

“It’s the final run of the competition. A hushed tone falls on the crowd as the greatest flier in Equestria, the legendary Rainbow Dash, takes her position! Her wings open, and her legs tense! She calms her mind, while the excitement threatens to overtake her!”

Rainbow Dash had a fairly easy job in Ponyville.

“And she’s off! The crowd goes up in a roar as the esteemed filly rushes across the sky, towards the first obstacle. She turns mid-flight, aiming towards the second marker, as she obliterates the first out of the sky!” With the addition some of her own sound effects, she kicked the cloud, and destroyed it in a puff. Rainbow rushed across the sky in a zigzag like pattern, as she destroyed clouds in her wake. All of this was done, of course, while Rainbow Dash applied a heavy dose of self-narration. “Fourteen markers down, it’s down to the wire! Can Rainbow Dash do the impossible and finish the course in time? Can! She! Do! It!” She sailed through the last cloud, as vapor mixed with her wings.

“YES! First place goes to our new champion, Rainbow Dash! The crowd... goes... wild!” Rainbow Dash fluttered down to the ground while she bowed to the imaginary crowd. She imagined them cheer her name over and over. “Thank you! Thank you! I couldn’t have done it without the legions of supporters and all of the praise you’ve given me over the-”

“Rainbow Dash?” Twilight Sparkle asked, “Umm... what are you doing?”

She froze at her unexpected onlooker only a couple feet away. How could she not have seen her coming up? “Oh, uh, hey Twilight! Just, you know, cleaning up some clouds, the schedule called for some clearer skies, so that’s what I was doing, clearing the skies. Heh heh. Though in my opinion, we could use some more clouds. Hot day, huh?” Rainbow backed up a bit, giving herself a bit more space between the two.

“And... those loopy paths through the sky?”

“Oh, I just normally incorporate my workout routine into my job. Gotta stay fit, look good for the Wonderbolts, you know.” Rainbow did some weak flexing, avoiding eye-contact with the mare in front of her.

“Uh huh. And your... legions of supporters with praise?”

“Forget about that, Twilight,” Rainbow looked anxious to move on from the present topic. “Anyways, what brings you out over here anyways?”

“Oh! Right,” Twilight casually dismissed her friend’s antics while moving on to her own activities. “So I recently wrote Princess Celestia inquiring about the recent heat wave in Ponyville, and asked about how the weather changes in the Everfree Forest. There didn’t seem to be any books on it in the library.” Twilight’s horn shimmered as she pulled a small scroll out of

her saddlebags. "She wrote me back stating, ahem," Twilight cleared her throat, "that the answers I seek could likely be found starting with the town's Weather Patrol Captain. And well, that's why I'm here! I was wondering if you knew anything about the heat wave, and about the weather in and out of the Everfree Forest."

There was a moment of silence between them, as the cyan pony simply stared at the purple mare in front of her. Then she slowly brought her hoof up to rub her forehead. "Twilight," Rainbow said with a sigh, "we're friends, right? So I can be straight with you. I. AM. NOT. AN. EGGHEAD! Did you ever wonder why I dropped out of flight school, even though I'm one of the greatest fliers in Equestria? It's because it was so BORING." Rainbow dragged her cheeks down with her hooves to emphasize her struggle. "It was all wind currents and pressure systems and rules and cloud patterns and blah blah blahhhhhhhh it went on and on and on and on! I don't need to "think" the sky; I simply "be" the sky. I don't need to "test" the weather; I "am" the weather. You read me, queen of books?"

"So... you know nothing." Twilight always found a way to get straight to the point.

Rainbow sighed. "Look. I have to fill out and keep records of the weather for the day and the requests for clouds from Cloudsdale. It's the last part of my job for today. I send up weekly reports to the eggheads up there, a copy of which I keep in my records. If you'd like, you're happy to pore over them to your heart's content."

"If they're for 'eggheads like me' then they might actually have some useful information," Twilight smiled to herself. "Sounds good to me. Show me the files."

It was another simmering day in Ponyville as the two ponies trotted over to Rainbow Dash's house. The heat wave had lasted a while as a heavy lethargy slowly overtook the town. The pegasus ponies had quite a bit of control over the weather, but they couldn't control all of it. Even the weekly rainstorms brought in seemed to do little to fight the heat, except as it changed the weather from hot to, even worse, hot and humid.

"You DID... ergggg... remember to cast the 'walk-on-clouds' spell on... argg... yourself, didn't you?" Rainbow's wings struggled to pull Twilight up to her house. Twilight dangled helplessly between her front legs.

"Would I have allowed you to pull me up if I didn't?" Twilight asked smugly.

The pegasus gasped for air as she set Twilight down. "Okay... here you go. Let me show you to the... um... records room. Now, remember, I don't normally have visitors in here and I don't really like this room, and well," Rainbow Dash trailed off in her speech as they entered the cloud-formed room in the back.

If the outside of Rainbow Dash's Cloud House was meant to evoke the memories of a

pleasant, beautiful sky with rainbows, the inside of this room would appear to be a thunderstorm. While light could pass through the cloud material, it was decidedly darker inside, with only a single window to look out. Papers of reports were piled into heaps all over the floor. Many were bent or even crumpled up. A quick look at the papers themselves revealed that most of them had been rushed through by Rainbow, with only a few words on them. Each paper had the date, the temperature and barometer readings from two or three times a day, and some comments. Most of these comments were quick one-word notes for the day such as “cold” or “windy” or “very windy,” and she just left most of the page blank. The style of writing seemed to be rushed, as though simply putting the ink to the page was painful in and of itself. On the borders there were quite a few doodles of Wonderbolt logos, different styles of her cutie mark, and so forth. Twilight slowly paced around the room, the look of silent horror cemented on her face. She simply couldn't understand how anypony could live like this.

“Like I said, no one has *ever* asked for these records, and furniture that can stay in clouds is *really* expensive and I-” Rainbow Dash rambled as she ran through the room to attempt to get the piles into at least semi-recognizable stacks. “You can find the latest reports over by the window, that's where I normally write them until they get sent off and shuffled... into some other part of... the room. Look, it's normally not such a big deal, okay?”

Twilight Sparkle looked at papers shuffling around the room. Reports mixed with doodles mixed with awards blew around with the slight breeze. Rainbow Dash's “records room” was essentially her “junk closet.” Twilight's steady look of dismay slowly turned to intense concentration, and then steadfast resolution. The challenge was considerable, but she's organized big messes before. Second to magic, organization was Twilight's strongest skill. “Rainbow Dash. I'm going to need all these papers. Get me down from here; I'll be back with the balloon to pick them all up in several trips. And I'm not taking no for an answer.” Rainbow Dash complained and groaned, but since Twilight was essentially asking to do a large amount of work for her, she eventually relented. The balloon was brought, the papers were removed, and with the rest of the day focused on making trips back and forth, eventually the once chaotic room was left completely empty.

Twilight Sparkle was missed from most of the week. She met her social obligations, and seemed to be in good enough spirits, though there was the sense that she hadn't gotten enough sleep recently. The heat wave, still going strong, kept many ponies indoors anyways, so she didn't seem too out of place.

It would actually be almost two weeks before Twilight shared any news of what she found out with Rainbow Dash. Rainbow had been avoiding her, fearing the lecture on “How Organization is the Most Important Thing for Anypony.” Not to mention, she realized too late that some of those scribbles on the report edges were a little embarrassing. Until she needed to, Rainbow figured that she could keep slipping her latest report under the door to the library. But after a while, even the speedster was starting to get slightly curious at what Twilight would find out. The only odd thing Rainbow noticed was that the letters she put in her mailbox weren't

being picked up.

*Geez, is the heat so bad that even Derpy is taking a few off days? I wouldn't blame her with all those heavy mailbags she has to keep hauling around.*

It didn't matter. She had been a little late a few times before in getting her report in, and it seemed none of her supposed supervisors even batted an eye. Dash's mind wandered to the town, and more specifically, her friends. Applejack complained about her lack of progress as of late, as frequent breaks were needed for both herself and her brother. Fluttershy took care of her animals, but spent noticeably less time with them outside each day. Rarity was thrilled, as she had figured out a way to combine several fans with her unicorn magic to provide literally the coolest place in town. On top of that, all of her new "Summer Scorcher" lines of light-fitting, ventilated, enchanted-through-gems-to-provide-some-cooling-power clothes were being sold off the shelves as fast as she could make them. The enchanting was outside her normal expertise, but she had managed to pull Twilight away from her work long enough for a book and some advice on doing so. Pinkie Pie was bothered by the lack of energy through the town, but even she had seemingly slowed down to the energy level everyone else had the rest of the year. Even Rainbow herself felt tired from the heat, but it was fun as she reassigned the duties as more training in her mind.

Rainbow Dash turned over in her sleep. As warm as it was, her cloud home was perfect for hot nights like this one. A single breeze drifted over her like the most comfortable blanket. Cloud pillows never needed fluffing, and always seemed to stay cool. Rainbow Dash had moved her home around Ponyville at the start of the heat wave, finding a nice pocket of cool wind up north. The sound of the wind over the farmland was relaxing, and Luna's glowing moon simply completed the perfect night. All was perfect.

"RAINBOW DASH!"

Rainbow Dash woke up with a spasm, finding herself pinned by a purple unicorn. Her mane was ragged, and her bloodshot eyes showed how little sleep she had gotten recently.

"Twilight! What the hay are you doing here in the middle of the night? Can't a girl get some privacy for a tiny bit of sleep? Go home, leave me alone, you can tell me how disorganized I really am in the morning, all right?" Rainbow Dash turned her head into her pillow, using her hooves to put some clouds into her ears.

Twilight turned her back around. "We don't have time for you to sleep, Rainbow! I completed my research. Ponyville is in great danger!"

"What? What danger? What can I do?"

Twilight brought her face down close to her friend's. The tired eyes stared right into

Rainbow's. "You need to make a tornado strong enough to destroy Ponyville."

END OF CHAPTER 1