The Penguin's Missing Moon

Ebru Mina TOMURCUK

The Penguin's Missing Moon

Ebru Mina TOMURCUK

Pip was a small penguin chick with a fluffy grey head and a tiny orange beak. He wore a little red scarf that his mama knitted for him. Every night, Pip waddled to the edge of the ice and looked up at the night sky. He loved the moon more than anything else. It was big and round and silver, and it made him feel warm inside.

Pip's mama watched him from the den. She wore a soft seaweed shawl around her shoulders. "Time for bed, little one," she called. But Pip wanted to stay and watch the moon a little longer. "Just one more minute," he begged. The moon was so bright that it painted the snow blue and silver. Pip felt happy and safe under its glow.

One night, Pip noticed something strange. The moon was not perfectly round anymore. It looked like a big silver cookie with a bite taken out. "Mama, where did the moon go?" he asked, his big round eyes wide. Mama smiled gently. "The moon changes shape sometimes," she said. "It's called a phase. But don't worry, it always comes back."

Pip was not so sure. He decided to watch the moon every night to see what would happen. Some nights it was round, some nights it was half, and some nights it was just a thin sliver. Pip felt confused. "Why does it keep changing?" he wondered. He wished the moon would just stay the same. But the moon kept changing, and Pip kept watching.

Then one night, the sky was covered in thick, grey clouds. Pip waited and waited, but the moon did not appear. "The moon is gone!" he cried. "It's gone forever!" He felt a cold, scary feeling in his tummy. He ran to Mama and buried his face in her soft feathers. "What if it never comes back?" he whispered.

Mama wrapped her flippers around Pip. "The moon is not gone, little one," she said. "The clouds are just hiding it. But if you want to learn more, there is a wise bird who can help. His name is Nimbus. He is a petrel, and he knows all about the night sky." Pip looked up. "Will you come with me?" Mama nodded. "Of course."

Mama led Pip to the rocky point where Nimbus often rested. Nimbus was a seabird with long, wide wings and a white forehead. He had a thin braided grass cord tied around one leg. His dark eyes were calm and kind. "Hello, little penguin," Nimbus said. "I hear you are worried about the moon." Pip nodded, feeling shy.

Nimbus spread his wings and pointed to the sky. "The clouds are like a thick blanket," he explained. "They cover the moon for a while, but the moon is still there behind them. It never really leaves." Pip looked up. The clouds were moving slowly. "So the moon is just hiding?" he asked. "That's right," said Nimbus. "It will shine again soon."

Pip felt a little better, but he still had questions. "Why does the moon change shape?" he asked. Nimbus smiled. "That's called a phase. The moon goes around the Earth, and we see different parts of it lit by the sun. Sometimes it looks round, sometimes half, sometimes a thin curve. It's like a dance in the sky." Pip's eyes grew wide. "A dance?"

Nimbus nodded. "Yes, a slow, beautiful dance. And the clouds are like curtains that open and close. Sometimes they hide the moon, but they always move on." Pip looked at the sky again. The clouds were thinner now. A soft silver glow appeared behind them. "Is that the moon?" Pip whispered. "Yes," said Nimbus. "It's peeking out."

Pip watched as the clouds drifted away. The moon appeared, big and bright and round. It was even more beautiful than before. "It's back!" Pip shouted. He felt a warm, brave feeling inside his chest. "I was scared," he said, "but now I understand. The moon was just hiding." Nimbus nodded. "Understanding helps us feel brave."

Pip turned to Nimbus. "Thank you for explaining," he said. "I'm not scared anymore." Nimbus gave a gentle nod. "You are welcome, little one. Keep watching the sky. You will learn its secrets." Mama hugged Pip close. "I'm proud of you for being curious," she said. Pip smiled. He felt proud of himself, too.

From that night on, Pip watched the night sky every chance he got. He learned to tell when the moon would be round and when it would be a thin sliver. He learned that clouds come and go. And he learned that even when the moon hid, it was still there. He felt brave, even on cloudy nights. The sky was his friend now.

One evening, Mama found Pip telling a story to the other penguin chicks. "And then the moon peeked out from behind the clouds," he said, "and I wasn't scared at all!" The chicks listened with wide eyes. Mama smiled. "You are a wise little penguin now," she said. Pip puffed out his chest. "Nimbus taught me," he said. "And I taught myself to be brave."

Pip still loved the moon more than anything. But now he loved the whole night sky, too. He loved the stars and the clouds and the slow dance of the moon. He knew that even when things were hidden, they could come back. And he knew that understanding made his fear melt away. That made him feel brave and happy.

And so, every night, Pip waddled to the edge of the ice and looked up. Sometimes the moon was bright, sometimes it was hidden. But Pip always smiled. He knew the moon was there, dancing in the sky. And he knew he was brave. He pulled his red scarf close and whispered, "Goodnight, moon. See you tomorrow."