

NEWBIE DASH

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Prologue

(Opening shot: fade in to an overhead shot of a stretch of Ponyville during the day. The camera is positioned next to the upper stories of the town hall and aimed toward the Castle of Friendship in the distance. Rainbow Dash swoops lazily into view, heading in the crystal edifice's general direction; close-up of her.)

Scootaloo: *(from o.s.)* Hey! Rainbow Dash!

(The blue pegasus stops short and glances quizzically toward ground level. Cut to her perspective of the orange one, rolling to a stop on her scooter and waving with her crash helmet on. Zoom in quickly to a close-up, then cut to ground level.)

Rainbow: *(touching down)* Hiya, Scootaloo! What's up?

Scootaloo: The Rainbow Dash Fan Club just decided. Everypony's coming to see you when the Wonderbolts' new tour comes through Ponyville!

Rainbow: Well, it's great that you guys are going to the show, Scoot, but I won't actually be performing in it. Reservists aren't in the show unless one of the real Wonderbolts can't fly. *(Chuckle.)* I'll probably be working crowd control or something.

(This gives Scootaloo pause, but her mouth promptly turns up into a sly little smile.)

Scootaloo: You're still gonna be wearing a Wonderbolts uniform, though, right?

Rainbow: A reservist's one, yeah.

Scootaloo: Hmm...that's good enough for me!

(Any further discussion is pre-empted by a sound very much like that of an approaching jet airplane, accompanied by a minor tremor. Scootaloo gasps and all four eyes flick skyward in time to see the specks of three high-altitude pegasi cruising over the block and leaving short gray contrails behind themselves. A close-up picks out three Wonderbolts in flight suits and goggles—Spitfire, Fleetfoot, Soarin'. The mare in charge catches sight of the two spectators, then signals to each of the others in turn; they zoom on ahead as she drops into a backflip dive, coming out of it to hover a few feet above the road. When she touches down, it is in a three-point

stance and with enough force to throw out a small shock wave and earthquake. Scootaloo has shed her helmet and dismounted her scooter by this point.)

Scootaloo: *(awestruck)* Whoa!

Spitfire: Rainbow Dash! *(propping goggles on forehead)* Glad we found you. *(crossing to her)* We need you in the show when we get to Ponyville—*flying*.

(Rainbow's face displays remarkable efficiency in rearranging itself into a slack-jawed, bug-eyed expression of total shock.)

Scootaloo: But she's only in the Reserves!

Spitfire: Not anymore, kid.

Rainbow: *(shakily, hitching in breath)* You mean...? *(Scootaloo gasps.)*

Scootaloo: *(hugging her)* Rainbow Dash, you're finally a full-fledged Wonderbolt! *(giggling, punching at air)* Woo-hoo! Yeah, Rainbow Dash! Woo!

(Throughout this outburst, and the bit of giddy trotting in place that follows it, the recipient of this instant promotion shows not a whit of response, her mind still completely shorted out. Spitfire gives a dry little chuckle.)

Spitfire: What she said.

(Cut to a close-up of the stunned blue face, zooming in as the mouth slowly stretches into one of the biggest, shiniest-eyed grins of her life, and fade to black.)

OPENING THEME

Act One

(Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Rainbow's cloud house, zooming in slowly, then cut to her living room. Glass-topped coffee/side/end tables, couch, armchair, expansive window with blue curtains showing a pattern of yellow lightning bolts. Twilight Sparkle, the rest of her friends, and Spike are sitting/standing/lying around the place, and a half-filled, open suitcase rests on the coffee table. A rainbow blur makes two passes, depositing more items in the case and nearly separating manes from scalps, after which Rainbow returns at a more sedate pace.)

Rainbow: Uh, anypony seen my wing balm? *(flexing feathers)* I don't want to be stiff when I show up at Wonderbolt headquarters. *(Spike digs up a small container from the couch.)*

Spike: Got it!

(She barrels into him with enough momentum to knock both him and the balm into her suitcase, then claps the lid shut. It bulges noticeably as she crosses the room again.)

Twilight: Do you have time to tell us what happened, Rainbow Dash?

Rarity: Ooh, yes! *(Spike emerges dazedly.)* We must know every detail.

(Pinkie Pie drops into view, slamming the lid shut under her weight and driving him down all over again; his arms protrude and twitch helplessly.)

Pinkie: Start from when you were a foal, and you first knew your destiny was to become a Wonderbolt!

(Rainbow, now hovering in the doorway with a foreleg propped against the frame, chuckles faintly.)

Rainbow: *(settling to ground)* Well, not much to tell, really. Spitfire told me the Wonderbolts need *me* to go on tour with them.

Fluttershy: That's really great. I know how long you've been waiting for a spot to open up. *(Applejack nods.)*

Rainbow: *(pacing, as Spike climbs out and closes the suitcase)* Yep, Firestreak decided to retire and teach full-time. *(Close-up.)* Cloudsdale Flight School will probably be churning out Wonderbolts with him there. *(buffing a hoof on her chest)* But guess who was at the top of the reserve list?

Pinkie: *(from o.s.)* Ooh, ooh, I know!

(Cut to frame her, now at the center of the floor and frantically waving a foreleg for attention.)

Pinkie: Pick me!

Rarity: So what do you do now, Dashie?

Rainbow: I have to report to Wonderbolts headquarters this afternoon. *(flying to front doors, carrying suitcase)* It's only two days 'til tour starts, and I need to learn the routine.

(Zoom out quickly to frame more of the room as the doors burst open from outside. The hyperactive pink mare is on the front step, having instantly procured a huge cake, gifts, and balloons.)

Pinkie: You're leaving already?

(She hops over the threshold with a distraught little yelp, revealing that the balloons are tied around the barrel of her party cannon.)

Pinkie: But we barely started your congratulation party! *(flopping onto haunches)* I haven't even thought about your going-away party yet.

Rainbow: *(smiling)* Pinkie, I'm not leaving Ponyville. *(Pinkie perks up a bit.)* I just have to train for this show. *(The others gather around.)*

Fluttershy: I hope everything goes well. Sounds like an awful lot of pressure— *(close-up; holding up a pair of goggles)* —having to learn everything so quickly. *(Rainbow reaches into view with a wing and takes them.)*

Applejack: Yeah. Good luck, Dash.

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* Luck?

(A disdainful little chuckle punctuates this query. Cut to her, holding the goggles above her head with her wings and stretching the strap. She has set down the luggage.)

Rainbow: Save that for the rest of the team. *(They are snapped into place.)* Now that my awesomeness has finally been recognized— *(doing a loop-the-loop)* —the other Wonderbolts will have to keep up or eat my cloud trail.

Twilight: Everypony knows you're a great flyer, Rainbow Dash, but so are the rest of the Wonderbolts. *(Cut to Rainbow, propping goggles on forehead; she continues o.s.)* It might be more challenging than you think.

(The new Wonderbolt settles onto her hooves with a slightly deflated sigh.)

Rainbow: You're right. I mean, do I show up wearing sunglasses or not? Sunglasses *are* automatically cool, but anypony can put them on. *(Another sigh.)* Maybe I'd stand out more if I didn't.

(Here come six looks of assorted worry, unease, and exasperation from the rest of the bunch. Wipe to an overhead shot of a plateau on a rocky outcropping that juts up into the clouds. As in "Wonderbolts Academy," a paved runway splits the flat surface, and buildings have been constructed in the surrounding clouds on one side. Here, though, hoops stand on poles as part of a training course, and a rainbow waterfall feeds a stream over which the runway has been constructed. Nearly every building sports a shield or coat of arms above its door; the entrance of the largest is framed by a rainbow that curves down into a cloud and lightning bolt on either side, running through a shield at the apex that bears the team's logo of a winged bolt. As the camera zooms in slowly, fully kitted-out Wonderbolts fly/walk through the area and Rainbow and Spitfire move along one edge of the runway. A close-up of these two reveals that the new arrival no longer has her suitcase or goggles, and the boss still has her eyewear on her forehead.)

Spitfire: Team briefings are every morning at oh-seven-twenty.

Rainbow: Because there were twenty ponies in the original E-U-P Guard that became the Wonderbolts.

Spitfire: *(not impressed)* Right. *(smiling)* And I know you've seen the Academy bunks—

(Longer shot; they are now across from the largest building.)

Spitfire: —but these are the official Wonderbolts barracks. *(Close-up of Rainbow, starting forward eagerly.)*

Rainbow: Built by Admiral Fair Weather himself!

(She topples unceremoniously forward and down o.s.; an overhead shot discloses the hoof that Spitfire has planted on her tail to halt her just short of stepping onto the runway.)

Spitfire: Don't forget rule number one, newbie. *(She tugs Rainbow back.)* Always check both ways before crossing the runway.

(She proceeds to do so; finding the coast clear, she flaps across with her hooves barely clearing the pavement. Now Rainbow glances to either side of herself and also sees nothing coming for several hundred feet in either direction.)

Rainbow: Uh, sure, but... *(starting across)* ...no pony else is here.

Spitfire: They will be. And most of the Wonderbolts like to make a flashy entrance, so stay alert.

Rainbow: Right. No problem.

(She touches down and gazes proudly at the imposing barracks, whose front entrance Spitfire has now reached. Wipe to a trophy case inside; Rainbow leans excitedly into view toward it.)

Rainbow: Whoa!

(Zoom out. The case stands at one end of a squad bay, a single room whose two long walls are lined with beds; banners hang from the ceiling, portraits on the walls, and a statue of a Wonderbolt emerging from a lightning bolt is at the far end. Spitfire approaches from behind.)

Rainbow: Is that General Flash's cap?

Spitfire: And the original crest with the Wonderbolts' motto on it.

Rainbow, Spitfire: "*Altius Volantis—Soaring Higher!*"

Rainbow: *(backflipping to Spitfire's other side)* Wow!

(Pulling in a giddy gasp, she instantly shifts gears to try and compose herself.)

Rainbow: I mean, huh. Cool.

Spitfire: Okay, newbie. We've got a show in two days, which means *you* gotta hustle your haunches to learn this routine. *(pacing)* You got five minutes to get dressed and get outside to meet the rest of the team. *(Close-up of Rainbow.)*

Rainbow: Yes, ma'am! I'll have all the moves down by the end of the day! *(Zoom out to frame Spitfire.)*

Spitfire: Let's hope so. We're all expecting you to make quite an impression.

(With that, she takes wing and rockets out of the squad bay. In close-up, Rainbow allows herself a little grin that is one step away from becoming a full-scale fit of schoolgirl-like squealing. The image dissolves to one of her face in the same pose, reflected in a mirror and mostly covered by the blue/yellow flight suit and goggles she has yearned to don for five seasons and change. Zoom out to frame her admiring herself in the glass.)

Rainbow: Looking good!

(Turning away, she puts her goggles up.)

Rainbow: Okay. You're about to take your first flight as an actual Wonderbolt. *(Deep breath.)*
No pressure.

(A quick bit of stretching to limber up the legs and wings, ending with her standing on her hind legs.)

Rainbow: *(punching at air)* Just gotta go out there and knock 'em off their hooves. *(now pumped up)* Okay, Wonderbolts. *(pulling goggles down)* Get ready to meet your most awesome member ever!

(As she starts to move out, the view wipes to the edge of the runway. She comes in for a landing on the grass and begins to walk across the pavement to where Spitfire is talking with two other Wonderbolts, one of them being Surprise—white mare, swept-back yellow mane/tail, goggles up to expose red-violet eyes. In the far distance, two more flyers angle down sharply toward the runway; Spitfire is first to catch sight of them and of Rainbow, who has neglected to look both ways.)

Spitfire: *(to Rainbow)* Hey! Look out!

Rainbow: Huh?

(She freezes, each lens reflecting one of the incoming pegasi all too clearly, and hurls herself toward Spitfire's side with a yell just in time to avoid being hit broadside. The dive carries her o.s., triggering a camera-shaking crash and sending a spatter of gunk back onto the runway. Pan slowly in the direction from which it came, revealing a fresh trench carved into the grass and speckled with bits of garbage. It hops over the rainbow stream and stops at a freshly capsized trash can that now contains Rainbow in addition to most of its original load of refuse. As the lid rattles to rest, the befouled flyer pokes her head out with a woozy moan, her goggles having been shoved up to her forehead by the hit. Two jumpsuit-clad forelegs plant themselves directly in front, and a cut to Rainbow's perspective shows that they belong to Spitfire, who shakes her head disapprovingly. A chorus of raucous laughter rings out; cut to a longer shot of the crash site as a good half-dozen more Wonderbolts gather in. Three of them are Fleetfoot, Soarin', and Surprise, and a fourth is Misty Fly, the cream-colored mare who was part of the contingent in "Rarity Investigates!" All have their goggles up, and Misty's eyes—not see in her previous appearance—are now revealed as green.)

Misty: *(sardonically)* Whoa. Most awesome entrance by a newbie ever.

Soarin': Are you okay, Rainbow Dash?

Fleetfoot: More like Rainbow Crash!

(The group breaks into a fresh round of laughter as the mortified Rainbow lifts her head clear of the ground. A slow zoom in on her is followed by a wavering dissolve to the Cloudsdale flight camp she attended as a filly—see "The Cutie Mark Chronicles" and "The Cutie Re-Mark." The flashback is rendered in soft focus and faintly ringed with white, and the camera zooms in slowly on a group of foals gathered on the runway as Filly RD flies toward them, keeping her altitude.)

Filly RD: Okay, flight school. Get ready for Rainbow Dash!

(Her first day of attendance, no doubt. The self-introduction fails to wow most of the other students—which include Fluttershy, Dumbbell, Hoops, and Score. All of the foals have yet to earn their cutie marks. Filly RD starts into a loop-the-loop, but it turns into a yelling, flailing tumble that causes her to bang her head on a floating cloud hoop and plummet gracelessly out of the air. The fall bounces her back and forth between two adjacent structures and ends with her landing squarely in a fetid, overfull trash can. It topples onto its side, rolling onto the runway and leaving a trail of slop until one filly mercifully puts a hoof out to stop it. As the red-violet eyes counter-rotate in their sockets, the camera cuts to just behind her head and points out of the can to frame the approach of the mocking Colt Hoops.)

Colt Hoops: More like Rainbow Crash!

(Close-up of the luckless filly, who looks as if she would rather be hauled away to the city dump than listen to another second of the laughter ringing in her ears. She struggles mightily to hold back tears as the young voices begin to snicker and chant this nickname; the camera cuts here and there, showing that Filly FS is the only one fully abstaining from the joke. Zoom in on Filly RD, now out of the can and sitting gloomily on her haunches; a wavering dissolve brings the scene back to the here and now. Rainbow is now standing upright, her low spirits quickly giving way to indignation that she directs at Fleetfoot, Misty, and Soarin'.)

Rainbow: Hey! You guys buzzed me on purpose! *(Spitfire steps in.)*

Spitfire: Not quite. You forgot rule number one, newbie.

(The observers all rise off the ground behind her—now only five instead of six; one of the two previously unnamed Wonderbolts has cleared out.)

Others: Always check both ways before crossing the runway. *(Close-up of Rainbow.)*

Rainbow: Yeah, well...I was just...testing you guys!

(Sarcastic chuckles float down in response; cut to a slow pan across the hovering pegasi, then tilt quickly down to Spitfire.)

Spitfire: All right, nopony got hurt and we got a lot to do. *(flying toward runway)* So let's forget about this and get flying!

(The veterans fall in behind her, Misty hanging back for a moment.)

Misty: Classic rookie move, Rainbow Crash. *(flying off)* That was amazing.

(The rookie in question scowls to herself and plods away. Dissolve to Spitfire standing on a cloud, behind a megaphone on a pole driven into the white stuff. Six Wonderbolts hurtle past her, leaving dark gray cloud trails; well after they have gone, Rainbow—properly cleaned

up—follows the same course and spreads one of her own. All except Spitfire have goggles over eyes now.)

Spitfire: *(amplified)* Higher, Crash! You're breaking formation!

(In close-up, Rainbow kicks her wings into overdrive to catch up. A winged lightning-bolt logo floats across the screen; behind its trailing edge, the view wipes to another stretch of sky. All seven flyers streak past, then double back in a complicated slalom maneuver.)

Soarin': *(passing Rainbow)* Check your nine, Crash!

(Caught off guard by this sudden bit of correction, she stops short and then rockets after him. The logo floats past again, the view wiping behind it to a long overhead shot of the runway. Zoom in as Rainbow, Misty, and Surprise zoom down toward it, then cut to a head-on view. The last two of this trio cut a sharp turn, Rainbow lagging well behind; their new trajectory carries them past Spitfire and her megaphone, now at ground level.)

Spitfire: *(amplified)* Tighter, Crash! Get in there!

Rainbow: *(growling, to herself)* My name's not Crash!

(Pulling even with the others, she bumps Surprise hard enough to send herself and the white mare tumbling and yelling into a nearby cloud. Surprise is first to emerge completely, voicing a dry chuckle as Rainbow pokes her head up.)

Surprise: Coulda fooled me.

(“Crash” pushes her goggles up and lets her whole face fall in dejection. The logo floats past once again; behind it, wipe to a locker room in which the Wonderbolts—goggles either on foreheads or removed entirely—are stowing gear and taking care of post-practice business. Rainbow trudges in just far enough to peek around the doorway, only for Fleetfoot to arrive from the other direction, goggles off and a towel draped around her neck.)

Fleetfoot: Hey, Crash. I know it was a tough day today, but don't worry. You'll get the hang of it.

Rainbow: *(grinning, walking in)* Tough day? Please. If I can pull off a Sonic Rainboom, I can learn this routine. *(Cut to her, opening a locker.)* I'll have it down cold tomorrow—probably even come up with a couple of improvements.

Spitfire: *(from o.s.)* Rainbow Dash!

(Back to the doorway. The captain has arrived and is standing on her hind legs, leaning against the doorframe with forelegs crossed and not looking too happy. Fleetfoot backs away.)

Spitfire: Over here! *(Rainbow flaps over to her.)*

Rainbow: Yes, ma'am!

Spitfire: *(smiling a bit)* I'm glad you're still here.

Rainbow: Oh, yeah? Did you want some ideas on how to make the show extra-awesome? (*The smile fades.*)

Spitfire: (*dropping to all fours*) Not quite. I know you've been a reservist for a while— (*It returns.*) —but the 'Bolts have a few of their own rules you might not know about.

(Cut to a close-up of Rainbow's apprehensive expression and zoom out to show four others looking on. All are smiling except the dour-faced Misty, who allows herself a bit of mirth as she hefts a bucket of water and scrub rag and Soarin' holds up a pushbroom. In close-up, Rainbow boggles as the latter item is held out to her.)

Spitfire: (*from o.s.*) Like, worst flyer of the day— (*Cut to her.*) —has to clean up the whole compound. (*The others start for the door.*) Better get to it, Crash.

(As the other four fly out around her, she hovers slowly backwards after them and lets her own levity shift into a look of unsmiling sternness. Rainbow voices a fed-up little sigh.)

Rainbow: (*softly, to herself*) My name's not Crash.

(Snap to black.)

Act Two

(Opening shot: fade in to a long shot of Rainbow's cloud house in the starry evening sky. She flies into view toward it, having changed out of her flight suit and goggles; cut to the front entrance as she lands on the step. The dispirited pegasus pushes the doors open, only to find the muzzle of Pinkie's party cannon aimed directly into her face. She takes a point-blank salvo of confetti/streamers/balloons and gapes at who is behind it: all five of her friends and the Cutie Mark Crusaders.)

All eight: SURPRISE!!

Rainbow: (*shaking herself clean*) What?

(She walks in, finding the whole place liberally bedecked with party decorations.)

Crusaders: Hooray, Rainbow Dash! Our favorite Wonderbolt!

(On the end of this, tilt up to frame an overhead banner they have drawn: the blue daredevil fully suited up and in flight, leaving a rainbow contrail and surrounded by lightning bolts. Back to Rainbow, who stares at the work as Twilight crosses to her.)

Twilight: We know you're probably tired, Rainbow Dash, but Pinkie wanted to throw you a real party. (*Pinkie pops up between them.*)

Pinkie: Your "Best Day Ever" party!

(The end of this line becomes amplified due to the megaphone that she produces from nowhere and aims into the blue face. She puts it away just as quickly.)

Rainbow: *(chuckling weakly, pacing away from her)* Yeah. It was something, all right. *(She finds herself stopped by Applejack.)*

Applejack: Well, we can't wait to hear all about it!

Rainbow: *(flying away with another chuckle)* And I'd love to tell you, I really would, but—*(reaching top of stairs)* —I'm pretty beat.

(An expansive yawn and stretch to drive the point home.)

Rainbow: You know, from all the excitement of my big day? *(The others gather at the foot of the staircase.)*

Fluttershy: Um, is something wrong, Rainbow Dash?

Rainbow: What could be wrong? I'm finally a Wonderbolt, which means everything has to be totally, perfectly awesome.

(All of her false breeziness evaporates by the time she reaches her last word, which is delivered in a full-body, haunch-sitting slump with chin propped on front hooves.)

Rarity: Oh, no! Something *is* wrong. What happened, darling? *(Zoom in slowly on Rainbow.)*

Rainbow: I told you, it's nothing! *(slowly losing steam)* I mean, maybe some of the Wonderbolts started calling me "Rainbow Crash."

Fluttershy: Oh, no! Isn't that the same terrible nickname those bullies in flight school used to call you?

(Rainbow's only response is a piteous little nod and whimper.)

Twilight: Why would they call you that?

Rainbow: Well, I... *(softly, quickly)* ...kinda sorta fell into a garbage can. *(Cringe; whimper. Twilight makes a sound of disgust.)*

Pinkie: Well, look at the bright side. *(Close-up.)* At least they didn't call you "Rainbow Trash."

(She finds her mouth corked with an orange-tan hoof in a trice.)

Applejack: So you started off on the wrong hoof. I bet every new Wonderbolt has a tough first day.

Rarity: *(from o.s.)* Mmm-hmm! *(Cut to her.)* What you need is to find a positive way to stand out. *(A flick of the purple mane.)* As soon as you're known for something else, that nasty old nickname will be forgotten.

(Cut to a close-up of Rainbow, now allowing herself a hopeful smile, and zoom out to frame Twilight hovering alongside.)

Twilight: Rarity's right. Why don't you think of the Wonderbolts like us? (*pointing down the stairs*) We're a team.

(*Cut to a slow pan across the other four mares, all smiling up in her direction.*)

Twilight: (*from o.s.*) But we all stand out in different ways.

(*The pegasus mulls this over for a second, then stands up with a big smile and spreads her wings.*)

Rainbow: That's it! (*She zooms down to the ground floor.*) I'm gonna stand out in a different way, just like you guys!

(*Five mares and three fillies become very concerned at the slightly garbled message she has received.*)

Rainbow: Goodbye, Rainbow Crash—hello, Captain Awesome!

(*She rockets out the door, leaving the eight guests to wonder silently at just how badly this might go. Dissolve to the exterior of the Wonderbolts' barracks at sunrise of the following morning, zooming in slowly, then snap to black. The view splits horizontally, the gap widening as if it were an opening eye to give a blurry close-up of the speedster's face—the perspective of a pony who is just waking up. As the black recedes fully, the image resolves into an unusually perky Rainbow, her forelock styled to resemble Pinkie's curly one somewhat.*)

Rainbow: (*energetically, like Pinkie*) Good morning, everypony!

(*Longer shot; she is standing on the bed of Soarin' to stare him dead in the eye. As she speaks, she works her way back and forth along the squad bay, the camera zooming out in steps to show the rest of the team in their racks and jolted awake. Balloons, flowers, and bunting have been added to the décor, and all are out of uniform.*)

Rainbow: Who's ready for a fantastic day of flying? I know I am! I just couldn't be more excited for the big show tomorrow. Are you guys excited? I'm excited! Actually, I'm always excited. Some ponies even call me... (*Close-up.*) ...“Dynamic Dash”!

(*A balloon rises in front of her face and pops, the view instantly shifting to a longer shot.*)

Rainbow: Because I'm so full of energy all the time!

(*The cheerful verbal assault comes to a close as she lets her tongue hang out and pants like a dog. Here comes a slightly irked Fleetfoot, towel around shoulders.*)

Fleetfoot: Uh, Wonderbolts don't get excited, *Crash.* (*flying past her*) You gotta keep a level head to fly the way we do.

(Rainbow pulls her tongue back in and lets her head droop with a heavy sigh. An instant later, she comes up smiling and tosses her head so that the multicolored forelock falls into Applejack's tousled style.)

Rainbow: *(drawing, like Applejack)* Well, of course I know that.

(She crosses to Fleetfoot, who is now brushing her teeth at a sink.)

Rainbow: But the truth of the matter is, you should be excited! *(crossing to Soarin', out of bed, and Surprise)* It's the dream of near every little pegasus pony to grow up and fly with the Wonderbolts. *(hovering higher)* And here you all are doin' it! *(Fleetfoot crosses to them.)*

Fleetfoot: So are you.

Rainbow: *(settling to floor)* True. *(Close-up of her as she continues.)* Go ahead and call me "Forthright Filly" if you want, but shee-yucks. I like to tell it like it is. And I believe a pony ought to appreciate hard work payin' off like this, because bein' a Wonderbolt is somethin' special.

Misty: *(from o.s.)* We know.

(The slam of a door jolts her out of this Southern-fried silliness, and the camera cuts to a long shot of the squad bay—every team member gone except for her, every bed neatly made. The one hoof she has raised echoes hollowly against the floor when she brings it down, and she swiftly takes wing with a fresh smile. Wipe to an overhead shot of the plateau, later in the day; a couple of suited Wonderbolts stand by the runway, and two more cleave the sky as they fly past. In close-up, Spitfire looks over a clipboard held in one wing as two stallions await her verdict; all three have goggles on foreheads. Behind her, here comes a still-undressed Rainbow, face buried in a book and heavy eyeglasses perched on her nose. The flyer-turned-egghead lowers the book, exposing the tape being used to hold the specs' broken bridge together. Her forelock is back to its usual windblown style.)

Rainbow: *(scholarly tone, like Twilight)* You know, I was just reading about how dihedral wing angles can help increase stability in banking turns. *(She pulls out a stack of papers.)* It made me think that pre-flight checklists could really help increase our efficiency.

(They are passed over to Spitfire, the camera panning slightly to frame the three thoroughly unimpressed veterans and put Rainbow out of view.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s.)* So I went ahead and made them for everypony!

(Without a word, the yellow-orange mare tips her clipboard so that the new pages slide off to the ground. Back to Rainbow, no longer holding her book.)

Rainbow: I'm always finding so much interesting information in books. In fact, a lot of ponies call me "Reading Rainboom."

(Her big grin and her glasses are both swept off her face the moment Spitfire shoves a megaphone into it and starts to bellow.)

Spitfire: *(amplified)* WE ALL KNOW HOW WINGS WORK, NEWBIE, AND WE ALREADY HAVE CHECKLISTS! *NOW GET OFF THE RUNWAY!!*

(Rainbow shakes some sense back into herself, shifting from contrition to elation at just under the speed of light. Now her forelock rearranges itself into a familiar gentle curl that partly hides one eye. Spitfire has disposed of the megaphone now.)

Rainbow: *(meekly, like Fluttershy)* I'm so sorry. I was just trying to help because I care about all of the Wonderbolts oh so much. Yes-sirree. Just call me "Care Mare."

(Spitfire instead chooses to shoot her a withering glare.)

Rainbow: Um, but if you're busy now, I can just come back later. *(The glare is backstopped by a growl.)* Or, you know, not at all.

(She bails out in a blur. Wipe to the locker room, where Soarin' is up on his hind legs to put his things away in an upper-level locker. Across the aisle, Blaze—the light yellow mare seen in "Rarity Investigates!"—is giving Fleetfoot a massage. He is dressed with goggles up, they are not, and a fully suited-up Rainbow—with goggles up and her mane back to its usual appearance—pokes her head into view for a quick look-see. Spotting the three, she ducks out of sight. Where Blaze's eyes had been hidden behind her lenses in her earlier appearance, they can now be seen as purple.)

Rainbow: *(softly, to herself, normal voice)* Okay.

(A bit of deft wing-work, and she has achieved an approximation of the elegant curls in Rarity's forelock. A bit of practice at batting her eyes, and she strolls up to Soarin'.)

Rainbow: *(refined, like Rarity)* I must tell you how much I just love these uniforms. *(poking him in the chest)* Why, ever since I was a foal, I've admired the mixture of bold lines and classic contours. They don't call me "Rainbow Fash" for nothing.

Soarin': *(hopelessly puzzled)* Uh-huh...?

Rainbow: The "Fash" is for fashion. *(Bat the eyes.)*

Spitfire: *(from o.s.)* Crash!

(The inept flirter turns to the team leader, who stands by a row of lockers with only a towel over her shoulders. Rainbow's mane and voice revert to normal.)

Spitfire: I'm not sure why you're acting like this, but you need to stop.

Rainbow: *(scratching back of neck)* I was just, you know, trying to show everypony all the awesome ways I can contribute to the 'Bolts.

Spitfire: I know you're excited to find your place on the team, but just focus on the routine for now, okay?

Rainbow: Yes, ma'am!

Spitfire: *(smiling)* Maybe this will help motivate you.

(She thumps the nearest locker with a knee, causing it to swing open. Among the items taped up inside is a photo of Rainbow's friends, marking this locker as hers. Hanging from a hook is a dark gray bomber jacket lined with gray-green fleece; her popeyed expression suggests that it was not there the last time she went for her gear. As she leans in for a better look, a close-up clearly picks out the gold Wonderbolt logo on one side of the zipper, and two patches on the other side. One is styled as a name tag; the other shows her cutie mark slamming into a red STOP sign and breaking its pole. She pulls the jacket down and grins exultantly over it, but grimaces mightily upon noticing the patch; close-up of it, zooming in.)

Rainbow: *(from o.s., incredulously)* "Crash"? *(Back to her and Spitfire.)* Couldn't you just put my regular name on it?

Spitfire: That's not how it works around here. We all have our nicknames on our jackets. *(calling across room)* Right, Clipper?

Rainbow: *(bewildered)* Clipper?

(The camera pans to follow Rainbow's bewildered look and stops on Soarin', now hovering to get to his locker.)

Soarin': Right, Boss! *(He slams the door and flies off.)*

Spitfire: *(pacing past Rainbow)* Now it's official. Welcome to the Wonderbolts, Crash!

(Allowing herself a satisfied chuckle, she completely misses the venomous little snarl that Rainbow utters as she throws the jacket back into her locker. Cut to within, the camera pointing out at her.)

Rainbow: *(reverberating slightly)* If I don't come up with something unforgettable to add to the routine, I'm gonna be Rainbow Crash for the rest of my life!

(She slams the door shut to black out the screen.)

Act Three

(Opening shot: fade in to a small dark cloud floating incongruously in a tract of otherwise-tranquil daytime sky. Rainbow flies into view with goggles still on forehead, looks furtively around, and pushes it away; tilt down to a stretch of park land outside Ponyville that has been set up for the Wonderbolts' performance. Bleacher seating, banners and strings of pennants, tents, loudspeakers, and so forth. Cut to one section of bleachers, where Applejack, Rarity, and the Crusaders have already found seats; Twilight, Fluttershy, and Spike promptly join them. The unicorn mare has donned a broad-brimmed sun hat and a pink scarf for the occasion.)

Scotaloo: This is gonna be so amazing!

Spike: I know! I'm almost as excited as Pinkie Pie!

(The fun-loving pony chooses this moment to arrive—by rising up from floor level so that he finds himself lifted on her head.)

Pinkie: I can't wait to see Rainbow Dash's first performance as an honest-to-goodness Wonderbolt! I hope there's cotton candy! *(She whisks away, taking Spike with her.)*

Fluttershy: We should all remember to be extra-supportive for Rainbow Dash, too.

Rarity: Excellent point. It's simply dreadful that she's had such a rough start after finally achieving her dream.

Twilight: Rainbow Dash is a pretty resilient pony. I'm sure she's shaken off her tough first day and turned it around by now.

Applejack: Speakin' of... *(addressing herself o.s.)* ...hey, Dash! *(Rainbow flies over.)*

Rainbow: Oh, perfect! *(Foreleg around Scotaloo's shoulders.)* Hey, can I borrow Scotaloo?

Scotaloo: Me? What for?

Rainbow: *(trying to sound casual, chuckling)* Oh, I just needed some help and figured the president of the Rainbow Dash Fan Club was the right pony for the job.

Twilight: I thought the Wonderbolt Reserves were here to help.

Rainbow: Oh...uh, yeah, they're all busy doing, uh, official Reserves stuff. But don't worry! *(hoisting Scotaloo up)* With Scotaloo's help, everything's gonna be awesome. Better than awesome!

Rarity: Does—does that mean practice went well yesterday?

Rainbow: *(flying off)* Gotta go!

(Thoroughly confused glances pass among the remaining six. Cut to a long shot of a cliff overlooking the venue and zoom in slowly. A wooden ramp similar to a ski jump has been built to follow the contour of the slope that leads down to the edge. Rainbow airlifts Scotaloo into view and sets her down; close-up of them.)

Scotaloo: What are we doing up here, Rainbow Dash?

Rainbow: *(pulling her closer; winking)* I just need a small favor from you that's really gonna make this show something special. *(gesturing with a wing)* Now, the Wonderbolts are gonna fly over this ridge right before the finale of the show.

(Lifting off, she ducks behind the foliage of a nearby tree and brings out the dark cloud she snagged earlier. This is positioned to float over the low end of the ramp.)

Rainbow: *(miming actions)* I'll fly by last, and when I signal you, you zip up the ramp on your scooter and kick the storm cloud into my path.

Scotaloo: What? *(Cut to Rainbow; zoom in slowly.)*

Rainbow: That kick will shoot off a lightning bolt right behind me, making me look totally awesome! And then I'll do some incredible Rainbow Dash flying with it to create the coolest,

show-stopping-est, lightning-tastic light show anypony has ever seen! *(Her eyes shine and quiver at the prospect.)*

Scotaloo: *(from o.s.)* Are you sure about this?

(Cut to the unconvinced little pegasus; Rainbow swoops down to shove her scooter into her grip.)

Rainbow: *(giddily)* Uh-huh. It's gonna be so awesome—and no pony will ever call me "Rainbow Crash" after this!

(Three fully suited-up Wonderbolts flash past overhead.)

Rainbow: Oh! *(She puts on her goggles.)* Gotta go! Be ready for me, okay, Scotaloo? *(Takeoff.)*

Scotaloo: *(hesitantly)* Um...okay?

(She is left standing on the ridge with a "how did I end up in this mess?" expression writ large on her face. Cut to a couple of the loudspeakers, which vibrate to the sound of a stallion announcer's voice being broadcast to the crowd.)

Announcer voice: Mares and gentle-colts! Fillies and foals of all ages! Look to the skies and prepare to be awestruck by the incredible flying prowess of...*the Wonderbolts!*

(During this line, the camera cuts here and there among the spectators and finally tilts up from them to frame a septet of flyers, including Rainbow, making a pass overhead. Lightning crackles through their gray cloud contrails, and a close-up picks out the front three as Spitfire, Fleetfoot, and Misty. All seven go into a turn and pull away slightly, with Rainbow bringing up the rear. The next move brings them toward the crowd, passing low enough to thoroughly wreck mane/tail styles for a second and nearly blow Rarity's sun hat off her head. Naturally, the crowd goes wild; Rarity readjusts her hat as Twilight helps Fluttershy back up to her seat.)

Fluttershy: I hope Spike and Pinkie Pie are done getting their snacks, or they're gonna miss Rainbow Dash.

Rarity: Oh, don't worry, Fluttershy. Nothing would keep Pinkie Pie from missing this. *(Chuckle from Applejack.)*

Applejack: Except maybe cotton candy.

(Elsewhere on the grounds, Spike watches the formation whiz past. He and Pinkie have in fact wound up at a cotton candy stand, and the proprietor is half-hidden from view, turned away from them to work the machine. Light blue coat; fluffy, two-tone light pink mane/tail; a cone of the sweet stuff as a cutie mark; striped yellow shirt with apron.)

Spike: Come on, Pinkie! The show's starting!

Pinkie: One second! *(to vendor)* Just a little bit bigger, please, but hurry!

(A pivot reveals the light blue eyes and bearded/mustachioed face of an earth pony stallion, who holds out a generous serving of his product on a paper cone.)

Pinkie: Bigger!

(His eyes pop in surprise. High overhead, the Wonderbolts have split into two groups—four, including Rainbow, and two; the seventh member is no longer with them—who describe crisscrossing flight paths for a few pegasi watching from a nearby cloud. The four go into a near-vertical ascent, losing no speed and drawing awed murmurs from the ground-based audience. At the peak of their rise, they come to a stop and languidly flip 180 degrees to go into a headfirst power dive, which paints shock and fear across every face until they pull up just short of the dirt. Cheers.)

Twilight: That was amazing! She's doing great!

(Cut to Pinkie and Spike.)

Pinkie: *(spreading forelegs wide)* BIGGER!!

(The interior of the stand is now hidden from view by a single gargantuan mass of pink sugary goodness; Spike grumbles to himself as it bulges out over the counter. On the scene, two Wonderbolts start into a horizontal collision course. A close-up picks out Fleetfoot, the view narrowing as a second panel expands upward from the bottom of the screen to show Spitfire as the other. The view returns to fullscreen as they close the final yards, but just as they are about to wipe each other out, both rotate by 90 degrees so that they pass cleanly back-to-back, the tops of their manes almost brushing together. Rainbow and another mare copy the maneuver, then Misty and Soarin', and all six regroup for a leisurely descent at Spitfire's cue.)

(Almost immediately after dropping below the bottom edge of the screen, though, they rise again as a group—but Rainbow, in the rear, drops out of her slot and slams on the brakes. She flips a hoof signal off to one side; cut to Scootaloo, wearing her helmet and poised with her scooter at the top of the ramp Rainbow built on the cliff. The older daredevil flies off.)

Scootaloo: *(very uneasily)* I hope this works.

(Push off. Pick up speed on the downhill run. Hit the launch. At the peak of the resulting leap, she lashes out with a hind leg and delivers a sideways kick to the storm cloud Rainbow parked over the ridge. It begins to drift away, and she lands on the grass just beyond the end of the ramp. Rainbow, meanwhile, has rejoined the formation and is flying even with Soarin'. He is a bit confused to see her peel off without warning, and once the remaining five have landed to the crowd's delight, he taps Spitfire to get her attention. Silence gradually falls as all ten goggle-covered eyes train themselves on the wild blue yonder—and the crackling cloud that is now on an intercept course with Rainbow.)

(She lets off a panicked yell and manages to stop just short of making contact with the charged-up surface, and she is quick to start into a full retreat. A nearby tree is just as quick to ruin that plan, though, and her descent through its branches is marked by thuds, yelps, and a plethora of dislodged leaves and small animals. A round of gasps from the crowd, accompanied by disbelieving stares from Spitfire and Soarin' with their goggles up; Rarity puts a hoof over Sweetie's eyes to shield her from any particularly graphic unpleasantness.)

(A badly dazed Rainbow emerges from the tree with a bird's nest on her head, and the occupants and all their buddies deliver a swift pummeling with beaks and wings. She peels out with most of them in hot pursuit, but two stay behind to catch the nest—and the egg it contains—when it falls free of the varicolored mane. Now a flailing, screaming mess in a ripped, scuffed flight suit, she flies directly into a string of pennants hung up between two poles. This stretches like a giant rubber band, bringing her gradually to a stop and then snapping back to launch her into a head-over-hooves tumbling arc. This time, her momentum is stopped by the tree on the cliff; Scootaloo is still here, her scooter and helmet now gone. The impact leaves Rainbow hanging upside down from the lowest branches, groaning out her pain for the filly to hear with full clarity.)

(The respite ends as quickly as it began, as the boughs snap upward to launch the hapless showboater into a new flight path with all the grace and artistry of a concrete block thrown off a very high roof. Losing her goggles in the process, she screams her way up to the semicircular lower surface of a cloud and skids through it like an upside-down half pipe. Miraculously, she recovers from this utter fiasco and ends up flying a level course—until the storm cloud drifts past and zaps a bolt of lightning directly into her haunch. Now dazed, singed, and trailing puffs of black smoke, she plunges out of the sky.)

(Cut to a profile close-up of Pinkie on the move, with a most disgruntled Spike sitting on her back and holding a cotton candy cone. Even though the bulk of it is cut off by the top edge of the screen, enough is visible to suggest the sheer magnitude of the purchase.)

Pinkie: Hope I'm not too late.

(She blows out a contemptuous little breath before a zoom out tells the rest of the story—the thing is roughly three times her height and double her length.)

Pinkie: I wonder what took that pony so long.

(Cut to the stand; both it and the exhausted vendor are now well and truly bedecked with the brightly colored gunk, to the consternation of a waiting mare and filly. Now Pinkie and Spike return to the bleachers, the mare paying no mind whatsoever to the crowd's terrified expression or the wings Fluttershy has raised to cover her own eyes; Rarity has uncovered Sweetie's now. Pinkie stops short of her seat just in time for Rainbow to complete her headlong, screaming approach and slam squarely into the expanse of sweet fluff, which explodes in all directions on impact. Most of the ponies in attendance end up wearing a dollop or two; zoom out to put

Rainbow in the fore—sprawled out, groaning, and nearly hidden under several tufts. She lifts her head wearily as Pinkie gallops up in the background and rises to her hind legs.)

Pinkie: That was AMAZING!! *(Here comes Spitfire to the crash site, followed by Fleetfoot and Soarin'. Goggles up; all three are clean.)*

Spitfire: *(sourly)* Way to go, Rainbow Crash.

(The wiped-out flyer just lets her face flop back into the cotton candy. Dissolve to a tent, from which a mare in a nurse's cap emerges to hold the flap open so Rainbow can step out. She has hosed off and traded her flight suit and goggles for bandages on head, chest, and hooves, and she sighs heavily while plodding across the grass. It does not take long for the rest of the squad to cut her off, contempt and anger showing in exceptional detail on every face due to their goggles being raised.)

Spitfire: You gonna tell us what just happened, newbie?

Rainbow: *(sighing)* I'm so sorry.

Spitfire: I should hope so. You changed the routine without consulting me and put other ponies at risk. I've drummed flyers out of the 'Bolts for less.

Rainbow: *(hanging head)* I know— *(Zoom out slowly.)* —and I'm ready for whatever punishment you want. You guys were right to call me "Rainbow Crash." I've always been a standout flyer, but since I joined the Wonderbolts, I've only stood out for making mistakes. *(Sigh.)* It's been my dream my whole life, but I guess maybe I'm not Wonderbolt material after all.

(The performers behind her trade a smile, and Soarin' is quick to thump his wing against hers.)

Soarin': Are you serious? You're the most talented flyer we've ever had!

Fleetfoot: And you've saved all of Equestria, like, a dozen times.

Rainbow: I-I...

Spitfire: *(smiling, poking her with a wing)* Of course you're supposed to be a Wonderbolt. We've been waiting for a spot to open up ever since you joined the Reserves.

Rainbow: But...you guys all called me "Rainbow Crash."

Soarin': Yeah, so? My nickname's "Clipper." You know why they call me that?

Rainbow: Uh... 'cause you're as fast as a ship?

Soarin': *(bashfully)* Because I clipped my wing on a flagpole as I was landing on my first day. *(Chuckle.)*

Rainbow: Huh.

(Now she finds Fleetfoot and Misty smiling across at her with a degree of real warmth and good humor.)

Fleetfoot: "Flatfoot." My first day, I misjudged my landing and came down right on Spitfire's hoof. *(Misty stifles a giggle; pan slowly across the others.)*

Misty: "Dizzy."

Surprise: "Slowpoke." *(A white-coated, two-tone-blue-maned mare speaks next.)*

White mare: “Hoof-in-Mouth.” (*Stop on Spitfire.*)

Spitfire: You don’t want to know what they call me.

(But she leans over to whisper in Rainbow’s ear, so softly as to be indecipherable. The red-violet eyes pop wide as a little grunt of disbelief escapes the mouth under them.)

Rainbow: Whoa. That is so much worse than “Crash.”

Spitfire: (*rolling eyes*) Right?

Rainbow: So does this mean I’m...still on the team?

Spitfire: You think you can be part of this team and not constantly try to showboat?

Rainbow: I promise! I spent my whole life trying to be a standout flyer, but now that I’m a Wonderbolt, it’s time to be okay with fitting in.

Spitfire: Good. (*starting to laugh*) Because I really didn’t want to miss the chance to tease you for *years* about this catastrophe! I mean, that crash was epic!

(Good-natured chuckles and remarks fly among the group as Rainbow smiles, realizing that they have begun to accept her as one of the gang. The mirth gets chopped off when Spitfire jabs a wing into the blue chest, instantly all business.)

Spitfire: But you’re on probation for a month! (*She leans hard into Rainbow’s face, forcing her to her haunches.*) Got a problem with that?

Rainbow: No, ma’am.

(The boss ends the conversation by shoving Rainbow’s missing goggles into her hoof and stalking away. For her part, the chastised rookie throws a shaky, grateful smile and lets it shift into a relieved grin as her eyes shift toward the sky. Tilt up to follow her enraptured gaze into the starlit expanse of sunset, then dissolve to the full moon in the night sky and tilt down to the now-empty show venue. Most of the banners and pennants have fallen loose, and Rainbow is alone on the grounds, sweeping up debris and no longer carrying the goggles. Here come her friends and Scootaloo, all clean of cotton candy shrapnel and finding her in good spirits despite the scut work.)

Twilight: Hey, Rainbow Dash. We just wanted to check on you. Are you doing okay?

Rainbow: I’m doing great, thanks!

Scootaloo: Sure you don’t need any help?

Rainbow: Nah. This mess is my responsibility and I’ve gotta clean it up myself. And after this— (*Twilight and Scootaloo trade a puzzled look.*) —Spitfire’s got me cleaning the Wonderbolts compound for the next month.

(She nips one end of a pennant string in her teeth and deposits it in the trash can she has been using.)

Scootaloo: So why are you in such a good mood? (*Close-up of Rainbow.*)

Rainbow: (*gleefully*) Duh! Because I’m a Wonderbolt!

(She cranks off an uninhibited grin, spreading her wings wide. The view dissolves to a profile close-up of her face in the same pose, but clad in her flight suit with goggles on forehead. The golds and pinks of a sunrise sky shine behind her, and a zoom out frames her, Spitfire, and Soarin'—fully kitted out—flying side by side under the huge image in freeze frame. Fade to black.)