

Last Star 197

The Last Star ~ Hysteria

The girls entered another node between the universes, but this time, it was like many closed, blue cubes. They shifted in an unknown pattern, replacing one another, like in a big sorting room.

Luna connected to the local network, trying to find hypotheses about the chamber or adequate mathematical models, but instead found a general panic in the main discussion forum. Once she read the reports of the lower cube layers, her face contorted in horror.

“Luna. Speak!” - Avi asked.

“They... they're going to incinerate us.” - Luna uttered.

Eva looked down, where a red-hot wall blocked the path. Anything that came into contact with it simply evaporated. However, in rare cases, the wall opened, letting some of the cubes through.

“It lets some of us pass!” - Eva shouted. - “We still have a chance!”

“Not without the soul fragments of the first astronaut.” - Luna informed. - “It won't let us in, unless we have all pieces with us.” - She fell to her knees, just like her copies in nearby cubes. - “We've lost, just like that.”

Avi grabbed Luna's shoulders and shook her. - “Luna! This is NOT the end.”

"You don't understand, Avi... we never had anything to say here. She chooses who can enter, she rules this world." - Luna uttered.

"What about the Echo of Apocalypse?" - Eva asked timidly. - "Can it give us a chance to survive?"

"It won't work." - Luna said. - "It had already been attempted. The Echo is a powerful weapon, but its main purpose is to damage soul structures. It can't remove barriers between the timelines."

Avi looked at other cages, one by one. All Lunas stood up, lighting their last flame. This ocean of candles soon illuminated the darkness like stars.

"Don't lose hope." - Could be heard from Luna's chat. - "They still carry our torch."

Luna got up and wiped her tears. She materialized her own lantern and joined.

"I-I can't." - Eva stammered, wrapping her arms around her. - "I don't want to. Not again."

Avi, unlike her other copies, didn't hug Luna and Eva to say a final goodbye. Instead, she approached the cube's wall and began kicking it and pummeling it with all her strength, screaming at the top of her lungs. - "I didn't say my last word! I know you hear us, you scumbag! You worthless wretch, you abominable freak, you loser!!"

Luna's heart ached. She saw her other copies, accepting their fate. She wanted to hug Avi one last time, just like they did.

Their cube glowed red, changing its position until it moved between the cubes where other Avis acted the same.

"Avi, stop... please." - Eva begged, even if she was shaking from the mere thought of what awaited them.

Avi continued to pummel the transparent wall until her knuckles started bleeding. - "You won't take Luna away from me! You won't take anyone's life! STOP THIS!"

Luna stepped back to the corner, where she sat down and curled up, crying into her sleeves.

"AVI!" - Eva yelled. - "Look at us!"

Avi turned her face. It was all wet from her tears.

"Are you going to cry alone?" - Eva asked.

Although Avis in other cubes accepted their fate, she was the only one to scream. - "I am supposed to let this evil win!? Am I supposed to accept this injustice!!? NO! When they drag you to be executed, your moral responsibility is to bite, kick, and scream! To give up one's life is an affront to those who care about you!"

Avi's cube was sorted again, landing between other protesting Avis.

"Avi." - Luna uttered quietly. - "I no longer have strength. Let me have a moment of weakness."

"No. I won't." - Avi declared firmly, her eyes red from tears.

When Luna exploded into a cry, the cube repositioned again.

Eva was ready to slap Avi, but Luna flashed to stop her. - "Let me do it." - She raised her hand, but Avi's piercing gaze stopped her.

"Hit me." - Avi demanded. - "I can take it."

Instead, Luna threw herself at Avi, embracing her tightly. Their cube was dangerously close to the wall of fire.

"Luna..." - Avi reciprocated, adding in a gentle voice. - "We don't have time. We need to act."

Luna let her go, quietly nodding. - "You're right. You're always right." - She connected to the local network, but there was only one chatroom and three other groups in it.

"Luna...?" - Daichi's voice could be heard from the communicator.

"Reporting in." - Luna calmly answered.

"What is Luna doing here?" - A voice of the second Daichi asked.

"I think I have a theory." - The first Daichi said. - "Luna, do you have soul fragments?"

"No." - Luna informed. - "We left them on our spaceship, but even if we had them, they won't be enough."

"Can you send us the access code to your ship?" - The first Daichi asked. - "Do it fast! Your life depends on it!"

Luna's heart stopped.

"Luna!? Access codes, NOW!" - Daichi repeated.

This story originates from a different website. Ensure the author gets the support they deserve by reading it there.

“Sending...” - Luna whispered in an almost silent voice, and then their cube repositioned again into the absolute darkness with nobody around.

“What had happened?” - Eva uttered, half-scared, but half-relieved.

Feet, legs, and soon a full Daichi's silhouette appeared from the ceiling, then fell inside. He collapsed to his knees, panting. - “Did I make it in time?” - His face lit up with joy once she noticed the three girls barely keeping it together. - “I actually made it!!”

“How...?” - Luna asked quietly.

“The newest Anaari's invention, a multi-dimensional communication device.” - Daichi pointed at the panel on his wrist. - “Unfortunately, we're late for the final party, so we won't be able to talk to anyone.”

“Final party?” - Eva asked.

“Yes. I've all the soul fragments...” - Daichi informed. - “...I don't know how this will turn out, though. To be honest, if I knew about other timelines, I would've never looked for them.” - He scratched his chin,

adding. - "Well, but I'm here, so we should still try to do our best. A minor spoiler, there's still a lot of work ahead of us. First, we have to create a deeply chaos-infused random number generator."

Luna wiped her tears. - "We've already done it."

"Clever girls." - Daichi complimented. - "It'll be useful at your next encounter with Ronra Naad."

"Not 'ours'?" - Luna noticed.

"Unfortunately, to bypass Infinity Witch's security, I need to temporarily move elsewhere." - Daichi informed. - "The scenario where we stay together was thoroughly analyzed, and it's an impenetrable roadblock."

"You seem to know a lot." - Eva noticed. - "Can you enlighten us?"

"The knowledge of future possibilities won't be useful to you. Try to trust the random choices and Avi's intuition." - Daichi requested.

"My intuition?" - Avi uttered, not understanding why suddenly she was so important.

"The universes where you had survived are exceptionally rare..." - Daichi revealed. - "...I don't understand the reason why it is important, but your existence is necessary to cross the next portal."

“Do you know what lies past it?” - Luna asked.

“No. The timelines that survived until now all converge to a single moment.” - Daichi revealed.

Eva gazed at the incinerating barrier, where a dimensional gate slowly opened. - “We are out of time...”

“Alright, alright/” - Daichi uttered to himself and stepped forward, then summoned a golden stasis shield. - “I just need to play my role, just like it was during my training...”

“You seem a little tense.” - Luna noticed. - “What's supposed to happen?”

Daichi winked at her. - “Extreme driving.”

Before Luna could say anything more, their cube entered the fluctuating tar, and it burst, leaving the sorting room behind them...

“Daichi...” - Avi called.

He, however, raised his hand, asking for silence. - "Four... three... two... one..."

The stasis shield faded, revealing a whirling maw filled to the brim with chaotically scattered, crooked, triangular teeth. Inside it, thousands of eyes were growing, and deeper in the throat were giant, barbed tongues.

Daichi pointed his glove, shooting with a cross-shaped beam that dismembered the nightmare abomination. When the chunks of flesh flew past them, the thrashing veins splattered them with green acid.

Daichi's protective bubble launched forward with a dizzying speed, piercing the corpse and flying between two seemingly infinite blocks of silver swords. Struck by a shockwave, these blades shattered behind Daichi like glass.

"We can't make it!" - Avi yelled, seeing that the narrow gap in front of them was closing. She closed her eyes and let out a long squeak of panic.

The barrier around Daichi swelled and accelerated in three short but explosive pulses that blew up the steel in front of them. The hot plasma of molten swords burst forth, towards a growing avalanche of claws and nails, and pierced countless holes in them.

Like a line of white light, Daichi's sphere flashed through one of the makeshift tunnels, and the creature popped like a balloon. From all sides, Daichi was now surrounded by never-ending walls of flesh with enormous eyes. Between them, there were dreadnought-class spaceships covered in growths made of living tissue. Their lights sequentially turned on and their eyes opened, as if the presence of intruders

awoke them. Millions of turrets turned towards Daichi, launching their deadly laser rays at him. The red lights cut through the void like hundreds of infinite lances, but Daichi evaded each of them skillfully.

However, it was only the beginning. The hatches of nearby spacecraft carriers opened, freeing clouds of black locust that obscured the sky. It was less than half a minute, and the enemy fighters began to assault the bubble with a series of projectiles. The metal shapes flashed before the girls' eyes by the dozens every second, colliding and smashing into each other.

Daichi didn't leave the attack unanswered. His barrier glowed in pristine white, shooting out millions of arches of light, each successfully cutting the enemy in half. Still, it wasn't enough to stop even a fraction of machines, and there were more of them each second.

"Luna." - Daichi spoke. - "Got a moment?"

"I'm obviously not moving anywhere." - Luna informed.

"Oh, right." - Daichi replied. - "It's time for our random factor. Point where I should drop you."

"In this chaos!?" - Avi shouted. - "Are you crazy!?"

"Don't worry. I'll buy you some time to teleport." - Daichi assured.

"I'm sending you the coordinates." - Luna said. - "Good luck."

"Good luck to you, too." - Daichi spoke as he sent a diagonal, crescent wave of energy at the flesh wall in front of them. The deep cut caused the meat to fall off into the dark abyss, creating a new escape path.

A giant, shifting continent soon appeared below Daichi. The sphere decelerated, lowering its altitude, and passed mountain ranges, then flew underneath the torso of a gargantuan centipede with legs replaced by human-like arms. The earth below them erupted, launching sharp pieces of rock at the chitin armor. In the shadow of the bug monster, there was now a long maw with countless tentacles that grabbed the insect and pulled it inside to devour it. Daichi, again, was trapped between two moving obstacles.

"Okay, I think you will find a way from here." - Daichi shouted when they were over a gurgling maw. -
"All out!"

The girls didn't even have time to protest because they were separated from the bubble, and their speed quickly reached zero. They were falling down, into the maw, but Luna teleported them and all three rolled down a slope that was the side of the maw.

They stopped at the edge of a desert made of dead skin and hair. It was gradually tilting, like the whole body-continent was starting to move.

"Eva!" - Luna pointed at a lone tower in the distance. - "There!"

Eva quickly summoned a disc under their feet and launched it ahead. She slalomed between the thick hair, at least until the sand below them rose, forming a few long lines. Large schools of piranha-like beasts jumped out from under the sand, their suction-capped maws equipped with a dozen side

graspers. Eva instinctively called her multitask cell for protection, but the enormous wave made out of countless fish obstructed her vision, and she couldn't properly estimate the distance to the tower.

There was a loud thud, and the desert hunters crashed into the stone wall and the multitask cell, turning into a green goop that splattered onto the stone bricks that were pushed into the tower with impact. Between these, like fish thrown ashore, Luna, Avi, and Eva lay, and behind them a few of their neutralized pursuers.

Eva helped Avi get up, and Luna turned back into a sphere, then wobbled to the nearby window. She empowered her scans and noticed a wave of sand in the distance, heading towards them. - "We're about to be buried alive! Eva, draw the teleportation circle!"

"I lost my staff!" - Eva shouted.

"It's there..." - Avi pointed. - "Underneath the rubble."

Luna pushed the debris aside. - "That's the last thing we needed." - The staff was broken in half. - "Can you fix it?" - She asked Eva.

Eva glued two sticks to each other, but she was panicking. - "It's not working. Its soul is gone!"

"Breathe, Eva." - Luna calmed her friend down. - "Can you make it work just one more time?"

"I'll try." - Eva said. The first circle glowed faintly, showing the destinations.

"Amber Fever." - Luna requested.

Eva activated the seal, but the staff exploded in her hands, and the teleportation circle desynchronized, forming three different destinations.

Architect's Harmony, Question of Loss, Philosophers' Law.