*Pinkamina was pushing a geode with her muzzle, grunting lightly as she pushed it along into a little rock pile she’d been making. Farming rocks sure was hard work for a little filly like her! Pushing her stringy mane behind her ear, she peered across the field. Her two sisters were working the cart and would soon come to collect her little pile as well.*

 *No, silly. They didn’t grow rocks. That would be stupid. The habit of the Pie family was to buy a plot of land, flatten it, clean it of wild debris like rocks, and then sell it to a nearby farm or budding farm family. The gems, geodes, and anything else of mild value would be kept, and the family often made a healthy little bundle from each sale. The only problem was, when a piece of land was finally farmable, the family would pack up and move on.*

 *Pinkamina sighed miserably. She hated rock farming. She hated moving so often. She never had any friends that she could really cling to because they just kept going away within a year’s time or so. She could never put down any sort of roots. Her only friends were her sisters, and they were as delightfully dull as the rocks they herded about on the ground. Her brow lowered into an often-worn foul expression of frustration. Her sisters said it made her look like their father.*

 *The little pink filly sighed again, wandering about to find another round-ish rock to push with her poor face. How would she ever grow up to be an attractive mare this way? Her head would look like a rock at this rate! Not that she’d ever meet a nice colt moving around all the time. In fact, she—what was that sound? Pinkamina looked up, blink-blinking as a powerful wind pressed against her nose. It carried with it the smell of rain-pregnant wind, of rushing victory and of--!*

 ***SHK-BOOOOOOOOOM!***

*Pinkamina was struck by every color of the rainbow all at the same time! The shockwave of Celestia-knew-what blasted across the rock-field, blowing her mane back. The whole sky was a disk-shaped rainbow! She whinny-screamed ferally, rearing up as her skull vibrated and threatened to shatter into brain matter. She tumbled end over end as debris and earth pressed away in the same direction while tears went back the sides of her face. Pressed to the ground and holding on with her tiny hooves she was concussed with magic, light of all colors, and thunder without sound. Rattled down to her very soul she screamed and saw red as her tear ducts bled onto her face. Her ears suddenly refused her sound. Blasted into deafness she teetered, vomited into a ditch next to her and collapsed onto her side, gasping for air. The rushing wind was suddenly done, and her mane rushed forward again, sticking in all directions like cotton candy. She didn’t feel so good— she could hear a giggly filly’s voice in her head, and she wasn’t just imagining it. Oh Celestia, she felt like she was dying. She didn’t want to die. She had to… had to… sleep. She fell face-first into the dirt as an electric energy began to fill her body. A sort of hyper-activeness that came from a pony of vast enthusiasm. It was not Pinkamina, it was—!*

Pinkie Pie sat up with a cry, peering around her room. What had she been dreaming? She didn’t remember. Scratching her head a little soberly, she bounced out of her bed and went about her morning routine. Heaving a big breath, she opened her door and went upstairs to greet the new day. “Ah, Pinkie Pie, you’re up!” Mrs. Pie said, her dumpy cheeks lifting to show off a charming smile. “There’s somepony been waiting for you this morning.” She lifted one eyebrow a couple of times, which made Pinkie Pie cock her head.

“For me?” Pinkie said, coming close while Mrs. Cake gestured. Going to the kitchen door, they pushed it open just a little. There in the front part of the shop was Mr. Cake and the stallion Lickity Split. He was politely bent, looking at the display case while Mr. Cake lectured him on the fine art of small pastry making. “Oooh…” Pinkie Pie said, her eyes lighting up and her cheeks darkening a little.

“I knew something was up the moment he said he’d wait twenty minutes for you to come upstairs this morning.” Mrs. Cake said wisely. “Now.” She pulled Pinkie close to herself conspiratorially. “Is that the stallion you went out to see the other day? Who’s heeee…?” she drew it out like they were college dorm room sisters or something.

Pinkie Pie’s face colored a little more darkly and she giggled, springing out of the neck-hold with enough elastitic to launch her briefly into the air. “Oh-h I’m not seeing him! That’s Lickity Split!” she said, grinning widely and cantering out to see him. “Lickity!” she announced herself, springing right over Mr. Cake and over the counter in one jump. “Hi there!”

“Oh hi, Pinkamina! Good morning!” Lickity said, leaning back and lifting a hoof a little defensively. She cocked her head. He was so formal, bizarre— and how come his head was wrapped like that?

 Oh right, the tornado a week or so ago. That had been a doozy! Or so she’d been told. Pinkie Pie had no memory of that day. It must’ve been nap time for her or something, she’d woken up in her bed the next morning with no inkling of the disaster until she’d stepped outside to see clean-up crews everywhere. Thankfully no buildings had been lost, just lots and lots of windows and doors. “What’cha up to, huh?” she pranced about him, jumping about. Boing. Boing. Boing. He watched her with a confused expression.

“Uhh, are you okay?” Lickity Split wanted to know, watching her go up and down. “And what happened to your mane? You changed it back.”

“What do you mean? My mane is always like this!” Pinkie Pie stopped to examine the poofy-ness of her cotton candy pink mane. “It’s like fluffy taffy cotton candy, huh? I love cotton candy flavored taffy don’t you?”

He affixed her with a startled expression, then glanced at Mr. and Mrs. Cake, who were pretending to not be listening intently. “Right…” he said slowly. “Uh-well, I brought you something.” He steered the conversation a little bit, trying not to wonder at her odd behavior. “Here.” He turned his head to poke around in his saddlebags for a moment, then produced a bag of name-brand potato chips. He set it on the floor, then nudged it at her with a bit of color in his cheeks. “You uh… I know you like salty chips.” He said a little bashfully, kicking at the tile a little.

Pinkie Pie stopped a moment, tilting her head a little too far to one side for what her spinal cord should’ve allowed. Mr. and Mrs. Cake exchanged a confused expression. “Chips?” she said with a genuine raised eyebrow. “I’m er…” she saw his hopeful look and gave him a lidded smile, eyebrows bunched in an upward fashion. “Oh, thank you!” she said with half-enthusiasm, taking the corner of the bag in her teeth and trotting to the counter. She and Mrs. Cake locked eyes, exchanged completely confused looks, and Pinkie Pie was beaming again when she turned about. “That’s super nice of you to think of me, Lickity!” she bounded forward again to be near to him.

Lickity Split smiled super-broadly, ears perking. She sure was acting oddly today, but at least she liked his little gift. “W-well that was it, I just wanted to say hullo and give you that and be on my way I guess, hahaha…!” his fake laughter trailed off and he was backing away slowly.

“Gotta go?” Pinkie Pie said, sidling forward and not-so-subtly trying to catch his vanilla scent before he went. She loved that sweet smell he gave off, it reminded her of all sorts of wonderful things. “Aww, you should swing by again sometime. Its super nice of you to bring me a snack! I’m not that into salt, but it’s the thought that counts right Mrs. Cake?” she called over her shoulder.

“Right!” The dumpy mare said from behind the counter. Everyone in the room was confused for all different reasons. Other than Mr. Cake, of course. He had no inkling of what was going on. Lickity smiled rather awkwardly and then turned to go. The bell above the door tinkled, and he was gone. “Well that was… odd.” Mrs. Cake said, looking at Pinkie Pie with a concerned face.

“Yeah. Huh.” Pinkie Pie thought. “I guess maybe he thought I’d have a snack attack today?” she came to the counter to paw at the bag of salty chips a little. Such a specific gift for a stallion to just suddenly barge in to bring…

“Well if he’s bringin’ you junk food he MUST like you!” Mr. Cake chuckled. Both mares gave him a look and he shrank back into the kitchen so they could mare-talk. “Just a thought…” he said meekly before the door swung shut.

“What do you think Mrs. Cake?” Pinkie Pie bounded over the counter again with a spring.

“Maybe he thinks you’re really skinny?” she was turning the bag over like it was a foreign object. The chips were name-brand, not diet, no nutritional value, and had enough sodium in them to give a weaker animal a heart attack. “These aren’t exactly good for you…” it was big talk coming from a rather round mare who spent her days making cakes and pies, but she had a point.

“I GOT A GIFT FROM LICKITY SPLIT!” Pinkie Pie exploded suddenly, laughing wildly and unable to contain herself anymore. “The stallion from the corner! Lickity Split! I just like saying his name! Lickity Split! Lickity Split! Lickity—!” Mrs. Cake caught the bouncing mare by her muzzle. Rambling Pinkie Pie was a weaponize-able force to be reckoned with. Best to stop it before she got out of control. The pink mare smiled apologetically, trying to calm down. Mrs. Cake lowered her hoof slowly. “But you know what this means right? He’s… he’s…”

“Interested.” Mrs. Cake smiled adoringly at Pinkie Pie, who beamed at her energetically and nodded. Ah, to be young and in love. It made the middle-aged mare smile warmly as her little worker bounced back and forth in jubiliation. The stallion she’d mentioned more than a few times, bringing gifts right into Sugar Cube Corner. He must’ve been a bold one! No wonder Pinkie Pie liked him. Though it was the first time Mrs. Cake had ever seen the stallion, she could certainly agree he was handsome and not lacking in the charm department. The two mares giggled and chatted excitedly for the whole day while poor Mr. Cake was left in the kitchen to work the order train.

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 Applebloom screamed and whinnied while the barn started to come down around her. She’d just been working on her cutie mark with her wood-carving knife and one of the support beams. You never know, she could’ve gotten a woodcarving cutie mark! She didn’t expect the weight of the entire barn to come crashing down on her, though, when she widdled away at just one of them. She’d just been doing a few stars and designs. How was she supposed to know termites had been eating the inside of the beam the whole time?!

 Just then a figure blasted out of the night at warp-speed, wings flaring brightly in the moonlight. The blur of motion caught the wailing, paralyzed filly so hard she almost got whiplash. She was gripped in a pair of powerful hooves and mooshed against a furry chest while they flew through the air. At the end of the arc of movement, having never been more than a few feet off the ground, Applebloom and her savior tumbled along the ground in a wad of arms and legs. As soon as they landed, hard as it was, the pony took off running through the thicket.

Applebloom lay on her back, stunned, and then winced when she heard the barn collapse into itself like a cataclysmic bomb had gone off. The explosion of dust and splintered wood was impressive. “Applejack’s gonna kill me…” she murmured, slowly sitting up and holding her head. When she could see straight again, she spoke, “Thank you kindly! Ah could’a been a pony pancake iff’n you hadn’t—!” There was nopony around. “Hello? Somepony?” she looked around, but there was nopony about to speak to. Where had her savior gone. She lifted one hoof, a little worried, until the massive sounds of Big Macintosh hooves could be heard thundering her way. “Ah am so gunna catch it now.” She wilted as Big Mac and Applejack emerged from the darkness, having bolted from the house and all the way out there.

“Applebloom!” Applejack shrieked, looking at the filly and then the destroyed barn. “What did you do?! What were you thinking?! You could’a killed yerself!” it was a long lecture that lasted much of the night, only occasionally helped by rather angry looks from the stoic red stallion next to her. (To tell the honest truth Big Macintosh’s silent angry face hurt a lot worse to the little filly than Applejack’s shouting marathon)

Some distance away in the thicket, there was a figure and a smoking party cannon. Pinkamina groaned, rubbing her side a little. She’d landed badly with the filly in tow. “Just in time, once again.” She said, panting. Gritting her teeth, she ripped the wings off of her sides. They were fake, just twigs and leaves. She’d put the disguise together for just such an occasion that allowed for speed and darkness. Applebloom would no doubt report that she’d been saved by a mysterious pegasus, not an earth pony like herself. Flawless. She smirked just a little, then heaved a tired sigh. Picking up the party cannon, not questioning how it was so light and durable, she thrust it into her saddlebags. (She also didn’t question why it fit there. It just did. Pinkie Pie’s things didn’t have to obey physics, and the sooner she’d accepted that, the sooner she’d just been able to get over it.) Making sure once more that Applebloom was getting an ear full for her shenanigans from her elder siblings, she nodded to herself. Disaster averted. She chose to leave before Big Mac put the filly over his foreleg to spank her.

 Feeling rather grand for such a flawless run this time around, Pinkamina was grinning her wicked grin as she cantered down the streets of Ponyville. Others would hear of the barn collapse tomorrow, for it was late at night right now. So, for the moment, she had the peacefulness of the cool night. She stopped and gazed up at Luna’s moon. She’d done good. She deserved a rewa— she saw Lickity Split on the corner having just closed up his shop to go out for a bit, staring at her. “Speak of the devil.” She smirked to herself, eyeing him like a human eyes a fresh, steamy cheeseburger.

 “Uhh, hey Pinkamina.” Lickity said cautiously. He eyed her mane, and then her chilling smile. “How are you tonight?” he gulped a little when she opened her saddlebag, plopped down next to him and fished out her first salt chip. Crunch crunch crunch. “Like those, do you?” he ventured with a little smile.

 “Yeah, thanks.” Pinkamina said. “You still smell like a mare, by the way.” She abused him just a little, smirking at him sideways. He smiled apologetically, then chuckled a little. She was just playing with him, he could tell now. Her subtleties took some getting used to. “I guess that’s working around all that ice cream all day, huh?”

 Lickity nodded some, smiling. He ventured to steal a chip from her bag and she leaned away. He gave her a look and she rolled her eyes with a smirk, tilting the bag his way. He finally got a hoof-full. Crunch crunch crunch. “I never got to thank you for taking me to that rescue tent.” He said a little bashfully.

 “You gave me chips. We’re even.” Pinkamina said, waving her hoof at him a little.

 “No really. I could’a been left in that closet *forever*!” Lickity saw her wince like he’d just scrapped his hooves on a chalkboard. She hated that word so, so much. “That’s where I hide from bad storms and stuff, it would’ve taken ages for anypony to come find me!” he said, leaning so she’d look at him.

 “What is it with you and almost getting killed in small rooms?” Pinkamina chided him.

 “What?” his ears perked. The pink mare jolted. Pony-feathers! “Was that you some weeks ago, in the freezer?” Lickity looked at her with raised eyebrows and a shocked, gaping mouth.

“Er-YEAH! That would’ve been embarrassing to die curled up in a CLOSET! Real stupid!” she said loudly, crunching her next chip extra-extra loud to distract him. His face fell. It wasn’t her after all?

 Lickity crunched his next potato chip with a muted crunching, looking over at her carefully. Slowly, things began to click into place for him. Not the whole picture, but a few more details about the pink mare were slipping into his grasp. Turning a little, he cocked his head at her. “Spend a lot of nights out alone, Pinkamina? You seemed pretty cheery at Sugar Cube Corner this morning.”

 “Well that was this morning. This is now. It’s quieter at night.” Pinkamina said snottily, turning her muzzle up at him. She crunched another chip while he surveyed her closely, not looking at him. Then, when she chanced a glance she caught him staring at her flank. “Hey now!” she said, standing and swinging her backside away and out of view. “Don’t get any ideas, vanilla pony!” she snapped.

 “I was just thinking how different you are, swinging back and forth.” Lickity said in earnest, looking at her. “During the day, and then at night.” He stared at her a little suspiciously. She tried not to gulp audibly. “It’s like you’re two different ponies with the same cutie mark. So strange…” he mumbled, looking into her eyes. She leaned back and frowned, lifting a hoof like she might strike him if he got too close. His eyes lidded into a dreamy expression that made lots of red flags in Pinkamina’s mind go off. “I like both of them.” He leaned suddenly and kissed her hard.

 “Mmmph?!” Pinkamina’s pupils shrank into tiny dots and the bag of chips hit the curb with a crunch. She tried to back away, but he followed her forward. Their muzzles pressed together he tilted his head just a bit to adjust himself. Her mind raced in ten thousand directions, heart racing. She cuffed him with an angry hoof on the side of his face where the four by four had struck him. He whimpered mildly, but didn’t break the kiss. Her hoof didn’t leave his face. Stupid vanilla-smelling, chip-bearing stallion! She rubbed at his jaw-line greedily, a rush of feral hormones coming over her. Kissing, to her, was like tossing a canteen to a pony lost in a desert. She’d been parched for male attention and now suddenly there it was. Pinkamina fought it, didn’t like it-? Wanted it! Yes wanted it, poured herself into it. She SLAMMED him into the glass door of his own ice cream shop, kissing him like an angry, greedy animal. She’d saved a filly from being crushed to death by launching herself out of a cannon, she deserved a Faust-damned reward! Their tongues danced hotly, furiously, until they were both panting against each other and their chests heaving. The glass squeeeeeeaked as he was pressed to one side until he grunted onto his back on the sidewalk with her atop him. Her mane hung down like a curtain over his face, and his burly moans pleased her. The hot, sloppy sounds of their kissing was loud and erotic. He was all hers to do with as she pleased, the poor sucker.

 “Oh good grief, get a room you two!” Somepony walked by on the other side of the street, rolling her eyes. “At least not on the sidewalk!”

The spell of want broke, and Pinkamina LEAPT off of Lickity Split in an icy wave of realization and horror. What had she been doing?! She rubbed her muzzle wildly, her brow lowering into a murderous glare. “Never kiss me like that again!” she snarled, spitting and going over to snatch her potato chip bag. She stuffed herself, crunching wildly as though to get the taste of him out of her mouth.

Lickity lay there panting and staring at her. She glared back. Slowly he got to his hooves with a confused grunt. She’d been so into it until they were interrupted! “But we—!”

“B-but we nothing!” Pinkamina suddenly pelted him with the bag, then turned and bolted down the street like the dogs of Tartarus were on her heels. She clenched her teeth, pink-seaweed mane flapping wildly in the night.

Lickity had never been so confused. He stood there panting, lost in a mild haze of happy hormones and with a mild arousal on his brain (as well as other parts). She wanted him, then she didn’t, then she was happy and bouncy, then moody and dominant. Then when they kissed, she said never to kiss her that way again. What did she want?! He frowned in frustration, then his face lit up again. “Never kiss me like that again…” He mumbled. “I’ll have to think of another way to kiss you, then.” His cheeks colored a pleasant, happy pink. The stallion picked up the destroyed bag of chips in his teeth, tossing them into a nearby waste bin.