

## Last Star 137

Star XXXIX ~ By the Seaside ~ Part X

The rain gently pattered against the hotel's windows, and to Avi, it was like a soothing, pleasant melody. Seeing how calmly Avi sleeps, her parents and Luna let her sleep through breakfast, although they left some sandwiches for when she wakes up. Even when Uiloa sent a tea party invitation to the girls, Luna had to answer. She jokingly attached a photo of Avi and her unkempt hair, adding. - "Our cute sleepyhead has to rest. Love, Luna." - Right afterward, she returned to Avi and snuggled to her back, making the girl smile in her sleep.

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When Avi opened her eyes, it was already almost noon. She turned to greet Luna, who was now also sleeping, with a kiss to her cheek, then lazily looked at the clock behind them. She immediately jumped out of her bedcovers, shouting. - "We've overslept!"

Luna slowly lifted her eyelids and stretched, yawning. A moment later, she embraced Avi and snuggled up to her, trying to put her back to bed with her weight gently.

"Let's stay here a bit longer..." - Luna murmured.

"...but Uiloa was supposed to write to me." - Avi protested.

"I've already taken care of it." - Luna said, completely pushing Avi to the bed and lying next to her. After trapping Avi's head between her arms, she pressed her cheek against her neck. - "We're alone. Nobody will bother us." - She whispered to her ear.

Seeing her like this, Avi's heart momentarily beat faster, and Luna smiled in response.

"I like feeling your pulse... and the smell of your hair." - Luna uttered, her nose gently following along her neck.

Avi, still shy, wrapped her arm around Luna's waist and felt the radiating warmth and softness of her skin. In response, Luna's leg moved under Avi's, and she pushed closer to her chest, purring like a kitten. She began to kiss Avi's neck like she did before, getting closer and closer to her lips.

"Luna... I think we should be getting up." - Avi interrupted her.

Luna moved her arms to prop herself above Avi's head, and talk to her face to face. - "How long will you keep me waiting?" - She said with innocent sadness.

"You know it's not up to me." - Avi said as she pulled her body back to leave Luna's hold.

Luna averted her eyes. - "I do know, but do we really have to restrict ourselves that much?"

"Luna. Yes." - Avi said firmly. - "Moreover, I think we are already crossing the line. We've got to seriously slow it down."

Luna buried herself in the bedcovers and turned her back to Avi, complaining. - “Why did everything have to fall apart just now, when I finally have you so close!? It's not even my fault!”

“Luna.” - Avi replied. - “I can understand your frustration.”

“We don't even know how much time I've left!” - Luna added. - “It's just not fair!”

Avi hugged Luna from behind, trying to cheer her up. - “We'll succeed. We only have to be patient and not give up.”

Luna was silent for a long while. She let Avi's caresses calm her nerves. - “You're right. You're always right. I just... want to be closer to you so much.” - Luna finally responded. They stayed like this for a few minutes, until Luna moved slightly away and turned her face to Avi's. - “I'll have to be content with only dreams about the future, which is still beyond my grasp.”

“When we fill these days of waiting with beautiful memories, they'll pass faster than you expect.” - Avi said.

Luna half-smiled, still not confident about Avi's assurances.

“We'll chase down a brighter future. I promise.” - Avi added.

“...but for now, we live today...” - Luna replied. - “...and today's weather isn't the best.”

“You can smile and dance even in the rain.” - Avi stated. - “All it takes is to finally get out of bed. We can't dream forever.”

“Eh.” - Luna sighed. - “True. Your parents are already enjoying the spa, while we still need to eat breakfast.”

Avi stretched out her arms. - “Did they leave anything yummy for us?”

“Just sandwiches.” - Luna informed. - “I will warm the tea.”

Avi nodded. - “Once we're done eating, how about we take a short walk?”

“Sure. Remember to take your raincoat, though, the wind is strong.” - Luna warned.

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Luna summoned an umbrella and wrapped her arm around Avi's elbow. There was not a living soul outside, and the storm seemed to be intensifying each minute. Before the girls managed to leave the hotel, a powerful gust of wind sent a barrage of raindrops inside the building, and Avi's and Luna's raincoats flapped violently.

"Your ideas are sometimes weird." - Luna commented.

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Avi simply laughed with joy and let her friend's arm go, then leapt forward, splashing a nearby puddle with her rain boots. - "Come! Don't complain!" - She called.

Luna walked to Avi, struggling to hold the hood of her coat with her hand. She stopped at the edge of the puddle and looked at the palms, which bent under the heavy wind.

"Incredible sight, don't you think!?" - Avi yelled, barely able to outshout the rustling trees and the sound of raindrops battering the pavement.

"We could have seen the same scene from the hotel window." - Luna replied.

"Oh, Luna! You know it's not about it!" - Avi denied. - "And..." - She didn't finish her sentence, eager to see Luna's curiosity.

"And what?" - Luna asked.

“Ocean!” - Avi exclaimed. - “The waves must be huge in this weather!”

“I must admit, that's a logical conclusion.” - Luna commented.

“So, don't you want to see them!?” - Avi asked.

“I'm mostly neutral...” - Luna confessed. - “...but I'll go if it makes you happy.”

“Luna!” - Avi pouted, unhappy with the answer. - “I want you to like it, too!”

Luna smiled faintly and took Avi's hand. - “With you, I'll surely like it, so let's give it a chance.”

Avi pulled Luna, heading out. - “You'll see that it'll be a breathtaking experience.”

Soon, they both entered the storm, passing the flooded plaza and wet sidewalks. They were partially protected by Luna's umbrella, so Avi took off her hood to have a better view and then took a deep breath to feel the fresh and cool air. The girls had stopped once they reached an overgrown dune on the border of the beach and resort. That's when Avi rushed ahead to climb to its top and spread her arms. With closed eyes, she let the rain wash her entire body.

“Avi! You'll get cold!” - Luna called, then ran to her and put the umbrella above them.

Avi smiled with joy. - "Luna! Don't be so stiff! Look around you, let yourself feel it."

Luna's gaze wandered towards the tubulent sea. The waves were violently crashing against the shore, while the raindrops rippled the surface of the ocean. Luna let her shoes and coat dematerialize, then stepped onto the wet sand barefoot.

After closing her eyes, Luna also made the umbrella vanish and listened to thundering waves, while the hail struck her skin.

Avi sat down and let Luna embrace it alone for a moment.

"In moments like this one, I realize how small a part of this vast universe we are... that the days will go on, even without us. Fighting against the time itself is like trying to turn back these very waves." - Luna stated. - "Every belief, every dream... they are here merely to fill out our borrowed days. I wonder, can we really live fully when we're shackled by our mortality?"

Avi's mouth opened, but before she could reply, Luna turned to her with a sad smile. Her wet, tangled hair swayed faintly in the wind.

"Avi. What freedom is?" - Luna continued. - "Is it merely an illusion, a predetermined response to a set of external stimuli? Will we play our roles like the puppets, aware of these few strings that are being pulled, only for them to be cut? Does anything have a meaning?"

"Luna... why out of the sudden?" - Avu uttered as she got up.

"Our shared vacation, my life with you, they're still beautiful... and I want to enjoy them to the fullest, but I can't. Not when this shadow follows us. Even when I try to forget, its presence is like a thorn in my heart. In each second, those who gave life to me can take it away. Is it selfish for me to say that this storm won't stop? Is it selfish to say that I want to survive? That I don't want to keep pretending. That I want to fight with you for the future they took away from me, right now?"

"No." - Avi said and moved closer to Luna. - "It's not selfish, I..." - She hugged her tenderly. - "I'm sorry that I didn't notice."

Luna embraced her back. - "Can you talk to your parents? I... I don't think I want to stay here."

"I understand... I'll cancel our meeting with Uiloa and phone dad and mom as soon as possible." - Avi assured.

Luna calmed down slightly and replied. - "No, there's no need. These vacations, I want to remember them the same way you would. I didn't get to meet all of your friends yet, and I'm sure you will want to say goodbye. We should do it properly, at a farewell party."

"Luna..." - Avi uttered quietly. - "...I can agree to that. We'll make this last toast for a better future, together."

"Thank you." - Luna whispered and summoned the umbrella again. They were standing in the rain, hugging for a while longer, then returned to the hotel.



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While Avi's parents were spending time in the spa, she and Luna were sitting in their hotel room, drinking warm tea. Avi was drawing using her tablet, while Luna was gazing beyond the window with a melancholic expression.

“Done!” - Avi announced with a wide smile.

Luna slowly turned her head and extended her hand to take Avi's tablet. She wanted to have a look. The artwork portrayed a person in a yellow raincoat. They held an umbrella above a white sun rising above the ocean. The light of a few stars barely illuminated the night around them, revealing the falling raindrops.

In silence, Luna studied the painting. - “You're getting better.” - She said later.

“I called it 'With Love'.” - Avi stated proudly.

“With Love?” - Luna raised her eyebrow. - “It sounds like an unfinished sentence.”

“That's because it can be finished in more than one way!” - Avi explained. - “With love, we find the light in the darkest places. With love, we're never alone. With love, hope will always burn...”

“With love, we find the meaning.” - Luna added quietly.

Avi nodded with enthusiasm.

Luna gazed beyond the window again, uttering. - “We'll endure this storm.”

“...and then, return home.” - Avi finished, allowing the gentle pattern of rain to be the only thing interrupting the silence.

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Although the time passed slowly, neither girls were bothered by it. Still, they decided they wouldn't be idle anymore and grabbed headphones to listen to an audiobook recommended by Uiloa until Avi's parents were back. Once they returned, Avi recalled her promise and left Luna alone. She invited her mom and dad to the other room, where, without getting into details, she asked them to fulfill Luna's wish. Charlotte and Nicolas understood the situation, accepting it without causing any problems. They were slightly disheartened, but didn't let it show.

“I'm sure you'll get your freedom back...” - Nicolas said. - “...and then, you'll be able to journey wherever you want.”

Avi nodded with determination.

“We love Luna, and we'll stay with her until the very end. She should know it.” - Charlotte added.

“I'll let her know.” - Avi assured.

“If there's anything else we can do for you, let us know.” - Nicolas asked. - “We're in this together.”

“Luna needs some time in silence to recover and think it all over.” - Avi replied. - “She wants you to enjoy your stay here, even if she has made you worry. She'll talk to you in the evening, before the meeting at the sushi restaurant. She really cares about us and wants us to at least try to continue our vacations. She doesn't want it to influence the way we say goodbye.”

“It's a tough ask, but we'll do our best.” - Nicolas assured. - “While not forgetting about her situation.” - They said bye to Avi and left for lunch.

When Avi returned, Luna wasn't in the mood to eat and told Avi she could go join her parents, but Avi just smiled gently and stayed with her.