Summary

Set during Comet In Moominland.

Snufkin doesn't realise at first that he's fallen in love.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Snufkin kept his eyes closed as he played his harmonica. There was somebody just down the mountain path, watching him. If he kept his cool, he'd be able to find out who it was without making them angry. He played until a loud voice shouted.

"Hey! Hello! I'm Little My! Do you have any food?"
Snufkin opened his eyes to find a terribly small mymble running towards his campsite, followed by her two much taller friends. Taller than the little mymble anyway - they appeared to be about the same height as Snufkin. One of them was a rather handsome moomin. Snufkin was suddenly very aware that he hadn't bathed for a few days, since he'd taken a dip in the ocean.

"Hullo." Snufkin said. "Do you have any coffee?"

He did love the taste of coffee, but also if he could brew it strong enough then perhaps the smell would overtake his own. To Snufkin's relief, they were willing to share their coffee in exchange for some food.

They introduced themselves and Snufkin shook each of their hands in turn. Moomin's paws were so soft and clean. It almost made Snufkin feel as though he was too dirty to touch them. He let go as quickly as possible without being rude.

Snufkin waited until everyone was settled around his campfire before he asked "What brings you to the lonely mountains?"

"We're searching for the observatory." Moomin told him. "We're trying to find out about the catastrophic event our friend the Muskrat was talking about."

"Ah, yes, I've also heard rumours of a comet."

"A comet!?" They chorused.

Hadn't they ever heard of a comet before? They must be more sheltered than Snufkin had originally thought. Surely if they were experienced explorers, they would have heard about the comet. Snufkin sipped his coffee. It was quite possibly the best coffee he'd ever tasted, filling him up with loving warmth. It tasted almost the same as the coffee grown by a kitchen witch he'd met in the south.

"Its a star with a tail. It travels through the sky, wherever it pleases while the rest of the stars stay in their place." Snufkin cast his gaze to the sky as he spoke. What a wonderful life! To be able to travel amongst the stars and meet whoever lived on them. Moomin leaned his head on his hands, seemingly enraptured with the information about the comet.

"We're going to the observatory to find out where it's going!" Little My told him, excitedly.

"Ah, how exciting. A comet could hit anywhere at all, even here." Snufkin thought it was exciting, anyway. There was no way of knowing where a comet would go, unless you had a scientist and an observatory of course.

"Here!?" Sniff squeaked out. "It mustn't hit me!"

"Comets will hit wherever they please. If it's heading here, then here is where it will hit. May I
accompany you to the observatory? I do love the stars."

"Of course you should come!" Moomin cheered. "Say... Why do you know so much more about the comet than the Muskrat?"

"Well...he lives in a hole. And I travel around and talk to many different people." Snufkin was confused at the question. How did someone who lived in a hole know anything, let alone that a disaster was going to strike?

Snufkin smiled in amusement at the thought of someone living in a hole their entire lives and never leaving one place. What a strange and boring existence! He was glad that his new friends, at least, were wanderers like him - even if they planned to return to their permanent homes once their adventure was finished.

"You all should spend the night in my tent. The comet isn't close just yet."

Snufkin pulled his blanket over Moomin, despite the other's protests that he wasn't cold. The poor moomin was shivering harshly. He clearly wasn't used to camping and Snufkin didn't mind helping him, even if Moomin appeared a little embarrassed about needing it.

Snufkin was grateful of his habit of sleeping with his hat covering his face as he felt eyes staring at him.

Sniff was snoring on the other side of the tent, with the little Mymble snuggled adorably into a backpack. The only one left would be the moomin of the group. Snufkin evened out his breathing and relaxed to make it look as though he was sleeping. He didn't know what Moomin wanted but it could surely wait until morning? Moomin continued to stare at him and Snufkin resisted the urge to shift uncomfortably.

He could feel the blanket still shaking. Maybe Moomin was still cold? Was that the problem? Or
maybe it was weird for Snufkin to share his blanket when the moomin already had his own? Snufkin wasn't used to travelling with other people, but he'd met a couple of snorks just a week ago, so surely he wasn't that out of practice at interacting with others?

He hadn't shared his blanket with the Snork or Snorkmaiden, though. They had come prepared with their own tent, but they'd left happy and friendly. Or at least, Snorkmaiden was happy and friendly while Snork muttered to himself about scientific things Snufkin didn't quite understand. They had both given him a friendly goodbye and Snorkmaiden had left him with a kiss, so Snufkin could be certain he hadn't mortally offended them.

Now all he had to do was think of what he could have done to upset Moomin. If Moomin was upset. Which he might not be. Perhaps he should work backwards?

He'd pulled his sheet over Moomin, a person he'd only met that day, which is when Moomin started staring at him. Maybe Moomin was insulted at Snufkin thinking he was cold? Was it the implication that he needed looking after? Or was it that Moomin claimed he wasn't cold and Snufkin pulled the blanket over him anyway? Moomin said he wasn't cold so maybe he was shaking because he was too hot and Snufkin made it worse by giving him the blanket and now Moomin was trying to figure out how to tell him that he didn't want the blanket and that Snufkin shouldn't make assumptions and that he'd never been more insulted in his life-

Snufkin cut off his thoughts there and squeezed his eyes shut, as though to block them out. If Moomin didn't want the blanket, all he would have to do is push it off. Snufkin had met a lot of people on his travels, but he had never met someone who was offended at Snufkin offering to share his supplies. He highly doubted that the first person to take umbrage to sharing would be the sweet, friendly Moomin.

When Snufkin lifted his hat to take a peak to the side, he saw that Moomin was cuddled up under the blanket, eyes closed and his fist clutching at it. Moomin's face was buried in the part of the blanket he'd pulled up to rest on as a pillow. He was fast asleep.

Snufkin shook his head. There he was, anxiously scrambling for something he'd done wrong, as he always did, when Moomin wasn't thinking about Snufkin at all. Snufkin had probably just imagined Moomin's eyes on him. He breathed a sigh of relief at the realisation that he hadn't done anything wrong.

Thank the protector-of-all-small-creatures, Moomin wasn't thinking about Snufkin at all.
Snufkin watched in admiration as Moomin charge forward into the carnivorous plant to rescue Snorkmaiden. He hadn't quite realised before this moment how brave Moomin was. He flung himself into danger with no forethought for his own safety - only a reckless determination to rescue Snorkmaiden.

Snufkin only allowed himself a second to appreciate the sight before he pulled out his knife and threw it to Moomin.

"Moomin! Here!" Moomin caught and unfolded the knife, and began slicing off the heads of the plant.

Snufkin and Snork pulled faces at the plant and started walking backwards, taunting it into following them and shouting insults. Moomin and Snorkmaiden managed to get untangled just as Little My leapt into the fray and started chomping down on the plant, beheading it with her teeth.

Snufkin pushed Snork behind him as a vine leapt towards them, just as Moomin shot forward and cut it in half. He was an impressive fighter, Snufkin thought. And it was very brave of him to rescue Snorkmaiden, like a knight in a fairytale who rescues a princess.

Snorkmaiden clutched Moomin's hands in hers and thanked him profusely for saving her, as he blushed and insisted it was nothing.

Little My looked annoyed at being ignored.

"You were very brave too, Little My." Sniff reassured her and her usual antagonising expression lit up.

"And where were you, Sniff, you wimp? Its just a plant I can't believe you're that much of a coward-oh wait yes I can because I already knew you were."

As the two descended into delighted bickering and Snorkmaiden and Moomin stared into each other's eyes, Snork turned to speak with Snufkin.

"It is good to see you again, Snufkin. We were going to find you on our way back down to let you know what we found out."

"About the comet? Don't worry about that, we've just come from the observatory. I'm sure they told us the same thing they told you."
"Then you know? You know where it is going to hit?"

"Yes, Moomin Valley. We were just on our way there now."

"What? But why would you go right to where the comet's going to hit?"

"We live there!" Moomin had finally broken free from being entranced in Snorkmaiden's eyes. "We have to warn everybody about the comet!"

"Oh, that's so noble of you." Snorkmaiden cooed. "We'll come with you."

The Snork didn't look pleased, but agreed to come along anyway.

"Snufkin! Oh, I'm so glad we found you again!" Snorkmaiden finally managed to tear her gaze away from her heroic rescuer.

"Ah, more like we found you.""

Oh, I suppose that is true, isn't it." She blushed and kissed his cheek in greeting. Snorkmaiden was an enthusiastically touchy person, which Snufkin wasn't particularly comfortable with, but allowed anyway as it seemed to be in her nature. It was important not to deny one's nature.

Snufkin could see Moomin watching them over Snorkmaiden's shoulder. He didn't look happy, but Snufkin wasn't sure why. Maybe he wanted a kiss from Snorkmaiden too? Moomin certainly seemed enamoured with her. Snufkin hoped his new friend would get that kiss. Moomin was such a sweet troll and so brave too, he certainly deserved to be kissed if he wanted to. Wait, but he'd also saved Snufkin and Snork. Did that mean Snufkin was supposed to kiss him? Or was Snork supposed to? Snufkin didn't particularly want to touch anyone after being overwhelmed by Snorkmaiden, so he left it for the others to decide what happened.

"Its good to see you again, Snufkin."

"Yes, its good to see you too." He replied.

Snufkin wasn't usually one to intrude on other people's conversations, but he was rather curious about what Moomin and Snorkmaiden had been discussing so intensely that they'd been dancing for three songs in a row. Snufkin would have joined his friends in dancing but he much preferred sitting and playing his harmonica to having to force himself to touch a dance partner. Snork was busy
scribbling notes in the corner, so if Snufkin joined the dancing his friends would have an uneven number. He didn't think he could cope with making so much eye contact with a complete stranger.

Snufkin closed his eyes and tried to focus on the music. He felt the vibrations of the band being sent from the floor through his entire body. That was nice. He opened his eyes and found that Moomin and Snorkmaiden were still dancing into the fourth song. Snorkmaiden caught his eye and smiled at him. He held her gaze and kept playing, the best substitute for a smile he could come up with at that moment.

Moomin and Snorkmaiden waltzed across the floor, seemingly unaware of where they were going. Where they were going was closer to the musicians and thus closer to Snufkin. Snufkin could just about hear what they were saying and it was, dare he say it, rather romantic.

"-nly for a few days, and I know this might seem crazy but I'm so in love with you. I'm so in love with you I think I'm going mad from it. I've never met anyone like you before and I don't think I ever will again. I admire you so much. You're so brave and clever and y-you're beautiful. I love you." Moomin said with determination in his eyes.

Snorkmaiden flung her arms around his neck and clung onto him.

Snufkin thought it was rather sweet but it made him feel a little funny inside. Perhaps it was the method of the confession? Right here in front of all these people? How embarrassing! What if she'd said no? Not that anyone would say no to Moomin, of course. But now everybody else at the dance knew their private business - how uncomfortable. Not everyone was as closed off as Snufkin. He didn't know what the fuss in his stomach was about - it wasn't his confession, after all.

No, if anyone ever confessed to Snufkin, he hoped it wouldn't be like that. It was far too emotional and public and much to terrifying. If Snufkin ever confessed to anyone, he'd do it as publically as the object of his affections liked, but he certainly hoped that anyone he liked would have the same respect of privacy he did. But if anyone confessed to Snufkin, he thought, he would enjoy it if it were in the form of a letter. He would be delighted in a letter that was just like any other he enjoyed recieving - short and to the point, with a joke to finish off.

Snufkin sighed and blinked back from his daydreaming, realising he had been staring at Moomin the entire time. His heart beat faster and, disappointed, he realised the reason for the funny pit in his stomach was staring straight back at him.

Moomin was Snufkin's best friend and best friends always support each other, even (or especially) when one of them is secretly in love with the other, when the other has just confessed to someone else. Or so Snufkin thought. He'd never been in that particular situation until just now. And so, he smiled and waved shyly at Moomin and smiled a little wider when Moomin beamed back and waved
Snufkin was delighted Moomin was happy. Snufkin hoped his thoughts wouldn't turn bitter towards Snorkmaiden - she was also his friend after all, and friendship should always come before an unwanted romance.

Snufkin wondered why Moomin and Snorkmaiden were walking on the opposite sides of the group. He had thought, with the impending comet, they would want to spend as much time together as possible. Still, no matter his own feelings towards Moomin, it wasn't really his business.

Snorkmaiden walked next to her brother, Snork, then Sniff, Little My, Snufkin, and then Moomin. Nobody spoke. Moomin seemed quite wrapped up in his own thoughts - a pastime Snufkin knew from experience was best when uninterrupted.

They wandered in silence until they came upon a vast, dry canyon. A vast, dry canyon where the sea used to reside. Snufkin let out a sob and fell to his knees, tears streaming down his face. "No! No, no, no! Not the sea! Oh, it's all gone! No more fishing, no more black ice reflecting the stars, no more sailing!" He felt a terrible pain in his chest, as though his heart had shattered into millions of tiny pieces and he'd felt the pain of each one.

His friends looked horrified. Moomin gently patted his shoulder. "But Snufkin, you're always so happy-go-lucky."

Great. Now he'd upset Moomin. He should just die right now. No more sea, Moomin hated him, the stars are falling from the sky. Snufkin would just walk straight into the ocean, if it was still there!

"I know... But I've always loved the sea more than anything..."

Moomin didn't move his paw from Snufkin's shoulder, squeezing it comfortingly instead. Snufkin shakily reached up and put his paw on Moomin's in thanks.

"The comet has probably dried it up." Snork told them. "It's getting closer."

That was enough of a reminder as any that they needed to keep moving. Snufkin shakily stood up and slid his paw down into Moomin's. He clung tightly like a child to its mother, trembling. Snufkin wiped the tears from his cheeks but his eyes remained misty. The rest of the group followed them, dispersing to talk amongst themselves. Most likely trying to distract themselves from the stupidly
emotional display Snufkin had just made of himself.

He avoided everyone's gaze, embarrassed. Moomin softly squished Snufkin's paw between both of his. Snufkin looked over and found him smiling softly, reassuringly at him and almost burst into tears again. Moomin was so sweet, so kind. He shouldn't have to see Snufkin so upset - he deserved better than that. If Snufkin could protect him from anything hurting him, he would. If Snufkin had to curl himself around Moomin and shield him from this comet using his own body he would. He'd fight the comet off bare handed if he had to - if he was capable.

Moomin was the kindest, bravest person Snufkin had ever met. He didn't think he could admire anyone more. Snufkin had met so many people, and Moomin was the best of all of them.

He'd have to remember to tell him that. Sometime after he stops crying and sometime before the comet hits.

Snufkin was faced with a sudden realisation that hadn't occurred to the rest of his friends. "We need to cross the ocean to get to Moomin Valley."

"Yes? Oh! But how? It's all dried up!"

"We can't use a ship! We're stuck." Snork said.

"What?"

"Stuck?"

"No, no! We can't be stuck!"

The group erupted into terrified denials and upset protests.

Snufkin was grateful for his stint in a lava covered country that had given him the perfect solution to their problem. He knew how to get across the dried up sea.

"We're not stuck." He told them, trying to distract himself from the fact that his beloved ocean had disappeared.
"What are you talking about? Look at it, we can't walk across!" Little My yelled at him.

"That's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to walk across the ocean."

"You've gone crazy!" Little My shouted. "Didn't you hear me? We can't walk across that!"

"She's right, you know." Snorkmaiden agreed.

"Oh we won't be walking across on foot." Snufkin informed them. "We'll be walking across on stilts!"

"Stilts?" Moomin asked.

"Yes, that's how I got around when I went to a land once that was completely covered in lava. I couldn't walk on the floor of course, because of the lava, so instead I got around on stilts. They're much faster than walking on land."

"But we don't have any stilts." Moomin protested. Snufkin was a little disappointed. He'd thought that, of all his friends, Moomin would be the most up for trying new things. He might also have been a little hurt by the distrustful expression on Moomin's face. He hadn't realised before how often Moomin smiled at him or looked at him with a fond expression. Now, Moomin just looked confused and a little upset. Snufkin hoped he would never be the cause of that expression on Moomin's expression ever again. In fact, he'd like to replace that expression right now.

"We can make some!" Snufkin said.

"I agree." Snork said. "There's plenty of trees we can take branches from and make stilts. It shouldn't be too hard."

"Really? Oh, wonderful!" Snorkmaiden smiled and clapped her hands together.

"But..." Sniff interrupted. "I don't know how to walk on stilts..."

"O-oh...me neither." Moomin agreed, sadly. So did the rest of them.

Snufkin waved them off. "I'll teach you, once we make them. It's not difficult when you get the hang of it. You can practice before we set out." He'd never taught anyone how to walk on stilts before, but he'd taught some songs to a few birds so he was sure it couldn't be much different. He couldn't help but look forward to showing off in front of Moomin, even if he wouldn't care too much.

Snufkin's friends were so clever and caught on quickly. It only took them an hour to learn how to walk on the stilts. Snufkin couldn't help but be proud of them, even as they wobbled a little bit as they began to cross the ocean.
Snufkin pulled his bottle of sun oil out of his bag and began spreading it over one of the blankets the moomins had brought to the cave with them. They had so many - he was sure they wouldn't mind. Nobody usually bothered him when he did unusual things, they were too busy being weary of the stranger. So it was a surprise when Moominmamma asked him what he was spreading on the blanket.

"It's sun oil, Moominmamma. I was given it as a gift when I was in a land covered in lava to use as projection against the heat. There's only a drop left." He explained, hoping that was enough explanation for why he was ruining her blanket. People, Snufkin had observed and found quite unusual, were very persnickety about their personal property. Even if they had quite a lot of the same thing, such as a storage cupboard full of blankets or, for instance, a whole field of melons.

Instead of shouting at him, as a lot of people would, Moominmamma instead suggested gently that he use the sun oil on himself. How mean! How selfish! What cruelty did she think him capable of to use up a perfectly sharable resource and leave his friends to burn?

As he reassured Moominmamma that the sun oiled blanket could cover them all from the entrance of the cave, Snufkin calmed himself by remembering that other people often thought he'd be defensive of his own property. People tended to expect that because he didn't own much, he would grasp onto what little he had. He couldn't blame them for thinking that, but it wasn't true at all. He only felt attached to two things; his hat and his harmonica. They were the only things of his that were irreplaceable. Except the sun oil, which was closely guarded by those who made it and almost never was found outside the lava land.

But that was besides the point. As Moominmamma went to sit by her husband, she was replaced by Moomin. Snufkin found this situation infinitely more pleasant, as Moomin didn't bother attempting to make small talk. Instead, he dipped his paws in the sun oil and helped Snufkin with his job of spreading it over the blanket.

Snufkin could feel the warmth of Moomin's side pressed up against his own and felt a little light headed. He hummed a tune to help him concentrate. When Moomin looked surprised at the noise, Snufkin gave him a small smile. For some reason this made Moomin's ears turn red and Snufkin worried he'd upset him in some way, before Moomin smiled back.

Together they finished with the blanket and pinned it tightly to the entrance of the cave. Snufkin tried to ignore Moomin's obvious staring. He didn't know what it was about but Moomin wasn't a mean person. He was certain it was nothing bad. Certain in this context, Snufkin thought to himself, can
also mean hopeful. Moomin would tell him when he was ready. Which would have to be tonight because they may be dead in the morning.

After the blanket was safely secured, Moomin grasped Snufkin's paw. Snufkin blinked down at their intertwined digits and then blinked up at Moomin's face. He tilted his head questioningly at Moomin. Instead of answering with loud, enthusiastic babbling as Snufkin had come to expect, he simply tugged Snufkin along behind him. Snufkin allowed himself to be lead to a small side tunnel in the cave, where nobody else could see or hear them.

What on earth could Moomin want to say that the rest of them couldn't hear? Snufkin couldn't think of a single thing. So instead of thinking he allowed himself to enjoy the moment of holding paws with his love in privacy.

Moomin turned to face him and they held both paws. He had a look of terrified anticipation on his face and Snufkin trembled nervously. Moomin had noticed, he knew it. Moomin knew Snufkin was in love with him and had taken him aside to let him down gently. Then he was going to tell Snufkin to go away forever and never bother him again. Moomin would forget all about him, almost immediately, then he'd get married to Snorkmaiden and have a long and happy life with her while Snufkin died alone in the middle of nowhere, without anybody caring for him at all.

Snufkin blinked back tears and bit his wobbling lip, hoping that Moomin wouldn't notice. It seemed Snufkin was in luck, as Moomin couldn't even bring himself to look at Snufkin at all. This didn't make him feel better.

"When I first saw you, I thought you were the most remarkable creature I'd ever seen. I was right. You sat there, lit up by your campfire and played the most beautiful music I've ever heard. And it suited you because you're the most beautiful person I ever met."

Snufkin stared at Moomin with his mouth hanging open, like an idiot. Moomin didn't seem to notice as he stared at the floor and kept talking, as fast as he could.

"You're so clever too. You always seem to know what to do. You've always got a plan. You barely own anything but somehow you're still generous with it and you're brave too. Snufkin, you're incredible. If the comet kills me tomorrow and leaves you alive, I'd be happy in the afterlife just
Snufkin could feel his face burning red. His eyes were wide as he stared in shock at Moomin, who still wouldn't look directly at him. He couldn't think of anything to say in return! He opened his mouth to try and return the flattering list of compliments, but it seemed Moomin wasn't quite done yet.

"Snufkin, I'm sorry for asking this but if I can have just one kiss from you tonight then I'll die happy in the morning. I'm in love with you and I have been since the moment I saw you." Moomin finally met his eyes with a determined glint, but still full of terror. Snufkin hadn't seen Moomin this scared before - why was he more scared of talking to Snufkin than he is of a comet?

Snufkin felt like he was floating. Moomin was in love with him! He didn't remember ever being this happy. Snufkin smiled widely and felt himself start to purr. Moomin had asked him for a kiss! He could die happy if he had a kiss from Snufkin? Well Snufkin could die happy right now! Snufkin would give Moomin anything he asked for in the universe and all he asked for was a kiss. Of course he could have a kiss! He could have as many kisses as he desired from Snufkin.

Snufkin put his paws on either side of Moomin's face and cupped his snout gently. Moomin's face turned red and lost his determination. Instead it was replaced with nervous anticipation. Moomin wanted a kiss and Snufkin would never deny Moomin something he could offer freely.

Snufkin leaned in slowly and reverently placed a kiss on Moomin's snout. Moomin wrapped his arms around Snufkin, causing them to fall over. Snufkin let out a tiny "oof" as he connected with the floor, then burst out giggling. He couldn't help but feel a little silly, as Moomin stared at him as he laughed, but he knew he had to say something.

Snufkin gently kissed the back of Moomin's paw and delighted in the adorable blush he was rewarded with.

"Moomin, you're so brave. I've been impressed with how brave you are since you told me you were going on an adventure through the lonely mountains to find the observatory. Then I was even more impressed when you charged in to save Snorkmaiden from that plant. You reminded me of a knight from a fairytale. I've always loved the knights in fairytales the best."

It felt incredibly important to Snufkin that Moomin knew he reminded Snufkin of a brave, fairytale knight. He wasn't sure why, but it made Moomin's eyes light up with delight.
"You're so sweet and kind, Moomin. The first thought you had when you found out a comet is heading towards us is to race right towards where it was going to hit just to warn your family and friends. Most people would just run in the other direction and keep safe and if you had done that, nobody would have blamed you. But you didn't because you care so much and that has made you brave. You know I don't much like talking about feelings, but I feel you must know that I'm in love with you."

Surely, Moomin must know by now that Snufkin had never lived anyone more? But Moomin seemed surprised at the declaration. He threw his arms around Snufkin's neck and nuzzled his nose with his snout. Snufkin hugged him back.

He would love to live the rest of his life without letting go.

End Notes

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