In the Chill of Winter

Written by: MalevolentSpoon

'Buck it's cold out here!' Rainbow Dash thought bitterly. She would have spoken the words had her teeth not been chattering so hard. Now, Rainbow Dash was certainly no stranger to cold. In fact, she often referred to herself as "the coolest pony ever." Countless hours spent soaring through the air at high speeds and high altitudes contributed to her endurance as well... yet still, she shivered like a leaf.

That day was said to be one of the coldest on record, even by winter standards. It was so cold, most ponies couldn't tell it was just past noon. What few ponies that were out and about were barely recognizable under the thick clothing they all wore. Unfortunately, the weather patrol was forced to be outside as well, since there were still some clouds left over from the snowstorm last night. Out of all of them, Rainbow was the only one without a jacket. Her only protection from the elements was a commemorative Wonderbolt scarf.

"W-What I w-wouldn't g-g-give t-to be a W-W-Wonderbolt right n-now..." She managed to stammer out from behind clenched teeth. Her reasons for why were different than usual, being more about just having one of their suits to wear, which were custom-made to stand against the most adverse weather conditions... most notably, *cold*.

Her thoughts disappeared as she abruptly bashed head-first into the side of a building. Recoiling, she was pelted by a thin blanket of snow from the roof above. She shook it off and glared in irritation at the obstacle in front of her. Due to the heavy blanket of snow covering it, it took a moment before she recognized it to be her friend Rarity's boutique.

Rainbow face-hoofed and grunted with frustration. *'Of course! How could I forget about Rarity! I'm sure she could spare an hour or two and whip me up something to wear other than this little thing!'* She thought, lifting up part of her scarf. Wearing her first smile of the day, she gently glided down to her doorstep and put her hoof on the door to try and push it open. Just as she did so, she froze in place. Hanging on the door in front of her was a small sign. In Rarity's fancy handwriting, it read:

I'm afraid that my shop is closed for the time being. Be sure to check back soon!

Rainbow banged her hoof on the door in annoyance. To her surprise, the door wasn't locked, and it creaked open slightly. *'I know she's closed, but this is important! I'm freezing my feathers off out here!'* Dash thought as she stepped inside.

The warm glow she had expected was nowhere to be found. The normally bright and colorful walls of the boutique's main floor seemed dull and grayed in the low light coming in from the windows. Mannequins of all shapes and sizes sat about the room, their faceless heads staring ever forward. All manner of unfinished garments hung about them. Dash shivered slightly, the whole place seemingly cold, creepy, and... *depressing*.

Looking up the stairs in the back of the room, Rainbow caught a glimpse of a dim light. Wanting to be free of the creepy air about her, she trotted across and made her way up. But as she climbed, a strange sound assaulted her ears. A familiar sound, but she couldn't put her hoof on what it was exactly.

Finally, she crested the landing and walked into Rarity's private design studio. She strained her eyes against the low light and scanned the room. Unfortunately, the same dark vibe as the room below resonated throughout. To her surprise, the place was spotless. Usually when she came here, it looked like a Sonic Rainboom ripped through... but this time it was spick and span!

After a short time, her gaze fell on a cloaked figure at the back of the room- wait... was that Rarity? After another step closer, she realized it was! Her shoulders were shaking gently, quiet little gasps accompanying each spasm. She was... crying.

"Uh... Rarity? Rarity, is that you?" asked Dash, concerned. The fashionista lifted her head at the mention of her name. The candelabra to her left meekly illuminated her features, but Dash could make out the streaks on her cheeks.

"R-R... Rainbow Dash?!" The white mare stammered, eyes growing wider and wider in shock. "What in the name of *Equestria* are you doing here!?"

Rainbow scuffed a hoof at the floor. "I, um... was out working and... I got really cold, so I figured I'd drop in and warm up, or something. Um... Rarity? Were you... *crying* just now?"

"W-Why, no! I-I... I..." Rarity frantically wracked her brain for an excuse. Quite fast, she realized that there was nothing she could say or do... Except tell the truth.

Tears springing anew from her eyes, she leapt forward and tackled Rainbow Dash in a bear-hug comparable to those of a certain pink party pony.

"What the hay!?" cried Rainbow as she was thrown to the floor. She struggled to break free, but Rarity held firm. Then all at once, Rainbow's need to fight back left her as she felt a slight moisture on her chest. She looked up to see the top of Rarity's hood resting on her, her shoulders heaving.

*'Pony-feathers! She's crying again... on **me!** Aw, why does this stuff always have to happen to me?'* Dash thought, panicking. *Okay, okay, I... I have to do something, but what!? I just... can't stand to see her cry...'*

While arguing with herself, Dash lay still as Rarity cried her heart out on her chest. Her weeping died down just a smidgen, and Dash noticed. *'Okay, she's calming down. I guess that means just laying here is working, but I don't think it's enough... Hmmm. What if I...'* Hesitantly, she reached up and wrapped her forelegs around her friend in a gentle embrace. Dash thought she heard a slight gasp escape the unicorn, but it was muffled by her sobbing.

After a few seconds, Rainbow squeezed a little tighter. *That's it, that's it... Maybe I should say something? Ugh, what do I say though!?'* "Um... there, there?" she tried nervously, patting Rarity's back. To her relief, Rarity quieted down just a little. "That's it. It's okay, Rare, I'm here. C'mon back..." She started whispering in her ear, trying her best to comfort her. Thankfully, it was working.

"Okay, I... I feel bad for you, Rarity, and... I wanna help." Rarity finally grew silent, listening to what Dash said. "Can you... tell me what's up?" Thankfully, Rarity answered, but it came out only as a muffled groan since she didn't raise her head. Dash managed a small chuckle, "Sorry... diiidn't quite catch that..." she joked.

Rarity finally looked up at her, her playful sense all but vanished. The look in her friend's eyes would've melted even Nightmare Moon's heart. "I-I... *sniff* I just said that... I was sorry," she replied before lowering her head again. Rainbow pushed the hood off of her friend's head, revealing her curly purple mane. It was still pretty much the same shape it was always in: Shiny, perfect... *beautiful*.

Unable to stop herself, Rainbow ran a hoof gently over the back of Rarity's mane. Rarity lifted her head again at the sensation, and Rainbow quickly pulled her hoof away, blushing. "S-Sorry! I, um... what are you apologizing for?" Rarity wiped her tears away

and looked down.

“I’m sorry I tackled you. And I’m sorry you had to see me like this,” she answered solemnly.

“Hey, I don’t mind hugs. And anyways, yeah, this is kinda much. Even for you,” Dash quickly added, “No offense...”

“I’m so pathetic!” Rarity said suddenly. Rainbow recoiled against the outburst. “Something as trivial as this, and I just fall apart!” At a loss for words, the pegasus scratched at the back of her head. “I’m just so... so... *hideous!*”

Dash face-hoofed. “Augh, is that all!? You had me worried sick that something more-”

“Oh, of course *you* would never understand what that means to me! To have all my hard work thrown back into my face by the one pony it was meant for! To be regarded by them as nothing more than ‘A lowly commoner’...” Her voice trailed off as she fought back more tears. She turned back to Dash and was met by an irritated glare.

“Oh, *I* don’t know what that’s like? Did you forget who you’re talking to!? About all the hard work I put in to impress the Wonderbolts!? You’re not the only pony who wants to get noticed, ya know! But I guess nopony cares about what I want!” Rarity shrunk back against her, now even more ashamed than before.

“Rainbow, I-”

“No! You know what? I think I’d better get back to work now. Nice seeing ya Rarity!” The cyan mare hissed. She turned away and started walking out.

“Wait, please!” came a pathetic cry from behind her. She stopped, even though every part of her being was telling her the same thing:

Just ignore her.

But still, she stopped. Rarity took a cautious step closer. “I... I just... it’s so cold outside. And all you have to keep you warm is that little scarf.” Still facing ahead, Dash looked down and brought a hoof up to feel the scarf around her neck. “If you want... I could make something warmer up for you. My boutique is closed at the moment, so...”

Rainbow Dash sighed. Now she was reminded why she came here in the first place. She started for the door again, and Rarity hung her head in sadness. But instead of walking out, Rainbow took off her scarf and hung it on the coat rack beside the entrance. She then turned around and sat on her haunches. Looking up, she was met by a warm, thankful smile from her friend. She ignored it and snorted, still a little mad at her.

“So... ya gonna take my measurements, or what?”

“Wow, Rarity! This thing is awesome!” Rainbow Dash admitted as she admired herself in the mirror. She turned to get a better look at the new saddle she now wore: Wool-lined, crafted out of leather and colored snowy-white. On her chest was a similar piece that connected to the section on her back just behind her wings. Two smaller pieces adorned her flanks, each one with a stitched rendition of her Cutie Mark for quick identification purposes. More straps connected the pieces together at her shoulders and chest, as well as just in front of her wings and at her waist. One circular strap secured the side pieces to each of her haunches. Completing the ensemble was a set of hoof cozies and a pair of wool earmuffs.

Rarity approached from behind her, her black cloak discarded in a crumpled heap on her floor, off to the side. The room around them was now properly-lit, with a spotlight focused on the pegasus as she stood on the small platform. Dash was glad the depressing feeling of the place from before was now long gone, and Rarity’s depressed mood with it.

Rarity smiled, beaming with pride. “Why thank you, Rainbow Dash! And of course, I have you to thank as well! Without your input, I likely would have settled on a dreadfully over-complicated piece. But due to your... simplistic advice, I threw some things together and voila! I’m so pleased that I just might make this an official product of mine!”

“I’m sure it’d be a best seller,” reassured Rainbow. “Especially with a pony like *me* to model it for you, of course!” Rarity rolled her eyes at the pegasus’ bragging, but her smile didn’t falter. At least, not until she started double-checking the outfit’s various fittings and adjustments. As her mind wandered over the course of events that led up to this moment, she slowly began to shrink down again.

Out of the corner of her eye, Dash saw the change in her friend's demeanor. *'I guess I should apologize for yelling at her...'* She looked down for a second and sighed, before turning to her.

"I'm sorry..." They spoke together. They looked into each others' eyes for a moment and smiled, then Rainbow spoke.

"I'm sorry I snapped at you. I knew you were upset, and the last thing you needed was me yelling at you."

"And I'm sorry I took my anger out on you. Out of anypony, it would definitely be *you* who would understand how I feel." She smiled at her, but Dash wasn't done yet. There was something she had said that caught the flier's attention, and she wasn't leaving till she understood what it meant. "Something wrong, dear?"

"Actually, I've been meaning to ask... when you yelled at me, you said something about 'the pony it was meant for.' Who did you mean, exactly?" Rarity looked away, clearly hesitant to answer. It was obvious she didn't want to talk about it, but Rainbow wasn't going to give up.

Rarity sighed, "Rainbow Dash... do you remember when we all went to the Grand Galloping Gala last month?"

"Course I do! All I can say is: Worst. Party. Ever."

Rarity giggled a little at her intentionally naive response, but her tone turned serious again. "Well, do you also remember what I told you about how *my* little 'adventure' that night went?"

Rainbow thought for a second. "Oh yeah! You said you were gonna find this 'super fancy' stallion, or something. You even talked about marrying the guy, too! But when you met him, he basically ignored you the whole ni-" She stopped as the realization dawned on her. "Oh..."

Rarity grabbed Rainbow in another bear-hug and started to cry again. "Oh, Rainbow Dash! He was the most handsome stallion I'd ever seen! My fantasies didn't do him justice!" Rainbow rolled her eyes indifferently. "But then... I started actually talking to him. And throughout the rest of the night, little by little, the chivalrous Prince

Charming I always imagined faded away, leaving that... *that*... sniveling little ***twit*** in his place!" Rarity spat, her voice dripping with resentment.

"He was the key to living the life I always wanted! But still, he rejected me. I was nothing to him..." Depressed again, Rarity sulked off the platform. Once on the floor, she made it all but two steps before collapsing into another sobbing fit.

Dash stepped off the platform and lay down beside her. She didn't really get how, but she now understood exactly why Rarity said what she did before.

"You blame yourself," she said flatly.

Rarity looked over at her, "Of course I do!"

"But what about what you told us in the carriage on the way home?"

"That wasn't really how I felt... I know there is no possibility that somepony of his upbringing could ever behave in such a way. It had to be my fault! It just had to!" Rarity said, raising her voice.

"But Rarity, that doesn't make sense!" Dash shot back.

"It doesn't have to make sense! It's the truth! I did something wrong, I just know it!"

"No you didn't! You... you still want to be with him, don't you?" Asked Rainbow as the realization finally dawned on her. Crying again, Rarity turned away and nodded. Rainbow sighed, "Rarity, I'm sure that this whole thing sucks for you, but you gotta learn to let it go. What happened that night wasn't your fault. You looked beautiful, believe me."

"You're-" she sniffled, "You're just saying that..." Rainbow put a hoof to the unicorn's cheek and turned her head so that they were looking right into each other's eyes, their faces inches away from each other.

"No, Rarity... I'm not. You're one of the best-looking mares I know. And if he couldn't see that too, then he didn't deserve you in the first place." The fashionista looked deeply into her eyes. Rainbow hoped with all her heart that Rarity would believe her. "The fact is, you need somepony who'll appreciate you."

For a moment, Rarity didn't say anything. Then, her eyes grew slightly wider, almost as if she just realized something. Smiling, she reached down and held Dash's hoof in hers.

"Somepony like?" she asked, almost as if expecting a certain answer.

'This is your chance, feather-brain! She knows! You've waited a year for this; now tell her how you feel!' commanded a voice inside Dash's head. And boy, did she want to listen...

Rainbow sighed, "I don't know, Rarity. I'm no psychic, but I'm sure there's some stallion out there who'll give you everything you could ever want," she said solemnly. To her surprise, Rarity hugged her again, this time gentler than before.

"Thank you, Rainbow Dash. I know situations like these aren't your forte, but if I may say, you're a very wise pony."

Rainbow waved a hoof dismissively. "No sweat. Hey, maybe I should become a therapist?" she joked. Rarity rolled her eyes. A moment of silence, then she asked: "So, does this mean you're over him?"

Rarity shook her head. "Not yet... but I will be, in time. As for the here and now, after today I hope that we can get to know each other a little more, Rainbow Dash. I want to repay you for what you've done for me today, and I think becoming closer as friends is a good place to start."

Rainbow hugged her then, and stood up. "That sounds awesome..." she said as she turned to finally leave. Moments later, Rarity watched from a window as a rainbow contrail shot out into the distant winter sky.

Smiling, Rarity turned back and glanced at the cloak in the corner. She lifted it with her magic and tossed it into the trash bin. She did the same with any other memorabilia she had left of her former crush. Once she was done, she walked over and smiled warmly at one of the many picture frames that lined the walls.

In this simple mahogany frame, was a picture of Rainbow Dash. It was a simple

photo, taken the day after she won the Best Young Flier's competition, when she finally returned home from her day with the Wonderbolts. She struck a simple mid-air victory pose, grinning like a mad-pony. It was a picture that likely all of their friends had in their own homes, and it wasn't one of their greatest memories. But to Rarity, it served as a reminder to the day Rainbow saved her life.

From that day on, it would also remind her of the favor Dash did for her this day. She owed that pegasus a lot already, and now she had one more thing to add to that list. But that was alright, because she had every intention of making it up to her.

She chuckled, and turned to give one last look out the window. "Yes. In time, Dash... we'll both be ready."

Author's Notes: Well, here's the start.

Thanks to the following for turning my story inside and out, upside down, and all around to make into help me make it what it is now:

Kim "Fluttershy" Dykas
The anonymous pre-reader from EqD
Twilight Snarkle
Kurbz

But a special thank you goes out to Stormchaser, who not only reviewed my story, but also took time out of his day to try and help me improve it enough to get it up to my pre-reader's abnormally-high standards.

And thanks to everypony who reads this little story. Hopefully your time here wasn't wasted.

This story is not over.