

FRIENDS IN HIGH PLACES

by GeodesicDragon

Three fillies sat under the cool shade of a tree, watching their classmates playing in the sun. One of them soon grew bored with the show and turned her attention to the other two.

"So," she said, "what do y'all reckon we'll be learnin' about today?"

Her companions both faced her.

"I don't know Apple Bloom," one replied, "we'll probably be carrying on with our lessons on money."

"I think the word you want is 'currency', Scootaloo." the third one piped up, "Were you even paying attention to Miss Cheerilee?"

"Normally when you talk like that, Sweetie Belle," Scootaloo snorted, "I ask if you're a dictionary. But I think its safe to say that we all know that you are."

Sweetie Belle smiled as Apple Bloom suddenly groaned.

"Great," she muttered, "an' just when Ah thought today was gonna be trouble-free. Look who's comin'."

Scootaloo and Sweetie Belle followed Apple Bloom's gaze, which fell upon a couple of other foals. The two earth ponies were sneering at the three Crusaders as they came over and integrated themselves into the group without an invite to do so.

"Look at this Silver Spoon," one said, "it looks like the blank flanks are having yet another hushed little talk with each other. Remind me, what is it you're planning to fail at again? Is it getting your cutie marks, or just life in general?"

Silver Spoon laughed sycophantically.

"I think it's the second one Diamond Tiara," she said, "because we both know these losers have tried everything to get their cutie marks. Maybe they should try and get one in not being so lame?"

"But that would mean..." Diamond Tiara replied as she put a hoof to her forehead dramatically, "that they'd be blank flanks forever!"

She and Silver Spoon both giggled uproariously as Scootaloo stomped a hoof into the ground.

"You've had your fun," she snapped, "now leave us alone."

"Or what, Scootaloser?" Diamond Tiara snarled, "You'll tell on us? Even if you do, which you won't, the worst Miss Cheerilee can do is give us lines or detention. And even if she was to go so far as to expel us, we'd just get home schooled. Which means we'd still be around to have some fun at your expense."

"Yeah," Silver Spoon added, "you won't get rid of us that easily, so you might as well get used to the idea of us making your lives a misery... because there's not a single thing you can do about it."

The two of them laughed again as the bell rang before trotting inside the schoolhouse. The Crusaders let out a dejected sigh.

"As much as Ah hate ta admit it," Apple Bloom sighed, "she's right. Tellin' on them ain't gonna do anythin' but cause more problems."

"Well there has to be something we can do," Sweetie Belle's voice cracked with emotion, "because I'm sick of those two always picking on us!"

"Well we can't get revenge on them," Scootaloo interjected, "especially after what happened when Babs was here."

"Well," Apple Bloom said, "we'll hafta think of somethin'. But whatever it is, it has ta be good enough ta make those two leave us alone ferever."

The three of them nodded and hurried inside the schoolhouse. Entering the classroom they took their seats just as the teacher came in, closing the door behind her.

"Good morning everypony!" she said cheerfully.

"Good morning Miss Cheerilee!" the class chorused in unison.

Cheerilee beamed and sat at her desk.

"Okay class," she said, "we are going to be continuing our lesson on currency today. But before we do, I have an assignment for you to do. You can work alone or in teams for this."

The class groaned. Cheerilee rolled her eyes and continued talking.

"If anypony knows about currency," she said, "it's the many ponies who run shops and other businesses here in Ponyville. So, for your assignment, I would like you to go out and find somepony willing to come in and talk about how they earn their money, as well as what they do with it. Any questions?"

A single hoof was raised.

"Yes Twist," Cheerilee nodded, "what is your question?"

"Can we bring in friendth or family for thith project?" Twist asked with her usual lisp, "Becauthe my family runth a thweet thop."

"That's fine Twist," Cheerilee replied, "as long as they don't mind coming in, that is. Now, are there any other questions?"

The students stayed silent.

"Very well," Cheerilee said, "we shall hold the talks next Monday. Now, let us continue our lessons."

The three Crusaders sat at a table in the shade and ate their lunch in silence. Each filly was thinking about the project assigned to them by Miss Cheerilee. Sweetie Belle was the first to speak.

"Everypony will be expecting us to bring in either Rarity or Applejack," she said, "because they're the only ones we know who make any money."

"Ah know they will." Apple Bloom replied, "Meanwhile, Diamond Tiara an' Silver Spoon will be bringin' their dads in. Then we'll have to listen to those old windbags braggin' 'bout how they own nearly half of Ponyville 'tween them."

"And then there's the fact we're banned from most of the stores in town anyway," Scootaloo moaned, "on account of the damage we've done during our Crusades."

"What about Pinkie Pie?" Sweetie Belle asked, "She knows about making money."

"We could ask Pinkie Pie," Apple Bloom replied, "but she's been in a mighty bad mood lately. Somethin' musta happened 'tween her an' Doctor Sorou ta make her so angry."

"And I guess none of us want to approach her in case she bites our heads off." Scootaloo said, "But who else *is* there?"

The three of them thought for a few moments before they all groaned and laid their heads against the table.

"Wow," a voice said, "I've never seen you three looking so dejected before. Whatever happened to the three happy-go-lucky fillies I'm so familiar with?"

The three crusaders looked up, their eyes locking with those of a human, flanked on either side by members of the Royal Guard.

"Geo!" Sweetie Belle squealed before gasping, "Sorry, I meant to say... *Prince* Geo."

Geo waved a hand dismissively.

"You three are my friends," he said, "so you can drop the 'Prince' part. To be honest, I still can't believe that I even *am* a prince."

"But," Scootaloo said hesitantly, "the coronation was a month ago. Surely you'd be used to it by now?"

"You'd think," Geo said, "but you'd be wrong. Anyway, this isn't about me. What's got you three looking so upset?"

Apple Bloom sighed.

"We're supposed ta ask one of tha shopkeepers in town if'n they'd mind comin' ta talk to the class about how they make their money, and what they do with it. But we can't think of anypony besides Applejack and Rarity, and everypony will be expectin' us ta ask them. Just fer once we want ta be original."

Geo laid a hand on his chin.

"When are these talks due to take place?" he asked, "Because I might be able to help you out."

The three fillies gasped in delight.

"Next Monday," Sweetie Belle replied, "and I assume it would be in the morning when school starts."

Geo turned to one of the guards with him.

"How's my schedule for next Monday morning?" he said, "Please tell me I've not got anything planned."

The guard produced a diary and flicked through it. He scanned the pages and looked up with a nod.

"All clear your Highness." he said, "In fact, your schedule is clear for all of next week."

"Glad to hear it," Geo replied, "now pencil in these three little fillies for Monday morning at eight."

The guard nodded and produced a quill, scribbling in the diary with it before putting both items back in the bag he carried.

"Thank ya kindly Geo," Apple Bloom said, "but if ya don't mind me askin'... what do you know about makin' money?"

"It's a surprise." Geo replied as he tapped his nose, "But trust me, you're gonna love it."

The ringing of the bell indicated the end of lunch. The Crusaders finished their sandwiches as quickly as they could and bolted back inside, waving goodbye to Geo as they ran. The human returned their waves with a large smile on his face.

"I love this job." he muttered to himself as he watched them leave.

The week flew by and soon Monday morning had arrived again, heralding the end of yet another glorious weekend for the foals now trudging reluctantly through the schoolhouse doors. Behind them walked a few adult ponies, each of them wearing something associated with their profession.

Among them were two smartly-dressed stallions, who seemed interested in only talking to each other. Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon stood nearby, listening eagerly to the two as they talked. They spotted the Crusaders walking through the gates and grinned.

"There are our friends," Diamond Tiara said sweetly, "so we're going to say hello. See you in class daddy!"

"Okay darling," one of the stallions replied, "have fun!"

"You too Silver Spoon!" the other added.

The two fillies trotted away eagerly.

"Oh we'll have some fun all right," Silver Spoon whispered, "with those blank-flank losers."

She and Diamond Tiara giggled, attracting the attention of the Crusaders who each let out an audible sigh of irritation.

"I wish the weekend would come back," Scootaloo said, "so we can get some peace and quiet from you two."

"I see you haven't got anypony with you for your assignment." Diamond Tiara sneered, "I guess being banned from every shop in town didn't help. Oh well, at least we'll get a laugh out of watching Miss Cheerilee give the three of you an 'F'."

"Ah'd like ta give *you* an 'F'," Apple Bloom snarled, "but Mac an' mah sister would kill John fer teachin' it ta me."

Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon cackled.

"We *did* get somepony," Sweetie Belle snapped, "but they're just running a little late."

"Whatever, Blanky Belle." Diamond Tiara retorted, "Try telling that to Miss Cheerilee."

The ringing of the bell signalled the start of lessons. Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon turned around but were prevented from walking away by Scootaloo leaping in front of them and bringing her face close to theirs.

"Mock us all you want," she growled, "but know this. By the end of today, you *will* be treating us with respect."

Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon glanced at each other before smirking and pushing past Scootaloo.

"Whatever," Silver Spoon said, "you don't scare us."

"Maybe if you could actually fly..." Diamond Tiara added, "we still wouldn't be scared. See you in class, blank-flanks!"

Scootaloo went to pursue the two fillies but was stopped by Sweetie Belle, who shook her head furiously.

"They're not worth it." she said, "But once we've delivered our project, they'll be begging us to be their friends."

"Sounds good." Scootaloo replied, "I assume we're going to throw it back in their faces?"

"No, because that would mean we're as bad as them." Sweetie Belle said, "But we can still rub it in."

The three Crusaders giggled as they rushed into the schoolhouse.

"—and that's how I use the money I earn to help Ponyville, by paying extraordinarily large taxes on my vast wealth."

The stallion bowed modestly as a smattering of applause filled the room, led by Diamond Tiara.

"Thank you, Mister Rich." Cheerilee said as she suppressed a yawn, "For that wonderful talk. Now, we only have one group left. Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo. Where is your speaker?"

The three fillies glanced around nervously while Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon both struggled to contain their laughter.

"He was supposed to be here by now," Apple Bloom said, "but Ah don't know what's keeping him."

"If your speaker isn't here girls," Cheerilee sighed, "then I'm afraid I'll have to give all three of you an—"

The classroom door swung open, almost hitting Filthy Rich in the snout, and a Royal Guard entered.

"Oh my," Cheerilee said, "is there a problem?"

The guard looked around the room warily before shaking his head.

"No," he replied, "there isn't a problem."

"There *is* a problem." another voice interjected, "The fact that I made a promise to be here on time, and instead arrive late!"

The owner of the voice entered the room, causing several sets of jaws to hit the ground and the Crusaders to cheer.

"Hey girls," Geo said flatly, "sorry I'm late."

"You got here just in time Geo," Sweetie Belle chirped, "because we were about to get an 'F'!"

"Sweetie Belle!" Cheerilee scolded, "You must address the Prince by his proper title."

"No they don't," Geo grinned, "because I said they could call me 'Geo'. One of the perks of being a friend of mine, you see."

Cheerilee nodded respectfully.

"I see." she said, "Apologies Sweetie Belle. Now, I assume the Prince is your speaker?"

"He sure is!" Scootaloo said proudly before flashing a wicked grin at Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon.

"Well this *is* a surprise," Cheerilee replied, "but who am I to deny Royalty? What will you be discussing with us, your Highness?"

"Has anypony ever wondered what royalty does with their money?" Geo asked. The class nodded and he continued, "Good, because that's what we're here to tell you."

"We?" the Crusaders asked in unison, "What do you mean, 'we'?"

Geo smiled and poked his head into the corridor. He said a few words quietly and came back in. The clapping of hooves soon followed as Twilight Sparkle entered the room. The guard snapped to attention while the assorted ponies quickly pressed their muzzles into the floor.

"P-princess Twilight?" Cheerilee fanned her face with a forehoof nervously, "It's a pleasure to see you again."

To Cheerilee's surprise Twilight wrapped a wing around her and pulled her in for a hug. She returned the gesture eagerly, making no attempt to hide the large grin on her face.

"It's good to see you as well Cheerilee." Twilight replied, "I'm just sorry we're late. We had a little trouble getting our foals to settle."

"Yeah," Geo chuckled, "their magic is starting to manifest itself now, so it's a bit hectic."

Polite laughter was the response. Twilight ruffled her wings and stood in front of the class with Geo at her side.

"So," she said, "judging by the blackboard behind me you're learning about currency, and that each of these ponies is here to talk about what they do with the many bits that pass through their tills each day. Well, as my husband said, royalty makes money as well. We get a stipend from the Royal Court in Canterlot each month, which we use for—"

As Twilight began her lesson the Crusaders listened intently, the grins they wore threatening to consume their faces. Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon sat nearby in silent shock, aware of the fact that the three would be rubbing this in their faces later.

"— and there you have it. That, my friends, is what we as members of the Royal Family do with our money. We invest it in the community we have grown to love and cherish, helping those who cannot help themselves."

The room broke into applause as Twilight bowed her head while Geo simply smiled. As the clapping died down he spoke.

"I just want to thank Apple Bloom, Sweetie Belle and Scootaloo," he said, "for the opportunity to come here and talk to you. It feels great to be a part of daily life here in Ponyville. If it wasn't for this town, neither Twilight or myself would be in the position we are now. So thanks again for being so great."

Another round of applause broke out as Cheerilee moved to the front of the class.

"Thank you very much to both the Prince and Princess," she said, "not only for gracing us with their presence, but also for that insightful look into how royalty works. It's good to see that not every Royal is like Prince Blueblood."

Everypony murmured and nodded in agreement as Twilight stretched her legs and wings out.

"It's been fun everypony," she said, "but we need to get back to the library. Feel free to come by and visit us any time!"

"Please do," Geo added, "because as useful as they are, the guards we've got aren't exactly the best for talking to. No offence."

"None taken your Highness." the guard replied.

As the royal couple left to applause and waving Apple Bloom, Sweetie Bell and Scootaloo slipped out of their seats and approached Diamond Tiara and Silver Spoon.

"Ah think it's safe ta assume," Apple Bloom said, "that y'all are gonna leave us alone from now on?"

"If you think," Diamond Tiara spluttered, "that we're going to stop teasing you simply because you're friends with royalty, then..."

She looked around the room for a moment before dropping her voice to a low whisper.

"... you're absolutely right."

"Y-yeah!" Silver Spoon added, "We wouldn't want to be thrown in the dungeons or anything like that!"

She laughed nervously and began playing with her mane while Diamond Tiara adopted a small smile.

"So..." she gulped, "truce?"

The Crusaders looked at each other for a moment before smiling.

"Fine by us." Apple Bloom replied, "'sides, Ah think y'all learned something. Ya don't need ta be rich ta have connections."

The three fillies returned to their desks full of glee. They huddled together and began whispering.

"We're not really going to let them get away with this are we?" Scootaloo groaned, "Because they need taking down a peg."

"We're not going to stoop to their level." Sweetie Belle replied, "We won, and that's that. Now let's just forget about it and carry on with our lessons."

And in the glow of the afternoon sun, they did exactly that.