

Learn to Fly

~by Vimbert the Unimpressive

I was falling. That was about all my mind could register before I started screaming in panic. Ponyville looked so far below as I fell through the clouds, desperately wagging my legs to find purchase on something, anything, but my efforts were futile. *Quick, focus on just levitating yourself...* My horn glowed as I forced my eyes shut and concentrated, but something smacked the side of my head, breaking my concentration. I opened my eyes, casting about for the offending item, but nothing appeared. The air rushed past me as the familiar terrain loomed closer and closer. *There's no time!* I thought, desperate as my heart began to beat faster. I looked up to see a panicked Spike looking over the side of my hot air balloon's basket. He yelled something I couldn't hear over the sheer rush of the air, a panicked look on his face.

“Oh, what was that cloud-walking spell?!” I searched frantically through my mind, though I knew I couldn't cast it in time to break my fall. I began to panic more, feeling utterly helpless. The clouds rushed by as I picked up speed. I'd reach terminal velocity in no time, and that ground didn't look very welcoming. My eyes bulged as my imagination summoned up gruesome images of my inevitable demise.

“Now, now, Twilight Sparkle, my faithful student, it's not like you to panic so,” a calm voice spoke from just above me. Princess Celestia swept into view, her powerful wings slowly beating, allowing her to keep pace with my fall.

“P-Princess! I-I—what should I do?!?!” I wailed, my eyes watering.

She smiled a sly smile that reminded me of when she had explained the plan that led my friends and I to harness the Elements of Harmony. “Why, just use your wings. What could be simpler?”

“I don’t have any—” I started to protest. My mouth hung open as I looked back and saw pegasus wings on my back. Not only that, but I was as large as the Princess was. My mane flowed in some omnipresent wind and sparkled like hers. *I was an alicorn?!*

Slowly, I unfurled my wings and began to strain, willing myself skyward with all my might. I underestimated my new appendages and not only stopped my descent, but ascended rapidly. The Princess, who had followed, chuckled. “Well, now that you have not falling under control, let's work on something just a little more challenging.”

I flushed, embarrassed at showing such panic in front of my mentor. “S-sure.”

Flying was like nothing I'd ever experienced before. Suddenly, Rainbow Dash's obsession made perfect sense. The feel of the air blowing through my mane and tail, the adrenaline of speed... this defied words. Princess Celestia and I flew higher and faster than most pegasi could ever dream of as I quickly mastered the basics of flight, grinning in spite of the panic I'd felt minutes ago. The rush of the air on my face and the pounding of my heart made me break out into a wider grin. After a few minutes, I was doing loops in the air without any problems while grinning like a madmare in delight and laughing.

“Why, Twilight, you seem to be picking this up rather quickly,” the Princess remarked, slowing so we could speak.

My powerful wings beating lazily at the air, I said sheepishly, “I read a few books on the subject, Princess. I was actually surprised the library had any books on flying.”

She gave me that sly grin again. “It is unusual, isn't it?” I got the creeping feeling that, once again, my mentor had been manipulating events from behind the scenes. I swallowed, wondering how long this particular plot had been in the making. “In any case,” she continued, “you seem to have mastered the basics rather quickly. Why don't you try something more complicated?”

“Like a Sonic Rainboom!” a voice chirped. I looked over, and Rainbow Dash had suddenly appeared next to me, eyeing my new wings with an almost hungry look on her face.

I stopped suddenly, fixing Rainbow Dash with a flat glare as I continued to hover. “Yes. I just learned how to fly, so *clearly* I'm ready to move on to something that most ponies only dream of.” My voice dripped with sarcasm.

“Psssh, yeah!” Rainbow Dash exclaimed as she and the Princess turned and joined me. “Princess Celestia thought that maybe I could help you a bit while she watched.” She gave the Princess a nervous look. “I mean, I'm awesome and all... but I'm probably not as good a teacher as she is, but I... uh...” A confused expression was plain on Rainbow Dash's face as her pride battled with her common sense.

Princess Celestia laughed. “Oh, go on. I'll be watching. Make me proud.”

Rainbow Dash solemnly gave her a salute with a hoof and started ascending. “Come on, Twilight! Ready to make history?”

Hastily, I caught up to her quick pace, my heart still jackhammering with excitement over the fresh thrill of flight. “What makes you think I can do a Sonic Rainboom when logically, I shouldn't even be flying?”

“Are you kidding me?!” she shouted over the rushing air. “Forget logic! I've been watching you study flying under the Princess, and you've done in a few minutes what it takes most pegasi years to master!”

I smirked. “Well, I did read several books on the subject.”

She groaned and rolled her eyes. “Urgh. Figures, you egghead. I... guess it actually worked though. Not that you'll ever be as cool as me, but you're definitely cooler now.” She turned her head and looked at me quizzically. “Have you been an alicorn this whole time?”

I shrugged as best I could while continuing to fly. I'm not sure if the gesture worked, judging by Rainbow's quirked eyebrow. "I'm as surprised as you are. Maybe a little more, really... Princess Celestia always said I was special, but I never dreamed she meant it quite like this. An alicorn... it's all so shocking to me. Maybe it existed as some sort of dormant trait, and my exposure to the Element of Magic awakened it?" I mused, trying to piece the strange events of the past twenty minutes or so together. Rainbow Dash tried to stifle a yawn as we continued to ascend. I chuckled.

We continued climbing until I could barely see Ponyville below. Rainbow Dash landed on a cloud and eagerly stared at the vast expanse of land below us. I felt dizzy as I stared down, hovering just beside her. *I only recently became capable of flight. I might not be able to stand on clouds yet.* I gulped loudly. Rainbow Dash, with a smirk on her face, asked, "So... you ready?"

I turned, shaking slightly as I hovered in the air. "I don't know, Rainbow Dash..."

Rainbow put a hoof to her face and flew up to where I was. She put a foreleg around my neck and cheered, "Come on! Just imagine if we can both pull it off at the same time! A double Sonic Rainboom! That's never been done, like, EVER!"

"A double rainbow..." I murmured. I glanced back at Rainbow Dash, my eyes burning with determination. "Okay! So... what do I have to do? What kind of elaborate maneuvers do you have to do to pull off a Sonic Rainboom?"

"Just go really really fast!" she shouted, more excitable than usual.

"Really? That's it?" I asked flatly.

An annoyed expression darkened her face. "You've always got to plan things out, don't you? Welllll..." she hesitated, then spoke very quickly, suddenly sounding like Fluttershy in one of the yellow pegasus's assertive moods. "There's a lot you probably should know about the G-forces you'll be enduring. Most pegasi couldn't take it, but I've been able to do sharp turns which put my body under a

lot of strain and I was fine. Since you're an alicorn now, I suspect that the increased magic energy of your body, some of which is flowing to your wings, will strengthen you enough that you can withstand the stress from acceleration and freefall. There's also the whole 'breaking the sound barrier' thing, but eh. After all, if I can pull it off, an alicorn ought to be fine. My only concern is whether you're tough enough mentally to not chicken out in the middle because you'll overthink it, psyching yourself out.”

My mouth hung open, and I tried several times to start a sentence. “I... you... but... I... what?” I stammered flatly.

She giggled. “What, you think I don't think sometimes?” Without another word, she zoomed upwards into the sky, rocketing past the hot air balloon, then turned and began a sharp dive.

“Rainbow, wait!” I cried and took off after her. She already had a forehoof extended in front of her, and the sound barrier was starting to become visible around her. With a gulp, I summoned all the speed I could muster, just barely managing to keep pace with Rainbow. I extended both hooves in front of me, assuming more surface area meant less stress overall. I saw Rainbow give me a quick knowing look, and then she too stretched out her hooves, matching me. *There's more to her than meets the eye*, I mused.

I had no more time to think as we screamed toward the ground. Both of us dove forward with all we had, and despite my efforts to keep my mouth shut, I could feel my cheeks start to flap out and my eyes water. Gritting my teeth, I narrowed my eyes to try to protect them. *If only I had some goggles!* Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Rainbow shouting, but my focus and the rush of the air prevented me from hearing her. The barrier in front of me grew thicker, and I felt more and more resistance building in the air. Simultaneously, Rainbow and I broke through with two thunderous, booming cracks, and suddenly there was no resistance in the air: we were flying faster than I'd ever dreamed! Looking over at the multi-hued pegasus, I saw a giddy grin on her face that was no doubt

matched by a similar expression on my own. We flew in formation, screaming over Ponyville, leaving twin rainbows in our wake. My trail was a bit darker than Rainbow's, and we wove in and out, creating a vortex of brilliant colors, our trails contrasting nicely. Together, the two blended to create a dazzling sight I had no words for. No normal rainbow could compare to the beautiful, harmonious prism of colors we'd left in our wake. Part of my mind screamed at me that I should be studying what effects performing this stunt was having on my body, but somehow I couldn't bring myself to in the excitement of the moment.

“We're doing it, Rainbow! We're really doing it!”

“Awwww yeah! This is what we can do when we work together!” she cried, spinning a quick loop around me as her grin widened further. “And now we-” she abruptly cut off, her mouth hanging open as she stared at the pegasus who joined us. She had a mane that almost resembled wildfire, and was wearing a Wonderbolts costume.

The fiery-haired pegasus grinned widely as she kept pace with us easily. “I thought I saw something amazing heading this way.”

I flew in silence for a moment, then exclaimed, “Oh! ...Spitfire, right? One of the Wonderbolts?”

“The one an-” she began to say.

“OMIGOSHOMIGOSHOMIGOSHOMIGOSH!” Rainbow squeaked as she moved to the Wonderbolt's side.

They began talking in low, yet excited tones, and I turned my attention to the landscape. We'd left even Canterlot far behind, to my surprise, and at our breakneck speed, we had already reached the Northern Ocean. I relished the feel of the sea wind on my face as the three of us painted the skies with color. Suddenly, it occurred to me that Spitfire was somehow managing to keep up with us without

performing a Sonic Rainboom, which made no sense. She suddenly vanished from the sky with a slight pop. Rainbow Dash shot me a glare. “You and your logic, Twilight. You're no fun,” she pouted, stopping suddenly on a cloud.

Marveling at how quickly turning could be done mid-Rainboom, I slowed to a stop and cautiously made my way back to her. “What did I do?” I asked, confused.

“You did *that* again,” an eternally calm voice spoke from behind me.

“P-Princess?” I whirled around in surprise. Princess Celestia hovered there, a disapproving look on her face.

“Oh, Twilight. You know your dedication to rationality is commendable, but every now and then you need to just enjoy the moment. Remember what you do, but don't ruin the moment.” She began to become less distinct, as though she was fading from existence. I looked on with horror as she faded out of sight.

Unfazed, Rainbow commented, “Huh. Well, that was weird.”

I turned. “How can you be calm at a time like this?! I don't understand what just happened!” I exclaimed frantically.

She sighed and sulked further. “You know, it's not easy being me. You don't listen to me enough. When we work together, we accomplish amazing things, but all too often, you can't put yourself in the moment. So I sit in my little corner, removed from the action, as you detach yourself and try to analyze everything. I never get to act in the passion of the moment, and anything that seems the least bit irrational is thrown out by you,” Rainbow Dash whined. Noting my look of bafflement, she grinned. “What, is your logic not working, Twi? Here, maybe seeing will be believing.” She gestured at the trail we'd left behind us.

My breath caught in my throat. A shimmering tunnel composed of more colors than I had

realized existed led to this very spot. *Imagine, ponies all over Equestria must be marveling at how beautiful it is... and it's all because we worked together.* “I should really be writing this down,” I said to myself absently.

Rainbow Dash groaned, and as I looked back to her, she looked almost miserable. “You still don't understand? What did Celestia *just* tell you? Live in the moment, but record it later! If your focus is on recording what's going on around you, rather than fully participating in events, your memories are going to be 'oh yeah, I took a picture there' and 'oh yeah, I was writing about it there' NOT what actually happened.”

I shrank back a little. “You've... well... thought about this, huh? This seems a little... weird for you.”

She smirked. “No, but it wouldn't be weird for you, would it?”

Bewildered, I asked flatly, “What's *that* supposed to mean?”

She closed her eyes, and in moments, I was looking at myself in normal unicorn form, staring at me serenely yet smugly from a cloud. In my own voice, the figure said, “You know shoving away a part of yourself isn't healthy. Think it through. We're smart. I know you'll know what to do. Me, I'd rather just... fly here, until you need me. I need you to look at the future and analyze the past. Me? I focus on the present. I'll help you enjoy things, but only if you let me be a part of you. It gets lonely up here...” It sprouted sudden wings, and lazily flew off, doing slow rolls in the sky through the dissipating trail of rainbows, a warm, yet sad smile on its (*my?*) face.

A sudden blinding light shone, obscuring everything and making me yelp. I opened my eyes to find myself staring at my bedroom window, where the mid-morning sun shone through, unusually strong for a spring morning. *Just a dream*, I thought, dragging myself out of bed. I grabbed a brush with telekinesis and smoothed out my mane's bedhead, pondering the odd dream, and noting with a

small twinge of disappointment that I hadn't woken up as an alicorn. *There was meaning there. I know it. ...Perhaps I should write it all down while it's fresh in my mind so I can understand it later...* I trotted over to my nightstand, pulling out the dream journal I'd been keeping for years. Its frayed cover, yellowed with age, made me smile as I thought of the many entries within its binder. Everything from my fillyhood nightmares to my fondest daydreams of adventures with my friends were written here. I flipped it open to the first empty page, grabbing a quill with my magic, and wrote, "Flying is", then stopped. *Is this something I really need to deconstruct? Or something I'll fail to remember?*

With a slow smile creeping over my face, I put the journal away gently. I moved out to my room's balcony and focused as my horn glowed intensely. I heard a few ponies below gasp, noticing how much magic I was using. Welding my eyes shut, I thought my way through the particular spell I had in mind. My horn glowed ever brighter, and a few moments later, I collapsed on the balcony, panting from exertion. I felt the cool spring breeze blow over me, and its calm energy soothed me. I stood, somewhat shaky after pulling off such a difficult spell. I turned and looked at my back. *It worked*, I thought with no small degree of pride.

I spread the shimmering wings I'd given myself, alighted on the railing, and took off into the sky, feeling the sun warm me as I flew lazily above the town I called home, drinking in the feeling of the sweetness of the air and the pleasant sensations spreading through my body as I soared higher and higher. I smiled. *You're not alone any more.*

Author's notes: This was originally written for the Writefriend Training Grounds on DeviantART. Like much of my work, I find it difficult to classify, because my mind (and thus my writing) often works in many different directions at once. Much like Twilight, I sometimes over-think. I'm very grateful for the prompt and the inspiration the group provided, and hope that you, the reader, took something away from this. Have you flown today?