

## Last Star 108

Star XXXVI ~ Chain of Memories ~ Part II

Avi and Nicolas couldn't defend themselves, despite having their durable spacesuits. The first issue was that Virka could be hurt if anything were to happen. The second issue was that they couldn't identify militants' weapons. The emerald blades of long glaives were vibrating like crazy, with a sound like a buzzing fly, and when pointed at an enemy, they hindered the sense of balance and motion.

On top of that, the militants were protected by marksmen with rifles in the shape of double steel bars, between which there was a bolt with the same vibrating behavior and sound.

The guards were inspecting the intruders without saying a word. They patiently waited until another boat arrived. At its front, there was a woman in a body-tight outfit made of black leather. Her jacket and trousers had many pockets filled with tools and various devices. It also had leather stripes that held some of her potions, throwing knives, makeshift grenades, or blunderbuss ammunition. The latter weapon was tied to her belt, next to a rapier made of blood-red crystal.

When the woman came closer, Avi noticed her violet eyes with symmetrical pupils shaped like three flower petals, and a scar below them, running across her green cheeks and nose, then at last her confident, wide smile, which revealed vampire-like fangs.

"Now, now, now..." - The woman spoke. - "She told us she came alone, and what do we see? A gift that keeps on giving."

Nicolas didn't speak. He decided it would be better to let the woman speak, but Avi didn't share his opinion.

“Free Virka, right now!” - Avi demanded.

“Silence.” - The leader demanded. - “Unless you want to end up worse than she did.”

Avi was furious and wanted to scream at the stranger, but restrained herself due to Virka. She was worried about her more than about her own safety.

The leader signaled her people to open the cell and drag her new captives outside. Still, Virka was left inside.

Avi immediately started to protest and struggle. - “I won't leave Virka like this!”

“Eh.” - The leader nodded to her guards. One of them pulled out a flat creature with thin tentacles, then glued it to Avi's chest, causing her to experience an electric shock. First, Avi started to bleed from her nostrils, then she lost consciousness.

“Avi!” - Nicolas shouted, trying to break free and get closer to his daughter.

“Neutralize him, too.” - The woman ordered.

Nicolas wasn't too slow to react, and soon his body also refused to cooperate. He didn't lose his consciousness, like Avi did, and, half-aware, could observe how they were transported onto the boats, then to the elevator, and a torture chamber...

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“Which of you do I start with?” - The leader spoke when Nicolas fully regained awareness. Avi was next to him, but showed no signs of life. Their spacesuits were cut open, removed, and taken away, while they were both tied to chairs.

Seeing the tools on the walls of the hut, then sharp scalpels, pliers, and needles messily scattered on top of the wooden tables, Nicolas understood what their oppressor had in mind.

“Please... leave Avi out of this. We'll cooperate.” - Nicolas negotiated.

“Timid, like an Ixonian Fluffball.” - The woman said as she grabbed the scalpel and put it in front of Nicolas's eye. - “Hmm, let's start with common courtesy.” - She emphasized the last word as she moved her blade from one eye to another. Although Nicolas was scared, he decided to keep quiet.

The changes in his expression were being thoroughly studied, and after the woman decided that the playtime was over, she stepped back and took a bottle of rum out of a drawer. She took a few swigs, emptying almost one-fourth of it, then firmly placed her boot on the edge of Nicolas's chair and leaned down over him, offering him the liquor.

“Go on, drink. Cheers to your health.” - The woman insisted.

Nicolas hesitantly moved his lips to the bottle, and the woman tilted it so he could drink. The alcohol was rather strong and burned his throat, but it didn't seem that the woman would go easy on Nicolas, and she forced him to consume everything.

When the last drop left the bottle, the woman put its neck to her eye, inspecting the insides. - "Well, well... you don't know when to stop." - She commented. - "You didn't leave anything for me. That wasn't nice of you..." - She tossed the bottle to the corner of the room, shattering it, then opened another drawer and took out more rum. - "...but that doesn't matter, I have more." - She leaned against the table behind her, took another swig, then said. - "I am Ofira, and I already know the name of your companion. Care to introduce yourself?"

Nicolas felt dizzy. Whatever he just drank was immediately effective. - "Nicolas..."

"Nicolas? I'll call you Nico. Is it fine?" - Ofira said, then jumped to sit on top of the table. - "Nico, let's get to the point. Tell me, why in the name of infinite darkness did you try to take my dear Khazanite from me?"

Nicolas raised his eyes. - "It's our friend."

"Phi." - Ofira scoffed. - "A friend? What a good joke! In Khazan, there are only two types of people: exploiters and the exploited. So, will you kindly tell me which one you are?"

"I have no idea what you're talking about." - Nicolas uttered.

Ofira stabbed the scalpel between Nicolas's fingers. - "You won't get another chance. Tell me what your business is with Khazan."

Nicolas was honest, but felt that Ofira wouldn't like his answer, so she tried to tell her something she wanted to hear. - "She helps us sabotage astronauts' soul-killing weapon."

Ofira took a step back. First, she was shocked, then she started guffawing. - "Helps you!? To sabotage astronauts? Don't make me laugh. You can barely rescue her and you're still telling me that you are planning to do THAT!?"

"I'm telling the truth." - Nicolas replied, exhausted.

"You probably are." - Ofira admitted. - "In fact, I have gave you a serum to make sure, and I'm confident you're too stupid to bypass its effects, contrary to your 'friend'. But enough of this. I have an offer... but first, tell me, how many more companions are with you?"

"My wife and Luna." - Nicolas revealed.

"What?" - Ofira was taken aback again. - "That's all? Is that really how you're planning to attack the astronauts' outpost?"

Nicolas ignored her remarks.

"You aren't too talkative, eh? Should I help you?" - Ofira said, then jumped down from the table. She approached Avi and circled her like a vulture, her finger gently caressing the armrest.

Nicolas knew he needed to speak soon, so he added. - "Luna is Anaari's daughter."

"...and?" - Ofira asked, uninterested.

Nicolas didn't know what else to say.

"Do you really think her presence will suffice?" - Ofira spoke. - "Well, well... you're a bunch of fools. If you want to attempt a suicide mission, then I have nothing against it."

"Virka was looking for you. We thought you would help us." - Nicolas added.

"Ah, ah... finally something." - Ofira said, then sat on the chair opposite Nicolas. - "...but it still doesn't make any sense. Why would that vixen sacrifice herself for such uncertain... no, no, I should rather say impossible mission."

"Sacrifice herself?" - Nicolas repeated.

"She knew what she was getting into. She won't leave this place alive, and most likely decided that paying with her head is enough to buy a favor." - Ofira shrugged.

“No...” - Avi's faint voice could be heard from the back of the torture chamber.

“Oh!” - Ofira hopped, excited. - “Our sleeping princess is finally awake. Should we hear what she has to say?”

“Avi...” - Nicolas tried to warn her.

“Silence!” - Ofira demanded, no longer in a good mood.

“I won't let you hurt Virka.” - Avi muttered.

“Oh, oh! Well, well, what a daring declaration!” - Ofira said as her scalpel made a shallow cut in Avi's cheek, causing it to bleed. Still, Avi stayed adamant.

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“Please...” - Avi spoke. - “...Virka is my friend.”

“Friend?” - Ofira repeated. - “Did I hear that right?”

Avi stared right into her eyes, showing no hesitation. - "Yes."

"Are you all really friends with that prostitute?" - Ofira uttered with scorn.

"Who?" - Avi didn't understand the meaning of that word.

Ofira looked at Avi as if she were stupid, then at Nicolas, who understood pretty well, but was still unaware of what it implied.

"Do you really not know who she is?" - Ofira replied, annoyed. - "She wrapped you all around her little finger, but why? For her to die, and for you to be captured by astronauts? I see nothing reasonable behind it... There must be some detail that I'm missing. Am I not right, Nico?"

"I told you everything." - Nicolas responded.

"Maybe, or maybe you didn't think hard enough." - Ofira commented. - "Well, but that's not important. I'll simply ask our sweet little candy." - Ofira grabbed Avi's chin, squeezing her cheeks and looked her straight in the eyes, with a sinister smile. - "This prostitute..." - She began.

"Don't call her like this." - Avi hissed in anger. - "She has a name."

"Aww, how aggressive." - Ofira said, freeing Avi's face from her grip. She approached one of the cabinets, looking for something. - "A soul-killing weapon... a soul-killing weapon..." - She muttered to

herself. - "Who are they trying to use it against? Anaari? The Witch? Both? Doesn't matter. It so happens that I know a bit about their technology." - She pulled out a bowl with a thick, golden liquid and offered it to Avi. - "Now, drink."

Avi forced her mouth closed.

"Nico?" - Ofira requested. - "Will you talk some sense into her, or should I do it myself?"

"Avi..." - Nicolas uttered. - "...she will hurt you if you don't listen."

Avi looked at the tools on the tables, and Ofira immediately noticed, then smiled encouragingly. - "Cheers to your health?"

"Better to mine than yours." - Avi uttered through gritted teeth, then drank the liquid.

Ofira took a step back and waited. Avi began to cough, then experienced strong convulsions. Her veins became black, and blood of the same color began to flow out of her eyes.

"What did you do to her!?" - Nicolas screamed.

"I poisoned her." - Ofira replied dispassionately. - "I have to confirm something."

“Please, give her an antidote!” - Nicolas begged.

“Nico, don't be so dramatic.” - Ofira said, faking fatigue.

A moment passed, and Avi was lifeless. Seeing her like this as the minutes passed, Nicolas was on the verge of despair.

“You murdered... my daughter.” - He uttered in disbelief.

“Yes, and no.” - Ofira said as she gently slapped Avi's cheeks. - “Now, now, wake up, little bird.”

Avi took a deep breath and opened her eyes. She stared at Nicolas, disoriented.

“Everything is clear. How noble of her...” - Ofira commented. - “...she didn't change at all. The end justifies the means.” - She sat down again. - “I believe I need to bring it to your attention – Virka doesn't want to help you destroy this weapon. No, she wants our little candy to become a martyr.”

“Stop talking nonsense.” - Avi uttered.

“Do you know that you have a hybrid soul?” - Ofira asked. - “Do you at least know what it can be used for?”

“Yes!” - Avi yelled. - “I know the risk, but I have to save Luna! Neither you nor astronauts will stop me!”

“Save?” - Ofira was surprised, then pondered for a while. - “Eh. You know what? This is too much for my nerves. If I were to unknot her web of intrigue, we would spend an entire month here... and I don't have that much time.”

“Then let us go!” - Avi shouted.

Ofira spoke to herself, concealing her sadness. - “Life for life, it's an honest trade.” - She crossed her arms and rocked on her chair. - “Fine, I'll help you, just as Virka wanted.”

“What?” - Nicolas uttered.

“Now, now! No more questions, no more complaints!” - Ofira clapped her hands. - “You want to immobilize their battle station? Then I have something for you. Wait here, my dear guests, I'll be back soon.”

Ofira disappeared outside, and that's when Avi began to rock her own chair, trying to free herself. She tipped it over, then began crawling to the pieces of shattered glass. However, once she tried to cut her ties, they proved to be too durable.

In the meantime, Ofira returned. - “Oh, you're making a mess, our little candy.” - She grabbed Avi's chair, setting it back upright.

“Leave me alone, you hag!” - Avi screamed.

“You need to be more patient, my darling.” - Ofira said calmly. She approached an oil lamp and lit the wick, then heated up a metal form with convex symbols. Next, she moved next to Avi, grabbed her hair, and forced her head lower. - “It'll hurt a little.” - She said as she pressed the seal against Avi's nape, imprinting a pattern. Avi was screaming as loudly as it was physically possible, but it didn't negate her pain. - “Now, done.”

Avi's eyes were in tears, but she bit her lip and endured.

“This will allow you to immobilize the astronauts' station. I can't help you locate it or get inside, though. I'll leave it to you.” - Ofira informed.

Avi was too mad to comment, and Nicolas didn't know what to say. Ofira's change of attitude seemed suspicious to her.

“Nothing? Not even a thank you?” - Ofira said. - “That's not very kind of you.”

“Will you let us go now?” - Nicolas finally spoke.

“If you promise not to cause any trouble. We can even escort you to the exit safely.” - Ofira informed.

“You still need to free Virka!” - Avi demanded.

“She stays here.” - Ofira announced. - “It's the price she was willing to pay.”

“ABSOLUTELY NOT!” - Avi screamed.

“Avi...” - Nicolas tried to calm her down.

Ofira grabbed her nose. - “I see. It seems we still have a few things to explain. Otherwise, our little candy will be bothering everyone – GUARDS!” - Ofira called, and two pikemen entered. - “Bring the Khazanite!”

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“Virka!” - Avi shouted when she noticed her friend. However, Virka was averting her gaze, not willing to even speak without being asked. - “Virka? What did they do to you...”

Ofira allowed Virka to sit next to them, without any ties, then put her hands on her shoulders.

“Go ahead, Khazan princess.” - Ofira spoke. - “Tell them why you are here.”

"I have to be punished for my sins." - Virka replied.

Ofira put her index finger against her lip and circled Virka. Her mere presence was threatening enough. -  
"Well, well... and what would those sins be?"

Virka's mouth trembled, and she bit her lip.

"Have some courage, girl! Fortune favors the brave!" - Ofira insisted.

"I was... human trafficking." - Virka uttered quietly.

"What?" - Ofira put her hand next to her ear and came closer. - "We can't hear you!"

"I was human trafficking. I sold people to astronauts, to mercenaries... and to other palaces." - Virka admitted.

"To brothels. Let's call things by their proper name. BROTHELS." - Ofira emphasized.

"By the stars." - Nicolas uttered. - "Give it a rest. We understand now."

“Mm. Mm.” - Ofira turned to Virka. - “Clear? Crystal clear?”

“NO!” - Avi stated firmly.

“Our little candy doesn't know what brothels are.” - Ofira turned to Nicolas. - “Should I explain it to her?”

Nicolas was too tired. - “Avi... we don't have to do that. This situation isn't salvageable.”

“I want to know!” - Avi demanded, and Ofira had a sinister smile again.

“Of course, our little candy...” - She began describing how those places functioned in detail, explained what Virka did to her victims, and pointed out that many of the people living in her town were survivors of Virka's schemes and wouldn't easily let her go. Avi was disgusted. She stared at Virka with a contorted face, and all Virka could do was avoid eye contact, full of guilt and shame.

“I curse everything this.” - Avi spoke as tears rolled down her cheeks. - “She was traveling with us all this time and didn't say anything.”

“Now, now...” - Ofira turned to Virka. - “Doesn't our little candy deserve some explanations?”

Virka, however, was silent, so Ofira let it be.

“Now you understand.” - Ofira said. - “Any questions?”

Avi was filled with negative emotions. She spoke, and cold calculation was evident in her words. - “What are you planning to do with her?”

“Oh, it's quite simple.” - Ofira said as she leaned against the wall. - “A unique beast lives in these swamps. Eel of ruin. Supposedly, it feeds on dead people's memories, the worst of them. It's said that when it devours someone alive, it can recreate the experiences of deceased souls in its victim. The process of digestion takes as long as it would take to live through all of them. I think it's the most adequate punishment we can make.”

“No room for mercy.” - Nicolas commented.

“Well, I don't think she deserves it.” - Ofira said. - “Does she?” - She asked Avi directly.

Avi looked at Ofira with eyes full of venom, and Ofira guessed it was directed not at her, but at Virka.

“I'm sorry.” - Virka replied without being asked. - “I deserve it.”

“Why did you do it!?” - Avi yelled, full of resentment. - “Why did you have to ruin everything!?”

Virka bit her lips until they bled and closed her eyes, crying.

“Now, now, save your crocodile tears for the eel.” - Ofira said contemptuously.

Virka continued crying. She was clearly even more distressed upon hearing what fate awaits her.

Ofira had a satisfied, sadistic smile. - “Everything is clear.” - She clapped her hands to her henchmen, and they freed Avi and Nicolas. - “You can escort them.”

“Wait!” - Avi said. - “Dad, go back to the ship. I want to look her straight in the eyes when she meets her fate.”

“Avi...” - Nicolas uttered. He couldn't recognize Avi. It wasn't like her.

“Dad.” - Avi spoke in an even colder tone. - “I won't be at peace with myself otherwise.” - Her eyes met Nicolas's, and he could read her feelings now.

“I understand.” - Nicolas said.

“Nice, our little candy has claws.” - Ofira commented, clearly satisfied by the fact that Virka's suffering will be made even worse.

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The execution was supposed to happen on the platform at the top of one of the tree branches. Below it, there was only a dark abyss, and nobody was allowed to enter here most of the time. Virka was led to walk the plank. The event would take place after all her sins would be publicly recited.

Avi was allowed to stand in the front row and stare at Virka freely, which pleased Ofira greatly. Virka still avoided Avi's sight, but when the time for her to be executed came, she looked at Avi one last time to apologize.

The glaives pushed Virka off the plank, to the edge of darkness, and she was devoured by darkness.

Right then, Avi rushed out of the crowd. Ofira quickly realized what was going to happen, but it was too late. Her muffled screams to the guards to stop the girl faded right after Avi passed them and also dove into the abyss.

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There was a loud splash, then another one. Avi pulled the fruit out of her pocket, revealing the lake around her. - “Virka!”

There was no answer, so she dove underwater, and that's when she noticed her. Behind Virka, there was a long, dark shape with a large jaw filled to the brim with teeth. Avi pulled out a knife and headed in their direction.

Avi couldn't remember what happened later, but there was a moment when she lost sight of Virka and panicked, attacking the monster's eyes blindly until it let its victim go. Right after it happened, Avi resurfaced and dragged Virka to the coast, then resuscitated her.

Virka coughed some water out, then took a first breath and opened her eyes. At first, Avi hugged her, but then she pushed her away and slapped her.

“Avi...?” - Virka didn't understand anything. - “Why...?”

“I already told you. You are my friend. I know that you regret what you did. Still, you have to be atone for your sins, but not like this.” - Avi said.

Virka began crying again. She was half-relieved and half-not understanding her new feelings.

Avi took Virka's hand. - “They'll look for us. We have to be faster than them. I can't do it by myself.”

Virka nodded, then grabbed the orange fruit from one of the nearest roots. - “This way!”

Intermission ~ The Loneliest Girl

From afar, Avi could already hear Luna scolding Nicolas for returning alone. His assurances that Avi would return soon didn't help either. When Nicolas noticed that Avi was returning with Virka, he felt half-relieved, while his other half didn't know how to address the situation. After two steps inside the spaceship, Virka finally collapsed from fatigue and wounds, but Luna quickly flashed to her and held her.

"I'll take care of her." - Luna informed.

When Luna and Charlotte left, Nicolas gave Avi a meaningful look.

"I know..." - Avi said. - "...but let's keep this secret."

"It's fine with me, but once she recovers and we find a good place, she is leaving." - Nicolas demanded.

Avi lowered her eyes. Despite being aware of what her heart wants, her mind couldn't find a better solution. - "I will let her know."

Nicolas sighed. Although he knew Avi well, it was hard to read her feelings now. The whole situation was too complicated for him. - "She..." - Nicolas paused. - "Virka is pretty aware of the consequences of her choices."

Avi pressed her lips together. - "She needs help."

"This issue is no longer ours to handle." - Nicolas replied. - "She must find her own path."

“Who will accept her after everything she has done?” - Avi asked. - “She has nowhere to go.”

“Avi. Virka is older and more experienced than you and me. She'll be fine.” - Nicolas argued.

“She... she...” - Avi's lips shook as she spoke. - “Before your revival, she attempted suicide.”

Nicolas didn't seem too surprised, but still had to sit down and rethink everything. - “It's already difficult. How much more complicated are you trying to make it?”

Avi didn't answer. She had no strength to negotiate. She also wasn't sure about what Virka feels, so she couldn't suggest a different solution.

“She still won't stay here.” - Nicolas stated. - “It's set in stone. Although I think we will still need to find her a place that would allow her to rehabilitate.”

Avi lowered her head, full of doubts. - “...but does such a place exist?”

“If we keep searching, we'll find one.” - Nicolas said. - “Every sufficiently advanced civilization should have those types of institutions.”

Avi nodded quietly. She knew that the next few weeks wouldn't be easy. For them, and for Virka.

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Virka was slowly recovering, at least physically. Still, Luna was worried because Virka refused to eat and take medicine. As a consequence, she had to be connected to an IV drip. When Luna tried to consult with Avi, she quickly noticed that Avi was dodging her questions.

After some time, it irritated Luna greatly. - "Avi, look me straight in the eyes." - She said suddenly. When Avi listened, Luna asked. - "Do you trust me?"

Avi realized that her actions were hurting Luna and felt shame. Tears quickly welled up in her eyes. - "I'm sorry... I..." - She explained to Luna everything that had happened in the outpost on the previous planet, revealing all Virka's crimes and describing how she had saved her.

Luna put her hands on her waist and sighed, then began to walk back and forth, deep in thought.

"I always had a feeling that something was wrong." - Luna finally admitted. - "Although I would've never predicted that the situation was this bad." - She stopped and turned to Avi. - "What's your opinion about this?"

"We need to help her." - Avi said as she wiped her cheeks.

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"I think that our priority should be isolating her from society." - Luna uttered. - "We should find a place where she won't be hurt by anyone, including herself. It won't be easy given her intellectual capabilities, so a standard mental health institution won't do."

"What do you suggest?"

"Nothing right now." - Luna replied. - "We should focus on surviving the next few weeks. I assume your mom also already knows what had happened. Your dad would surely tell her. We all will know her secret, and we all will keep it to ourselves, but Virka will be aware of that. She's already alone."

Avi lowered her eyes with a sad expression.

Luna noticed it. - "I can tell you care about her the most here, even after everything she has done. I won't stop you from trying to talk to her, but I don't think it will help."

"I'm worried she will... that she will..." - Avi didn't finish her sentence.

"I know what you mean." - Luna said.

"She shouldn't have to endure this." - Avi added. - "I only want her to feel better."

Luna crossed her arms, sighing. - "I already told you that you don't need my permission. If you want to be useful, make her eat again."

Avi got up from her bed - "Thank you, Luna." - then kissed her cheek before leaving.

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When Avi entered the medical room, Virka averted her pained eyes. Luna already told Avi that Virka didn't utter a single word during the entire healing process, and instead gazed at her white coverlet with a depressed expression, so her sudden behavior change seemed important to Avi.

Silent, Avi smiled gently and put the tray with a bowl of soup on a nearby cabinet, then sat down on a stool. She picked the bowl up and moved a filled spoon closer to Virka.

Virka bit her lip, but Avi was waiting patiently.

"Stop!" - Virka finally hissed and slapped Avi's hand, causing her to drop the spoon, which flew right up to the door. Avi got up, picked it up, washed it clean in a nearby sink, then smiled to Virka again as she tried to feed her.

Virka wouldn't budge, so Avi and she were stuck like this for a few minutes.

“Please, eat. It'll get cold.” - Avi finally requested.

“I don't want to.”

“If you won't eat, you won't recover.” - Avi explained.

“I don't want to recover.” - Virka insisted. - “Leave me alone.”

Avi put the bowl aside. She kept smiling, but her voice became more assertive. - “It can't continue. You must be aware of that.”

Virka peeked at Avi, but couldn't read her feelings, not anymore. Avi's smile wasn't natural. It was like a mask glued to her face. It reminded Virka of only one thing – her home.

“Stop smiling at me like this!” - Virka screamed. - “It's disgusting!!”

Avi's smile disappeared instantly, replaced by fury. - “Do you think I'm doing this, because I want to!!? Do you think you're allowed to give up after everything you have done!?”

Virka endured Avi's outburst, but her fingernails dug deep into the coverlet.

“It would be so easy to die and escape your responsibility!! Not to fight at all!” - Avi screamed.

“You don't know what you're talking about.” - Virka hissed quietly.

“I don't!? Are you telling me this after everything we have been through together!?! After I've accepted you, regardless of everything!? After I've saved you!?” - Avi asked.

“YES, YOU DON'T KNOW!” - Virka also erupted. - “Nobody took everything away from you. Nobody ever enslaved your body, mind, and soul. You don't know what it feels like to wake up each day, naked and wounded, and be forced to smile! You don't know what it means, when even your right to die is taken away!” - She cried frantically. - “I was younger... way younger than you. I would've given everything for someone to rescue me from there... I was deceived, exploited, and abused. I thought that I'd get my freedom back, but their claws are still wrapped around me. Even after.... even after everyone is already dead.”

Avi took a step back. Virka had moments of weakness before, but she never saw her this distressed. Virka was barely breathing, shaking, and her fingernails dug deeply into the skin of her arms.

Avi recalled how Virka mentioned her situation before, but only now understood how little she knew, and that Virka was mostly bottling her emotions up until now. Only now she understood that it was the first time Virka had behaved like this, like she was no longer restrained.

Luna rushed into the room because her medical equipment indicated there was a risk of a heart attack. She immediately gave her a shot of a sedative and turned the knob above the IV drip's synthesizer. Virka slowly calmed down, sinking onto the pillow with her face still in tears before falling asleep.

“I didn't... I didn't want to, Luna.” - Avi uttered, sobbing.

“She'll be fine.” - Luna comforted her with a hug.

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Virka's attack didn't happen again. Luna was even able to talk to her for a moment after she woke up. There was only one thing Virka wanted – for Avi not to come to her again. After some time had passed, she began to eat and was later allowed to return to her room, where she simply locked herself in and didn't get out at all. It was Luna's responsibility to bring her meals, and no one else's.

After experiencing Virka's confession, Avi was depressed for a few days. She wanted to talk to her again, but she didn't know what she would tell her. She was still angry at Virka for her crimes and for deceiving them. She also didn't believe that Virka acted fairly by isolating herself, but it seemed to be a solution that worked best. However, what Avi felt the most was that she was sorry for what had happened to Virka.

Three weeks have passed without any changes, and the spaceship finally arrived at the thirty-seventh star system.