

Moonshy

by Friendly Uncle

The moon hung bright and heavy in the velvet sky. Fluttershy smiled up at the stars and sipped her hot chocolate, letting the stress of the day melt out of her body. All the little animals were asleep, most of Ponyville was snuggled contentedly in their beds, and her own pillow was waiting patiently for her. She'd get there eventually, but right now the stars were so pretty, and the night was so quiet, and the chocolate was so warm... so not yet...

Her left ear twitched as it detected a noise, then swivelled around to pinpoint the sound. Somewhere to the west, near the Everfree Forest, somepony was singing a song. Curious, Fluttershy finished her drink before taking off in the direction of the noise, her wings carrying her swiftly and silently along the ground. Coming up on the forest, she paused and alighted on a convenient boulder, staring up in surprise at the sight of a pony entirely shrouded in a large cloak perched atop a tree and serenading the moon.

*"I don't know
What words I can say
The wind has a way
To talk to me
Flowers sleep
A silent lullaby
I pray for reply
I'm ready
Quiet day calms me
Oh serenity
Someone please tell me
Oh moon, what is it they say?
Maybe I will know one day..."*

Fluttershy felt her heart break for the mournful tone of the singer's beautiful voice. She didn't often find herself compelled to approach other ponies, but this song awoke the same maternal instincts that would have her nursing bunnies back to health after tragic tortoise racing accidents. She wanted to put a foreleg around the singer and tell them everything was going to be okay.

On the other hoof, that would involve actually flying over to a strange pony she'd never met before and making actual physical contact with them. Fluttershy squeaked softly with indecision and remained on her rock.

She thought she was being quiet, but it was apparently enough. The singer's hooded head abruptly whirled around and Fluttershy found herself trapped in the gaze of two shining eyes. The singer's cloak rippled outwards to reveal powerful wings as she rose into the air and flew

towards Fluttershy.

That was about enough to set off every warning bell in Fluttershy's extensive collection. Letting out another, considerably louder, squeak, she turned tail and fled. And very nearly ran straight into the cloaked stranger. In the time it had taken Fluttershy to turn to flee, the stranger had not only covered the distance between them, but slipped behind her and blocked off her escape route.

"Fluttershy?"

The pudding-colored pegasus stopped having a panic attack long enough to be mildly confused. She didn't specifically recall ever meeting a great dark pegasus who hung out in trees and sang sad songs at the moon while wearing an evil-looking cloak, but there were a lot of ponies in Ponyville, and she didn't get out much. It was possible she'd been pointed out to one without her knowledge, maybe out of recognition for her work with animals. Or maybe she was about to be assaulted.

The cloaked pony tossed her head and allowed her hood to fall away, revealing indigo fur, a lighter blue mane, a long horn, and a small onyx tiara. Fluttershy's eyes widened.

"Princess Luna! What... what are *you* doing here?"

Luna's cautious smile slowly dipped down at the corners and she began to back away.

"I... I was simply going for a... fly... I'm sorry, I should have realized... of course I'm not welcome here. I'm sorry. I'll go."

She turned to flee, only to stop short at a sharp tug on her backside. Whirling around in surprise, she found Fluttershy hanging on gamely to a mouthful of her tail. When she had the princess' attention again she hastily spat it back out.

"You *surprised* me," said Fluttershy.

Luna blinked.

"That's all, I mean. You're welcome to stay. I was just curious, so I followed your song." Fluttershy looked down at the ground and pawed it nervously. "Your singing is beautiful."

Luna allowed a small smile and settled back onto the ground, just outside of Fluttershy's personal space.

"Thank you."

Fluttershy looked up at her through the pink curtain of her hair, frowning a little.

“Why are you so sad?”

Now Luna was more than a little taken aback. She took a few nervous steps backwards, unwilling to meet Fluttershy’s inquisitive gaze.

“It’s just the way the song goes,” she said carefully. “It’s an older one, from before...”

She bit her lip. Fluttershy sort of sidled up to her, attempting to be comforting despite clearly being afraid of the larger pony.

“It wasn’t really the song,” Fluttershy tried to explain, “you just sounded really sad while you were singing it. It’s okay if you don’t want to talk about it. But if you do, I’ll listen.”

Luna let her head hang slowly downwards, frowning a little.

“... you are the first to offer me as much in a long time,” she said softly.

Fluttershy grazed the tip of one wing gently along Luna’s, an unobtrusive gesture of comfort.

“It is not that I could not speak to Celestia. She has been... so kind... and so forgiving... and so hard on *herself* for all that happened. We cannot speak of it without apologizing! We cannot... we cannot share what is truly in our hearts with one another. She does not trust me, and she hates herself for not trusting me. And I love her, but there is still that distance between us and even after so great a span of years the old jealousies *are still there*.”

The tears in her eyes glittered like diamonds in the moonlight as Luna looked up to find Fluttershy wrapping a wing protectively around her. The pegasus pony smiled comfortingly. Luna felt her cheeks grow hot and averted her gaze.

“I cannot express myself.”

“I know how that feels.”

Luna looked up at Fluttershy in surprise. The pegasus immediately backpedaled.

“I mean, I don’t know how *all* of that feels I don’t have a sister and I’ve never been trapped in the moon or anything but I know what it’s like to not... know how to say something or to not want to say something because you’re afraid... I’m... I feel like that *right now* because I’m really scared I’m going to say something stupid and offend you or something and I’m *always* like that and most of the time I just don’t say anything.”

Fluttershy shut her eyes tight because Luna was staring at her, a bit perplexed.

“But when I don’t say things they just get... sort of held in and... full... and then eventually someone makes me say something and I just *snap* and it all comes out at once. And that’s bad! So, uhm. I don’t want that to happen to you, so if you need somepony to talk to, and you can’t talk to anypony else, please talk to me?”

There were tears in Luna’s eyes again, but she was smiling now. The situation seemed to call for it, so she stepped closer to Fluttershy and entwined their necks in a hug. Fluttershy startled, but did not object.

“Thank you, Fluttershy. That means a lot to me.”

Fluttershy nuzzled her cheek briefly, then gently pulled away, motioning for the princess to follow her.

“I’ll make some more hot chocolate, and we can talk about whatever you want.”

“That... might take a while,” chuckled Luna, following.

“Well, we’ve got all night.”

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Celestia paced nervously around the large domed observatory that stood atop her castle, continually checking the large clock mounted on one of the supporting pillars. It was late. She’d been doing everything she could to avoid the obvious conclusion, but now the truth was staring her rudely in the face.

Luna wasn’t coming.

“No,” she murmured softly to herself, “Not again... I can’t do it again... please don’t make me-”

“I’m here!”

Celestia whirled, eyes wide in shock, as Luna came galloping into the room. The smaller alicorn was panting heavily, and her mane was a bit dishevelled, but she seemed otherwise none the worse for wear.

“I’m here!” she said again, gasping for breath, “I’m so sorry I’m late. But I’m here now. I’m sorry.”

“It... it’s alright little sister,” said Celestia, quickly hugging Luna. “I’m just glad that you made it.”

Luna smiled as her horn began to glow faintly with power. Celestia's did the same, and far away, in another time and place, great wheels began to turn. Outside, the sun rose in the east and began its slow trek across the sky.

"But I can't help being curious," Celestia asked, "what made you lose track of time?"

"I had an unusual encounter last night," Luna said shyly, "I wonder if, assuming you have time, I could speak of it."

Celestia smiled warmly and wrapped a wing around her little sister.

"Certainly," she said, "Let's talk."

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