

Celestia's Lullaby

I can't sleep.

Is it because I'm lying in an unbelievably huge bed? Is it because the bed feels like a raft, adrift in the ocean I call my room? Is it because of the bright moonlight shining through the windows?

Or is it just that I am alone for the very first time in my life?

I can't help it. Princess Celestia offered me my own room in the castle! How was I supposed to say no to that?

I was so happy when my parents agreed. I was so proud. I would move into Canterlot Castle even before Shining Armor. He always brags that he will become Captain of the Royal Guard one day. Of course I had used my chance to tease my Big Brother Best Friend Forever about getting into the castle before him.

Now I missed them all terribly.

I'm not a little filly anymore. Well, I am, but I'm not scared of the dark. I can't be scared. I'm studying magic at Celestia's School for Gifted Unicorns under the wing of the Princess herself!

I am a clever filly. Clever fillies aren't afraid to be alone at night. They know that there is nothing to fear. Only stupid ponies believe in those old ponies' tales about monsters and nightmares.

But right now, I feel rather stupid.

Every time I try to get to sleep I think I see something just at the edge of my vision. I turn around to look, but all I see are silvery rays of moonlight, reflecting off the bookshelves across from the windows.

I grab Smarty Pants and hold her close to my chest. She is soft to the touch and gives me something to do with my forehooves, but that is all. I just can't get comfortable and warm in this bed. The moon shines bright outside, but every shadow in the room looks like it wants to grab me.

At home I would wake Shining up and he would let me cuddle up beside him. I didn't do that too often, but it helped when I was ... unable to sleep.

Maybe I can cuddle with Spike? His basket is next to my bed.

No. He looks way too cute, curled up in a ball and sucking at the end of his tail. I can't disturb his dreams now. He's a baby dragon. I have to take care of him and not the other way around.

"Come on Twilight! You can do this!" I mutter. Just like that, I have an idea. The school librarian had given me a book after the entrance exam. She said it would help me concentrate, focus and channel my magic better. Maybe reading something will help me to fall asleep. I get up, light a candle and walk to where I'd left it, on my desk by the window.

But what is that? I think I hear a voice outside. *Am I going crazy?*

I perk up my ears and there it is again, soothing, soft and tuneful.

I hop on the desk. I can see directly into the castle gardens, and the moonlight shows me a tall, white pony with a mane and tail that billow ethereally in the still air. Is that the Princess? Why is Princess Celestia singing in the gardens?

It sounds wonderful. I have to get closer somehow.

I jump off the desk and tiptoe out of my chamber as quietly as I can. There are a few guards in the hallways. I have to be really careful. But thanks to all the pillars and niches I manage to avoid being spotted. I reach the garden door and look outside.

The Princess is still there, still singing. I can hear her words now.

*May these thousand winters
Swiftly pass, I pray
I love you; I miss you
All these miles away*

*May all your dreams be sweet tonight
Safe upon your bed of moonlight
And know not of sadness, pain, or care
And when I dream, I'll fly away and meet you there
Sleep ...*

That song sounds like a lullaby. A wonderful lullaby at that, sung in a voice so crystal clear I can feel it deep in my chest. But there's something strange about it too.

Celestia's voice is quiet and ... sad?

That can't be right! She is the strongest being in all of Equestria. She is wise, beautiful, responsible, nice and brings happiness to everypony around her. She raises the sun to give us warmth for the day, and the moon to give everypony time to rest.

So why is she singing this beautiful lullaby seemingly to nobody, with enough sadness in her voice to send shivers down my spine? Her melancholy runs deep, deep enough that I can feel it too.

My chest tightens and I hiccup back incipient tears.

I don't want her to feel like this.

So I also fight the urge to run. I shouldn't be here, but my teacher is ... is ... I don't understand it, but I can't just leave her.

I step silently closer, reach out a hoof to her and touch her hind leg.

She gasps and looks at me open-mouthed, her eyes wide and glistening.

"Twilight Sparkle? What are you doing here at this hour?"

I sit down and take a deep breath before launching into my explanation.

"I couldn't sleep and when I sat down at the window to study I heard you singing. Your voice was so— So I came here and you— But—" I can't hold it back anymore. My voice cracks and I break down in tears "Please, don't be mad at me!"

I can't see what happens next, but I feel the tickle of magic around me and Celestia drapes me across her back, with a reassuring nuzzle. "Shhh, it's alright Twilight. Everything is fine. You don't need to cry," she says, her voice calm and kind. "Come, my little pony. I'll bring you back to bed."

I hold on tight slowly calming down. She carries me back inside. The softness and warmth of the Princess's coat does what hours of trying could not. I begin to feel ... sleepy.

We arrive in my chambers. Celestia carefully puts me back into my bed and wraps the blanket snugly around me.

All my worries from earlier are gone and forgotten. The bed is no longer huge and lonely, but familiar and inviting. I hug Smarty Pants and close my eyes.

As I doze off, Celestia begins to hum. This time the melody brims with loving-kindness, ushering me gently to sleep.

"Good night, Princess," I murmur.

"Good night, Twilight," I hear her answer faintly as I finally drift into my dreams.
"I hope I never have to sing such a lullaby to you."