

THE LAST STAR

Star I ~ Last of Her Kind ~ Part II

Avi stopped in front of the door, her hesitating hand was resting on the cold, steel knob. Luna hovered over her arm peacefully, without a hint of activity or change.

Who was she? What exactly was her ship?

There were a lot of questions, but Avi felt that they would have to wait until tomorrow. Hungry, cold, and sleepy, she had no strength to start any investigation. Still, she felt that Luna's presence wouldn't bring any unexpected danger, even if she felt uneasy about an alien sphere with partial access to her mind.

Avi walked to a hall and looked at Luna once more, to make sure that she was still here and wasn't some sort of hallucination.

The sphere of light appeared to be inactive, it only wobbled up and down and followed her new friend until they reached the bedroom.

Exhausted, Avi jumped onto the bed and sank her head into her pillow.

Again, the same dream. I'm surrounded by a tar-like slime, and there is nothing to grab. I sink deeper, barely able to hold my breath. Blackness fills my nostrils, mouth, and ears. Only my right hand reaches to the sky.

The first rays of sunlight crept in through the window and gently caressed Avi's cheek. She slowly opened her eyes and turned on her side. The same, familiar orb of light floated right before her face.

"Good morning, Luna." - Avi muttered, still unsure how she should react to this unusual presence.

"Good morning." - Luna's voice sounded synthetic, monotonously repeated syllables made an impression of a highly specialized machine designed to mimic human speech.

Avi stretched her arms and looked at the clock on the windowsill. It was past seven, but for some reason, Avi felt less sleepy than on her other days. This time, after she moved out of bed, she didn't forget her bunny slippers.

After a long yawn, Avi walked to the bathroom, turned the faucet, applied a drop of soap to her hands, and washed the rest of the soot off her face. When her eyes moved to the mirror, Avi realized that the sphere of light was still there, above her shoulder.

“Luna, I'm in the bathroom. Can you leave?”

Luna slowly analyzed her words. - “Bathroom. What's its purpose? I see a lot of unfamiliar appliances.”

Avi sat on a stool next to her, then pointed at each item and began to explain with patience. - “The bathroom helps to maintain hygiene. We have a shower and a faucet, both with running water, and a washing machine that cleans clothes. Next, there is a toilet, but please don't ask me to explain what it's for.”

“Noted. Hygiene. Clothes. Can you explain both of these terms?”

“Hygiene is about keeping your body clean. Clothes are what I wear.”

“Noted. I can understand the desire to take care of your physical shell, but what are the clothes for?”

“We wear them to...” - Avi didn't want to explain nudity, so she replied. -
“...keep us from cold or as a decoration.”

“Cold? Your current shell seems weak. Why won't you discard it?”

“Luna, I can't just discard my shell. My shell is me. Without it, I wouldn't exist.”

Luna's light pulsed, she was analyzing the data. - “Unbelievable. It's the first time I've heard of such a case.”

“Luna... can I ask you, where are you from?”

“I'm from the moon.”

“On the moon... are there more people like you?”

Luna's light became slightly dimmer. - “No, sadly. No.”

“You were there alone!?” - Avi was in disbelief. Was Luna's fate exactly the same as hers?

“Not quite. I could contact my creators.”

Avi associated this word with her parents and became a bit sad. - “Do you think that they will come for you soon?”

“No. They... abandoned me.”

Avi lowered her head, she shouldn't have asked. - “I'm sorry.”

Luna was silent unexpectedly long.

“Luna. You can stay here as long as you want.” - Avi tried to comfort her.

“Thank you.”

Avi smiled lightly, but it appeared that Luna didn't register emotions.

“Any extra questions, Luna?” - Avi asked.

“No.”

“Good, will you let me wash myself? I'll be back in a few minutes.”

Luna understood the request. When she moved outside, Avi took a quick shower, tossed her yesterday's clothes into the laundry basket, then dressed in a denim suspender skirt and a white shirt. When she opened the door, Luna hovered right behind them, not moving an inch.

“Oh, I didn't expect you right here.” - Avi mumbled, a bit surprised.

“My place is next to you.” - Luna replied and moved above Avi's right shoulder.

“You don't have to accompany me all the time.”

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“I don't have other directives.”

“I won't be offended if you check the house out... but if I'm already here, I can give you a tour.”

Avi moved to the end of the hallway, to a living room with a kitchenette.

“Here, I have my meals.” - Avi pointed at the counter with knife stands and an empty fruit basket.

“Have a meal? I don't understand.”

“My body requires energy to function and it gets it from diges... uhm, processing food, which I usually get from the plants in my garden.”

“Plants?”

“Plants are, among others, everything that was burned in yesterday's fire. They're immobile, living organisms that feed on the sun... like, for example, the green grass that we walked on, or the purple flowers with a pleasant, sweet smell.”

Luna spoke with resignation. - “Your shell... is quite a complicated system. I'm having trouble understanding all of the concepts. You extract energy from the air and other organisms?”

“Yes, and from water...” - Avi stopped for a moment, curious. - “...and you?”

“Stars' light is enough to keep my basic functions running, but advanced activities require a regeneration chamber.”

“Is its absence serious?”

“Yes.”

“I... If I can help you anyhow, do let me know.”

“I’ll get accustomed to limited functionality.”

Avi opened the fridge and grabbed a couple of carrots, then directed Luna to the shelves in the living area. - “Here, I keep the books.”

“I understand this word, but your books look different than mine.”

Avi reached for a large encyclopedia, then moved to the first page to show its contents. Then, she moved the page again to show the illustrations and descriptions.

“The pattern of displaying the information isn't very different from the one I know.”

“If you want, I can read it for you in my free time. After the thorough study, you should have way fewer questions.”

“Thank you. Manipulation of physical objects is impossible in my current state.”

Avi moved her hands lower, to a box with vinyls. - “Here, I keep my music.”

“Music?”

“I can't believe!” - Avi's eyes opened wide and brightened up. She hastily took out a vinyl, then placed it on a gramophone. - “This is one of my favorites – 'Past the Stargazing Season'”

Luna listened in silence, her light twinkling to the rhythm of music.

“Do you like it?” - Avi asked with excitement.

“I... am speechless. I never expected to hear anything that beautiful.”

With a wide smile, Avi leaned lower to grab another box. - “I have films too, but they require more time.” - She only didn't mention board and video games, due to the fact that Luna couldn't play with her anyway. - “Do you prefer to stay here, or should I show you the garden and the garage?”

“Mmm...” - The sphere swayed to the rhythm. - “...what other music do you have?”

“'Wilt' and 'Bloom', 'Fifty-two Hearts', 'Pandemonium', 'Journey – on violin', 'Daybreak Frontline', 'Circle of Karma', 'Scattered Glass'... and many more!”

“I would love to listen to each and every one of them, but I think it needs to wait. I'm mostly interested in how your outpost is controlled.”

“Sure! Let's get going! The garage is right behind the garden.”

Avi opened the door outside and turned left, then entered the greenhouse that was closest to the building. From both sides, she was surrounded by red tomatoes, courgettes, bell peppers, and carrots.

For Luna, it was another first-time experience. - "I would love to run an analysis on these plants." - She declared.

Avi giggled. - "I will give you a chance when I cook!"

"Cook?"

"That's how we prepare the food, so it's more pleasant..." - Avi paused, trying to choose adequate words. - "...at the initial stage of processing."

"I never thought that energy consumption could be pleasant."

Avi was surprised. - "You don't feel anything when you... uhm, charge?"

“I only feel that my power returns to standard levels. It's.... ordinary. Unlike music or learning.”

“I think I get it. Do you like to learn?”

“Very. Absorbing and processing new data. I feel it was something that I was created for.”

Avi and Luna exited the greenhouse and moved to the garage door. One press of a button later, the gate lifted and the lights inside turned on automatically, revealing a dusty interior.

On the right side, there were a few tables with dismembered robots, tools, and tangled cables. In the middle of the room, there was also a light quad with a little trailer. Behind it, right at the rear, a modern computer occupied half of the wall, it was built in such a way that its only visible part was its touch screen.

Avi spread her arms and declared. - “This is my command center!”

Luna moved to the quad, then to gutted machines, and at last, to the computer.

“That's... a very primitive tech.” - Luna said.

“Well, it is what it is!” - Avi moved to the screen and navigated the basic functions. - “Solar panels on the roof are our energy supply. All repairs are done remotely, with the help of robots. Here, do you see the indicators?”

Luna floated closer and looked at the charts. - “Almost optimal.”

Avi proudly puffed out her chest. - “Goes without saying!”

“Last diagnosis... three years ago. Is nobody keeping an eye on it?”

Avi answered with a timid blush. - “I... don't know that stuff. My mom always did it.”

“Mom?”

“It's like your creators, a caretaker who was dear to my heart.”

Luna moved to the left side of the screen. - “Come, I'll show you.”

Avi moved closer, her face reflecting in the screen, and followed the instructions.

“Click here, and here, then enter the angle. Considering current positions of the sun and cloudiness, it should be thirty-four degrees.” - Luna explained step after step. - “Now, submit changes.”

Avi checked the final report. Photoelectric panels required some cleaning in a few spots to work with full capacity.

“You're like a wizard!”

“Wizard?”

“A genius of arcane arts! How did you know what to do without any manual?”

“The interface is quite intuitive. It was made specifically for inexperienced users. At the beginning of my existence, I was guided by similar technology... to be honest, we can still automate a lot of processes here.”

Avi's eyes were stuck on Luna, she was happy to have an assistant like her. -
“Maybe... if you are familiar with my technology, could you help to activate a few of the robots?”

“With great pleasure.”

Luna moved to disassembled machines. - “What device would you like to fix first? I would like to warn you, we might not have enough spare parts.”

Avi moved to a shape under a stained coverlet. She knelt, pondering, then removed the cloth and revealed a steel bird and a wristguard with a small screen.

“Here... I call him 'Scout'. He means a lot to me.”

Luna moved closer. - “Move him to the table and open the back panel. Next...”

Avi followed the instructions. After an hour of tinkering, they had to replace the gyroscopic system, the power cable, and a few elements related to remote control. Luckily, Avi knew where the substitute parts were and which machines could serve as donors.

It was the time of trial. Avi equipped the wristguard, clicked start, and waited until the eyes of a steel swallow lit up in red, registering the surroundings and relaying information to the pilot.

Avi, touched, was on the verge of tears. It was one of not many keepsakes from her father.

"I... you don't even know, how grateful I am." - Avi sighed, if she could, she would hug Luna.

"Think nothing of it." - Luna replied, a new device appeared useful to her. -
"Your robot looks quite exploited."

Avi nodded. - "It's one of the few things that brought me closer to the sky. I always dreamt of flying, like him."

“Dreams.” - Luna circled next to blueprints. - “Your room is full of them.”

“Was... alone, I couldn't continue these dreams.”

“...but would you like to, now?”

“It's all that my parents left me... their dreams are mine.”

“Then, they are mine as well. Let's do something about it.”

Avi's eyes lit up.

“A lot of work awaits, will your shell withstand it?” - Luna asked encouragingly and returned above the Avi's shoulder, who just nodded with a wide smile.