

"IT'S ALL LIES AND SLANDER!"

By GeodesicDragon

As I strolled through the streets of Ponyville, I felt like I was on top of the world. I felt as though I could take on a manticore, or Discord, or the Changelings, or even a pack of Timber Wolves and come out with barely a scratch on me. But, most importantly, I felt like there was nothing that could get me down.

Except, perhaps, for all the ponies who were shooting venomous glances my way. At first I tried to ignore it, thinking that perhaps they had mistaken me for somepony else. But it kept happening again and again, and the pony glaring at me didn't stick around long enough for me to ask them exactly what their problem was.

Approaching the diner, I saw three other mares – Berry Punch, Roseluck and Colgate – sitting outside, chatting happily. I smiled brightly – if anypony could help me make sense of this situation, then it would surely be my friends. But as they saw me approaching, their conversation ground to a halt and they all gave me the same filthy look I'd been getting all morning.

"Uh... morning, girls." I waved at them. "What's up?"

"We could ask you the same thing," Berry replied. "Tell us, have you been with any stallions lately?"

My eyes shrank to pinpricks and I shook your head, blushing crimson. "What? No!" I replied. "Whatever gave you that idea?!"

"Oh, come on," Roseluck said. "We're your friends, so you can tell us all about your 'conquests.'" She giggled. "It was Big Macintosh, wasn't it? Celestia know he's a tough nut to crack."

"I haven't slept with anypony!" I snarled. "It's all lies and slander! Where on Equestria did you hear this stupid rumour, anyway?" I paused. "Because that's all it is, a rumour."

"We overheard Rarity talking about it," Colgate said. "You know what that mare is like when it comes to gossip." She stood up and put a few bits on the table. "If you're adamant that this is a rumour, then of course we're going to believe you — and the least we can do, as your friends, is help you get to the bottom of this."

Berry and Roseluck also stood up, the three of them coming over to me and giving me a brief hug.

"Let's find Rarity," I said. "I'll show her that I'm not some whorse, and then we can get to the bottom of this."

My friends nodded, and we set off in the direction of Rarity's shop.

"Welcome to the Carousel Boutique," Rarity said as the bell above the door chimed our presence. "Where everything is chique, unique and—" She stopped mid-sentence as she caught sight of me and narrowed her eyes. "Oh, it's *you*."

"Well that went sour fast," I replied. "Listen, Rarity, I just want to cut to the chase here. What you've been spouting to everypony about me is a filthy rumour." I glared at her. "And I demand to know why in Tartarus you are even making that sort of thing up!"

"Me?" Rarity put a hoof to her chest in shock. "Making things up?"

Roseluck stepped forward and pointed an accusatory hoof at her. "Don't play dumb with us, Rarity," she snarled. "We overheard you telling Cheerilee about 'the mare with the libido.'"

"Yeah, Rarity," Berry added. "So just tell us what your problem is already, before we see to it you lose more than just *our* custom."

Rarity balked at this. "W-whatever do you mean?" she asked.

"How do you think Fancy Pants will react when he hears you've been spreading lies about your customers?" Colgate asked. "It wouldn't be hard to get a letter to him, you know." She stomped a hoof into the ground. "Now tell us what your damn problem is!"

"I haven't got a problem!" Rarity shrieked. "I was merely voicing what I had already heard from somepony else!"

"Who?" I demanded.

"Rainbow Dash." Rarity sighed. "She told me this morning, when she was giving me details of the weather we can expect for the rest of this week." She paused. "But if you say it is a lie, then I apologise for having played my part in its spread — and assure you that I will do my utmost to make sure everypony knows the truth."

"Fine by me." I shrugged. "Come on, girls, let's find Rainbow Dash."

With that, the four of us turned around and left.

The sound of heavy snoring, as well as the sight of a rainbow-coloured tail dangling from a tree branch, gave away Rainbow Dash's position. Myself, Berry, Roseluck and Colgate approached her quietly — even though we all knew she could sleep through a tornado — and stood underneath.

"Hey, Rainbow Dash!" I shouted. "Wake up, dammit, you've got some explaining to do, you hear me?!"

Rainbow didn't even stir, so Berry stepped up to the tree.

"Allow me to try," she said — turning around and kicking the tree with all her might. Again, not a peep came from the pegasus above us. "Shoot, I thought for sure that would work."

I looked at Roseluck, expecting her to try, but she just shrugged and pointed at Colgate.

"Me?" she asked. "What could I possibly— oh, right. Unicorn."

With that, she focused some magic into her horn and grabbed Dash's tail in her aura. Then, as a wicked grin flashed across her face for a moment, she yanked hard and pulled the snoozing mare out of the tree. Dash awoke with a startled yelp as she hit the ground hard, looking up to find herself locking eyes with me.

"Oh, hey," she said, acting nonchalant. "What's up, you here to share the gory details about last night's boy toy?"

"Cut the crap, Rainbow Dash," I snarled, prodding her with a forehoof. "Rarity told us you're the one who told her this vicious rumour that's been going around about me."

Dash shrugged. "Yeah, I did pass it on," she replied. "But if you think I'm the one who came up with it, then you're wrong."

"Oh, please," Colgate scoffed. "You're one of the biggest pranksters in Ponyville — and after some of the stunts you've pulled, surely something like this one would be foal's play?"

"Hey." Dash narrowed her eyes. "That thing with the superglue and the feathers was an accident, not a prank. It's not my fault you weren't looking where you were walking."

Colgate ground her teeth together as Berry spoke up.

"Well if it wasn't you who made it up, then who did you hear it from?" she asked. "Because, honestly, this is getting annoying."

"Tell me about it," I grumbled.

"Look." Dash sighed. "I'm sorry about the rumour — but if you want answers, then head over to the hospital and speak with Ian. He told me about it when I was getting a check up earlier."

"Ian?" Roseluck parroted. "You mean that human?"

Dash rolled her eyes. "How many ponies named 'Ian' are there?"

"All right." I stepped in quickly to stop Roseluck throttling Dash for her cheeky remark. "We'll go to the hospital — but by Celestia, I swear I had better get some answers there."

Dash simply grinned and flew back up to the tree branches to resume her nap, while my friends and I headed back into town.

As the four of us entered the hospital, we began looking around for any sign of Ian — which wouldn't be hard, as the human was easily twice the height of a normal pony. As we did so, one of the doctors noticed us and came over.

"Good morning, ladies," he said. "Can I help you at all?"

"Morning, Haywick." I nodded. "You can help us, actually. Do you know where Ian is? It's rather imperative that I speak to him."

Haywick looked puzzled. "Do you have an appointment?" he asked.

"Well, no," I replied. "But I still need to speak to him. It's about the rumour somepony has been spreading about me — Rainbow Dash told me she heard it from him, so I'm here looking for answers."

Haywick rubbed his chin. "Ah, yes, the rumour." he shook his head. "I chose not to believe it myself, but it's a shame how many ponies immediately took it onboard as fact." I smiled at him, and he smiled back. "I'll go and see if Ian is free, one moment please."

He trotted away, through a door labelled 'STAFF ONLY,' and disappeared from sight. I looked around, scuffing a forehoof along the tiled floor to avoid the glares and whispers of staff and patients alike. A few minutes passed before Haywick finally reappeared.

"Ian has agreed to speak to you," he said. "Follow me."

He led us through the door he had gone through, down a set of stairs, along some twisting corridors, before finally stopping at another door which was labelled 'STAFFROOM.'

"He's in there, ladies." Haywick pointed at the door. "As luck would have it, he was on his lunch break. Make it quick, though, as he needs to go back on duty in ten minutes."

"Thanks, Doc." I held my hoof out and he bumped it with his before walking away. "Come on then, girls, let's get some answers."

The four of us walked into the room, where Ian sat on a couch in the corner. On the table in front of him was a Sugarcube Corner container, a sprinkling of sugar being all that remained of the contents. The human sat up as we approached, popping his joints and giving us his undivided attention.

"So," he said. "Doctor Haywick tells me that you wanted to speak with me regarding the rumours being circulated about one of you?"

I raised a hoof. "Yeah," I replied. "I'm the one whom the rumours are about, and I want to know who told you about it."

"Nopony told me anything," Ian said.

Roseluck gasped. "If that's the case, then that means..."

"It means he's the one who invented the rumour to begin with!" Berry snarled, getting in Ian's face. "What's your problem, bub?!"

Ian gently pushed Berry away from him. "I have no idea what you are talking about," he defended. "Why would I want to make up rumours about a mare whom I'm never met?"

"But Rainbow Dash told us she heard the rumour from you while getting her check up this morning," I said.

"Then Rainbow Dash is sorely mistaken," Ian snapped. "Now, unless there was something else, I need to get back to work."

He stood up and walked towards the door, only stopping when Colgate held a hoof out and spoke.

"Ian, wait," she said. "What exactly did you and Rainbow Dash talk about during her check up?"

Ian sighed. "We talked about her Wonderbolts training, the weather, the coronation of Princess Twilight... you know, the sort of things you talk about with anypony."

"And that's it?" Colgate turned to face me. "That's really weird — I seriously can't imagine how Rainbow Dash could have misinterpreted any of that as a rumour about you."

I looked down at my hooves. "I guess I'll never figure this out," I whimpered. "Thanks for your time, Doctor, I'm sorry we blamed you for this mess. We'll let you get back to work now."

Colgate opened the door and we stepped into the corridor — only for Ian to stop us in our tracks.

"Wait," he called. "There was *one* thing Rainbow Dash did, something that I found rather strange."

"What was it?" I asked, hope evident in my voice.

"Well..." Ian scratched his head. "I won't go into too much detail about Dash's check up, for confidentiality reasons, but part of it required me to ask her if her vaccinations were up to date."

The four of us looked at him blankly. "What does that have to do with the rumour?" Berry asked.

"Dash asked me why I wanted to know about her vaccinations — so I told her that with winter approaching, it was important to have everypony protected against colds and flu." He paused for a moment. "I was looking through the hospital's vaccination records and, to be honest, they were pretty dismal. I explained to the rest of the staff that should somepony go down with flu, it would spread like wildfire to the rest of Ponyville. As soon as I said that, Rainbow Dash burst out laughing — heck, she couldn't leave fast enough."

"Wait a minute." Roseluck held a hoof out. "Did you say that a flu outbreak would 'spread like wildfire?'"

Ian nodded. "Um, yes?"

Berry laughed out loud. "Oh, Celestia," she said. "I get it now."

"So do I!" Colgate joined in with the laughing, as did Roseluck, while Ian and I stood in silence.

"Would somepony mind telling me what's so funny?" he asked. "I don't see why my choice of words would cause such a laugh riot."

Berry pointed at me. "You said you've never met our friend before?" she asked, to which Ian nodded. "Well then, Ian, allow me to introduce you to... Wild Fire!"

Ian stood still for a moment as he processed what Berry had said. Eventually his jaw dropped open in shock, my friends resumed their howling laughter — while I sank to the floor and buried my head in my forehooves, silently wishing that the rumours were in fact true.

Because I'd much rather deal with rumours — instead of the ridicule this revelation was no doubt going to cause.