

Last Star 143

Star XXXIX ~ Artificial ~ Part III

In the Sari's club, Avi not only bought a few albums she wanted the most, but she also visited all of the booths with official promotional items. She got many shirts, bracelets, a bead necklace, a figurine, and an extra nomad-style bag. Moreover, she could also try their traditional foods, which were mostly based on dried or candied fruits, and then she could learn about their wandering culture while drinking oriental coffee. The final activity was a holographic concert, which was a recording of Sari's authentic performance in this space station.

When all the lamps turned off and Sari's image entered the scene, there was a loud cheer, and everyone raised their glowsticks. Avi didn't have any, but she raised her hands just like other people did, and mimicked the way everyone moved, cheering the hologram on until she couldn't move. After an encore, the guests began leaving, so Avi sat on the nearby chair to recover, and Luna sat right next to her.

"I had fun, how about you?" - Avi said, her eyes still full of stars. Her radiant expression was like an aura of optimism that could easily infect.

Luna stared at the floor and swayed her feet back and forth. The corner of her mouth lifted, hinting at a feeling of blissful nostalgia. - "Yes, I like to see you smile."

"Oh." - Avi blushed and averted her face, embarrassed. - "You told me more than once."

Luna silently enjoyed the moment, letting Avi speak.

Avi looked at Luna once more and smiled gently. - "Do you want to do anything else?"

"I would love to, but the time won't stop for us, and even these moments dear to my heart have to be replaced by memories." - Luna replied.

Avi wasn't sure what Luna meant, but it made her look at her watch. - "Oh! It's already this late!?" - She exclaimed, shocked, then added after a pause, a bit downcast. - "I get it. Let's move."

Luna stood up. - "If you want to stay, then stay. The club is closing in two hours."

"Luna!" - Avi spoke, loud and in high spirits. - "Am I supposed to give up on spending these few last moments with you!? Not – a – chance."

Luna smiled gently and took Avi's hand. - "You're making me a happy girl, thank you."

After leaving the building, they headed to the embassy, where Luna was supposed to offer technological help to diplomats. Avi waited outside, where she read the book given to her by the preacher's assistant. She was mostly interested in the chapters he talked about, but they proved to be too complicated and interpretation-prone, so she gave up and decided to just listen to Sari's newest albums.

Hours passed, and Luna wasn't returning. The lamps of the space station were turning off one by one, leaving only the streetlights on. An evening came, and there were fewer and fewer passersby, because everyone was returning home. Avi was getting hungry, but there were also no food stalls open nearby, so she pulled out one of her Sari-themed lollipops to at least have some sugar in her system. Soon, the plaza was empty, leaving Avi by herself, even if the lights beyond embassy windows indicated people were still working.

When the main door finally opened, Avi got up and looked for her friend among the people who were leaving the building. Luna's light illuminated the darkness, but she was still politely talking to the officials until the moment to say bye came. Right after, she hurried to Avi and hugged her.

Once she freed Avi, the girl asked. - "How was it?"

"Everything went according to plan." - Luna said. - "Their future is in their hands now."

"So, everyone is happy?" - Avi asked.

"You could say so." - Luna added.

"That's good." - Avi said, then yawned.

"I'm sorry that it took so long." - Luna apologized. - "I'll let your parents know that we're done here and that we can come back."

Avi nodded, yawning once more. She waited for Luna, and they both began to walk the same path they had come here. They turned into the streets of the lower city, passing the spot where the religious gathering was. The crate was still standing there, and the grass was littered with leaflets. Luna sighed, seeing this, snapped her fingers, and sent all the trash to the nearby rubbish bin. They turned, passing some citizens, and moved into a dark alley between skyscrapers. Luna's scans were indicating that they were being followed, so she began to walk faster.

"Luna? Why are you in such a hurry?" - Avi complained.

"Don't pay attention to it. Can you catch up?" - Luna asked.

"No." - Avi said. "Why?"

Luna sighed. - "Wait here for a moment, okay?"

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"Again?" - Avi uttered. - "Why?"

"I have to talk to someone." - Luna informed. - "It's nothing you need to worry about."

"Seriously?" - Avi said, then sat on a nearby electric box. - "Fine..." - She yawned. - "...but come back soon."

"It won't take longer than a few minutes." - Luna assured, then left.

Luna crossed her arms, standing in front of six men and two women. Each of them was an android. They looked tipsy, but Luna decided to ignore it.

"How can I help you?" - She asked.

"Are you... a machine?" - The first android asked.

"I don't get why it's any of your business." - Luna replied.

"...and your friend is what? Meat?" - The man asked.

"I dislike that term, but for your sake, I'll ignore this remark." - Luna suggested.

Android looked at his friends. They were as unhappy with Luna's attitude as him.

"Are you hanging around with that bag of crap?" - The android said with scorn.

Luna angrily furrowed her brows.

"Blasphemer and traitor!" - One of the women shouted.

"I won't repeat myself." - Luna warned.

That's when that same woman spat in her direction. A thick, black oil was now rolling down Luna's cheek, but she still stood motionless and wasn't even blinking, which confused the androids. Luna lifted her foot and, in slow motion, marked the steel floor in front of her with a line. The harsh grinding and flying sparks were a sign of impending trouble.

Luna said nothing more and simply turned, then left.

That's when a glass, an oil bottle flew in her direction. She stopped it with her telekinesis, leaving it suspended in the air. Only once a foot of the first android crossed the line on the ground, she reacted. Without any warning, the android's body was thrown into the small wall that separated the sidewalk and the street, smashing bricks with the force of impact.

Seeing this, two other androids leaped to Luna, but their bodies were swiftly hammered into the walls of nearby buildings. The second woman activated her hacking tools, trying to access Luna's systems remotely, but Luna didn't even have to defend herself. She still sent a weak counterattack, causing the android to go into spasms, and her systems to short-circuit. A smoking body fell to the ground, showing no signs of consciousness.

When the remaining four androids hesitated to attack, another familiar group approached from the opposite street. Some of them knelt next to the neutralized androids, checking if they were still alive, while the rest surrounded the alley. There were over a dozen of them.

Their hybrid preacher listened to the report about the state of damaged machines, then stepped out of the group, shouting. - "Brothers! Sisters! What kind of conflict is happening here?"

One of the androids shot the leader a sidelong glance, probably because they didn't like hybrids, too, but due to their number advantage, he hid it. - "She has attacked us."

The leader recognized Luna. - "For no reason?" - He asked the android.

"There was a difference in our worldviews, but we resolved it." - Luna spoke. - "Now that we understand each other, I'll just leave. My girlfriend waits for me." - She added to provoke them.

The hybrid was shocked by her statement, but didn't show any signs of prejudice yet. Instead, it judged the situation with a clear head. - "No, you aren't leaving."

"Huh? Will you try to stop me?" - Luna added.

"No." - The hybrid said. - "But we've already informed the police. Do you want to run from the scene and cause yourself more trouble?"

Luna stopped. That's not what she wanted.

The leader continued, asking. - "What exactly had happened here?"

"They were drunk and looked for a fight, because they didn't like my friend." - Luna admitted.

"You've severely damaged them." - The hybrid spoke. - "As a daughter of light, didn't you have the means to resolve it in a better way?"

Luna could get what the man was saying. She knew he was right. - "I had... a bad day." - She turned to the androids, saying. - "I'm sorry."

"And you lot? Don't you feel any shame? Why are you harassing people just because they're different? We don't choose what body and place we are born in." - The hybrid spoke to androids.

However, they were silent.

When the police arrived, they kept everyone from leaving until they retrieved the recordings from nearby cameras and interrogated everyone. It was confirmed that Luna wasn't the instigator, but she was cautioned by the police the most for the unreasonable use of force.

She was about to be detained, but when the police checked their database, their main officer shook their head and said. - "She has diplomatic immunity. Let her go."

When other androids left the scene, the hybrid preacher added. - "It's easy to justify our sins with a lie, and true change comes once we understand what a lie is, and what is not."

"I made a mistake today." - Luna admitted.

"I don't mean just today." - The hybrid added.

Luna calmly disagreed. - "In that case, I'll just say that absolute truth can't be known. We can only approach it based on our assumptions, but we'll never prove they aren't contradicting themselves. Moreover, two contradicting sets of assumptions can still create two separate sets of truths, and none of them may be internally inconsistent."

"It's an analytical approach..." - The hybrid argued. - "...but faith and truth can't be understood with just reason."

"The truth you're trying to show me is its human interpretation. One of many mirrors." - Luna said. - "I found my truth in love, and I don't plan to give up on it."

"It's love of heart, and the heart can deceive. True love exists only in truth, and truth can only be known through faith." - The hybrid declared.

Luna sighed. - "Using your reasoning against mine, we will only go in circles. I will keep stating my opinion, and you'll keep stating yours... and there is someone dear to me, who I don't want to keep waiting. I don't wish you ill, even though our views differ greatly... so may the stars' light listen to your prayers."

“May it listen to yours, too, and when you find the one true star, don't lose sight of it.” - The hybrid said.

“That's my plan.” - Luna uttered and left, casually waving goodbye.

Luna led Avi to her bedroom, then kissed her tenderly on her forehead to say goodnight, and the girl fell asleep quickly. Herself, Luna was also exhausted, so she walked to the bridge and set course to the next star. Full of doubts and with an uncertain heart, she entered her regeneration chamber, praying quietly for the next morning with Avi to come.