

The Quiet Night at Starr Park

The lights of Starr Park usually never slept. Neon signs blinked, machines hummed, and distant cheers echoed across the wide plazas. But this night was different. The air felt slower, softer, almost as if the entire park had decided to breathe together. Shelly stood near the central fountain, her shotgun resting calmly against her shoulder. She was not guarding, not patrolling. She was waiting. "Does anyone else feel that?" Shelly asked quietly. Colt adjusted his red vest and looked around, his usual grin replaced with curiosity. "Yeah... it is way too quiet. I am not complaining, though," Colt said. "My ears finally get a break." Spike waddled closer, his small cactus body glowing gently under the park lights. He did not speak, but his round eyes sparkled with calm excitement. Jessie arrived next, rolling Scrappy behind her. The turret made no noise tonight, as if even Scrappy understood this was not a night for action. "I checked all systems," Jessie said softly. "No alarms, no glitches, no sudden chaos. Everything is stable." Shelly smiled. "Then maybe tonight is for rest." Across Starr Park, other Brawlers began to gather. Poco floated in, strumming his guitar with feather-light touches, each note slow and soothing. Nita followed, holding her bear hat close, Leon walking silently beside her with his hood pulled low. "Is there going to be a battle?" Nita asked. "No," Shelly replied gently. "Tonight is different." Even Bull leaned against a wall nearby, arms crossed, eyes half-closed. "About time," Bull muttered. "My muscles need a night off." The group slowly formed a circle near the fountain. The water shimmered, reflecting soft blues and purples onto their faces. Starr Park felt less like a battleground and more like a shared home. Poco began playing a slower melody, one that drifted through the air like a lullaby. "This song is for listening, not dancing," Poco whispered. "Just breathe." Shelly sat down, resting her hands on her knees. "When was the last time we all stopped?" she asked. Colt shrugged. "I do not remember." Jessie looked at Scrappy. "Even machines need rest. So do we." Spike gently leaned against Shelly's side. She laughed quietly. "You are surprisingly warm," she said. The sound of footsteps echoed softly as Pam approached, carrying a thermos. "Hot cocoa," Pam announced. "No energy boosts, no tricks. Just warmth." She handed small cups around. Even Spike received one, carefully balanced. "Thanks, Pam," Leon said from beneath his hood. Leon rarely spoke much, but tonight his voice carried comfort. "I like nights when nobody expects anything from me," he added. Nita nodded. "It feels safe." From the shadows, Sandy slowly floated down, already half asleep. "Best night ever," Sandy murmured. "No noise." Shelly looked around at everyone, her voice steady and kind. "We fight a lot. We train, we rush, we compete. But nights like this remind me why we protect this place." Colt leaned back on his hands. "Yeah. Not everything has to be loud to matter." Poco's music softened further, slower with each note. The lights of Starr Park dimmed automatically, responding to the calm energy filling the air. Jessie yawned. "I think the park is syncing with us." Pam smiled proudly. "That means it is healthy." Bull chuckled quietly. "Never thought I would say this, but... this is nice." Shelly closed her eyes for a moment, listening to the gentle sounds of breathing, water flowing, and music drifting. "Let us promise something," she said. Everyone looked at her. "No matter how intense things get, we always make space for nights like this." Colt nodded first. "Deal." "Deal," Jessie echoed. Spike raised his tiny arms happily. Poco played a soft final chord. "I will remember this melody," he said. "For nights when someone needs calm." Leon stretched. "I might actually sleep." Sandy was already asleep. Pam wrapped a blanket around Nita, who leaned into it with a content sigh. The fountain lights slowly faded, leaving only

starlike reflections above. Starr Park did not feel empty. It felt complete. Shelly stood one last time, looking over her friends. -"Good night, everyone." -"Good night," they replied, one by one. Spike tapped Shelly's boot gently before curling up beside her. Poco's guitar rested quietly against the ground. The park slept. And for once, nothing needed to be won. Only rested.

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