

Clouds Of Light

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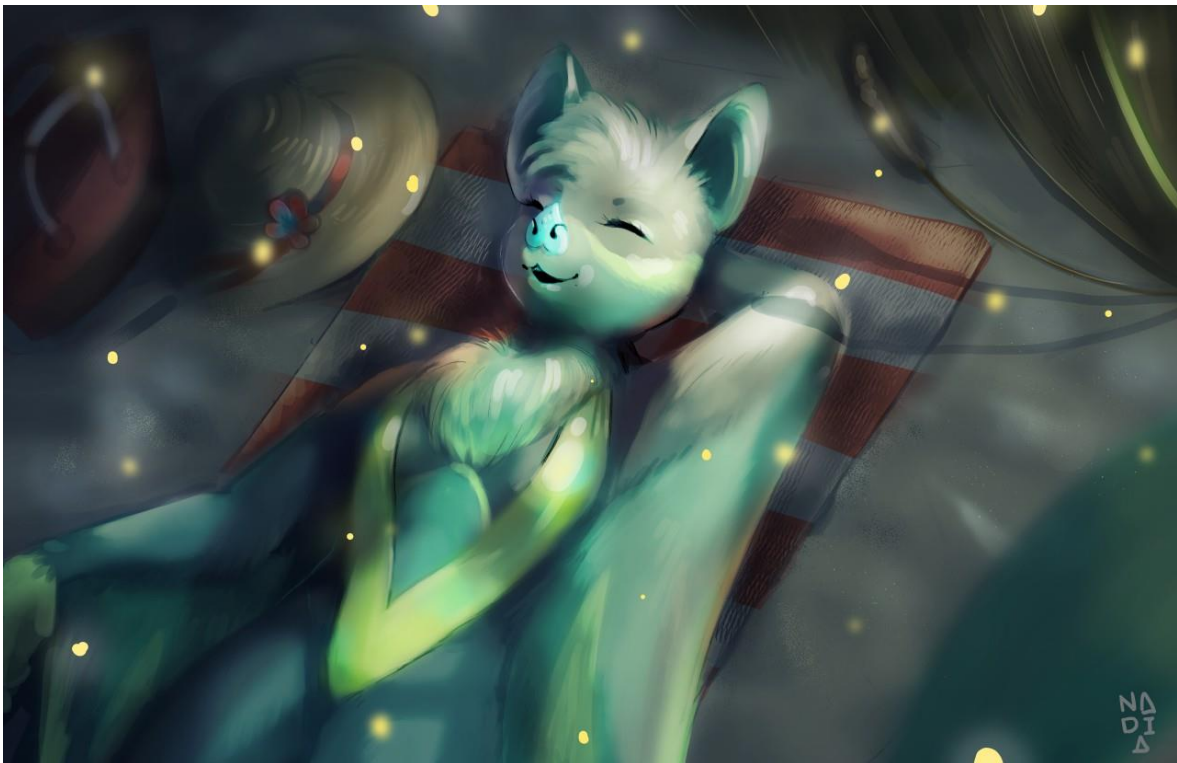
Featuring an illustration by: nahdiafur

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Black water crashed again and again into the shore. Its rolling contours highlighted a dazzling white by the Moon above. Its surf, too, the foam deposited in silver streaks along the grey sands, to fade away bubble by bubble or shattered all at once by errant paws. For while the beach was dark, it was far from empty. The beach being well into its hours of operation for benefit of Furs of the nocturnal sort. In the far water, a purple Bat was windsailing without a sail. In the shallows a school of Sharks were navigating their beachball toss amid even more swimmers. Two Raccoon kits were playing Frisbee on the wet sands. On the dry, A Sloth was diligently constructing a grand castle. Scenes of this sort payed themselves out along a half mile stretch, the sounds of play and lively conversation fading into those of multiple radios stations and a Porcupine strumming his guitar.

Back away from the ruckus, at the inner edge of the beach where the sand met untamed grass, there lay a simple red and white blanket. Atop that lay a Sugar Glider. Lounging in a sideless one-piece of yellow designed to accommodate gliding membranes of green. The scent of honey-roasted peanut crumbs lingering in the salted air.

Here, where no music played, the clearest sound was the flitting of countless, tiny wings. Eyes closed merrily, Teardrop listened to them flutter about on their tireless search for attention and mates. Their movements times to the swaying of the tall blades just behind her head, a swoosh of in-and-out. In-and-out. In-and-out.



She joined the world in taking a deep, refreshing breath, letting it all out as she opened her emerald eyes. The firefly swarms had grown since she'd closed them. They soared over her now in golden clouds, their light competing with that of the great white orb whose light she'd been bathing in. Separate masses collided into each other and fractured away again, forming accidental shapes in the sky. Here a rocket ship! There a heart! Here a butterfly! There a top hat! Each of these phantoms there and gone like a poem, lasting no more than a second. Plenty of time, for large and sharp eyes to enjoy.

All at once the little lights scattered from their communal center point, a living supernova. In its wake, a pulsing blue disc arced just over the female's head -- causing her to cry out in surprise! -- and embedded itself within the cattails.

No sooner had Teardrop still her hammering heart, laying with quickened breath upon her blanket, a portly Raccoon boy in dark red shorts came trumbling over. Painting apologies, "Sorry! Sorry! Sorry!"

The green lady's chattering teeth opened into a laugh, and she retrieved the light-up Frisbee and sent it flying back his way. He ran off with it, leaving a quickly shouted 'thank you' behind. Just like that, the adrenaline rush had been there and gone.

Laying back down, Teardrop closed her eyes and waited for the little lights to come fluttering back.