the rest of his family, waving wildly but futilely to get their attention.*)

**Colt SK:** Up here! Look! Look! Look, look, look, look! Look! Hey! Mom! Dad! Can you see?

(*He starts into a loop-the-loop, his tiny wings beating and straining to their limit, but is unable to make it through any more than a quarter-circle before dropping back. Filly VT drops to his level, revealing that she does have her mark, and one strong flap sends out a gust ahead of herself that pushes him through all 360 degrees. He revels in his unexpected success, but his face falls upon seeing that none of the other family members have taken even the smallest bit of notice. In close-up, he heaves a sigh and slumps.*)

**Filly VT:** (*from o.s.*) Whoa! (*Pan to frame her, now close behind.*) That was amazing!

(*He smiles and flies over to her, they shake hooves, and he leads her on a flight. Dissolve to the pair still on the move, now closer to their current ages and wearing goggles; she flaps out a gust that allows him to hit overdrive, and she zooms after him. The upside-down lightning bolt now decorates Sky’s haunch, and his eyebrows have grown in. Each pegasus leaves a contrail behind him/herself upon hitting high speed. Sky’s is dark blue with a two-tone zigzag streak in pastel blue and green; Vapor’s is white and striped in the colors of her coat and mane/tail.*)

**Vapor:** (*voice over*) Flying together gave us both what we wanted. (*Zoom in on her face.*) But I never told Sky how much I was helping him.

(*On the end of this, the scene undergoes a wavering dissolve back to her in the present.*)

**Vapor:** It started with a small boost here, or a little gust of wind there— (*pacing a bit*) —but I didn’t think my help could actually hurt his chances.

**Twilight:** (*crossing to her*) I understand, but now you’re both in trouble.

**Rainbow:** You need to work on your tricks. And Sky needs to be able to fly without you, or he won’t make it.

**Vapor:** Oh, but he has to! Flying with the Wonderbolts has been Sky’s dream ever since he was a colt.

**Twilight:** What about you? (*Vapor turns away.*)

**Vapor:** I…I guess I haven’t thought about it. I just want to be with my best friend.

**Rainbow:** Then we have to find a way to help both of you.

**Twilight:** Starting with telling Sky the truth. (*Vapor’s eyes shrink to pinpoints; she whirls to Twilight, hooves on shoulders.*)

**Vapor:** No! You can’t! Sky would be crushed, and without his confidence, he won’t fly as well.

(*A short pan brings the cockily smiling face of Rainbow into view—Vapor has just underscored the point she made at the start of this act—and Twilight sighs and pushes the white mare back a bit.*)

**Twilight:** Then I guess we’ll give Dash’s method a shot.

**Rainbow:** (*pumping a hoof*) Yes! (*Laughing, she pops up to hover on her back.*) I love being right. (*flipping over*) Okay, here’s what we do. Sky needs to build his strength. Air drills, wing lifts, all that boring methodical stuff.

**Twilight:** Sounds like my cup of oats.

**Vapor:** But how will we get him to do that? He doesn’t think he needs practice.

**Rainbow:** (*landing*) We’ll just tell Sky that he should practice with Twilight— (*pulling Vapor closer*) —so you won’t feel so self-conscious about getting special training from me.

**Vapor:** (*brightening*) With you? Really? You’d do that for me?

**Rainbow:** (*letting go, thumping Vapor’s chest gently*) Heh. You say that like it’s not gonna be a blast.

(*Wipe to Twilight at the front of the classroom, using a telekinetically held pointer to indicate one of the notes on the blackboard. A quick zoom out shows Sky as the only student in attendance—a private instruction session—but Twilight shoots him a dirty look. His eyes are open, but he is staring vacantly toward the ceiling with his jaw hanging open, and a close-up shows the reason: he is wearing a sleep mask, nearly the same shade as his coat but not quite, with the open eyes drawn on it as an attempt to hide a midday nap. The item is magically lifted away, bringing him back to bleary, blinking awareness and giving him a good clear view of the Princess’s thoroughly unamused eyes. An open book floats up and is shoved into his face, sliding off to land in his grip.*)

(*Wipe to Rainbow and Vapor hovering among the clouds. Vapor has donned goggles and the high-collared blue/yellow tunic of Wonderbolt cadets, and she nods at the full member’s “follow me” gesture. Rainbow flies a curving, rolling path and stops; when Vapor tries to copy it, though, she spins out with a cry and disappears into a cloud. Rainbow throws her a slightly pained smile.*)

(*Wipe to an extreme close-up of Sky’s hoof being raised so Twilight’s magic can buckle a weight onto it. A longer shot frames both of them hovering above the treetops; he too is in a tunic and goggles, and weights are attached to both forelegs and around his midsection. Twilight has a stopwatch, clipboard, and pencil under her control, and she jots a note before gesturing for the stallion to get moving. He does so, only to bounce through a series of hoops on poles set up as a maneuvering exercise. The violet mare grimaces and writes a bit more on her clipboard.*)

(*Wipe to a long shot of Rainbow flying tight loops around a large cloud, with Vapor hovering and watching in the foreground. The end result is to shape the mass into a rough likeness of Rainbow’s own head. Smiling, Vapor takes off and starts into her own bit of high-velocity sculpture; however, her final product comes out as Sky’s head. After a moment’s careful consideration, the teacher gives it a smile and shrug.*)

(*Wipe to an extreme close-up of the top of an open cylindrical container. An eyedropper is lowered toward it in Twilight’s field and squeezed to release a single drop of liquid. Clouds of blue vapor boil up on contact; cut to a longer shot of this rig—a large, blocky machine placed on the ground, with a wide-mouthed nozzle on one side pointed directly at the hovering Sky. He has shed the training weights he used on the maneuvering course. An intense wind blasts out of the nozzle, triggered by the chemical Twilight added. He holds his ground, so she pours in the entire contents of the glass from which she filled her dropper. More vapor spills upward, and the resulting wind is strong enough to fling the cocksure stallion away despite his strongest flapping. Twilight frowns slightly at his performance and floats up her pencil and clipboard to take more notes.*)

(*Wipe to a long shot of the plateau and tilt up to show Rainbow and Vapor seated on a cloud high above it. Rainbow has a pair of goggles propped on her forehead now; she socks them over her eyes, prompting her student to do the same, and both dive over the edge. Gravity accelerates the mares, bringing them closer and closer to the runway; with almost no room to spare, they turn sharply into a gentle ascent. Rainbow skids expertly to a stop, but Vapor slides past on her rear hooves, goes into an inadvertent somersault, and finally stops in a backward skid facing toward Rainbow. Close-up of her.*)

**Rainbow:** (*flying to her; goggles up*) Oh, you were *awesome!* (*Vapor puts hers up as well.*)

**Vapor:** Really? Thanks! I can’t believe I was able to keep up!

**Rainbow:** That’s the first nice thing I’ve heard you say about yourself. (*Sound of approaching hooves.*)

**Sky:** (*from o.s., angrily*) Hey!

(*Zoom out slightly; he is trotting along the runway toward them and not very happy, followed by Twilight. His goggles are also up now.*)

**Sky:** Can we switch now? I want to do tricks with Rainbow Dash.

**Vapor:** (*hastily*) You can’t! (*catching herself*) I mean, uh, you’re already so good at the fancy stuff. (*Big grin.*)

**Sky:** Heh, and the basic stuff.

(*He utterly fails to notice Twilight’s grimace and the clipboard she floats up, its top sheet marked with a column of zeroes to reflect his poor showing.*)

**Sky:** (*grinning*) You’re right. I don’t need to practice at all.

**Vapor:** (*timidly*) Um, maybe, Sky, you should. (*Clipboard down.*)

**Sky:** I’m already the best and everypony’s gonna know it, when I’m asked to join the Academy tomorrow.

**Vapor:** But…not if you don’t practice.

**Sky:** (*scoffing*) I wouldn’t be surprised if they asked me to become a Wonderbolt straight out of the trials. Boom! Dream achieved.

(*Something in Vapor’s mind finally gives way and she turns to him with an expression of savage desperation.*)

**Vapor:** *Sky, you’re not as good as you think you are!*

(*Realizing the sheer devastating potential of this outburst, she claps a horrified hoof to her mouth. Twilight’s visage has frozen in a popeyed, lopsided grin, Rainbow’s in a lip/hoof-chewing paroxysm of undiluted fear, and Sky’s bravado goes bye-bye. The following exchange brings a quiet smile to Twilight’s face and leaves Rainbow incredibly confused.*)

**Sky:** What did you say?

**Vapor:** (*sighing, crossing to him*) Sky, I want you to get in as much as anypony, and you’re amazing. But, uh…

**Sky:** But what?

**Vapor:** I’ve been…helping you.

**Sky:** (*scoffing, pacing past her*) Puh-lease!

(*The violet Princess’s smile evaporates in short order.*)

**Sky:** I don’t need *your* help. Watch.

(*He snaps his goggles into place and does a loop-the-loop, but stalls out while trying to climb higher after its completion. The blue wings flap for all they are worth just to keep him from plummeting back to the runway, and Rainbow makes a sympathetic groan that might be translated as “I feel your pain.” Sky’s muscles finally give out; he slams flat to the tarmac as Vapor winces and turns her face away. He sits up to his haunches and heaves for breath; Vapor offers a hoof to help him up, but he slaps it away bitterly as Twilight and Rainbow approach.*)

**Sky:** How could you do this to me? Did you all know?

(*Uncertain glances flick back and forth between the three pairs of observing eyes before Vapor works up enough nerve to nod sadly. Sky pushes his goggles to his forehead and refuses to meet their gazes.*)

**Sky:** Aw, great! So everypony but me knows I’m a joke. Was this your plan the whole time—to embarrass me?

**Vapor:** What? No! Don’t you know me at all? (*Sky is now upright; he rounds on her.*)

**Sky:** (*pointing accusingly*) I guess not, since it took me this long to find out you’re a terrible wing pony!

**Vapor:** (*gasping in shock*) I can’t believe you!

**Sky:** I can’t believe I was ever your friend!

(*He takes off, leaving one devastated cadet and two disbelieving mares in his wake.*)

**Vapor:** (*softly, sourly*) Thanks a lot.

(*She clears out in the other direction as Twilight opens her mouth in a hopeless attempt to dissuade her. Giving it up, the winged unicorn trades a dismayed look with the blue pegasus before the view snaps to black.*)

Act Three

(*Opening shot: fade in to an extreme close-up of the upper edge of the Dizzitron, the spin-out recovery simulator used in “Wonderbolts Academy.” It is whirling madly away, and Angel Wings is the cadet in the hot seat at the moment. A longer shot picks out Spitfire and one of her junior instructors supervising the exercise, as well as a line of other cadets waiting their turn, all in goggles and tunics. Sky is at the head of it, Vapor at the tail. As Angel Wings goes flying off, zoom out slightly to put Twilight and Rainbow in the fore, looking on. Rainbow has removed her goggles.*)

**Rainbow:** Do you think they’re still mad?

(*The resentful sidewise glances that the two former friends aim at each other answers that one clearly enough. Sky faces front and steps deliberately toward the machine.*)

**Rainbow:** Yeah. They’re still mad.

**Twilight:** This is all my fault. If we had just done things your way, maybe we could’ve avoided this whole mess.

**Rainbow:** No, it’s my fault. It hit me when I was watching Sky train with you. He wasn’t even trying.

(*With the Dizzitron now stopped, the instructor snaps the restraining bar in place across Sky’s midsection and Spitfire throws the lever to fire it up. As the RPM’s build, the other cadets’ eyes rotate in their sockets to follow its motion—all but Vapor, who turns hers away with the clearest disgust. The wind peels Sky’s lips back from his teeth until the moment of release, but he does not even try to right himself; instead, he hurtles bonelessly away until a safety net held by four hovering pegasi arrests his momentum.*)

**Rainbow:** Oh, no. He’s lost his confidence.

(*On the start of the next line, cut to a longer shot that frames an irate Spitfire crossing to them and a dispirited Sky flying past, goggles on forehead.*)

**Spitfire:** Do you want to tell me why one of my most promising students is flying like a balloon with a hole in it?! (*Rainbow approaches.*)

**Rainbow:** Uh…it’s a long story, but…we’ll fix it.

**Spitfire:** Yes, you will!

(*She delivers a whistle blast forceful enough to send her subordinate tumbling backwards and stomps off. Down on the grass, Rainbow moans woozily at the sonic assault and rubs the feeling back into her ears.*)

**Rainbow:** (*looking up at Twilight*) We really messed up, huh? (*Tilt up to the Princess, who smiles and strokes her chin.*)

**Twilight:** I have a plan.

(*Rainbow shoots upright, all eagerness and anticipation. Wipe to Sky, now out of uniform and hovering just above the plateau, and zoom in slowly as he strains to pull off his favorite loop. After a couple of failed tries, he flops to the grass on his back and covers his eyes, but he pulls his hooves away as the camera zooms out to frame Twilight approaching on the start of the next line.*)

**Twilight:** Hey, Sky. I thought I might find you here.

**Sky:** (*very snarky*) Well, apparently I need a lot of practice. (*He stands up and paces a bit.*) Guess I’m not the natural I thought I was.

**Twilight:** No. You’re not. (*His eyes pop.*)

**Sky:** Thanks. Good pep talk.

**Twilight:** I wasn’t a natural at friendship, but with some practice and some help from my friends, I got better. (*She moves a bit closer.*) And now I’m the Princess of Friendship.

**Sky:** (*puzzled*) So you’re saying I can be the Princess of Flying?

(*Her expression takes on a slightly humoring quality, as if reminding herself to cut him a little slack for not being the sharpest tool in the shed. Wipe to Vapor, also out of uniform and sulking on a cloud; Rainbow swoops around to her and climbs up over the edge.*)

**Rainbow:** You know, you’re really good. You’re lead-pony material.

**Vapor:** Huh. That’s sweet of you, but no. I couldn’t handle all the attention.

**Rainbow:** But you’ll never become a Wonderbolt if you’re too afraid to shine.

(*She boosts herself onto the cloud, jostling the surface so that Vapor bounces slightly where she sits.*)

**Rainbow:** That *is* what you want, right?

**Vapor:** Oh, not at first. I just wanted to be with Sky. (*smiling*) But learning to do all those fun tricks with you? It made me realize this *is* something I want for myself.

**Rainbow:** I was hoping you’d say that. Come with me.

(*She dives over the side, Vapor following after a moment. Wipe to Twilight and Sky coming in for a landing on the grass and zoom in slowly. Rainbow leads Vapor down, this pair landing a few feet away from the first.*)

**Sky:** (*accusingly, pointing at Vapor*) What’s *she* doing here?

**Rainbow:** Sky, Vapor was never trying to steal your spotlight. (*pacing*) She thought she was helping you.

**Twilight:** And Vapor, you shouldn’t have been so content to take a back seat.

(*During this line, a flick of Rainbow’s rump propels Vapor into the space between and the camera cuts to her as Sky is pushed toward her. Rainbow then pops up between the estranged pair, a foreleg across each set of shoulders.*)

**Rainbow:** Now you can either stay mad, or help each other and become two of the greatest flyers the Wonderbolt Academy has ever seen! (*Pause.*) Please pick the second option. I don’t want Spitfire to be mad at me.

(*She zooms up, up, and away in a varicolored blur, leaving them to stare uncertainly at one another for a long second. Soon enough, smiles come across both faces; Sky offers a conciliatory hoof to shake, but Vapor goes one better by launching herself at him for a full-contact hug. Twilight and Rainbow trade a high five to celebrate getting them back together.*)

(*Dissolve to the wind machine on which Sky was training in Act Two. It is now late afternoon, and he and Vapor are back in their cadet tunics and goggles. He hovers in front of the discharge nozzle, while she and Twilight are up top; his confident nod is the Princess’s cue to pour in the glass of liquid floating in her aura. Just as before, the wind whistles out of the nozzle at gale force and starts to push him back.*)

**Vapor:** You’ve got this, Sky!

(*Freshly inspired, he kicks into third or fourth or twelfth gear and manages to push closer to the nozzle, holding his ground until the machine shuts down on its own. Twilight and Vapor smile at his improvement. From here, wipe to a hovering Rainbow and Sky; Vapor flies past in a curving, rolling path much like the one Rainbow tried to get her to do during her Act Two training. Just as before, she wipes out into a cloud; Rainbow grimaces a bit, but Sky smiles and heads out after her. As she perches on the cloud to get her bearings, he lands alongside.*)

**Sky:** Focus on the cloud when you spin. It’ll help you fly straight when you come out of it.

**Vapor:** (*nodding, smiling*) Uh-huh.

(*Lifting off she zeroes in on a different mass of water vapor, does a neat roll and loop-the-loop, and hits it straight on to burst it apart without slowing down. The two trade an ecstatic high five once she returns. Dissolve to a close-up of the sun in a clear blue sky—it is now the following day—and tilt down to Spitfire on the plateau, clipboard in hoof. Both of her junior instructors are on hand now. She glances up, pencil in teeth, and flies down the line of cadets on the runway. Sky and Vapor stand side by side at the far end. One yellow-orange hoof picks out the blue stallion, who salutes and does a lightning-fast vertical liftoff as one instructor starts a stopwatch.*)

(*Sky slaloms easily through a set of poles, drawing a cheer from Vapor, then threads his way through a zigzag line of rings with the same level of agility. Through a curved pipe, then a long, arcing descent that brings him in for a deft stop on the runway. He ends up just in front of Spitfire, who writes a bit as the instructor checks the stopwatch. Wipe to a close-up of Vapor going flat out and starting a roll; next, as Spitfire watches, she cuts a series of tight turns around a cloud to sculpt it as in Act Two. Sky watches from the ground, Twilight and Rainbow hovering a distance back; his goggles are up on his forehead now.*)

**Sky:** Whoo! Yeah! (*Laugh.*)

(*An irked glare from Spitfire prompts him to curb his enthusiasm. Vapor streaks down, sticking her landing as neatly as Sky did, and the wisps of vapor dissipate from the cloud she had been shaping. It now bears an excellent likeness of the pegasus mare’s head that forms the lead/wing pony badges given to cadets. Spitfire impassively jots notes. Now two vertical panels slide in from opposite sides to fill the screen, each showing a close-up of one cadet. Both pairs of goggles are pulled down over eyes, and both pegasi blast off to follow flight paths that are almost mirror images of each other. A rise; a loop toward and then away from center screen. From here, cut to a set of bleachers on which Twilight, Rainbow, and the cadets have taken a seat to watch the show. These last two are the only ones cheering; the cadets are all too flabbergasted to get any words out, and Spitfire and her instructors maintain their stoic demeanor.*)

(*The spilt resumes, with a corkscrew, a final rise, and a sharp descent that now has them pointed toward center screen. Eight hooves hit the runway, throwing up dust at the skidding contact, and the dividing line disappears as they come to a stop—practically nose to nose. They grin appreciatively at each other, but register surprise at the sound of cheers coming from the throat of the entire crowd of bleacher bums. After one last searching stare from Spitfire and her instructors, the mare in charge turns to the two cadets, who straighten up to their full height, and smiles. She has put away her clipboard and pencil.*)

**Spitfire:** Congratulations.

(*Close-up of them. As Spitfire continues, she reaches into view and pins a gold lead-pony badge to each tunic.*)

**Spitfire:** (*from o.s.*) You’ve both made it into the Wonderbolt Academy!

(*The instructors walk off, and Vapor tackles Sky to the tarmac in a joyous hug as Twilight and Rainbow approach. Spitfire turns to them.*)

**Spitfire:** Whatever you did, it worked. These two have a lot of potential. (*The two trade a smile and grin.*) Who knows? They might even be better than you, Crash.

(*Being the nickname that Rainbow picked up during her less-than-amazing start with the squad in “Newbie Dash.”*)

**Rainbow:** (*laughing*) Okay, let’s not get carried away. (*Cut to Angel Wings, crossing to Sky/Vapor with goggles on forehead.*)

**Angel Wings:** Um, I just wanted you to know, you two are my new favorite ponies in all of Equestria.

**Rainbow:** (*from o.s., needled*) Hey! (*Back to her, Twilight, and Spitfire; the last two are grinning.*) I heard that!

(*The senior officer waggles her eyebrows, but Angel Wings, spooked by the outburst, flies away.*)

**Vapor:** (*to Sky*) I can’t believe we did it!

**Sky:** You were great! Even though you can out-fly me— (*nudging her chest*) —you can be my wing pony anytime.

**Vapor:** Aww— (*giggling, returning the nudge*) —and you can be mine.

(*They lift off, flying along the runway and doubling back. Cut to an extreme close-ups of Twilight’s and Rainbow’s cutie marks in turn, flaring to indicate a completed friendship mission, then to both mares glancing back at them. As the signal quiets down, they trade a high five and go airborne to start for home.*)

(*Dissolve to the entrance hall of the Castle, the camera positioned just inside the closed front doors. These open to admit Twilight and Rainbow, saddlebags on backs; the former is walking, while the latter is on wing. Throwing her gear to the floor, she touches down and allows herself a good full-body stretch. Twilight magically closes the doors and wipes her forehead in close-up.*)

**Twilight:** Phew! It’s good to be home. (*Pan to Rainbow.*)

**Rainbow:** (*sighing*) You’re telling me. Now we can finally catch up with some Daring Do, I can make cider with Applejack—

(*Her elucidation of any further plans is cut off by a knock at the doors. Twilight opens one of them with her magic, and she and Rainbow find a rather flustered Misty on the other side.*)

**Misty:** Dash! I’ve been looking all over for you. Wonderbolt emergency. We gotta get back to HQ.

**Rainbow:** You gotta be kidding me! I was just there!

(*She lets go with a frustrated, exhausted groan and flops onto her back, out cold. Twilight and Misty throw her a concerned look, then smile at each other over this bit of histrionics. Twilight adds a giggle as the view fades to black.*)