

Last Star 112

Star XXXVII ~ Unravelling ~ Part IV

As promised, Luna disappeared to look for a job, while Charlotte accompanied Avi. They both soon arrived at a dojo-like building, where the novice monks were putting their winter clothes on some hangers, paying no attention to them. Unsure how to behave, Avi asked for help and was directed to a room at the end of the corridor, where one of the Keys was sitting in a lotus position.

Charlotte decided to leave Avi there and returned to the spaceship to help Nicolas.

“Please, take off your shoes and sit down.” - The Key spoke.

Avi did as instructed.

“Close your eyes and imagine that everything except my voice went quiet, then ceased existing.” - The Key instructed.

Avi didn't inquire why the Key didn't ask her any questions or what her condition was. Again, she did as instructed.

“Imagine that you're standing in shallow water... You gently touch its surface with your fingertips, forming small ripples...” - The key continued.

“Hey!” - Avi shouted, stopping. - “What's it about? My friend taught me the same thing once!”

“Focus.” - The Key requested calmly. - “Start over.”

Avi grumbled, unhappy. She wanted some explanation, but she didn't receive any, so she continued the exercise.

“What do you see?” - The monk asked once he sensed that Avi was focused enough.

“Nothing.” - Avi informed.

The monk was worried. - “Are you sure?”

“I'm sure.” - Avi confirmed.

“Do you feel anyone's presence? Any sounds of someone wading in the water? Any ripples touching your feet?”

“Nothing, and nothing again.” - Avi uttered, clearly irritated.

“I told you. Don't lose your focus.” - The key requested once more. - “Restart. Remove any unnecessary emotions. Make your mind blank, it will make it easier.”

Avi took a breath in and out. She felt the cold water touching her feet, focused, and waited for the monk's guidance.

However, he said nothing for a rather long time. Too long.

"And...?" - Avi opened one of her eyes, asking.

"Stop, please." - The monk requested. - "It requires focus and time. Sit and wait."

Another half hour passed, then another, and another...

"Enough." - The monk uttered. - "It won't help us in any way."

"Hey! I did everything you wanted!" - Avi complained.

"You'll join the novices. You still need to hone your technique." - The Key informed.

"How long will it take?" - Avi asked. - "I don't have eternity."

“Three months to a year.”

“It's too long!” - Avi protested. - “There has to be a faster method!”

The Key pondered for a moment, judging Avi. - “I can tell you're determined. There is a reason why you are in such a hurry.”

“Yes, there is.” - Avi admitted. - “More than one. It's about saving lives.”

The Key sighed. - “I believe you, that's why I'll suggest another method.” - He approached a cabinet in the corner and opened it, then gave Avi a document to read and sign. - “Study it carefully, then write your name down here.”

Avi skimmed over the contents. It was something about bearing the full responsibility for damage to health and soul. She signed without a second thought and gave it to the Key.

After moving the document to a drawer, the monk asked to restart the exercise, but instead of asking the girl to focus, he asked her to relax. - “Remove all the unnecessary stimuli, breathe calmly, and feel the world fading.” - When Avi was ready, the monk began the second stage of exercise. - “Imagine that you lie in water, and your body submerges...”

Avi felt a strange, but familiar chill. She was afraid, but let the session continue...

Avi couldn't tell how long she was underwater and endured despite the cold. Soon, she decided she couldn't wait forever and opened her eyes, realizing she was surrounded by an endless darkness. Only a single ray of white light seemed to penetrate the water's surface.

Avi wanted to go back, but she was stopped by an eerie feeling, like it wasn't her own. It was a feeling of loneliness and isolation. It came from the abyss deep below her, where the light didn't reach. Someone was crying there.

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Avi opened her mouth, wanting to call that person, but for some reason, she couldn't make a sound. She felt frustrated due to it, but at the same time, was worried about the other soul.

The sobbing stopped. - "Avi?" - Avi heard in her skull. She was struck by someone else's feelings. A sense of injustice, rejection, being lost... but on top of that, hope. The last emotion was strongly linked to Avi's name.

Avi focused, asking. - "Who are you?"

"Did you forget?" - The other person felt insignificant, which reverberated in Avi's soul. She felt like the stranger was about to fade away, like the boundary between them and darkness vanished.

“Wait!” - Avi sent a strong emotion of solicitude, and it anchored the stranger momentarily. - “I want to know!!”

“Eva.” - A faint voice replied.

Avi was confident that she knew that name, but she couldn't recall when she met the girl.

“Eva.” - Avi stated with determination. - “I'll get you out of here! I promise!” - She looked up to the ray of light.

Instead of focusing on Avi's promise, Eva said. - “You left me here, and friends don't hurt each other.” - There was bitterness in her voice, but also a will to understand and reconcile.

“Sorry.” - Avi sent to Eva. She felt guilty for some reason. - “I don't remember anything. Can you forgive me?”

Eva was silent for a long time. - “Do you promise not to leave me again?” - There was both fear and longing in it.

“I promised that I would get you out. I don't know if I can do it right now, so if I fail, you have to trust me and endure for a bit longer.” - Avi encouraged. - “Be strong!”

Eva's heart understood what Avi was trying to say and accepted it. - "I forgive you."

Avi pointed up at the ray of light. - "Do you see it, or do you see me?"

"No. It's too dark..." - Eva sobbed. - "...and so cold."

Avi figured out she could focus and send Eva a mental image of light.

"I can see it." - Eva uttered.

"I don't know if it will work, but try to reach it with your hands, close your eyes, and imagine warmth at your fingertips." - Avi instructed.

"I feel... warmth. It's nice."

Avi was surprised because she felt it, too, but she still continued. - "Let this warmth wash over your body, let it..." - Before she could finish, she felt intense heat pulling her out of the abyss...

"If it doesn't work, I'm going to reduce your monastery to ashes!" - Avi heard below her. She was still disoriented. For some reason, she was hovering above her body, formless. The only thing connecting her to it was a thread of light. She was Luna, Charlotte, and her mentor.

The Key was asking Luna to calm down. - "Two psyches can't live in one mind just like that! Give me some time, I need to put her twin soul to rest."

"No!" - Avi tried to yell, but she couldn't.

The Key looked up and stopped his ritual.

"Hey! Why did you stop!?" - Luna shouted. - "Give her back to me right now!"

"She is here." - The Key spoke. - "Let me talk to her. I must understand what had happened."

"Just finish what you were doing!" - Luna protested.

The monk ignored it and relaxed in a lotus position. It made Luna burst into flames in anger, scorching a large section of the floor, but Charlotte calmed her. - "Luna, it might be important. Give him some time."

Luna's flame died down, and she hissed. - "Two minutes and not a second more."

Avi exhaled in relief. She soon heard the Key's telepathic voice.

“Your second soul comes from darkness. I can't remove it, but I can make it dormant again.” - The Key informed.

“Her name is Eva and she must stay!” - Avi declared.

“W-what!?” - The Key stammered. - “I won't free a demon!”

“Hey! Don't call her like that!” - Avi protested. - “You don't know her!”

“Go back to your body right now, you cultist!” - The Key demanded.

“No!” - If Avi were able to show her tongue, she would do it. - “Not without Eva!”

The Key was losing his patience and threatened. - “If you don't go back, it'll take over your body! Once it happens, your link to it will perish, and so will you.”

“I don't care, not even a bit. It's either both of us coming back, or I'm not coming back at all.” - Avi said.

“One minute.” - Luna warned.

The monk began to negotiate. - “Please... if you free her, you'll cause chaos!”

“Phi. You're a coward, not a priest.” - Avi mocked him.

The Key erupted in anger. - “Think, you fool! Where am I supposed to put her in? There is only one body!”

“We can both fit in there.” - Avi said. - “Somehow.”

The monk bit his lip. He didn't want to do it, but he felt he had no choice. The link to Avi's body grew weaker and weaker. - “Before I help you, it must be clear – I don't know what the effects of it will be, but I'm sure you'll be able to communicate. I'll push her to the back of your psyche, removing her access to motoric functions of your body. It may lead to the nether decay of your mind, and it'll cost you a few years of your life.”

Avi didn't even flinch. - “Do it.”

“Thirty seconds.” - Luna warned again.

The Key put his palm on Avi's forehead, waking Eva.

“(Yawn) Where am I?” - She asked Avi.

“Everything will be okay, but you have to move. I would like to get my body back.” - Avi relayed telepathically.

“Oh. Okay...” - Eva agreed.

“Ten seconds.” - Luna warned for the third time, her flames glowing brighter.

Avi felt that Eva's presence was shifting elsewhere, hiding deep in her mind. The thread of light began pulling her to her body, and she let it.

When Avi opened her eyes, she immediately commented. - “I saw and heard everything. Why are you so clingy? I would be fine.”

[Oh. Another Avi? Made of light?] - Eva asked.

“It's my girlfriend, Luna.” - Avi replied, this time aloud.

Luna raised her eyebrow. - "Are you right in the head?"

"I was speaking to Eva." - Avi explained. - "It's my second soul."

[It's nice to meet you, Luna.] - Eva said.

"She said it's nice to meet you." - Avi relayed.

"Let me guess. She is in your mind." - Luna looked at the Key. - "She hears us, too. What else?"

"She sees, feels, and tastes!" - The monk replied, frustrated. - "Who knows what else! It's your friend who wanted this, so blame her!"

[Avi. I can tell they are angry at you. Why?] - Eva asked.

"Because they are a bunch of nervous wrecks." - Avi replied.

"I feel sorry for her. Being forced to be in YOUR head, out of all things." - Luna said. - "You'll be a bad influence."

Avi stuck her tongue out.

"I've helped you. Now, get out!" - The monk demanded, shooping the trio, or rather quartet of girls away.

[What is this empty feeling below?] - Eva asked. - [I don't like it.]

"It's hunger." - Avi explained. - "We had to be stuck there for quite a long time. What hour is it?" - She asked her mom.

"It's evening. We'll make it in time for a dinner." - Charlotte informed.

"Yeah, paid with MY money." - Luna pointed out.

"Luna..." - Avi whined. - "...won't you feed our new friend?"

"Parasites." - Luna just commented.