

**Eso Sí Que Es**  
by WTFHIW

Not long after nightfall on a given autumn Tuesday, Princesses Celestia and Luna were eager for some quiet time to enjoy each other's company, as the week had started in an unusually hectic manner.

Princess Luna had returned from yet another tour of one of Equestria's cities only two days prior, but the chance to sit and tell her sister of her most recent excursion had been sidetracked by a squabble in Parliament that required mediation. Neither of the Royals were pleased that a petty argument about trade tariffs had snowballed into an all-consuming issue which blocked the discussion of more important items on the docket, especially when a simple solution became plainly apparent once the sisters had been presented with all the facts. Just getting to those facts had been the real challenge, but such was the way of the world when the word on any politician's lips was "money."

With that particular frustration now behind them, the pair vowed to take full advantage of an evening to themselves, and had chosen the relative peace of the throne room for their retreat.

Once the guards had been ordered to exterior posts so the sisters could have some genuine privacy, the mares made themselves comfortable, and—to Celestia's delight—Luna started in on her tales from her most recent outing with little hesitation.

Her latest trek had been to Paddocksburgh: an agrarian township with the distinction of being the nation's highest producer of hay, as well as an experimental growing center for a wide variety of hothouse produce. She'd returned with two pecks of plump strawberries (one a gift, the other purchased as a show of support for the local economy), and a bowl of the sweet treats sat between the sisters as the Night Princess ran through a short stack of photographs taken during select events.

"This one's from the Bovine Dairy Union picnic," said Luna as she floated up a picture of her standing at the far-left of a small herd of grinning cows. "A lovely group of ladies; high-spirited and quite friendly."

Celestia chuckled upon spotting a deliberate mug in the crowd, eyes crossed and tongue lolling. "So I see."

"Hmm?" Luna leaned over to take a look. "Heh . . . that would be Ann in typical form."

"Ann?" Celestia's smile widened. "Really? Her name is *Ann*?"

"Oh, come on, Celly . . . you know cows favor such strange names. Believe it or not, she's the union president, and while she can be *quite* the character, she is *very* good at her job. I had the pleasure of speaking with her privately for more than an hour, and she was quite proud of the contract terms she'd negotiated with the regional churners and bakers. The townspoonies I spoke with were quite satisfied with those terms themselves, and have been very happy with the quality of the product."

"Contented cows give better milk, eh?"

Luna grinned. "Indeed. A few ponies we know could take a lesson from Ann's dedication to her fellows." The dark mare nodded in the direction of the Chambers of Parliament.

"A few ponies we know *should have* taken lessons in simple civility from their mothers," Celestia grumbled. "Let's put those foals out of our minds until the next 'crisis', shall we? Now, did you meet any other interesting folk while in town?"

"Oh, yes! . . . I do hope that one photo came out all right." Luna flipped through the pictures until one particular image caught her eye, and it drifted up for Celestia to see. "These two were *absolutely hilarious*."

The photo was of Luna standing in the foreground with her eyes rolled up toward the sky and biting her lower lip as if desperate to stifle a laugh. Just behind her was a pair of earth ponies that appeared to be in the middle of a hard argument.

“Good heavens. . . . What's going on *here*?” snickered the Day Princess, more at her little sister's expression than anything else.

“The pair behind me are Thistle and Heather, a brother-and-sister team in charge of managing the local fauna. Thistle is the chief pastoralist, while Heather is exclusively a veterinarian. When this was taken, they were debating which one of them smelled more of mildew.”

“ . . . What?”

“I don't know if it's a game they play or simply impulsive bickering, but for some reason, whenever they're in each other's company they start trading the most *ridiculous* barbs. Heather would accuse her brother of only being capable of turning to the right by making three quick lefts, and Thistle would retort by declaring his sister favors turnip sandwiches . . . sexually.”

Luna burst into laughter at the memory of that particular exchange, but Celestia failed to see the humor in such behavior. “Luna, that sounds horrible! Especially between siblings.”

“Oh, no, no . . . it's not as bad as all that.” She paused for a moment to catch her breath. “If you were to speak to one of them alone, they'd have nothing but good things to say about the other, but put them together, and *whew*! They'd launch right into it, regardless of the company in which they found themselves. For instance, when they were showing me how Thistle had been training the regional rodents to eat nothing but the weeds encroaching on the hay fields, Heather—with no provocation, mind you—turned to him and blurted, 'You have three wooden legs and a kickstand on the fourth!'

“I was, of course, quite shocked to hear such a thing come out of the blue, but without missing a beat, Thistle responded with, 'Oh yeah? Well, you have bony eyeballs, fat nostrils, a limp, and a prostate gland!' Once they'd gotten started, there was no stopping them, and it just kept getting sillier and sillier with each exchange. I simply couldn't stop laughing.”

Whether it was the mention of a kickstand on one's leg or the idea of a mare with a prostate that lightened her mood, Celestia's disapproving frown gave way to a smile, then a chortle, and finally full-on laughter that only fed off Luna's own. “Oh, goodness! My sides! Now I wish you'd brought a recorder with you rather than a camera. . . . To hear such nonsense firsthand would be brilliant!”

“Wait until you hear about the cucumber incident,” the younger monarch stated with a mischievous grin.

. . .

Over the next two hours, the Night Princess told the Day of her other experiences abroad, pausing occasionally for the odd strawberry, or to allow a bout of laughter to subside.

With her Paddocksburgh tales completed, Luna slid the photos into a small envelope and placed them carefully out of the way. “Well, that was fun, but it's getting late. I assume you'll want to retire?”

“I think I'll stay up for a while longer, if you don't mind,” Celestia smiled. “All those strawberries have my energy up.”

“Wonderful!” Luna chimed. It was a rare treat to have her sister's company so long after dark. “Anything specific you'd like to do?”

“Well, I do have some letters I could stand to answer, and you do as well, dearest.”

“Do I?” Outside of the occasional note from Twilight Sparkle, mail addressed to the younger monarch had been a rare thing.

“Yes, a few thank-yous have come in from ponies you met on previous tours. You're becoming rather popular, Luna, which is showing the success of your excursions.”

The dark mare managed a slight blush and a look of uncertainty. “Well . . . I don't know about *that*. . . .”

"Oh, come now, dearest. . . . Don't give me that look. Is it really a surprise that the ponies you've met have come to love you? All you ever needed was some time in the public eye, after all."

"Perhaps."

"Well, if I can't convince you, then the letters should. Let's get to it, all right?"

Celestia rang for her valet with a quick magical tug on a nearby golden bellrope. Mere seconds later, a pinto unicorn mare trotted into the throne room and bowed before Their Majesties.

"You rang, Milady?" she asked the elder Princess.

"Cornsilk, could you please go to my study and retrieve some letters from my desk? There should be two sets on the right-hand corner: one stack with items addressed to me, and the other addressed to Luna. We require both stacks, plus quills, ink, and parchment."

"At once." She bowed again and was out the door.

Before Celestia could goad her sister into retelling her the tale of Thistle's and Heather's ribald cucumber argument, Cornsilk returned with a small pushcart laden with various envelopes, papers, and a sizable cardboard box.

As the pinto distributed the correspondence between the two Princesses, both were rather surprised that the large package was addressed to Luna.

"What in the world can this be?" the dark mare asked her sister.

"I have no idea. . . . It must have come in while we were dealing with Parliament. Cornsilk, has this been run through the usual security checks?"

"It has, Milady. It's been inspected, registered, and the return address verified."

"Well then, Luna, let's see what you've gotten."

"All right." The junior Princess' horn glowed as she split the paper tape holding the box closed, folded back the flaps and extracted a letter from the top of the contents. After a quick scan of the text, she smiled as she recognized the author. "Ah! It's from that Manehattan schoolteacher I told you about last month. Listen to this. . . ."

*Dear Princess Luna,*

*I am writing to thank you once again for the time you spent with my class while you were in Manehattan. Your visit meant so much to my students, they decided they wanted to make you a gift as a class project. It took some time for them to decide on the project itself, but they worked very hard on it once the decision had been made.*

*Since you spend so much time and effort keeping our nights peaceful, the fillies and colts figured that you may get cold, especially during the longer winter nights. My ponies all hope these will help keep you warm as you guide the moon along its way.*

*Sincerely,*

*Sunflower Petals and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Class of Manehattan P.S. 42*

"How sweet!" said Celestia. "What did the children make for you?"

Luna reached into the box and extracted several long tubes of knitted fabric which had been bundled into quartets. "Oh, look! Leggings! How thoughtful of them, and such colors! . . . Wait . . . why are these all stitched closed at one end?"

The elder Princess chuckled, as it seemed Luna still held on to some rather old-fashioned ideals. "They're socks, dearest. They're meant to cover the hoof as well as the leg, and go inside your shoes."

"Oh . . . I see now. Should I try a few on?"

“Why not?”

The Night Princess slipped off her silvered shoes, selected a dark blue quartet decorated with embroidered stars, and took care to avoid snags as she slipped each sock on to her legs. However, she found that the heavy-knit wool was too thick to allow her shoes back over her hooves.

“Well, these are quite comfortable on the fetlocks and cannons, but I'm afraid my slippers don't want to accommodate the extra padding.”

“Sounds like a good excuse for new slippers, dearest. Stand up and let's have a look at the stockings themselves.”

Luna took to her hooves and paraded down the long runner-carpet leading from the throne's raised dais. “Well? What do you think?”

“Absolutely darling!” Celestia grinned. “You know, I think the young craftsponies who made those for you would *love* a picture of you wearing them.”

“Now there's an idea. . . . Do you think the Royal photographer would still be up at this hour?”

“It's not *too* late, so it wouldn't hurt to check. Cornsilk, would you be a dear and go see if Flash Bulb is still in the castle?”

“If not, could you fetch Gimbal for us?” added Luna, noting her own valet. “He's become quite skilled with a camera over the past few months.”

“As you wish, Your Majesties.”

As they waited, Luna returned to the dais and sorted through the remaining bundles of socks, picking out those with colors and patterns she found more favorable than others.

When she uncovered a bright yellow set, she floated them toward her sister and held them against her midriff while inspecting the sight with a critical eye.

“Luna, what are you doing?” asked the elder monarch, uncertain of the younger's intentions.

“These suit you quite well, Celly! Why don't you try them on?” Luna grinned.

“They were a gift *for you*, Luna. I don't think it would be appropriate for me to share in them.”

“Don't be silly, big sister! If you think the young ponies who crafted these would love to see me wearing them, don't you think they'd be even more thrilled to see *both of us* wearing them? Don't you remember me mentioning how many of them asked after you when I told you of my Manehattan tour?”

“Well . . . perhaps.”

“Come on, then. . . . Get those slippers off and try them on for size.”

After a moment's hesitation, Celestia relented and carefully worked the yellow stockings over all four hooves, while Luna shed the dark blue set for a turquoise one she felt complimented her eyes. The pair couldn't help but giggle at themselves and each other as they took turns modeling the leg-wear with exaggerated struts down and up the red carpet stretching across the room. It was rather silly for ponies of their ages and stations to be playing “dress-up” like fillies, but it was great fun nonetheless.

When Flash Bulb was escorted into the throne room by Celestia's rather stern valet, he was taken aback by the sight of the two Royals in brightly-colored socks, standing in mock-catty poses and laughing heartily.

“Ah! There you are, good photographer!” Celestia giggled as she took notice of the pegasus stallion. “We'd like you to take some pictures of us in these stockings. They'll be for the schoolponies that made them, so the more tasteful the photos, the better.”

“Um . . . certainly . . . Your Highness,” he stumbled, not certain if his eyes had really seen what he'd thought they'd seen. “Where would you like to start?”

“Hmm . . . perhaps up here on the dais, with the two of us standing in front of the throne?” the Day Princess offered. “Luna, what do you think?”

"I think that would do nicely. What would be the best pose?"

The professional in the pegasus took over, and he drew his camera from the large bag at his waist to start framing up some shots. "We can try a few poses. Why don't we begin with both of Your Majesties sitting on the throne instead? Princess Celestia, perhaps you can sit toward the back at a slight angle, with Princess Luna in front of you?"

"All right," the elder sister agreed, and settled into the cushioning of the Royal perch while leaving enough room for her sibling to share the space.

Luna moved next to Celestia and smiled. "How's this?"

"Perfect! That's a good shot!" He snapped a few pictures. "Now, perhaps the two of you can hang your forelegs over the edge of the throne? Let's get a good look at those socks." The shutter of the camera clicked a few more times. "Now, how about the standing pose? Maybe with each of you on one side of the throne? No . . . that's leaving too much of a void. In front of it? Yes, that's it!" Click, click, click.

It didn't take long for the photographer to get into a groove, and he directed the Princesses through several changes of socks while having them pose on both levels of the dais, and then down on the red runner with the high throne as the backdrop.

Celestia and Luna found their strange little fashion shoot to be more and more amusing as it progressed, and at one point had even convinced Cornsilk to don a very loud quartet of argyles that she didn't seem to care for. The pinto unicorn wound up in four of Flash Bulb's shots; one where she carried an obviously-forced smile, and three more with an expression which could sour milk at twenty paces. She was quite happy to have been dismissed for the night once the odd humiliation had come to an end.

With a few exposures remaining on his last roll of film, Flash Bulb took a moment to scout around the throne room for a new location for the final shots.

A glimmer of light caught his eye, and he trotted to the double-doors leading to a small eastern balcony and swung them open. If one backed away from the balcony and stood at just the right angle, nearly a quarter of the night's moon was visible in the upper-right corner of the door frame. It was too perfect of a backdrop to be ignored.

"Princess Luna?" he called back to the dais. "How about a few shots of you with the moon in the background? The light's just perfect for it!"

"I don't know . . . I'd really rather keep both of us in the pictures, if that's all right," she replied.

Celestia smiled and gave her sister a little nudge toward the balcony. "Nonsense, dearest! I think it would be lovely to have a picture of you with your moon. I say do it!"

"I can come back in the morning and get some shots of you with the sun as well, Princess Celestia, if the moonlight's a good preview of the framing and I bring the right filters, that is. . . ."

"Sounds like a wonderful idea, good sir! I'm all for it. Now, go ahead little sister."

Luna strolled down from the throne, and turned from the carpet to the polished marble floor as she made her way toward the photographer.

No more than four steps from the runner, the soft fabric of her socks began to slide on the slick masonry and she stumbled, but managed to recover. "Whoa! That wasn't pleasant. Have to be careful with these on. . . . Whoops!"

Her left foreleg suddenly shot out from under her, and her attempts to regain control made her lose her mastery of the other three. For a brief moment, she appeared to be performing the most ridiculous (if not vulgar) tap dance across the chamber, until all four hooves decided to fly from under her at once, and she belly-flopped to the ground with a grunt.

"Luna, are you all right?!" cried Celestia as she hopped from the throne to help her sister. She slipped herself as she touched the marble, but managed to take to her wings before she'd followed the younger Princess' example.

"I'm all right!" the dark mare replied. "Rather embarrassed, but all right."

Flash Bulb ran to Luna's side and offered his hooves to help her up, but regardless of his support, each time she managed to get one of her own underneath her, it would slide back out when she attempted to put any weight on it. Before she pulled the stallion to the floor with her, she asked him to stand aside so she could try her wings. With her torso flat on the marble, she didn't have enough clearance for a full flap, so she ended up levitating herself into the air instead.

"Suddenly, I don't like socks . . . or *gravity*." She frowned at the Day Princess.

"Oh, don't you try to blame that on *me*," Celestia chuckled as she returned to the throne and started working the socks from her legs.

Flash Bulb blinked at the brief exchange. "What?"

"Nothing . . . nothing. . . ." Luna said in a dismissing fashion. "Now, where should I stand for the pictures?"

". . . Don't you want to take those socks off first?" the pegasus asked.

"What? No! Of course not! If the photos come out well, I'd like to send them to Miss Sunflower's class with the rest of them."

"Well, if you insist. . . . Can you make it to this spot over here?" He moved into the position he wanted her to take.

"Certainly." She floated over and carefully lowered herself to the floor, making certain she had a firm stance before extinguishing the glow of her horn. "Just don't ask me to move around too much, unless the photo really calls for it."

"Hmm. . . ." He brought the camera's viewfinder up to his eye. "Well . . . do you think you can move just a few inches to the left, and turn slightly more towards me? I can adjust my position instead, but we'll lose more of the moon if I do. . . ."

"Very well," she sighed, and levitated herself up as he directed her through the minute adjustments.

Finally, the Night Princess heard the shutter clicking away, and Flash Bulb lowered the camera from his eye with a happy grin. "Got it! Thank you very much, Your Highness, and please accept my apologies for putting you through such trouble."

Luna let out a little laugh. "As long as the pictures come out . . . *and* you keep your word to take a few of my sister with her sun, all will be forgiven."

"Can do and will do, Your Highness!"

Celestia, now back in her golden shoes, trotted up to the stallion and said, "Please return with the equipment you need between nine and ten in the morning, sir."

"You will remember the socks, won't you, Celly?" Luna eyed her sister.

"Yes, yes . . . I'll make certain I have them. Now, good night to you, Mr. Flash Bulb, and thank you for your service."

"My pleasure, Your Majesties." He tucked his camera back into its bag, bowed, and trotted out with a grin, happy that the Princesses were pleased with his work.

Celestia turned back towards the throne, expecting Luna to remove her stockings and follow, but her little sister stayed still.

"Luna, aren't you coming? This was all great fun, but we still have letters to answer, you know."

"I'm afraid I'll fall again if I try to move," the younger monarch said through a false-frown, and shot Celestia the most pathetic look she could muster. "Carry me?"

Celestia couldn't help but laugh. "Oh, you can be *such a filly* sometimes, little sister . . . You're on your own. Fly or float, either would do the trick now that you're standing."

"Spoil sport," she grouched, then tried her wings. To her surprise, a couple of quick flaps caused her to slide a few feet forward rather than taking her into the air. "Well, hello . . . what have we here?"

The Day Princess heard a flurry of wingbeats, but rather than seeing Luna flying overhead, she saw her sliding past her at a decent speed. "Luna, what *are* you up to?"

Luna managed a workable turn by holding one wing out, then stopped herself with a few hard backflaps. "Tell me, dear sister . . . how much longer were you planning on staying up?"

"I'm not really tired, so perhaps another hour or two. Why?"

The junior Princess flapped herself back into motion and scooted past her sister with a wide grin. "Put your socks back on, Celly! You are challenged to a race!"

"What? Have you lost your . . ."

The elder Princess watched her sister manage a near-graceful turn around one of the throne room's many columns, then slide on down the length of the expansive hall, giggling as she slalomed between more columns as she went.

Play.

Her little sister wanted to play.

She could barely remember the last time Luna had been in such a happy mood, much less any time when either of them didn't have the weight of their responsibilities keeping them from truly enjoying themselves as they'd done that night. She drew a determined breath, and walked back up to the throne to slip off her shoes and retrieve the previously-discarded yellow socks.

"Oh, Luna?" she called down to the dark mare as the first of the four stockings slid over a hoof.

"Hmm?" Luna replied in the middle of a sideways slide.

"I believe the phrase is, 'It. Is. ON.'"

*-fin-*





THE GAME