

Last Star 113

Star XXXVII ~ Unravelling ~ Part V

[Mmm. I like it!] - Eva commented enthusiastically while Avi was eating. - [I like the green ones. What are they?]

“Pea.” - Avi explained with a full mouth.

[And the white one?] - Eva asked.

“Flatbread.” - Avi answered.

Luna noticed how a few tavern regulars were weirdly staring at Avi, so she told everyone. - “Don't pay attention to her. She has developmental disability.”

“Hey!” - Avi protested. - “YOU have developmental disability.”

Charlotte was fed up with their arguments. - “Please, behave. We're in a public place.”

“She's the one insulting me!” - Avi complained.

“If you told your new friends that you are supposed to act like a normal person during a meal, then it wouldn't happen.” - Luna argued.

“Contrary to you, I'm just trying to be nice to her.” - Avi countered.

[Does Luna not like you?] - Eva asked.

“She? I think she hates me.” - Avi replied.

Luna slammed her hands against the table. - “Do you even hear what you're teaching her!?”

[Sad.] - Eva uttered.

“It was a joke, Eva.” - Avi clarified. - “I and Luna often tease each other. We sometimes say things we don't mean.”

Eva felt lost. - [I don't understand.]

“You don't have to. It just happens occasionally, simply ignore it.” - Avi added.

Luna was too offended by Avi to interrupt them. Only after Avi finished her dinner and asked for a dessert did she reply. - "Not a chance."

"Luna...!" - Avi wailed and begged.

[Dessert? What is it?] - Eva asked.

"Something very, very yummy..." - Avi informed, then turned to Luna. - "Please! Do it for Eva!"

"Am I supposed to believe you?" - Luna asked. - "You're eating for two!"

"But there are two of us!" - Avi protested.

"...but you still have only one stomach." - Charlotte added, clearly being against it.

[I want a dessert! I want a dessert!] - Eva kept shouting.

"Please..." - Avi pleaded. - "Eva won't leave me alone!"

"It's your problem." - Luna uttered. - "YOU decided to place her in your head and didn't even think about the consequences."

[A dessert! A dessert! A dessert! A dessert!] - Eva repeated.

Luna and Charlotte were adamant, so Avi had to give up this time. - "I'm sorry, Eva.."

[No dessert?] - Eva sent a feeling of sadness to Avi, and she returned the same.

The guests began to leave for their rooms, but a few of them stayed to spend the evening at the bar, to talk. Avi, seeing she's not going to get anywhere, suggested instead. - "Maybe we can join them?"

"With that imp in your head?" - Luna said. - "No, thanks."

"I'm going back to the ship." - Charlotte added. - "Your complaining is exhausting."

"Good night." - Avi said, trying to cheer her mom up.

"Good night." - Charlotte replied. - "Have fun and don't overdo it."

Avi looked at Luna meaningfully. - "So...?"

Luna sighed and looked at the guests. - "What will you tell them when they ask about Eva?"

"The truth." - Avi stated.

Luna shook her head. - "At least don't mention she's a nether soul. We don't know how they will react."

Avi nodded to confirm she understood.

"...and then the latrine blew up, covering everything in sewage!" - The rabbit finished his story.

Avi guffawed. A story as absurd as this one was rare.

"It's good that nobody was hurt." - Luna commented.

The rabbit waved it off. - "We were young troublemakers, but not that irresponsible. It was an ideal sabotage plan."

"If you were caught..." - One of the worms uttered.

"But we were NOT caught, okay?" - The rabbit emphasized. - "Everything ended well. Our client received his stolen watch, and the thieves received a smelly lesson."

"To think you became monks." - A woman-like voice could be heard from underneath a head-shell of white robot with snail-like stalks.

"Monk-salvagers." - The rabbit corrected.- "We might be rogues, but dead people don't need their secrets and treasures."

Luna agreed with this worldview, but didn't comment.

Avi's eyes, however, were sparkling with joy. - "Can you tell us about the ruins and the edge of darkness now?"

A case of literary theft: this tale is not rightfully on Amazon; if you see it, report the violation.

"A spooky place." - The rabbit began. - "We scanned its tunnels with FTL probes..."

Luna had some knowledge about how this type of technology worked. The smaller the object was, the faster it could travel. That's why those robots could travel beyond the boundary of the observable universe. There was just one detail – it was Anaari's technology, which indicated that the rabbits had to recover it from a spaceship's wreckage.

“...they go on without an end and are over a hundred times longer than the distance between the Edge of Three, and the Farthest Point.” - The rabbit continued. - “The steel of their walls is impenetrable, and doors are locked with something called soul readers.”

A water elemental interrupted. - “That's why you are studying the nature of souls? To get inside?”

“No.” - The rabbit admitted. - “It would take numerous cycles to hack this tech... but the research ships of ancients are an honest game. Their imperfect imitations of soul readers can be fooled.”

The white robot asked. - “That's where your stealth tech comes from?”

“Among other things, yes.” - The rabbit waved.

“Can you explain how it works? I'm curious.” - The white robot politely requested.

“I can even show it!” - The rabbit rotated a knob on his belt, but there was no visible outcome. - “You see, for your average user, it's nothing but trash... but once I silence my soul.” - The rabbit's body became blurry, then completely vanished.

Luna noticed that the fundamental aspects of the monk were gone, yet her scans indicated no subsequent changes in the environment. From her point of view, the rabbit ceased to exist. That kind of stealth technology was more advanced than her own, and she had to accept that soul's 'miracles' are a tangible alternative to technology. She was pretty irritated by it.

The white robot closed its eyes, focusing, then added. - "Amazing. I can't even sense him with my soul vision."

[I can see him.] - Eva commented.

"What? Where?" - Avi asked.

[I'll show you.] - Eva said, and Avi's vision changed. It was as if she were using the multitask cell again. She saw a cloud of light, which was sneaking behind the barmaid, to a bar.

"I can see him! He's there!" - Avi pointed.

"What!?" - The rabbit deactivated his invisibility, caught red-handed in his attempt to steal alcohol.

The barmaid frowned. - "Those antics again!? I already told you, you can't just leave your coin in the cash register! I have to note the purchase down!"

"Oh, don't make a fuss. I would let you know in the morning, as I always do." - The rabbit said.

“Huh? The last time you were so drunk that you completely forgot!” - The barmaid yelled. - “I had to recount the inventory four times because of you!”

“Okay, okay. Let's bygones be bygones.” - The rabbit complained. - “We were saying farewell to the season of flight.”

“You are saying farewell to every season, and there are forty-three in a year!” - The barmaid pointed out.

The rabbit and an innkeeper bickered for a long while, and Avi listened, laughing. It reminded her of her own arguments with Luna. She knew that the two held no grudges and learned to like the pranks. When the rabbit returned, he brought a bottle of mulled wine based on local, incandescent pears.

He filled everyone's mugs, then mentioned to Avi. - “Let me guess. Eva helped you?”

Avi took a sip of sweet alcohol and felt a pleasant warmth.

“Twin soul. Now, that's a real puzzle.” - The rabbit spoke. - “We're studying for decades, and she already figured us out. Not that I'm jealous... it probably complicates your life greatly.”

Avi waved it off. - “We'll get by.”

Luna, however, understood what the rabbit meant, and her expression became sadder.

“I don't doubt it.” The rabbit uttered and emptied his mug. - “Ahh... I like it. Avi, tell us, do you know any other tricks?”

“I'm not sure. I've tried it for the first time with Eva.” - Avi said. - “Eva?”

[Yes! Can I show it to them? Can I?] - Eva uttered, excited.

“Sure, but don't overdo it.” - Avi requested.

A ring of black matter materialized around Avi, and she immediately recognized the multitask cell.

“Eva... is it?” - Avi replied in shock.

[It's me.] - Eva informed. - [Please, guide me!]

Avi extended her hand with her mug and created a tentacle, then grabbed the mug and levitated it in front of her.

Everyone, including Luna, was surprised.

“You... got the multitask cell back?” - Luna asked.

“Eee... I think so?” - Avi uttered.

Luna began to slowly drink her wine. She had to recollect her thoughts.

“Magnificent.” - The white robot commented.

“It's a bit like your bodies.” - A worm said to water elementals.

Avi opened her palm out of curiosity, imagining a flame, and it instantly appeared. She then changed its color to blue, green, and pink, and finally reshaped it into a butterfly.

“That's different.” - The water elemental spoke. - “Luna should be best aware of it.”

Luna put her mug down. - “Can you give it life?”

“Eva...?” - Avi asked.

[Life? Please explain.] - Eva sent to Avi.

“I think Luna wants me to create someone like us.” - Avi explained.

“No.” - Luna denied. - “It would be irresponsible.”

[Can you show it to me? I'll try.] - Eva requested.

“Eva needs... uhm... something to copy.” - Avi informed.

“I have a good sample!” - The worm informed. - “Wait here!”

When the worm returned from the floor above them, they were carrying a backpack full of dimensional cages – they were spherical devices that allowed collecting small specimens of flora and fauna. Their mechanism was simple - a gravitational field pulled the object to the center of the sphere, which later put the object in stasis.

“What are we starting with?” - The worm spoke, excited, as they pulled different spheres out.

“Let's skip the experiments on plants.” - Luna suggested.

The worm pulled out his largest sphere. - “Boreal chameleon.” - It was a type of slug with a single eye, with a body covered in blue rings. The worm, however, quickly changed its mind. - “...or maybe a Scorpion-Bat?” - It was a sphere as large as the previous one and held a winged creature with white fur, spider eyes, and a long tail with a stinger.

“Eee...” - Avi didn't like that idea. - “I prefer chameleon.”

Luna shook her head. - “We should try something smaller. Do you have any insects?”

The worm rummaged through his backpack, pulling out two spheres. - “Wolf dragonfly, or Cave Moth?”

Avi looked at both specimens. The innards of the black dragonfly pulsated with violet light, while its wings glistened like a dying galaxy. The Cave Moth was coated in white fluff, and above its large, black, beady eyes, four antennae resembled feathers.

[Moth! Moth!] - Eva exclaimed.

Avi let everyone know, and the worm freed the moth. The insect flew to the oil lamp, resting on its glass chimney. Avi extended her hand once again, forming a flame, then reshaping it into a moth. She took a deep breath and began meditating.

[Mm. I can't do it, it's too difficult.] - Eva said.

[Give me a moment.] - Avi requested telephonically. She focused, trying to feel her lungs, and that's when the moth slowly began breathing too.

Everyone fell silent, in anticipation and uncertainty. As the room grew quieter, the only thing Avi could now feel was her own heartbeat. That was enough to wake the moth up and stand on its own, struggling to walk on Avi's hand.

Avi felt it and opened her eyes, then began shouting, excited. - "It worked! IT WORKED!"

"Not really." - Luna informed. - "It's merely an imitation of life. Although it's more than a robot, and even more than entities based on the aspect of order."

When everyone was staring at the moth in awe, nobody realized it could lead to trouble. As the moth landed on the table, the wood immediately caught fire, and Avi screamed. There was chaos, and the water elementals had to intervene, dousing everyone in water. Everyone, but Luna, who kept her cool and summoned a shield to protect herself, then caught the fiery moth and sent it into a dimensional cage before it could cause more damage.

"I'm sorry..." - Avi apologized in shame.

“We should make the next test subject from clay...” - Luna commented. - “...and practice a bit, so you can control it.”

Naturally, the meeting ended shortly afterward, mainly because the rabbit wanted to dry their fur. The white robot and elementals said their goodbye a moment later, and right afterwards, Avi offered the fiery moth to the worm, as thanks. It pleased the creature greatly, not only because it was a unique specimen, but because it was an excellent memento of their shared evening.