

At last, Sweetie Belle emerged from the heavily wooded path. But the clubhouse before her looked different at night; dark and uninviting, not the place of friends and laughter she was used to. Again, she hesitated. Unsure of whether to proceed or not, she glanced around and finally saw the full moon that had been shining down on her all night. She was surprised she hadn't noticed it before, and realised that she must have spent the entire journey looking down at her hooves when she could have been looking up at that beautiful orb floating in a sea of stars.

The young pony felt a wild urge to get closer to it, even if just by a little bit. She climbed a nearby hill and sat atop it, placing her saddle bag beside her. Apple orchards spread out below her and the night sky spread out above. The centrepiece of it all, the full moon, hung in the sky and shone down on her. Gazing up at the glowing disc, Sweetie Belle recalled stories that said a pony could go mad looking at a full moon. She thought that this must be exactly the kind of moon they were talking about; the kind that drew your gaze and sucked you in. She chuckled to herself, the melancholy she had felt just a short time ago temporarily forgotten. What would a mad pony do anyway? Wolves were supposed to howl at the moon, so perhaps a pony should sing to it?

Sweetie Belle smiled. She liked the idea of singing to the moon. But what to sing? She thought for a minute before deciding. It was a song she had heard a few days ago while she was helping Rarity with her work. It had been played several times on her sister's favourite radio station. They usually played old songs which Rarity would hum or sometimes sing a line or two. Sweetie Belle liked that part of helping her sister best. Rarity had taught her this song, singing along with her until she knew it off by heart. This happy memory, set against the events earlier that night, brought tears to her eyes as she began to sing.

*"Moonlight becomes you, it goes with your hair"*

*"You certainly know the right thing to wear"*

Sweetie Belle closed her eyes, focusing solely on her voice.

*"Moonlight becomes you, I'm thrilled at the sight"*

*"And I could get so romantic tonight"*

She reached the second verse, losing herself in the song.

*"You're all dressed up to go dreaming"*

*"Now don't tell me I'm wrong"*

*"And what a night to go dreaming"*

*"Mind if I tag along?"*

*"Mind if I tag along?"*

Sweetie Belle turned, open mouthed, towards the voice that had joined her own. Two big green eyes and a small, sweet smile greeted her. The purple coat, the wings, and a horn that emerged from a halo of pale blue hair left no question as to the newcomer's identity. The Princess of Night was sitting next to her.

"Wha...?" Sweetie Belle asked.

"Hello," Luna answered.

"Sorry, I wasn't expecting to meet anypony and..." her voice trailed off.

"That's alright," said Luna. "I seem to have that effect on a lot of ponies," she added absent mindedly.

“Are you really Princess Luna?”

“Yep!” said Luna, grinning.

“But... um... where did you come from?”

“Well, I saw you sitting on the hill so I flew down to join you—”

“Down from the moon?!” Sweetie Belle interrupted, her eyes growing wide and a hint of awe creeping into her voice.

Luna chuckled. “No sweetie, I was flying over the town when—”

“Wait, you know my name?” Sweetie again interrupted.

Luna looked confused. “No... You haven't introduced yourself yet.”

“Oh, sorry. I'm Sweetie Belle,” said Sweetie Belle.

“A pleasure to meet you Sweetie Belle. May I finish answering your first question now?”

Sweetie Belle nodded.

“As I was saying, I was flying over town when I saw you on the hill. I flew closer and you began to sing one of my favourite songs. I couldn't help myself, I simply had to join in.”

A breeze blew across the hill, reminding Sweetie Belle of the cold damp patches under her eyes where she had been crying. She quickly turned away and rubbed at her face with a foreleg, trying to remove the evidence.

“If you don't want to tell me why you were crying,” Luna said softly, “then I won't ask you to.”

“Thank you,” said Sweetie Belle.

They sat in silence for a short time, looking up at the night sky.

Luna shuffled closer to the filly. “Hey Sweetie Belle,” she said.

“Yes?” Sweetie Belle replied, looking up at the older pony.

“Your hair's all messed up.”

“What?” Sweetie Belle asked, but Luna ignored the question. Instead she leant over and, using her front legs with an efficiency that comes from years of practice, began messing up the filly's hair.

“Hey, quit it!” the little pony cried out, but a mischievous giggle was the only reply. Sweetie found herself unable to retaliate in kind, Luna was even taller than Rarity. But that didn't mean she was defenceless; she went straight for the purple pony's exposed belly.

“That’s not fair, stop it!” Luna said, in between fits of laughter. However, Luna’s pleas fell on deaf ears; this filly was taking no prisoners.

The hilltop struggle lasted several minutes but, at last, Sweetie Belle emerged triumphant. Luna’s crown rested on Sweetie’s head; the Princess was letting her wear it as a peace offering. It was currently being used as a giant hairpin and they each wore a wide grin.

“I haven’t done that in ages!” said Luna when she had recovered her breath. “You have an older sister, don’t you?”

“Yeah, how did you know?”

“You knew exactly what you were doing. I didn’t stand a chance!”

Sweetie Belle thought back to the last time she had played like that with Rarity. It must have been years ago. She felt uncomfortable thinking about it; instead, she glanced up at the night sky and tried to change the subject.

“The moon’s really pretty tonight.”

“Thank you,” Luna replied, before adding a moment later, “the Moon thanks you too.”

“Really?”

“Yep,” said Luna. She looked distracted for a moment, like she was listening to something in the distance. “She also says I shouldn’t take the credit for her hard work.” Luna stuck her tongue out at the moon.

“Wait, the moon can talk?”

“Of course. Plays games too.” Luna leant towards the filly and whispered, “she likes to be the top hat,” and winked conspiratorially. Sweetie Belle remained dubious.

“Anyway,” said Luna. “Would you like to sing another song? This one has the Moon in it too.”

“Sure, what is it?”

“It’s called ‘Fly me to the moon’, do you know it?”

“Some of it.”

“Then I’ll teach you the rest.”

“OK!”

Luna grinned. “Three. Two. One...”

*“Fly me to the moon”*

*“Let me play among the stars”*

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Rarity was sitting at her kitchen table. A couple of hours ago she had made a half hearted attempt to clean up the dinner plates. Since then, she had remained in her seat and barely moved. Opal had come over to investigate for a while, but soon grew bored and found something soft to curl up on. Occasionally, she stole a glance at the door of the guest chambers that were currently serving as her sister's bedroom. The silent night slowly wore on, allowing the recollection of harsh words to echo around her mind. Gradually, she managed to work up the courage to follow through with her new decision; she wouldn't wait until morning, she would apologise right now. Rarity stood up and walked towards her sister's door.

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Back on the hilltop, the night was growing colder. Sweetie Belle shivered.

“Come and sit next to me Sweetie.”

Sweetie Belle did so, and Luna tucked her under a purple wing. She felt like she was being wrapped up in a warm, sweet-smelling duvet.

“Thanks,” said Sweetie Belle.

“Don't mention it,” said Luna. She felt a tiny rumbling from the filly. “Are you hungry?”

“Yeah, a bit.”

“I've got just the thing!” Luna levitated a large saddlebag from where it had been lying beside Sweetie's own, and set it down in front of her. She stuck her head inside and emerged with a brown squarish object entombed in cellophane. 'Wrapped' would have been an inadequate description. Using her magic, she carefully freed it from its plastic prison and floated it down to Sweetie Belle.

“What is it?” said Sweetie Belle.

“That, my friend, is a blackcurrant jam sandwich. I make the best blackcurrant jam sandwiches,” Luna said, a tad boastfully.

Sweetie Belle took a bite. It tasted like a perfectly ordinary blackcurrant jam sandwich. She noticed Luna looking at her expectantly.

“It's... nice,” Sweetie Belle managed.

“Really? You're not just saying that are you? No sudden urge to spit it out and hide the rest behind a bush?”

“No, it's fine,” said Sweetie Belle. She took another bite and meant it.

Luna beamed. “Success!” she cheered, and watched happily as the filly finished off the sandwich.

“Sorry!” Sweetie Belle said as she suddenly realised she had just eaten the whole thing without offering any to Luna. “Oh, and thank you,” she added, embarrassed she hadn’t remembered to say that either.

“That’s quite alright,” replied Luna. “You know, I think I should tell you why I’m out here in the first place.” She glanced around and lowered her head towards the little unicorn.

“Why are you out here?” Sweetie Belle whispered, the possibility of learning a secret keeping her voice quiet.

“I snuck out,” Luna whispered back.

“What?”

“I’ve already been all over Canterlot and the castle. So I snuck out to explore somewhere else. Nights can get dull with everypony asleep.”

“But why did you have to *sneak* out?”

“Celestia doesn’t like me going out at night by myself,” Luna replied. “I know she loves me, but I think my sister worries about me too much. It’s always: ‘don’t do that’, or ‘read these boring reports’, or ‘you can’t live off of jam sandwiches forever’, or ‘put that away you’re a Princess—’

Luna stopped short. Sweetie Belle had begun to cry under her wing.

“Oh, I’m sorry Sweetie! Was it something I said? Was it the sandwich?” Luna said, her voice filled with concern.

“No…” came Sweetie Belle’s response. The sound was muffled by her face being pressed against the Princess’s side.

Luna said nothing, patiently waiting for the filly to let it out in her own time.

“I… ran away,” Sweetie Belle managed to say, in between sobs. “My sister was angry… she shouted at me.”

“Why was your sister angry?”

“I was supposed to be back before dark,” Sweetie said, her words tumbling out together, “but I lost track of time and she had to come and get me.”

“Maybe she was just worried about y—”

“And she said…” Sweetie Belle interrupted. “She said she never wanted to look after me ever again!” The little unicorn’s sobs racked her whole body and she buried her face further into Luna’s fur.

Luna sighed and retrieved her crown from the tangle of Sweetie’s hair. She levitated a comb out of her bag and began fixing the damage she had done earlier to the filly’s mane.

“We all say things we regret when we’re angry,” Luna said, her voice soft and comforting. “Your sister loves

you Sweetie Belle. I'm sure she didn't mean what she said.”

A barely audible murmur was Sweetie Belle's reply.

“I know sisters,” Luna said as the comb continued magically back and forth. “There's no way she could stay mad at you. Just make sure she knows you're sorry for making her worry and everything will be back the way it was.” *You'd be surprised by how much a sister can forgive*, she added silently.

Sweetie Belle lifted her head from the Princess's side. “Promise?”

“Promise!” They shared a smile.

Sweetie Belle looked down again. “But, I still feel like crying.”

“It's okay to cry Sweetie. Take as long as you need. You've had a long day and this is no time of night for a little pony to be out in.”

Sweetie Belle rested her head against Luna once again. “I'm not a little pony,” she grumbled and closed her eyes, sobs having been replaced by silent tears.

Luna smiled and continued to rhythmically brush Sweetie's hair. Shortly, the filly's tears ceased altogether, and her breathing became slow and regular. Luna turned away from the sleeping Sweetie Belle and looked up towards the moon.

“Just you and me again,” she said to the night. Luna thought for a moment. “I think another song is in order.”

*“Hello darkness, my old friend, I've come to talk with you again”*

*“Because a vision softly creeping, Left its seeds while I was sleeping”*

*“And the vision that was planted in my brain”*

*“Still remains, within the sound of silence”*

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Rarity charged onto the dirt track that led to her sister's clubhouse, ignoring the low branches that whipped her face and ruined her mane. Her sister's room had been empty. Between the pillow that was still damp with tears and the wide open window, she had guessed what had happened. Rarity could scarcely believe it; she had driven her own little sister to run away. She would never be able to forgive herself if something had happened to her. She ran faster, nearly tripping over a protruding root, she strengthened the light coming from her horn. The trees that pressed in from either side were blocking the moonlight that had aided her thus far. A single thought now occupied her mind.

“I'm sorry Sweetie Belle,” she said between breaths.

Rarity had almost reached the end of the track when she heard something. She slowed down and listened hard... was that singing?

Luna had already finished several songs and was part way through another as Rarity emerged from the tree line. The unicorn panted rapidly and looked up in shock at the Princess of Night sitting on the hill before her.

*“There's a starmare waiting in the sky”*

*“She'd like to come and meet us”*

*“But she thinks she'd blow our minds”*

*“There's a starmare waiting in the sky”*

*“She's told us not to blow it”*

*“Cause she knows it's all worthwhile”*

Luna stopped her song and looked towards the new visitor. “You can come up if you like,” she said. “There's someone here who misses you.”

Rarity began making her way up the hill. Curiosity and hope giving her energy.

Luna nuzzled the sleeping filly. “It's time to wake up, Sweetie Belle,” she said gently. “Your sister has come to see you.”

“What?” said Sweetie Belle, still half asleep.

“Come on, get up!” Luna nuzzled her again. “Your sister's here.” Luna withdrew the wing that had been shielding Sweetie Belle and stood up. Exposed to the night air, Sweetie Belle quickly got to her legs as well, wobbling slightly as she regained her balance. They both turned towards Rarity, Sweetie partially hiding behind Luna.

As Rarity approached, Luna nudged Sweetie Belle out from her hiding place and towards her sister. The filly looked back nervously at the Princess.

“Go on,” Luna encouraged, giving her a big smile.

Rarity and Sweetie Belle stood looking at each other for a moment before they spoke in unison.

“I'm sorry!” they both said. Rarity tried to continue but her sister beat her to it.

“I'm sorry I made you worry. And I'm sorry I ran away. And...” Sweetie's voice grew quiet, fresh tears beginning to well up in her eyes. “Please don't hate me.”

Rarity rushed forward and brought her sister into a hug that might have never been broken. “I could never hate you darling! You're my little sister, I'll love you forever,” Rarity said, fighting back tears of her own.

“I'm sorry, Sweetie. I should never have snapped at you like that, I didn't mean those horrible things I said. Can you ever forgive me?” She released her sister from the embrace.

“Yeah,” said Sweetie Belle. “Um... does this mean I still get to stay with you?”

“Of course Sweetie! I love having you over to stay,” replied Rarity. They hugged again, their troubles having been carried away into the night. Eventually, they let go of one another and Rarity turned to Luna, who had been watching them with a happy smile.

“Thank you for looking after my sister.”

“That's quite alright,” Luna replied. “I enjoyed her company.”

Rarity turned back to her little sister. “I think it's time for us to go home,” she told the filly. “But not before you thank Princess Luna.”

“Thanks for looking after me, Princess Luna,” Sweetie Belle said, “and for teaching me that song,” she continued. “I really had fun, and... will you come back and see us again?”

“I'll be back with the next full moon,” promised Luna. “Or sooner,” she added. “And you can just call me Luna”.

“OK!” Sweetie said cheerfully and she and Rarity began to head towards the path home. When they reached the opening in the trees, they turned back and said goodbye to Luna before entering the woods.

The Princess of Night took to the skies and followed their progress on the ground. They waved farewell to each another as the sisters entered Rarity's boutique. Having seen her new friends home safely, Luna began to fly towards Canterlot; dawn was still several hours away and she knew who she wanted to spend the time with.

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Princess Celestia was lying on a large couch in the purple lounge. A great fire roared off to the side, illuminating the scroll she was reading and banishing the chill that blew in from the open balcony window. Luna landed lightly on this balcony and stepped through.

“I see you're still awake, sister,” said Luna.

“You know I get worried if you go out by yourself.” Celestia looked up from her scroll. “So what did you get up to?”

“I met a very nice filly. We sang songs and ate sandwiches.”

“That's nice,” Celestia said, smiling at the odd tale. “I'm glad you're back.”

“Me too,” agreed Luna. Celestia looked back at the scroll as her younger sister settled down beside her. She didn't notice the mischievous smile.

Luna shuffled closer to her sister. “Hey Celestia,” she said.

“Yes?” Celestia replied, looking up at the younger pony.

“Your hair's all messed up.”



Moonlight Becomes You

Fly me to the Moon

Sound of Silence

Starman