

Under a Mewling Moon

Written by Letrune

Part 6 - in which we dabble in history, sociology and criminology

It was an innate feeling of both Celestia and Luna to move the celestial objects. Barely a thought - just like how one can walk and whistle at the same time. They said it was so, at least. Maybe it was just thousands of years of routine.

So Celestia woke up to the Moon slowly sinking beyond the shining cityscape, and raised the Sun while drinking her morning tea. Luna just flopped for a rest as the coffee ran out, leaving Celestia for her thoughts.

There was something fishy - she smiled for a moment - around here. The cats who robbed them of their crowns seemed like professionals, and the Purrmier was an emotional wreck afterwards. Did she know something? Maybe she ordered it maybe?

It did not seem so, but she was an actress before. Even Celestia recalled that one movie she was in; she could just make it seem she was afraid, and then made a big scene on being just barely in control for herself in the theater... until she just "forgot" about her fear. She offered to spend more time with them. She was unfocused, sure, but it seemed she was genuinely happy to be with them. Maybe she was not actually that afraid, but used it as an excuse.

But this idea was so flimsy, she felt it collapsing on itself.

Felidia was multiple feline nationstates joining forces, did any of it want absolute control? It seemed unlikely to connect to any of the crowns, unless... the thieves wanted to throw discord between the Princesses and the cats.

But why? Equestria and Felidia were friends for hundreds of years, there were Equestrians going over the border every year for business and leisure - she did not recall a lot of cats going over however...

Her thoughts had to stop by a soft knocking behind her. As she turned the head around, she saw Reliven with a newspaper-bundle under his arm.

"I hope I am not disturbing any morning rituals, your majesty."

"Why, you are not, and please, just treat me like a friend. Please, come and join me. Wishing a cup of tea? Maybe with milk? Or... Without tea?"

They smiled at each other.

"Might ask for some later. Right now, I got the papers here if you wish."

"I'd rather talk, if you don't mind. Just between friends, not between a minister and a politician."

"Why would anyone mind a talk with such a lovely lady?" He said as he pulled a pillow and curled up on it in a cozy position. He took off his vest, from which his medals

clung, and put it next to himself on the pillow. "I am now just Reliven. Not the Minister of Friendly Affairs." He answered the unsaid question.

"Well, about your question, some would mind to talk to me by fear."

"Oh, yes... Sorry for that." He took a glance around. "Should it get out from between us: she is incredibly tired and stressed, but..." his voice went lower and her head leaned closer. "She is a panic-prone kitten at times."

"Is she having any issue with us?"

"None that I know of. It can be a simple, subconscious fear."

"Did we do something wrong?"

"No, not at all. It is just her... particular fear."

"We could talk to her sometime. She was pretty fine during and after the theater performance."

"And this is why I think her fear is just some sort of personal fear. No malice in her. Maybe she was once bumped by a pony into some water by accident, and her mind linked the two or something..."

"Well, we get nowhere by theorizing, unless one of us has some psychological training, and I am sure not." She smiled at him.

"Politics is applied psychology to larger groups for their benefit... Well, most often. Ideally to their benefit, shall we say."

"But not the same way as a psychologist would know. Entirely different roles."

"Just like acting and politics."

"Indeed."

"She was at the best point to try, having some skills... But between friends, she is not the best. She was the best of the few candidates."

"Hmm, who else was there?"

"I don't even recall. She was the one who was there enough to be remembered."

"Ideally, a politician would not be seen..." Celestia smiled. "I know what you think of, but with Luna and I, we are from a different time. Felidia is of a new age. Who knows... Maybe in the future, we would be only known for our work and not for being rulers."

"Sounds utopian, and it sounds like a great point."

"Who would not want an utopia?"

"Everyone wishes the best for themselves, but some utopias are built on someone else's misery. Take, for instance, the Storm King or Generalissima Katrina."

"We saw her picture in the museum and a statuette, but I do not know a lot about her. Was she that bad?"

"She was bad." he replied and hesitated a bit. She nodded, so he moved closer. "She started by fighting changelings with an aide named Rep, who we sadly do not know a lot about, and took over multiple towns of the changelings. She became a highly decorated general, uniting a lot of city states, like Mewsville, Manx Crossing, Calmsea, Border... Still later, thanks to her magic skills, she conquered Abyssinia from the queens and installed herself as ruler. She went mad with power and some potion's influence, taking over more and more, forcing her will on others. She enslaved the Bushwoolies, driving the remaining ones away. A rebellion was launched against her, and after weeks of intense fights, she was forced to go without her potion. She became a lot nicer, but refused to appear any more in public."

"She must have been ashamed."

"She... May have been. After that things slowly unwound and fell apart. Felidia was formed a hundred years later. We still feel some of her efforts lingering, but all in all, Felidia is better for everyone. Maybe one day, we will all be better and only remember her in a footnote of history."

"How long ago was it?"

"About three hundred years ago. Something like three hundred and twenty?"

"Oh. I... Was quite busy then. Makes sense that I forgot."

"And don't forget that Equestria wasn't quite friendly towards us then."

"Hard to recall. It feels like we have been friends since forever, Equestria and Felidia."

"Indeed... And this is why I am afraid of the matter of the crowns."

"Oh, don't let it ruffle your fur. Our crowns are like those medals you got."

"No, they are a lot more valuable."

"Is it really such a big matter for you cats?"

"The medals or the crowns?"

"Let's say both."

"Medals show accomplishments. You can look at someone and tell their history, their heroic deeds, what they have done. The crowns are a symbol of your authority, and more than that, a piece of history themselves. Were they not the original Elements of Harmony?"

"Oh, no, those crowns aren't. They are replicas." Celestia smiled on seeing Reliven's expression. "Sure, old replicas, but not the same. Say... Back to our hostess, why does she have none of these? No crowns, no medals."

"Felidia stopped using crowns after Katrina, we instead formed a council. We did have queens before, but they were still more like the representative of a pride than a ruler. It is... Complicated, compared to Equestrian politics and quite interesting. Still, we changed to a parliamentary system, the first on the continent. As of Miss Inedil... She seems like she wants nothing. She does the ceremonies and does her job, then suddenly forgets her medals and the like. I feel like she does not take pride in them, and instead

likes to shower them on others, either as a genuine effort to make everyone feel accomplished, or as her way to reward even the smallest of kindnesses. Maybe she doesn't like this spotlight, but she does not tell me."

"Aren't you friends?"

"We are, but... We are cats. Secrecy is just part of our being."

"You always got something hidden?"

"Just the personal. This is why she is... Not that good. She was popular when she was elected, and I feel she realized that she can not fill this role well. I feel like she wants out, and the stress wears her down, especially since she is afraid of horses."

"And we circle back. She tried to keep it a secret that she is afraid of us?"

"Tries and fails. She keeps the reason a secret - maybe from herself too."

"Maybe she has nothing and as you suggested, some past event."

"Hopefully... Anyway, the papers. I got the Equestrian Herald here..."

Elsewhere, a cat pushed a paper into the typewriter and began typing the latest article for the Cat's Sun, an editorial over how Equestria values the stolen crown, speculating. She stopped for a moment when the nearby vacuum tube clinked and a capsule arrived. Opening it, she got the message she waited for, and started typing faster.

"...the crowns being stolen may be an Equestrian ploy. Consider: unknown assailants in the middle of the night just sneak up on the Princesses and rob them? How could this happen? Where were their guards? How come the crowns just got lost? Where could they be hidden, and why? My ears tell me that we will get an answer soon, and if my feelings are right, the answer will not be liked by many Felidians."

The day was mostly like a vacation for the Princesses, they had lunch at a preselected restaurant without any issues, and spent a few hours at almost care-free leisure. The sun was lowered when they returned home, and this is when things took a turn: a Felidian Home Guard truck screeched to a halt, the tigress general Cier hopping down, holding a fancy wooden box in her arms.

"Good news, milady! The FHG found the crowns under a bed, and as such, can give them back," she was followed by the police officer Belfi, who nodded to them, while the general continued, her tone shifting towards more official and almost disparaging. "We also managed to capture the most likely culprit, and as our treaty of Mewsville Border Crossing states, she is under the jurisdiction of Equestrian law."

Belfi gently tugged Letrune out of the truck. She had a pair of handcuffs on, but the Princesses saw how it was a plastic one, more for show.

"Are you sure she is able to do such a thing?" Luna asked.

"Well, officially, I got to say that she likely is. Unofficially, I got no darn idea."

Luna got her crown from the box and plopped it on Letrune's head. The cat shook and took steps back and then tried to shake the crown off of her head.

"Well, that is a," Cier started, stopped, and whispered. "Thing."

"She seems incapable for such a deed."

"But she could very well plan up a way to order others. We had not found the operatives yet, but she could easily order some cats," Belfi stated, then looked at the cat, who seemed to be busy looking at her own toes. "But..."

"And what about her companion? Reliven is noticeably.. absent."

"He is organising a press answer, and said will be here soon enough."

"Well, if you don't mind it..." Luna said "We could talk about it in the house. Can someone bring Reliven here as well?"

In an hour, the main room had been almost filled. Guards of both nations, Belfi, Cier, Reliven and Letrune on one side of the table, Celestia and Luna on the other.

Celestia looked over the cats. Cier was obviously bored, looking at her claws and cleaning something from her teeth. Belfi had been thinking, occasionally writing into her notepad. Reliven was distraught. Letrune was on the brink of total emotional collapse, even after the handcuffs were removed.

"Well... if you don't mind me playing a detective," Luna started "all crimes rest on three legs. Who, how and why. We know the how, some sneaky assiliants, but the rest..."

"Sorry, but has anyone got something to drink? I'm parched." Cier questioned. To the felines' surprise, Celestia got up and walked off with two guards.

"Just a moment..." She soon returned with both guards, the unicorn one putting a plate with five bowls down. There was milk in each, and apart from Belfi, every cat and Celestia drank. Belfi hesitantly took some sips from hers but seemed uninterested.

"This tastes like water," Cier complained and leant back on the chair, balancing herself on the two rear chairlegs and her paw under the table's edge.

"Well, who here would have any motivation to take our crowns and then return them in a fancy box, stuffed under the bed of the Purrmier? What would make you, Letrune, do such?"

"I... I don't want those crowns," she stated. "I just wish to be left alone."

"You are horrified of us... or is it just another act?"

"I am af-afraid of horses," she said a bit too fast to get the trembling out of her voice.

"But as a leader, you have the responsibilities of a nation. Maybe you want to make sure no horses are close, or just want to get yourself fired."

There was a purring giggle, from Belfi as well. Letrune blushed a bit.

"It is just a f-fancy job. Comfy, got some spotlight..." she looked downwards and fallen silent for a bit too long.

"And it is more a formal job than a hard one, but it is a boring one at times. The Parliament does most of the real work. Who would not want it with great cats on her side?" Reliven added.

"Well, speaking of - what about you? Maybe you wish to be the Purrmier yourself?"

Reliven had a purring giggle again.

"It is a complex election. Anyone can throw their name in at a specific date as a candidate, to see if they want to be a leader. After that, they got to fill a form; this is where most cats just give up, because the form is boring, long and tiresome. It is made to be so. Then popular voting happens, and if there is a tie or some problem, the Parliament votes on who seems fit from the candidates for the job. So far, we never had a male Purrmier and I prefer my post as Minister of Friendly Affairs."

"I... never really... really had to do much," Letrune added. "Reliven done the foreign work, and I just had to review and sign some papers... not... not needing to... meet the p-p-ponies or..." she trailed off.

"Okay, you ponies got some truth serum in this milk?" Cier groaned as she leant forward, chair on four legs again. "Do you think we are stupid?"

"Well, I did add some truth serum indeed.. I drank it myself too," Celestia said.

"But not Luna," The tiger pointed to the princess, whose eyes widened.

"Honestly, she would have blabbered it out too soon. You know... sisters are just such."

"Hey!" Luna huffed.

"Yeah, I see now," The general murred. "Mine are messy too. But I still care for them, so this entire stupid treaty can go and..."

"I mean, the law is law... it goes all the way up," Letrune interjected, managing to mask whatever her sister said. "Where did you get it anyway?"

"From me," said a newcomer. Livra had been standing in the room, just behind Luna, but only now became visible. It was not real magic, just dark gray clothes and a pair of opaque glasses in a shadowed corner. "I was tasked to use all the magic we can to find the actual culprit. The Parliament is really panicking over this issue."

"Sure. Our big welcome party turns into a stolen jewelry story," Letrune said. "It is as if a talentless hack would have mixed up their stories, making a nice travelog into a Clawing Canar novel."

"Who?" Luna asked.

"A local pulp novel serial. It is about a hands-" she looked at everyone's puzzled and even impatient eyes. "Nothing special. Just detective stories."

"Back to the case... What about you, Belfi? You may wish to show us how efficient the police force is."

"Please..." she raised the bowl, and drank it all. "I have twenty other cases I would present and solve, if I could choose. I do not want to have any international disaster or a case that is not even in my jurisdiction. I am already sick of the fiasco and if I could, I would have had my officers on a holiday, traveling with you and dancing with flowers on their heads."

"So... we got you left, general."

"I had a lovely time setting up a parade and playing Science: the Communicating or Catopoly with my boys. This crime threw a wrench into my plans and I hate it like vegetable filled tofu cake in a breaded meat plate," she groaned.

"You mentioned dark catsuits on the assailants," Belfi spoke up. "I would say they may be from FelIntel."

"And what is that?"

"A special branch of the Home Guard. Similar to the Lunar Guard you have."

"Can we go and interrogate them?"

"I did," Cier interjected. "They are silent, like a kitten found neck deep in the cookie jar, except they hadn't eaten the cookies."

"Do you think someone stuffed that kitten in?" Celestia inquired and got a shrug.

"No confirmation yet. My guys were sent to check, and Director Softleap is investigating the details.

"So, what else remains?" Luna asked, and rubbed a hoof to her chin. "Someone gets specialists, likely a FelIntel unit to steal our crowns, waits a day, then we find them under the Purrmier's bed. Why? Maybe someone wants to put her aside?"

"They could just ask..." she sighed, then Luna continued.

"They were professionals, because they took out the guard, and could disappear. But who would want that and why?"

A dark room, just a copper lamp from the ceiling to draw the silhouettes of the ones present. There were three beings in the room, one eloquent male, one murring and one growling female. The male finished.

"You see, that would be quite an issue if they would try their ideas about the.... Connections."

"Why would it be so? You want the honor of making the treaty?" the murring female voice said.

"Oh, it would be quite nice."

“And you know that we are.... Not entirely capable of just putting you in an important role on such a short notice.”

“Why would I need such. It is not as if I would need the help of anyone beyond this simple request.”

“Then why waste our time?” the growling one asked, and the murring voice replied.

“But my friend, why would we not help him? Just because he is a p... pony with ambition?”

“Ladies... could we not have more light than this bulb? Surely, a manor or...”

“Comfort numbs your senses,” the growling one stated, walking not with the usual silent steps of a cat he expected, but heavy, impatient stomps of leather and metal. “Spit it out! I got work to do.”

The male pony cleared his throat.

“It would be a pleasure if someone could remove a certain congresspony from the seat while the Princesses are abroad. I mean, here. Why you had to blindfold me?”

“Oh, pleeease, let me give you my name, address and passwords to any installations we have! Maybe the key to the Treasury would be nice too?” snarked the growling voice, before the murring one hushed her.

“We can help, and while it was a snarky reaction, my friend here was right, it was mostly a safety deal. Would you have given us your real name?”

“....Errrr.....”

“So that is your real name.”

“...Yes.”

“No wonder you can’t win a seat,” the snark came again from the growling voice. “Last I heard, you had to charm the nobility and drop some cash into the wind and bam, you could be bored for eight hours too.”

“Politics is not boring,” interjected the murring one but the pony shouted over her.

“Because you know so much, right? Snarking seems to be how cats get their pillows around!”

He did not expect the muscular arm coming from behind his seat, grabbing his neck and moving his head to the left. He could see the deep green eyes reflecting the bulb and the vaguely shadowed form of a cat’s face, contorted with some scar running across the nose in an ellipsoid fashion. He pushed with his front hoof, to which she showed her fangs.

“Enough! Both of you, calm down or I have to take drastic measures.” The two stopped fighting but the arms still held the pony’s neck for a few moments. “Much better. So... You consider our... Help to be a small favor? I am afraid it is a big favor, but nothing you could not pay back in turn. Simply put, we would need some books about magic any pony can learn.”

"Only unicorns learn spells, us others got... Ehh... Talent-based magic. Pegasi can walk on clouds and such."

"And you?"

"Let us say that I got determination befitting a rock."

"So, nothing," the groaning voice laughed. "What, that was what you said!"

"Just a gaffe," he replied.

"No wonder you could not-"

"Friends..." the murring one said. "So, can you get us the books? Copies are fine too... but I would need the folio of that... Graybeard, right?"

"Starswirl the Bearded?!" he hopped off his chair, which landed on the concrete floor, echoing in the empty darkness. "Those are NIGH IMPOSSIBLE to get! Even Ms. Sparkle needs to get royal and librarian decrees and she is practically royalty herself!"

"I don't wish for the originals... I only wish for a copy. Maybe... In a way that could let us study. Maybe a mutually benefitting scientific research for a popular science magazine on ancient and modern magic."

"...You had it planned already?" asked both the groaning cat and the pony.

"Time is precious. So, may I have someone put in a good word or two for us, please?"

"Sure, sure, miss. May we shake hooves... and paws on it?"

He raised his to the murring one, who moved back with the chair and got up, keeping her distance.

"I prefer writing." She said, colder and more distant than before. "Now go, time is precious."

The two left, and the murring one picked up the phone, turning the dial a few times.

"Hello. Yes, full cleaning. Air filters too. One chair needs to be scrapped into mulch. Scratch that, into sawdust. Scatter as far from this place as possible."