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A bit of backstory before you begin, this tale came about on Ponychan, when a discussion about random shipping came up. I tossed the idea of Twist and Bloomberg, just for kicks. But of course, the idea knocked around my noggin too much, and this fell out. Thankfully ship free. Enjoy!

(I also apologize in advance for my rampant abuse of Twist's Peach Impediment. I mean Speech Impediment.)

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Twist was an odd little filly. When she spoke, her voice turned off most potential friends. She wasn't pretty either, like Silver Spoon or Diamond Tiara. It was odd being such an odd one. Things didn't seem to work for others like it did for her. When she got her cutie mark for making Peppermint Sticks that she loved so much, nobody seemed to make much of a deal. She didn't have a Cutecenera like Silver Spoon. In fact, to trace things back precisely, all of her sadness and troubles seemed to start when she got her cutie mark.

It couldn't have been a better night.

She was making peppermint sticks with her father, just like her grandmother had taught her. She rolled them by hoof, carefully laying them out on a sheet. She heard him laugh, long and hearty like he did when something made him smile so much he couldn't help but show it.

"What's tho funny dad?"

"You sure do love Peppermint, don't you?"

"I don't love peppermint," She said, still rolling the sticks, " I mean, peppermint ith tathty, but what I really love ith the look on my friend'th fatheth when they hand them a freth batch! But you still didn't antherw my question!"

"Why was I laughing?" He chuckled a little and planted his hoof squarely on her head, mussing her frizzy red hair a little more, "Because it's funny! What if this is it?"

"It?" She placed another roll on the sheet, and started working another.

"Your special talent!"

She took in a deep breath, and slowly, it dawned on her, "Dad, you just might be right! I can't thing, or danth, but I can make peppermint thticks! And everypony loveth peppermint thticks!"

She spun around, trying to catch a glimpse of her flank. And the sight of it made her father chuckle again, holding his sides.

“Okay now princess, it won’t just show up like magic! You have to give it some time.”

“How much more time? I can barely thtand it!”

Her father didn’t answer immediately, instead he took the tray of treats from off the counter, and moved to the oven,

“Go brush your teeth, and give your mother a goodnight kiss. I guarantee that tomorrow morning you’ll have your cutie mark.”

Twist’s eyes grew to the size of saucers, and she literally bounced up and down with her tremendous excitement. “Really, really dad?”

“Yes ma’am.” He smiled, slipping the tray into the oven, “Now go to bed.”

“Okay!” She bounded out the door. But, before her footsteps got too distant, her father heard her run back inside, and she hurried to his side once more, before planting the tiniest kiss on his cheek.

“I love you dad!” And with that, she was gone.

Her father, he just smiled, and set the timer to make sure he didn’t burn the peppermint again. He wasn’t so good at this. Not like Twist. She was such a chipper little thing.

And the next morning, her heart nearly jumped out of her throat. It was true, on her flank was a two little candy canes, arranged just so their crooks met in an adorable little heart. Her father decided that today they would go out and buy her a nice saddle, but he never got around to it. He needed to be out the door early, and he didn’t get home until she was fast asleep.

But that didn’t bother Twist. She wanted to show her friend. Her best friend, Applebloom. They were both Blank-Flanks, and had taken plenty of flak for it. But now, she wouldn’t have to worry about Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon making fun of her anymore. She could hold her head up high.

Applebloom was less than thrilled though. She even seemed disappointed that she had a Cutie Mark now. Sure, it meant that Twist had something she didn’t, but Applebloom was supposed to be happy for her! No, instead she stomped off, upset that she could no longer go to the Cüteceñera with her best friend. She didn’t want to be friends anymore, it seemed.

Twist couldn’t understand it. It was like she had been rejected for the one thing that was

supposed to make her special. She was supposed to be proud of her Cutie Mark, but Applebloom made her doubt that.

So when she went back inside, she covered her flank with a small skirt and waited by her window. Her mother had come to see her, with a bowl of wheatgrass for lunch.

“Sweetie? Is something the matter?” She placed the bowl beside her on the windowsill, but her daughter didn’t regard it.

“Applebloom’th upthet at me.”

“What? But I thought you two were such good friends. Did you have an argument?”

“No, it’s becauthe of thith dumb Cutie Mark!” Twist made to strike her own flank, but she couldn’t reach with her hooves, and only made herself look silly. Her mother leaned up against her, to calm her just a little.

“Hush now, why do you think that?”

“Becauthe me and Applebloom were only friendth becauthe we didn’t have our Cutie Markth yet. Now that I’ve got mine, Applebloom doethn’t want to hang out with me anymore!”

She felt her mother’s hoof wrap around her shoulder.

“That’s not true, stop it.” Her mother nuzzled up against her, but she turned away, “You and Applebloom are still friends. She’s just bummed out that she doesn’t have her Cutie Mark, in fact I bet more than anything she’d want your company.

“You think tho?” Twist brushed her cheek with her hoof. She wasn’t crying, but it felt like she was.

“I know so, and I know Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon’s Cuteceñera will be the perfect place to show you’re still her friend. She won’t be so embarrassed if you’re still there for her!”

And then she smiled, slowly and carefully, “Hey, you might jutht be right. I’m thtill Applebloom’th friend. I jutht gotta remind her!”

“Of course sweetie. Now eat your lunch before it gets soggy.”

And Twist was happy again. She ate quickly and, when her father came home much later, she was still awake. She begged him to take her first thing in the morning to get her new saddle, so she could look nice for the Cuteceñera. Against her smiling face, he was powerless, and said yes, planting a kiss on her head and reminding her that it was far past her bedtime.

The next day, they walked side by side, her and her father and her mother, to the Carousel Boutique. And there, she picked out the most beautiful saddle she could find, decorated with greens and whites and reds, it complimented her new Cutie Mark so nicely. And she couldn't help but parade in it all the way home, against her father's advice, and despite the fact that the party wouldn't be for a few hours at least.

But when the time did come, Twist was running ahead of her parents, skipping and leaping all the way to Sugarcube Corner. But, when she arrived, she couldn't find Applebloom. She looked up and down the room, at every table, and through every crowd of fillies, but she just couldn't find her. It was like Applebloom was avoiding her.

"Where could thee be?" She thought, "Maybe thee didn't come becauthe I got my Cutie Mark! Thee thinkth I'm too cool to be her friend!"

Thoughts like that started to get to her. Maybe she was the one who was alienating her best friend. This stupid Cutie Mark was what did it. Applebloom was an outcast now, she was alone, all because Twist had to get her Cutie Mark first.

She stifled a tear, and pulled her saddle over her flank, just so nobody could see it. That disgusting little heart.

There was a record scratch, and the party's music stopped. Everyone turned towards the door, it was Applebloom. Twist wanted to speak to her, but the crowd was too thick.

"Blank Flank! Blank Flank!"

Oh no, no! They were making fun of Applebloom. She needed to do something! Twist tried and tried to push her way past the other fillies. They didn't budge.

"You got a problem with Blank Flanks?"

She didn't recognize that filly's voice. It wasn't Silver Spoon, or Diamond Tiara. She just managed to peer over the crowd to see who it was. There were two ponies, a Pegasus and a Unicorn, both standing at Applebloom's side. She didn't know who either of them were, but she noticed immediately, they didn't have their Cutie Marks either.

Twist's heart hit the ground like a rock and shattered like an old peppermint. She'd been replaced. Applebloom had new friends, friends like her. She didn't need Twist anymore. When her father came to pick her up, he asked why she wasn't wearing her saddle anymore. "Becauthe, I'm not Thpecial enough..."

For the next few days, she sat alone in her room. She wouldn't do much, aside from pretending to sleep, attending school, and occasionally eating a peppermint stick as slowly as she could. She didn't even bother to make new ones when her jar ran empty. Finally, her father walked in

on her personal pity party, and sat on the edge of her bed.

“Talk to me, Twisty.”

“I’m never gonna be with Applebloom again...” She muttered.

Her father tried to pull the blanket off of her, but she held it tight.

“That’s silly, isn’t Applebloom your best friend?”

She sat up, and raised her voice, “Thee found new friendth. Thee doethn’t want to be my friend anymore!”

She was on the verge of tears again, and her father scooted closer, “Sugar, why in the world wouldn’t she want to be your friend anymore? Did she tell you that?”

“Well, no, but thee was with thothe other two girlth,”

Her father chuckled again, but Twist couldn’t see anything funny about this. He mussed her hair again,

“C’mon now, you can’t just go assuming. You need to go talk to Applebloom. It’s what’s best for your friendship.”

“Are you thure?”

“It couldn’t hurt to try, could it?”

And she didn’t wait another moment, except to get a good luck kiss on the forehead from her father. Twist ran as fast as she could to Sweet Apple Acres, thinking about what she would say when she got there. She must have run the conversation over in her head at least fifty times, but when she stepped on to the porch and knocked on the door, Applebloom didn’t open it.

It was Applejack.

“Howdy Twist, what can I do you for?” She said.

“I wath, um, jutht looking for Applebloom. Have you theen her?”

“Well, I reckon she’s out with her pals the Cutie Mark Crusaders right now. They’re just like peas in a pod ever since that Cuteceñera. You want me to call her?”

“No, ith fine.” Twist turned away, with her heart weighing down her chest again. She hopped off

the porch, not even bothering to say goodbye.

“I’ll just tell her you stopped by then, okay sugarcube?”

“That’s fine…” She said. She wasn’t sure if Applejack had heard her, but she really didn’t care at this point. She thought, for a moment, that maybe she should ask Applejack where her sister had went. But she felt dealing with the awkwardness of her new friends was a can of worms she didn’t want to open. She thought of a lot of things that she could do, of course, but she didn’t bother. Actually, she never got out of Sweet Apple Acres, before she felt so lousy she just needed to sit down.

So Twist sat down, leaning up against the first apple tree she could find. She had packed a few Peppermint sticks she had made, to help her apologize to Applebloom. Peppermint was great for making up. It was also good for when you’re sad. That’s why she was eating it now.

On her third or fourth stick, a breeze caught the tree’s branches and it rustled above her. Twist looked up just in time to be clonked on her noggin by a ripe red apple. If she was Pony Newton, this would be a major discovery. Of course, she wasn’t. So it was just a minor inconvenience.

“Hey, who threw thith?” She said, rubbing her injured head. Of course, she figured out pretty quickly that there was nobody around. Still.

“Oh.”

It was just the tree. Though, it was sort of nice. An apple did sound delicious. So she put down her little satchel of peppermint sticks and bit into the bright red apple. It tasted better than she expected, sweeter than an apple should.

“Thank you!” She said, but, she really didn’t have anyone to thank. So, Twist decided she would thank the tree. As silly as it seemed, it also seemed appropriate. She placed the apple in the grass, and turned to face it, and that’s when she noticed the writing in its bark. Adjusting her glasses, and leaning in, she could almost make out a name written in the tree. The writing wasn’t very neat, and it must have been carved years ago, faded a bit by weather.

“Bloomberg?” She said aloud, “Your name ith Bloomberg? Well, thankth for the apple. It really cheered me up!”

The tree didn’t respond, of course. But something about it, maybe the way the wind was catching its leaves, or maybe just how the trunk stood in the mid-morning daylight, made Twist think it was listening to her. And so, despite common sense nagging at the back of her head, she sat back down by the tree trunk and decided Bloomberg would be the best one to tell about her troubles.

"I've just been kinda upset lately, on account of getting my Cutie Mark. Normally that'd be a great thing, but my friend Applebloom isn't, well at first I thought there was just upset that she didn't get her Cutie Mark yet, but then she started hanging out with the other girls. It's like, she was only my friend because we didn't have our Cutie Mark..."

"Isn't that sad?"

Bloomberg swayed just so, and that let Twist know he understood. And she sat, just for a little while, enjoying the apple and resting in the shade of her new friend.

"Thank," She said, standing up, "I gotta get home, but we'll talk tomorrow, okay buddy?"

And when Twist got home, and her parents asked her how it went, she realized that she hadn't even thought about Applebloom since she talked with Bloomberg. She didn't know how she'd explain spending an afternoon with a tree, so she left that part out, and told her parents simply that she didn't get the chance to talk to her friend. Her old friend.

They comforted her, but she didn't mind. She told them that'd she'd get another chance another day.

But the next day, after school, Twist poked her head in the living room, and told her mother that she was going to Sweet Apple Acres to try again. But she never made it to the door of the Apple Family house. Instead, she had brought a batch of her favorite peppermint sticks to eat with Bloomberg. And when she returned two hours later, she merely shrugged her shoulders and told her mother that she couldn't find Applebloom.

So every day, for a week and three days, Twist would head to Sweet Apple Acres and sit in Bloomberg's shade. Sometimes they'd talk, about Applebloom most often, but it seemed that she'd talk less and less about her as the days went on. Soon she was telling Bloomberg about her favorite things, and how she first made peppermint sticks, and her grades in school, and a few lame jokes her father had told her. And finally, one afternoon, she simply sat beside him. Calmly chewing those little bits of peppermint, if only to keep her mouth busy, while she lounged under him.

And until the sun set, she just listened to the wind. And how Bloomberg's leaves rustled. And how he swayed just a little bit in the breeze. Almost like he was telling her about himself. And she was happy.

One morning, on a day when little fillies didn't have to go to school, she woke up bright and early, to watch the sun rise beside Bloomberg. She packed her bag with a little bundle of peppermint, tied with a bit of ribbon, like she always did, then left a note on the kitchen counter and crept out even before her mother was awake to make her breakfast. She walked on the same path, picking up her pace when the cool blue sky started to brighten. She didn't want to

miss it. The sun would rise so perfectly from the little hill where she met Bloomberg.

But she was just a little too late. And by the time she made it to the front gates of the Orchard, the sun was already peeking over the horizon. Her little sprint broke into a full gallop, so she wouldn't miss another minute with her friend. She climbed the little hill, and though she could have seen from a distance, she only realized once she was standing right there. The morning light showed it all too clear.

He was gone.

There was only a patch of dirt where her friend once stood.

Of course Twist didn't just outright accept this. She didn't understand. It must have been her eyes, or maybe her memory was failing her. She must have taken the wrong path, walked to the wrong hill. It was the wrong tree.

She ran from tree to tree, checking their roots, rubbing their bark. Praying that she'd find the name carved in one of them. But something inside her knew from the very start. She'd walked on the same path. She couldn't have been mistaken.

And hours later, she didn't know how long, she finally sat back down by that patch of dirt and cried. Just quiet little sobs that moistened the dirt in front of her. She curled her body around the dirt, just to pretend like he was still there, just for a little while. She closed her eyes.

"Twist, what in the hay are you doing?"

She snapped back to the real world. Her head poked up, and there was Applebloom, with those two other Fillies.

"Where's Bloomberg? Where did he go?" She didn't even bother saying anything else.

"Bloomberg? Ya'll sound like mah sister," She turned to the Pegasus beside her, "Scootaloo, did you know that my sister named one of the trees she planted?"

"No way!" Her friend said.

"Was it a special tree?" The other filly, the Unicorn asked.

"I think it was the first tree she ever planted er something." Applebloom said, "But that don't sound too special to me."

"That's special!" said the Unicorn.



“No it isn’t, you’re crazy Sweetie Belle.” Scootaloo said.

“But, but where’th Bloomberg?” Twist asked, she was still red from crying.

“Oh, um,” Applebloom looked around, to her friends at first, but then it became clear that she knew exactly what the answer was. She didn’t know how she’d say it though.

“Well, last night, mah big sister and her friends took him too Appleloosa, as a gift.”

“Applelootha!?” Twist was ready to cry again, “But, but why? He was thuch a... I mean, I liked thitting under that tree...”

Applebloom just shook her head and smiled, “It’s no big thing, here, we can just plant another one! Right Sweetie Belle?”

Sweetie Belle smiled, knowing exactly what her friend meant, and shouted, “Seed!” And Scootaloo echoed her, “Seed!”

From her saddlebag, Applebloom produced a little apple seed. And she passed it to Scootaloo, and then Scootaloo passed it to Sweetie Belle, and Sweetie Belle passed it to Twist. At first, she didn’t know what to do with it, but Applebloom motioned her hoof to the little patch of dirt where Bloomberg once stood. And Twist nodded, pushing the little speck just under the soil.

“There? All happy now?” Applebloom asked.

“Well, almotht.” Twist said, and reached into her own little saddlebag. She pulled out the bundle of peppermint, and started working on the patch while the other three watched. And in just a few minutes, she had erected a little fence around the seed, made of peppermint sticks and ribbon. Twist admired her work, and declared, “There! Perfect!”

“Why the hay did you do that?” Scootaloo looked upset, “We coulda eaten those!”

“Oh thucks, it’th only peppermint thticks. I make them all the time. It’th my thpecial talent!”

She proved it, by turning and presenting her Cutie Mark to the awestruck crusaders. Their eyes went wide, and Scootaloo even reached out to touch it.

Sweetie Belle was the first to ask the obvious, “You got your Cutie Mark? For making peppermint sticks?”

“Well, yeah,” She was almost blushing, “I could thow you how to if you’d like.”

“What are you waiting for?” said Scootaloo, her wings fluttering with glee, “It’s Cutie Mark

Crusader time!”

“Okay, follow me you guyth!” Twist sprinted ahead, and the other three were close behind her. And the three little fillies shouted, “Cutie Mark Candy Makers!”

Their eyes turned to Twist, and she thought for a moment, before letting out a cheer of her own, “Cutie Mark Crusaderth, with a Twitth!”

*“Cutie Mark Crusaders with a Twist!”*