THE VERY SPECIAL CANDY

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It was the middle of summer, and Dougie was sitting in his garden watering his plants when a strong wind blew something his way.
It landed with a flutter not far from him. He picked up the flier and read with delight that there would be a candy-making competition at the neighborhood fair. The grand prize was a shiny new bicycle. He wondered if his friends would be entering too.
He thought about his neighbor Tommie, who was much taller than all the other kids. Some people thought Tommie was strange because he towered over everyone else, always carrying a purple toolbox with him everywhere he went.
He thought about Bobbie, who was very little and had long pigtails that trailed behind her when she went on jogs around the neighborhood. Some boys found her strange because they thought she was too athletic for a girl. Dougie was sure she was the fastest kid he knew.
Lastly but not least, he thought about the twins, Susie and Stevie. Susie kept many test tubes filled with strange bubbling mixtures in her room, right next to her dollhouse. The other twin, Stevie, did not say much, but he loved to spend his time reading and painting the day away. People thought it was strange for a little girl like Susie to like science, and that Stevie was much too shy for a little boy.
Dougie knew how it felt to be considered strange. Most boys did not like gardening like he did.
Looking down at the flier again, Dougie remembered that his friends might like to know about the contest. He called Tommie over the tin. “Meet me at the Great Big Tree tomorrow! I have something to show you,” Dougie said, “and pass the message to our friends!” So Tommie called Bobbie, who called the Twins.
The next day, they all met under the Great Big Tree. Dougie showed his friends the flier and told them about the prize.

“If we win, I want the prize!” cried Bobbie. “No fair, I want it too!” shouted Susie. Stevie and Tommie did not look too happy either. When Dougie thought about it, he realized he wanted the shiny bicycle to himself too.
“Fine, then we should split up,” Dougie said with frustration. “You guys are too strange to work with anyways!”

So he went home to make his own candy, angry and sure that he could beat his friends in the competition.
Back at his home, Dougie picked different berries from his garden and mashed them up. Knowing how to garden will most definitely win over silly things like my friends’ strange talents, he thought. But when he combined the ingredients, it was much too mushy and the candy fell apart.
At Tommie’s house, Tommie made his batter and put it into the cooker. Knowing how machines work will most definitely win over silly things like my friends’ strange skills, he told himself. But he turned the heat on too high, and the candy came out of the cooker in hard, burnt lumps.
At Bobbie’s house, Bobbie put all her ingredients into a bowl and stirred and stirred and stirred. Being fast and strong will most definitely win over silly things like my friends’ strange skills, she thought as she whisked. But she stirred so fast that everything in the bowl jumbled into one big slimy mess.
At the twins’ house, Stevie wrote a candy recipe and handed it to Susie. Susie added her own touch by pouring some of her potions into the mix. Knowledge and creativity will most definitely win over silly things like our friends’ strange skills, Susie thought. But when they finally tasted it, the potions had made the candy much too sour.
Dougie was feeling defeated and lonely at his house. He called his friends again to see how their candies were going. “I thought we were all too different to work together, but working alone did not go so well for me,” he admitted. “Maybe we should use our strange talents together. We should meet again under the Great Big Tree tomorrow,” Bobbie suggested. Feeling the same way, the rest of the friends agreed.
In the morning, once again under the Great Big Tree, the five friends talked about what they should do next. “If we combine our skills, we might have a better chance of winning,” Dougie said. “But what about the shiny bicycle?” Bobbie asked. “I don’t care much for the shiny bicycle anymore. I just want to be with my friends again, even if we are very different,” Tommie said. “Stevie and I feel the same way,” Susie added, and Stevie nodded his head cheerfully. So they decided to cooperate and make the best candy they could.
Dougie, Tommie, Bobbie, Susie and Stevie started immediately. Dougie picked the freshest berries he could find. Susie calculated how much of each ingredient they needed to make the candy taste just right. But when it came time to put the candy in the cooker, it wouldn’t turn on! “Don’t worry,” Tommie said. “I can fix it!” He pulled a tool out of his purple tool box, reached up to repair a few things and had it running in no time.
When the candies finally came out of the cooker and cooled, Bobbie popped one into her mouth. “Yummy!” she said with a big smile on her face. Stevie showed everyone that he had painted pretty wrappers for candies. “Perfect!” they all said happily.
Suddenly, Dougie realized it was getting late and the contest was about to start down at the fair. “Don’t worry,” Bobbie said. “I can take the candies and run with them down to the fair just in time! Meet me there at judging time,” she told the rest of her friends, and took off with the candies.
The other friends arrived just in time as the judges were about to reveal the winner. People from all over the neighborhood were there, with candies just as unique as themselves.
“A winner has been chosen!” the judges on the stage said, and lifted the cover off of a candy tray. To the surprise of the five friends...

... it was the candy they had made!
“We chose this very special candy not only because it was delicious”, one judge said. “But also because there was much effort in making it.”

“Each one of you has a talent that is just as useful as the next,” added the second judge. “Being different is not bad, it is what makes everyone special. Little girls and boys are all good at different skills, and they can like anything they want to.”

“It seems you have used your special talents together as a group to make the best candy we have tasted today!” said the last judge.
“And for very special talents and a very special candy, we have a very special prize...”