

Last Star 206

The Last Star ~ One Last Kiss

Avi wanted to scream, asking the witch what had happened to Luna, but no voice would come out. She ran to the throne, but halfway through, she was stopped by an invisible wall. Punching and kicking, Avi tried to get through or alarm the unconcerned woman, but it also produced no noise.

Eva was standing still, her soul vision was going crazy. The power of the entity in front of them was incomprehensible. Witch's aura permeated everyone and everything, and it was just a small fragment of intricate circles and rings which, like layers, concealed the unknown core of her infinite soul.

The witch continued to sit and rest, while sand in the hourglass next to her trickled quickly.

Eva looked around, noticing that the place used to be a wooden house, but now, there was only the floor and disintegrating walls left. The rotten planks were bent upward, overgrown by mold and fungi, while the books in the library shelves had turned into dust a long time ago.

They were in the center of the Farthest Point, or at least very close to it. The stars around them faded and died, one after another. It was clear they wouldn't shine forever.

When the first ten stars were gone, Daichi also arrived. He, too, wanted to speak, but quickly realized his situation was no different than Avi's.

The Witch raised her hand, pulling Daichi's soul fragments out of a dimensional pocket, then spoke. -
"These are the last ones. Thank you."

"You nasty hag!!!" - Although Avi's voice was restored, the wall that separated her from the witch still stood. Avi felt motivated to now scream louder and punch harder, but the witch ignored her. She materialized four cups and a teapot, then sent it to her guests.

Avi took her cup, then slammed it against the barrier, shattering the porcelain. However, it repaired itself and refilled again.

"Lively as ever." - The witch said without any emotion.

"I would apologize for our manners..." - Daichi said. - "...but her behavior is justified."

"Oh. Collected, calm, and boring again." - The witch replied. - "You could follow her example, for change."

"I'm aware we can't say anything you haven't already heard..." - Daichi spoke.

The Witch gave him a blah-blah gesture, then continued to drink tea, listening to Avi's insults like it was a sweet melody.

Daichi was momentarily discouraged, but eventually stated. - "...the fragments we've collected. Give it a chance."

"This again." - The Witch commented, clearly disappointed. - "There will be an appropriate time for everything. Drink, relax. Tell goodbye to the stars and your close ones."

Eva asked, still afraid of the witch. - "Why are you doing this?"

The Witch's tone was bitter. - "Always the same questions, and the same answers, which can't change anything."

"It's the balance of Nether and Aether." - Daichi uttered. - "I assume your actions are motivated by it."

"Indeed..." - The witch answered. - "...but the explanations you had heard are mostly guesses."

"Please, explain it to us." - Daichi asked.

"You have no idea how exhausting it is to repeat the same words over and over again, more times than there are sand grains in the desert..." - The Witch spoke. - "...but I can empathise with some of your feelings. I'm aware you only have one life, and that it's still important to you."

Avi stopped protesting for a moment and crossed her arms. She also wanted to know her excuses.

"Everyone who told you that you have a choice and control your future, are liar." - The Witch spoke. - "There are two worlds, one made of nether, the second made of aether. Our unfortunate fate was to

land in the first one, where almost all of the souls are destined to end up in the abyss of eternal suffering.”

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Daichi raised his brow. - “Almost all?”

“A soul can be killed, and thus spared this fate.” - The Witch said. - “It'll wreak havoc in the universal balance, forcing our neighbours, who believe themselves flawless, to make difficult choices.”

Avi stomped her foot. - “You're a liar! It's all lies! Nobody and nothing can condemn us to the eternity of torment, for having been born in a different world!”

“Avi is right.” - Daichi added. - “It's hard to accept it without proof.”

“I paint my truth on an infinite canvas, and its many threads permeate every being. How are they supposed to see the whole when they blindly follow the vibrations of my brush?” - The witch spoke.

“You won't convince me that you see everything.” - Avi replied with fury. - “You're neither omniscient nor infallible. Your 'painting' interprets the reality, but isn't the truth.”

The Witch took a deep, tired breath. - “You never listened... but I assume Eva knows what I'm talking about, am I right?”

Eva took a step back, processing her doubts. - "I..."

"Eva! Don't let her sway you to her side!" - Avi shouted. - "She's trying to pull wool over our eyes and is stalling for time!"

"Avi... I remember where I was born." - Eva said. - "I don't want to go back."

"Eva?" - Avi uttered in disbelief.

Eva wrapped her arms around herself. - "I'm scared."

Daichi interrupted them. - "We understand what you're trying to say, so I assume you're trying to kill every soul..."

"The process of killing a soul is slightly different than sending it to freeze in limbo." - The witch informed.
- "A minor detail, but the global effect will be the same."

"I don't have any more questions." - Daichi replied.

"...but I do!" - Avi shouted. - "WHERE IS LUNA!?"

"She's safe." - The witch informed. - "She's drifting through outer space, at the other end of the universe. Don't worry, she'll be here for the finale. Although she'll be late. She's always too late."

Avi narrowed her eyes. - "You underestimate her."

"Do you believe that your love can stand the test of time?" - The Witch asked. - "She'll be a completely different person once she returns, and you'll be merely a drop in the sea of her memories."

"I doubt you've ever loved." - Avi hissed with hatred.

"I used to love, but what happened to me will happen to you, too." - The Witch revealed. - "The flame faded, and I was no longer blind, and from dying embers, my true calling was born."

Avi snapped. - "Rotten, cynical, bitter disbeliever! You're the one who told yourself that you can't love, and that there is no hope! I'm sure that you had never tried to fix those relationships and that you didn't look for a way to save us! Give yourself and others a chance!!!"

For a fraction of a second, there was doubt and hope in the Witch's expression, but she quickly recollected herself, replying. - "I like you. It's a shame you didn't walk by my side, gazing at the ocean of eternity. Maybe then, you would've understood."

"Never." - Avi hissed.

"Once again, shame..." - The witch uttered with sadness, then got up. - "...time to end our party."

"Daichi, Eva!" - Avi called. - "We have to stop her, together!"

"I'm sorry, Avi." - Avi muttered. - "I prefer to sleep forever, rather than suffer."

"Eva." - Avi spoke with compassion. - "I won't let anyone hurt you."

"I'm sorry." - Eva repeated, closing her eyes and sobbing.

"Daichi!" - Avi called. - "Why won't you use the astronauts' technology!?"

"She turned off all my systems." - Daichi informed. - "We can only pray that the first astronaut saves us."

"You will soon meet him, so open your ears and hear." - The Witch said as she reached for her wooden wand. - "He knows the truth and carries a burden heavier than we do."

The Witch drew a circle with her wand, and the first astronaut's fragments formed a vortex around her. Soon, more fragments began materializing from other, already dead timelines. Piece after piece, like a

puzzle, they formed a shape made of pure light, and once it faded, a man in a spacesuit appeared there, his face concealed behind a dark visor.

"I'm back." - The first astronaut spoke.

"Welcome home." - The witch uttered, gently caressing his helmet. However, she quickly withdrew her arm, her voice sad. - "Forgive me... but time is running out."

The astronaut took her hand before it retreated, then pulled the Witch to himself, holding her close to his chest. The old woman's heart raced, recalling the promise of the past long gone.

"I know..." - The astronaut replied. - "...and everything should be ready. For you, I'll defy even heaven."

The Witch dug her fingers deep into the astronaut's spacesuit, and tears of emotion welled up in her eyes. - "Why? After all this time..."

"I've spent it thinking only about you." - The astronaut declared.

The Witch hesitated. - "...is there even the faintest chance to alter this sorrowful destiny?"

The astronaut shook his head. - "It's a goodbye. I deeply wish we could be together in our last moments, but it's not fated to be."

The Witch averted her eyes, still embracing the astronaut. - “It's... okay. Leave if you must.”

The visor of the astronaut's helmet retracted, and he uttered a last wish. - “Before I depart, can you give me one last kiss?”

The Witch raised her head, her eyes gleamed as if their star was born anew. She didn't get to whisper her agreement because the first astronaut was already leaning towards her, giving a soft testimony of his undying love. His silhouette began crumbling, turning back into soul fragments and returning to aether, leaving the Witch alone.

Her trembling hand reached to her also trembling lips – why was she reminded of her pain, and why was this pain so sweet?