

*Disclaimer: This story follows Mr. Doyle's work fairly closely for the first two parts. This is a stylistic choice and lasts no further than the opening.*

## *A Study In Rainbows*

### **Chapter One: Miss. Rarity**

By Thanqol

In the year 1878 I took my title of Best Young Flier in Equestria from the University of Cloudsdale and proceeded to Beaumont to go through the course prescribed for Celestia's Royal Guard. Having completed my studies there, I was duly attached to the Fifth Neighthumberland Fusiliers as assistant Thunderstriker. The regiment was stationed in Zebrica at the time, and before I could join it, the second Moon War had broken out. On landing in Gallopoli I learned that my corps had advanced through the passes and was already deep in the enemy's country. I followed, however, with many other officers who were in the same situation as myself, and succeeded in reaching Cantar in safety, where I found my regiment, and at once entered upon my new duties.

The campaign brought honours and promotion to many, but for me it had nothing but misfortune and disaster. I was removed from my brigade and attached to the Storm Squadron, with whom I served at the fatal battle of Damarescus. There I was struck on the wing by a Zebra pie, which shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery. I should have fallen into the hands of the murderous Zebras had it not been for the devotion and courage shown by Gilda, my orderly, who threw me across her own back and succeeded in bringing me safely to the Equestrian lines.

Worn with pain, and weak from the prolonged hardships which I had undergone, I was removed, with a great train of wounded sufferers, to the base hospital at Saddleworth. Here I rallied, and had already improved so far as to be able to fly about the wards, and even to bask a little upon the veranda when I was struck down by enteric fever, that curse of our Zebrican possessions. For months my life was despaired of, and when at last I came to myself and became convalescent, I was so weak and emaciated that a medical board determined that not a day should be lost in sending me back to Equestira. I was dispatched accordingly, in the troopship *Repeated Evacuation*, and landed a month later on the Manehattan jetty, with my health irretrievably ruined, but with permission from a paternal government to spend the next nine months in attempting to improve it.

I had neither kith nor kin in Equestria, and was therefore as free as air -- or as free as an income of eleven bits will permit a Pegasus to be. Under such circumstances I naturally gravitated to Ponyville, that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained. I stayed for some times in the clouds, going through the motions of building a home there as we had been taught in Flight School, but I always had a propensity for

living outside my means. Before too long I was deeply in debt to an earth pony named Applejack and found myself having to either seek gainful employment or change my habits.

On the very day that I had come to this conclusion, I was standing at the Soft Serve Soda Bar, when some pony tapped me on the shoulder, and turning round I recognized Gilda, who I had not seen since I had been discharged by the air force. I joined her at the bar for a round of drinks.

"Whatever have you been doing with yourself, Rainbow Dash?" Gilda asked, "You're as thin as a rake!"

I gave her a short sketch of my adventures, only slightly exaggerated. Gilda was many things but above all she was unforgiving of laziness, so I concealed mine.

"Poor devil!" she exclaimed after listening to my misfortunes, "Beholden to an Earth Pony, no less! If you want to rough her up a bit, just give me the word."

"No, Gilda, I don't want the attention that would bring. I simply need to find some more affordable lodgings and a job."

"That's a strange thing. You are the second pony today to express such to me."

"And who was the first?"

"A young filly working at the dress studio on the hill. She was looking for somepony to go halves with her over some nice rooms she'd found which were too much for her purse."

"By Celestia, what a stroke of fortune!" I cried, "I am the very mare for her!"

Gilda looked over the top of her bottle at me. "Dash, I'm not sure how to say this, but this pony was more than a bit of a dweeb."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean she's never run a race in her life, has some eccentric ideas about fashion, and is a unicorn besides."

"Wow. She does sound like a dweeb. Nevertheless, I cannot allow this chance to pass me by."

"Well, do not blame me if you do not get on with her. Her name is Rarity, by the way."

"Rarity. Well, if nothing else, if she proves as insufferable as you imply, it will be easy to ditch her."

We got up and flew up to the dress shop on the hill. It was one of the new type, an assembly line production where works of art had the finesse scraped away for ease of mass production. Gone were the days of lone artisans, or so Equestria Daily claimed.

We walked inside to watch the white Unicorn hard at work. She was the only one in the room, a vast chamber with unattended sewing machines in lines, like a sweatshop. Unlike the glassy eyed assembly line workers I had been expecting, she was vibrant and animated. She sang softly to herself as she worked, dancing from machine to machine, surrounded by swirls of fabric and glittering sequins. I found myself staring, entranced by the grace and sophistication, until Gilda brought me back to reality with a slap on the back of the head.

"Eyes forwards, Dash. This is Rarity. Rarity, I would like to introduce you to my old friend, Rainbow Dash."

"Ah. Charmed," Rarity said, smiling and shaking my hand with a firmness I would not have given her credit for. Her hoof was perfectly manicured and I felt shame and awkwardness at my own filthy hooves. "You have been in Zebrica, I perceive?"

"How on Earth did you know that?" I asked in astonishment.

"Never mind," said she, giggling to herself and gesturing to her mannequin, "The question is now about the necklace. Do you see the significance of the emeralds?"

"It looks kind of froo froo," I said guardedly.

"Ha! You do not understand. Dressmakers these days have reduced their use of emeralds in craftsmanship due to limited supply, an unfortunate side effect of the establishment of mass production. In order to meet demand, they have taken to the production of coloured glass, which to the untrained eye can be mistaken for genuine emeralds. This type of counterfeit emeralds has been flooding the market and swindling hundreds of ponies out of their savings. But I have developed an easy and practical test to tell the true from the false."

"And what test is this, pray tell?"

"Simply take a metal coin and run it along the jewel. If it leaves a scratch, it is glass. If it is unharmed, it is genuine."

"Good heavens! You experimented with such a thing? What if your theory had been wrong and you had ruined actual emeralds?" I cried.

"It was a sacrifice I was willing to make to advance the cause of justice and, besides, my intuition informed me this was the right path," when Rarity said the word 'Intuition' she turned

slightly to show off her flank and her three-diamond cutie mark.

"Well, then, you are to be congratulated," I said.

"I simply have a passing interest in the evolution of crime. A hobby, nothing more."

"If you've finished dweebing it up about your dresses, Rarity, we are here on business," Gilda cut in, "Rainbow Dash needs accommodation and you were whining -" Rarity's eyes narrowed, and Gilda swiftly corrected herself, "- complaining about not finding anyone to go halves with you for the lodgings. I thought I could bring you two together."

Rarity seemed delighted at the idea of sharing her rooms. "I have my eye on a suite in Baker Street," she said, "Which would suit us to a T! You don't mind the smell of perfume, do you?"

"Uh, as long as it's not too girly," I said awkwardly.

"That's good enough. I generally have dressmaking gear about, and occasionally need a model. Would that annoy you?"

"By no means,"

"Let me see, what are my other shortcomings? I have a slight flair for the dramatic and a propensity to lock myself in my room while wearing a dark cape. You simply must not think me sulky when I do this, just leave me alone and I'll soon be right. What about you? I find it's simply a good idea to know the worst of the other before one commits to such a partnership."

I laughed, but felt intensely awkward at having to vocalise my own failings. "I listen to rock music almost exclusively, I get up at ungodly hours to go flying, and get cranky when my naps are interrupted. I have another set of vices when I'm well, but those are the principle ones at present."

"Do you exclude musical montages from your presence?" Rarity asked anxiously.

"It depends on the player," I answered, "A well done musical montage is a treat for the gods, a poor one -"

"Oh, no fear," Rarity laughed, "Daniel Ingram is my composer,"

"Ah, then my concerns are dispelled." I breathed a sigh of relief.

"I think we may consider the thing settled - that is, if the rooms are agreeable to you."

"When shall we see them?"

"Call for me here tomorrow noon, and we'll go together and inspect everything."

"Very well. Noon exactly," I said, shaking her hoof."

As we left, I turned and asked Gilda, "By the way, how the hay did she know I came from Zebrica? Have you been talking behind my back?"

"That's just her way," she said, smirking, "A great many ponies are curious as to how she finds things out."

"Oh, a mystery is it? I hate mysteries," I grumbled.

"Then you had best study her," Gilda teased, "But be careful not to gaze too deep into the well of sissiness lest you become a sissy yourself."

"Good bye," I told her, and flew away, but as I flew back to my cloud home I found myself considerably intrigued by my new acquaintance.