"Sister... I understand where you're coming from, but the only way to fulfill your wonder is by going to see it in person. No book can really give you the full picture." Celestia spoke kindly to Luna, a tone of understanding in her voice. Her eyes softened as she looked upon her younger sister, with only the utmost care in her gaze.

As shy as Luna was, deep down she knew Celestia was right. For the ten weeks the younger goddess had been back to Equestria most of her waking moments were spent in the royal library. Desperately wanting to catch up on everything she missed, it was a sub-conscious effort to relieve some of the remorse she felt for letting Nightmare Moon consume her physical being.

Luna rarely left the castle grounds, but even there she could tell much had changed during her millennia-long banishment to the moon. The goddess had her nose in every book, every scientific journal, every legal document she could get her hooves on. Soon, she could grasp modern theology, history, politics and science. She even tried to modernize her room, adding a soft carpet and a crystal chandelier to the décor of her room. Well, almost everything, as her cherished abacus still remained always close by.

The clacking of the beads, how smoothly they ran to and fro. Whenever she felt in despair, Luna could always turn to her abacus, softly toying with it and marveling at how something so simple could be used to do so much. The pale blue and silver color scheme reminded the alicorn of her own beloved night sky, it's stars twinkling in harmony with the moon and the streak of the milky way.

But, even through her relentless studying and analyzing of every text she could find, Luna still felt her curiosity unsatisfied, itching at her hooves. So, today she gathered up enough courage to ask the only pony she had ever really talked to since her return, her older sister Princess Celestia. Celestia bore no essence of surprise as Luna confessed her burning desire to find out how the Equestria had changed. Instead she simply smiled, stating "In order to truly know, you have to find out for yourself."

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Those very words reverberated in her mind, as Luna hugged the cloud in front of her. Reluctantly she had accepted her sister's advice, and was now going off on her small journey to see what the world was like. Celestia offered to have some guards to escort her where she pleased, but her reserved nature turned it down. Celestia never told her she had to meet other ponies, but simply see how the world changed, right? She could just slip in for a few days, watch from the safety of the shadows, and leave.

Unfortunately, she didn't know where to go. She'd been in Canterlot her whole time back in Equestria, except for a few hours for a party in... in... *Ponyville! That's it!'* She had thought to herself, *'I'll just observe Ponyville for a bit, take a note or two, and then I can head straight for home.'* And so, as quickly as she could, she flew out from Canterlot, and headed

towards Ponyville.

At first, her re-acquaintance with flight was euphoria of emotions. She had felt a fluttering feeling of freedom, as she nimbly dipped and dove among the clouds. Luna's mane rippled in the wind as she skimmed over a cloud, only to dive through it a second later.

'Luna, stop being such a silly filly.' She giggled as she thought to herself. Even though she didn't embrace her title of "Princess" as much as her sister did, she still felt bound to act somewhat on par with the nobility.

As she was about to continue her controlled descent, two voices roared out near her.

"Scootaloo, come on, are you racing or not?" a voice called out. It was feminine, but not by much.

"You betcha!" replied another, this higher voice belonging to a younger pony. Luna squeaked in surprise and fright, diving behind a nearby cloud. She hugged onto it tightly, not wanting to be seen. Her plan would be foiled if anypony saw her! This was how she ended up clinging to a cloud like a young foal to it's nighttime blanket.

Moments passed before she dared peek to check if the coast was clear. Luna let go a sigh of relief as she saw nopony around. All she could see was the blue sky, and a green field below. Squinting, she examined it closer. A vegetative area rimmed the heath, one section leading off into a forest. She could also make out a small creek flowing, and a cheery cottage behind it. But, besides that, it was a welcome contrast to the bustle of majority of Ponyville, which lay a little far off to her right.

Luna brightened a little, feeling her luck had changed. *'All I need to do now is hop down a few clouds without getting seen, and I can land on the border of the field. No pony will see me, and I'll be okay'*, she reassured herself, as she flew down to the next cloud below her, bouncing a little as the fluffy mass absorbed her momentum.

Gradually, she made her way down, as the warm breeze of late summer began to flow over her navy coat. It was a pleasant surprise from the chilly climate in Canterlot. Being situated half-way up a mountain was only a surefire way to ensure colder weather.

Looking down below, Luna realized this was the lowest cloud before ground-level. Taking a deep breath, she let her eyes roll over the landscape, wanting to take it all in. She gasped, marveling at the beauty of something so simple. The green heath rolled into a dense thicket of shrubbery, which eventually morphed into a beautiful forest. The same creek that flowed past the cottage now cut through the trees, glimmering like a path of sapphires in front of her. Birds chirped and sang happily, as a rabbit grazed amongst the grass. Luna hadn't seen something so wonderful, in over a thousand years.

On one side of the cloud and still entranced by the landscape in front of her, Luna barely heard the pegasus' arrival. A rainbow streaked through the cloud, it's wing clipping the princess. The alicorn gasped in shock more than pain, as she was knocked off from her cloud-perch. Dazed from the swift impact, she began to fall towards the ground.

Rainbow Dash grunted as she flew through the cloud. Her wing snagged a little, but that was normal. Wind sometimes built up behind a cloud and could provide some resistance if strong enough. Air flowed past her ears, muffling the sound of Luna's squeak. Rainbow Dash wondered for a second, doubting if she heard something or not. She took a quick glance over her shoulder a second later, but saw nothing. The alicorn had already fallen out of her line of sight.

The pegasus was about to examine it further until she felt a hoof tap her head. "Tag!" Scootaloo screamed in delight, taking off up into the sky.

"Oh, it's on!" Rainbow replied, soaring after her.

Unbeknownst to her, Luna was plummeting towards the earth. She was still dazed, her vision fuzzy and ears ringing. It took her mind a few seconds to process what was happening. As her brain came to life, so did her muscles and joints. She tried to scream, but the wind rushing past her face prevented all vocal sounds. Forcing her body to work harder, Luna desperately tried to flap her wings with her legs flailing about.

But, a millennia spent in the moon had weakened her muscles and she could not fly as strong as she once could. Looking down, Luna saw the ground rapidly approaching. She put all her strength into stalling her descent, her wing muscles straining to fight the force of gravity.

She attempted conjuring a spell to slow her down, but once again her years on the desolate satellite had taken a toll on her skills. A little blue spark erupted from her horn, only to peter out and vanish altogether.

Another terrifying, quick glance told the Princess that she would still impact the green field at a painful speed. The thought only lasted for a second, before she summoned the last of her strength and tapped into reserves she herself never knew existed. Luna's shield flashed into being, the navy blue sphere enveloping around her. It wouldn't save her completely, but she could just possibly avoid anything to serious.

Luna last heard the shield evaporate in a sizzle as she ran into the ground. The world went black.

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"Hello?" A quiet voice called out. Luna felt a soft hoof prodding her shoulder.

'Where am I?' she asked herself, *'All I remember was sitting on that cloud until something hit me and I..'* The fall. It all came back to her. The rushing of the air, the swirling view of blue and green. The vain attempt at screaming, the futility of her wings and magic, and eventually the casting of her shield before impinging into the ground below.

Now, she was laying on her back, the faint rustle of grass rubbing up against her. The air was calm, but comfortably warm. Luna would have enjoyed the feeling more, if her head did not ache so badly.

"Are you okay?" The voice asked again. It was gentle, caring. Instantly, the she felt surprisingly calm. The soothing voice almost made her pains fade away.

Luna attempted opening her eyes, the world coming in as a blur. The world around her was fuzzy, her sight becoming adjusted to the light. Blinking again she looked up, staring into a set of reassuring blue eyes, almost the same shade of her own. The face surrounding them was of a young mare, her yellow coat matching nicely with her natural pink mane. For a second she didn't mind, after all this pony seemed very nice.

'This pony!' The thought ran through her mind, *'What the hay! I'm not supposed to meet anypony!'* Luna screamed, instinctively scrambling back a few feet. The other mare screamed as well, a startled look in her expression. Without a second look, the new pony turned tail and began running away.

The alicorn watched as the yellow pony charged towards the cottage. After a quick examination, Luna realized that she was a pegasus, small wings hugging her sides. The mare kept streaking away, the last of her pink tail visible before she entered the house and slammed the door behind her.

Luna propped herself up, taking a deep breath. *'Odd,'* Luna thought, beginning to calm down, *'Why did she decide to run and not fly?'* Sighing, she decided it wasn't important.

As she got up, her thoughts evaporated to the sight around her. Everywhere flora and fauna alike populated her view, reintroducing herself to the world she had left behind. Curiosity once again flared in her mind. She could barely remember her last encounter with nature this vivid.

Her headache now no longer as harsh, the alicorn began to let herself wander. She smelled every flower she could spot, their scents only furthering her desire to explore more.

Although she preferred the allure of the night's sky, Luna couldn't help but admit to herself that this was truly marvelous to take in.

Taking a deep breath to calm herself down, Luna reminded herself to stick to plan. Observe. She began walking throughout the forest, carefully scrutinizing anything that seemed different or new to her. As she continued her walk, a raging battle developed in her head where emotions swung and fought each other.

On one hoof, she would love to do nothing else but let out a squeak of joy and to roll around in a flowerbed, or run like a foal. She wanted to give in and let her inner child, to just be set free in the surrounding forest.

On the other hoof, she still clung to the reasoning behind why her inner child was locked up, to be just like Celestia. Celestia was a true princess, wise and regal, always able to keep her composure in check. If Luna rolled around in flowers or skipped and jumped around in a fit of emotion, she would hardly be like her sister.

The alicorn groaned as her head began to hurt, as she weighed the possibilities. The pain kept growing as her headache roared back to life, accelerated by Luna's concentration and worries. Pain scorched through her horn, until she thought she could bear it no more.

With a moan, Luna fainted onto the ground, her body landing softly along the forest floor.

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Fluttershy gasped in worry as she saw Luna collapse onto the ground. She had been following her for the past few minutes, after summoning the courage to go after the Princess.

She had just been getting back from a day at the spa with Rarity when she saw the goddess fall from the sky. Just before she hit the ground, a brief flash shot through the air. The yellow pegasus could only think the worst. With her compassionate side taking over, the only thing Fluttershy *could* do was gallop as hard as she could to check on Luna.

Luckily, her fears dissipated as she neared the navy blue pony. All her bones were intact, and apart from a moderate concussion, the mare was in miraculously good condition.

Only after tapping her a few times and calling to her, did the goddess awake. As her eyes blinked open, all Fluttershy was able to do was to bite back her involuntary urge to scream, a byproduct of her shy attitude towards new ponies. Especially such a highly renowned pony like Princess Luna.

When the alicorn screamed first, the pink-maned pegasus instinctively screamed too, her anxiety coming out in a high-pitched yell. Without even really thinking, Fluttershy ran home, the wind swooshing by as she galloped straight to her doorstep. She was panting heavily as she slammed the door behind her.

And now, watching the princess in another state of unconsciousness, Fluttershy knew she had to do something. "Oh dear..." She sighed to herself, apprehension building in her chest.

With a grunt, she wrapped her forelegs around the mare, and used her wings to lift up off the ground. At first, she couldn't go more than a few feet above the earth.

'Oh no...' Fluttershy began, wondering if she could ever get the Princess to her house, *'Come on Fluttershy, be strong!* She reassured herself, *'It's a bit like Pinkie Pie told you... Not a "Hop, skip and a jump", But a "Flap, heave and a pull."... I hope.'*

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The deep fragrance of tea tickled Luna's nose as she awoke. A damp, cold cloth that was once over her face, had now flopped onto a soft blanket as she lifted her head up. She rubbed her hooves drowsily over her eyes, and stifled a yawn. "Where am I?" Luna asked herself for the second time that day, only this time it was out loud.

The room was a mix of a calming and somewhat pale color scheme. Brown and green were the dominant colors, but others could be found; a pale yellow shelf, a few blue and red books that resided in a small bookcase to her left.

Sounds of birds chirping flowed past her ears, the pattering of little feet scurrying around could be heard throughout. A small bunny hopped into her view, carrot in hand, directly across from her. Making eye contact, the little creature pointed it's remainder of a carrot straight at Luna before scurrying off.

Luna gasped a bit, not expecting such a level of intelligence from a forest animal. *'Did Equestria really change that much?'*

A small tray clattered quietly to her right, as it was placed on a nightstand. Luna looked over to see that the same yellow mare from before was standing next to her. The pony's pink mane flowed to the ground as her eyes studied the small alicorn.

"I'm very sorry, Princess Luna. I just saw you collapse and I couldn't resist but to help you." Her light blue eyes shifted from Luna to the ground, "If you want to leave.... I can understand that." Her voice was the same as before, quiet and soft, but still holding a strong sense of care.

"No no, thank you very much." Luna replied quietly. She was overtaken by this pony's willingness to allow herself to stay in her home. Perhaps not all ponies were as self-centered as those in Camelot.

"Can you tell me..." Luna stopped. She almost could feel herself hitting the ground. The rush

of the wind ending as she closed in closer the the earth. She bit her lip, not knowing if she could finish the sentence. Without the charm of the forest around her, the real weight of how close she was to becoming seriously hurt or injured, now hung upon her like a thousand pounds.

The goddess felt shaken by how dangerous of an ordeal she had gone through, how much she owed the fates for her luck. Tears began to well up on the corners of her eyes. It all nearly came crashing down on her as the pegasus began to speak.

"Shhh... It's okay." Fluttershy told her. "It wasn't too bad," She continued, the calming effect in her voice amplified as she realized Luna's distress, "All you hurt was your head, and not nearly as bad as it should've been. You don't have to worry about it any more." Fluttershy put a reassuring hoof on her shoulder. The blue mare looked up at her savior, giving her a half-hearted smile.

Luna was still in a little bit of shock, but the smell of the nearly-forgotten tea wafted into her senses. A twinge of bergamot resided, giving the smell a more exotic touch. "Is that tea?" She asked, her voice shaking. There were two little cups, each steaming around a a flower-painted porcelain teapot in the center.

"Oh yes." Fluttershy replied, eying the tray. She looked back at Luna, trying to smile a bit, "Would you like some?" Luna nodded, and accepted the cup the mare gave to her. As she took it, Fluttershy realized this was a good time to change the subject.

"So... Why are you here in Ponyville?" Fluttershy asked, trying her best to keep a casual tone and get the Princess' mind off her terrifying ordeal. Admitting it to herself, Fluttershy knew she would never act so open to an unknown pony unless it were under serious circumstances like this.

Luna looked up at Fluttershy, and adjusted herself on the bed so she could face her better. Her light blue mane getting in her eyes as she did, before blowing it out of her face. "Well, you see..." Luna began, relaying her story, including her task from Celestia and even admitting her reclusive plans to studying Ponyville, up until getting knocked out of the sky. "And then I just started falling..." She concluded, her voice beginning to shake again.

Fluttershy was growing a little frustrated. All her animal friends usually didn't work themselves into more grief after being hurt. Instead, they usually listened to her and did as she said. '*Why do other ponies have to be so difficult?*' She thought, arguing between her compassion for others and her growing disappointment in herself. '*But I have to help her! She's hurt and...*' Fluttershy looked at Luna, seeing how badly shaken she was. '*She looks just like I would after a tumble like that. I've **got** to help... Somehow.*'

Determined to stop the younger goddess from worrying too much, Fluttershy asked her

another question, "What do you plan on doing tomorrow? You're welcome to take a look around nearby at the local plants and animals."

Luna sniffed, still a little emotional still from talking earlier. "I honestly don't know. Even after observing all the beauty around here before I passed out, a voice inside me is telling me that I still will be looking for answers... It was all very beautiful, but it still feels like something would be missing." She zoned off towards the ground, lost in revelation.

As Luna began to sniffle some more, Fluttershy realized she was right, she would miss out on something. After going on a few adventures with Twilight and the other Elements of Harmony, she knew exactly what the Princess needed to help her understand the world. A friend.