

## Last Star 43

Star XVII ~ Through Patches of Violet ~ Part II

When the day was over, Virka invited Avi and Luna to one of the hotel rooms, with a round king-sized bed and aromatic candles inside, which created a dusk-like ambience.

“You can get some sleep here.” - Virka said, bidding them farewell.

Avi sat down on the edge of the covers. - “We are spending the night together again.”

“If you're uncomfortable with my presence, I can stay on alert and watch over you from afar.” - Luna replied.

Avi lay down, sighing and placing her left hand on her forehead. - “It's not like that, Luna. I... still live our shared moments.”

Luna sat on the other edge of the bed, with her back to Avi. - “...but?”

“I see that you can guess.”

Luna averted her gaze.

"Luna, do you sometimes feel that our friendship is falling apart?" - Avi asked. - "That it's different than when we've just met."

"No." - Luna uttered. - "There are good moments and moments when we argue, but it's all part of learning each other."

"Eh, is that how you see it? Luna... I feel overwhelmed by our interactions." - Avi explained. - "I feel like I can't catch a breath and sort out my thoughts."

"Does my presence cause you pain?" - Luna clearly seemed sad.

"No, Luna. No. That's not the issue, I just feel... like we are forced to be stuck with each other. It's hard to describe. When it's just the two of us, our spaceship is feeling too cramped. Don't you feel like this, too, Luna?"

"I..." - Luna fell silent. She wanted to reveal what she truly felt, but the words seemed stuck in her lungs. - "...maybe you're right, Avi." - She lay down next to her, but their hands didn't even touch.

Avi turned to confront Luna face to face. - "Luna, you can tell me about everything. I want to know what you really feel. Are you also not fine with our situation?"

Luna didn't want to look into Avi's eyes. - "I feel hurt, I feel as if you wanted to discard an essential part of me. It's like you're trying to put a barrier between us, that I'll never be able to tear down."

"Luna... I didn't know. I'm sorry." - Avi muttered and wanted to take Luna's hand, but Luna pulled it away. - "Luna?"

"I need neither a break nor more space. I only want you to accept me, not just the image of me that you're seeing."

"I..." - Avi backed a little, hesitating. - "...Luna, I don't know if I understand your feelings. What do you mean by image of you?"

"An illusion, that has nothing to do with reality."

"Luna... I can't see inside your heart or mind." - Avi replied, troubled. - "How can I know the real you? Help me understand."

Luna turned to Avi, almost crying. - "Can't you tell by looking at me!? Do I have to scream it out!?"

Avi stammered. - "I-If you have to."

Luna bit her lower lip, tears were trickling down her cheeks already. - "Avi... I hate you."

Avi felt a sharp sting in her heart. She immediately turned away, and Luna did the same. There was fear in Avi, her heart beat loudly and fast, drowning out Luna's sobbing. A long and uncomfortable night came, and none of the girls could easily change that.

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When the morning arrived, Luna was the first person to leave the room. She didn't wait for Avi, who still pretended to sleep.

When Avi finally walked out of the room, Virka was standing next to the doorway, leaning against the wall and smoking her pipe.

"How did it go?" - Their hostess asked.

"I've ruined everything." - Avi uttered with her shoulders low. - "She hates me." - Avi added, hiding her face in her hands and crying.

Virka approached Avi, pressing her against her chest and gently caressing her head. - "Shhh... shh... It's okay, she didn't mean it."

"She said that to my face. 'I hate you.' These were her exact words... Virka, I'm so afraid to lose her."

“Calm down... calm down... We'll figure it out.” - Virka said, gazing at Avi's wet face, which seemed to beg her for help. - “Oh, dear! You didn't sleep at all! I'll make you something light to eat, and afterward, take a rest. I'll handle the situation.”

Avi just nodded, then they both walked to the restaurant.

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Virka tried to check the cameras to find Luna, but she was nowhere around. She decided to look outside and equipped her space body suit, then entered the gardens. There she found Luna, sitting curled up under the spaceship.

“Luna... why did you say something so hurtful to Avi? You should know how much you mean to her...” - Virka spoke.

“Phi.” - Luna forced out. - “I mean nothing to her. You were right, I should accept this.”

The story has been taken without consent; if you see it on Amazon, report the incident.

“That's... a very stretched interpretation of what I said yesterday.” - Virka replied.

Luna took a long pause. - “Avi... is she okay?”

"She is asleep."

"Virka... I have a request... can you stay next to her? She experiences nightmares, and I don't want... I don't deserve to be next to her after what had happened."

Virka was worried. - "Don't be overdramatic, she'll certainly be happy to see you when she wakes up."

"No, Virka. No. She told me yesterday that she needs space. I respect her wishes. She deserves it after everything she has been through."

"...and what about you?"

"I... I'll get through this, I always do." - Luna averted her eyes, sad.

Virka sighed, then firmly grabbed Luna's hand and pulled her. - "We're going there, right now. Time to fix it."

"Virka, no!" - Although Luna protested, she allowed Virka to drag her all the way to the palace.

When she finally saw Avi, drenched in sweat and struggling to breathe, her heart trembled. She sat next to the girl, gently taking her hand, and Avi, feeling Luna's warmth, calmed down.

Virka walked out, closing the door and leaving the girls in private once more.

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Luna's face was the first thing that Avi could notice after waking up. It didn't have its gentle smile or calm warmth, there was only concern mixed with gloom.

Avi sat down next to her, still not letting Luna's hand go.

"Luna... I..." - Avi muttered.

"There is no need to say anything. I understand." - Luna said quietly. - "I should apologize for yesterday, I overreacted."

Avi's lips trembled lightly, and she broke into tears, throwing herself at Luna and hugging her tightly. -  
"No, I'm sorry. I wasn't even aware of how much I'm hurting you."

"It's in the past, Avi." - Luna uttered. - "You and Virka were right."

Avi drew her face back a little, asking with an uncertain, anxious look.

“Taking a pause will be good for us.” - Luna added.

“I... I don't think that anymore.” - Avi replied, taking Luna's hand in both hands. Her eyes were full of conviction.

Luna sighed. - “Avi, it'll be better this way. Why are you making it more difficult by changing your mind so suddenly?”

“You made me realize how much I care about you. I don't want any barriers between us anymore.” - Avi answered.

Luna flinched. - “Avi... It's too much for my nerves.”

“You don't... want this?”

“What we both want doesn't have to be good for us.” - Luna stated.

Avo averted her gaze. - “I understand. Even if it's not what I desire now, I'll trust you... because you're my friend.”



"It's settled, then." - Luna sighed.

"...but ...do you have any plan for how this is supposed to happen, Luna?" - Avi asked.

"I always have a plan. I'll find new hobbies, maybe take better care of the garden. I'll spend the time exploring who I am." - Luna said. - "I've gotten used to isolation."

"I don't." - Avi replied with sadness.

"Eh, Virka! I know you're there, eavesdropping!" - Luna suddenly shouted. - "Enter, right now!"

Virka opened the door, nervously twisting her tails. - "Sorry... I didn't plan to... but you know, I was slightly worried... and..."

"Sure, sure." - Luna said sarcastically. - "Do you want to travel with us?" - She asked bluntly.

"Why the idea...?" - Virka muttered.

"Do you want to spend the next one hundred and twenty years in this hole, or more?" - Luna answered.

“Khazan... is my home, my legacy.” - Virka replied, then added, a bit afraid. - “I can't... I can't fly out there.”

Luna stared at her, analyzing even the most subtle of her body movements.

“Do you want to watch the universe die, alone? Or would you rather prefer to do something about it?” - Luna added, standing up and offering her hand. - “I've come to know you and I believe in you, they need you there, Virka.”

Virka's expression was full of pain. - “You have no idea what you are saying. Nothing good is waiting for me there.”

Luna lowered her hand. - “I don't know why you are having doubts, but our spaceship leaves soon.”

“Go, without me.” - Virka averted her eyes.

Avi observed it, barely understanding. Luna was ready to leave, and before doing so, only added. - “I'll respect your choice. On behalf of us both, I thank you for your hospitality. Maybe we'll meet again someday.”

“You are going back to the spaceship, Luna?” - Avi asked, wiping her eyes and cheeks dry.

"Yes. I think our journey continues." - Luna replied, then added - "Goodbye, Virka." - and left without any extra words.

"Goodbye." - Virka quietly murmured.

Avi stood up too and hugged Virka, which surprised her. - "Thank you for everything."

"You're welcome, my darling." - Virka whispered, hesitantly reciprocating the embrace.

"Virka, I'll surely come back, but until then... do you want to remember me as a friend?"

"A friend?"

"Yes. I want us to be friend." - Avi said with a gentle smile. - "Will you accept my little request?"

"I never..." - Virka paused, staring at Avi's big, pleading eyes. She felt scared.

"Don't make me beg you." - Avi made a puppy face.

Virka's heart skipped a beat. She knew what her answer should be, she remembered her lessons to perfection. In Khazan, there was no room for friendship.

Virka suppressed the feeling and put on a kind expression. - "Yes, Avi. Let's be friends."

Avi, overjoyed, threw herself around Virka's neck. - "I won't forget you, it's a promise."

"Goodbye." - Virka said, letting her go. After Avi waved farewell, with her last glance, Virka could notice how bright Avi's smile was in the violet sunrays – her eyes were sparkling like a thousand stars. Virka instinctively extended her arm, wanting to say more, but couldn't find the words.

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Luna waited next to the spaceship, and Avi approached her, beyond happy.

"Did you say goodbye?" - Luna asked.

"Yes, and I officially have a new friend." - Avi responded.

"Hmm." - Luna, lost in thought, was staring into the distance. - "That's good. Are we starting?"

“Yes!”

Back inside, Avi focused on activating all the necessary controls. The spaceship slowly rose several meters, and then Luna noticed Virka running like crazy.

“Eee... Avi... I think Virka is there.” - Luna said.

“Did she come to wave goodbye!?” - Avi exclaimed with a smile and walked to the window, waving with her hand, while the ship ascended.

Virka was frantically flailing her hands, barely able to keep running.

“How nice of her!” - Avi added as they gained even more altitude, and soon, she lost sight of Virka.

It only took a moment, though, because when the ship was about to start, there was a loud thud and Avi screamed in terror. Virka's jetpack collided into the windshield, to which the woman glued herself, yelling something with all her strength.

“LUNA! What's going on!?” - Avi panicked.

“Stop the ship right now!” - Luna shouted, running up to the panel, but it still didn't accept her commands.

“How!? How!!? How!!!?” - Avi yelled.

“For heaven's sake... There is no time!” - Luna pulled Avi, leading her to the hallway. - “Create an exit right here and wait for me! I'll grab her!”

Avi touched the wall, letting Luna create a protective forcefield around her, then jumped out of the ship. She was quickly back, holding panting Virka.

“Have you completely lost it!?” - Luna yelled.

Virka took off her helmet to make it easier to breathe. - “I'm going with you.”

“Uhm... just like this?” - Avi uttered.

“OF COURSE NOT!” - Virka shouted. - “Land and let me pack my things!”

Luna rolled her eyes. - “What have I gotten myself into?”

Intermission ~ Fallen Angel

After finishing a long task of moving out, Virka exhaled with relief. When the spaceship started, she took off her shoes and, with bare feet, sprawled out with her whole body on the couch in the recreational room. Soon, Avi arrived there too with glasses of lemonade, very curious about her new acquaintance.

Avi sat down on top of the table, commenting. - "That was a lot of boxes. Can I ask what you keep in them?"

"Oh... nothing special. Mainly my finest wines and expensive bath oils." - Virka smiled ambiguously.

"Your room looks luxurious too... that handcrafted furniture and silk curtains. On top of that, you have all these treasures of art... won't you be missing your palace? We have it pretty modest in here, and the place is rather cramped."

"Of course I'll be missing it." - Virka added. - "I barely could fit two wardrobes, and I have no idea how I am supposed to stay in shape without the gym."

"Eee..." - Avi uttered. - "...right, we don't have space for that."

"Ehh... I never thought that I'd have to limit myself to a foldable bench and a basic set of weights..." - Virka kept complaining. - "...but at least you have quite an advanced simulation chamber here, so I guess I won't get bored to death here."

"It's three days of travel until the next star, I'm sure we'll get to know each other better." - Avi added optimistically. - "If you're interested, I can show you recordings of planets that Luna and I have already visited."

"I'll gladly see them, my darling..." - Virka said, stretching and rolling over onto her belly. - "...but before that, I would like to know more about you."

Avi was slightly surprised. - "About me? I don't know where to start..."

"Start from the beginning, my darling. From the very beginning." - Virka insisted. - "You can keep it short if you wish, we'll definitely get to know each other better later."

"Oh... I was born on Earth, like you already know. I didn't know anyone, except my parents..."

"I remember, you were the last of your kind." - Virka commented.

"...yes, but they soon were gone too. I... was struggling without them, my life lost its meaning until Luna found me. She showed me the path through this darkness... and well, that's how we got here."

"Mmm..." - Virka stretched out her arms. - "So it was your first friend? How long have you known each other?"

"A few months." - Avi answered.



"That's not that long." - Virka noted. - "Honestly, it amazes me how close you two are."

"We've been through a lot together." - Avi explained. - "Uhm... and Luna is quite eccentric. I think she knew that she wanted to be my companion from the very beginning. I'm still puzzled by it."

"Oh, is it so?" - Virka smiled enigmatically. - "She noticed so quickly... that you're special to her?"

"It wasn't even quick. It was immediate." - Avi replied.

"Ah, I recall how she mentioned that you've saved her. Could it be related to this in any way?"

"Yes..." - Avi was shocked by Virka's wits. - "...her spaceship crashed in the forest next to my house."

Virka pondered. - "The daughter of Anaari with such an advanced self-awareness, truly peculiar. I assume you two were on your own until now."

"...yes, there is Caleb too, but Luna says he's a robot, and there is Aurora too, but you already know her."

Virka moved her feet back and forth. - "In such a short time, you've created a second home here together. I'm jealous..."

"It's always better together, so I'll be happy if you choose to be a part of it." - Avi added. - "I like you."

A wide smile appeared on Virka's face. - "You're adorable... makes me want to munch on you."

Avi giggled. - "What, are you really that hungry?"

"You have no idea... my lips haven't tasted anything remarkable in a long time." - Virka said, her playful gaze admiring Avi's figure.

"Oh!!!" - Avi, oblivious of Virka's intentions, struck her hand with a fist. - "I know what I'll treat you to! Stay here!"

Virka raised her eyebrow, but let Avi leave, who, in a moment, was back with a fruit parfait.

"Here you go." - Avi said, offering her the dessert.

"Ohh..." - Virka was about to say that it wasn't what she meant, but she refrained. - "...you are so sweet, and it looks like something straight out of a fairy tale. I won't refuse, I won't refuse..."

Avi grinned. - "Luna and I discovered it in the golem factory on one of the visited planets."

Virka scooped up a candied fruit ball with a spoon and put it in her mouth. - "Mmm... delicious... but I wonder, how did you manage to prepare it so fast?"

"Luna's synthesizer can replicate most of the stuff we scan." - Avi explained.

Virka's jaw dropped. - "You have... that kind of technology?"

Avi nodded.

"Wait... what was the point of me packing everything?" - Virka muttered.

"Eee... sorry, I didn't think... You know, your boxes were sealed shut, I was sure those were mostly the personal items."

Virka facepalmed. - "A replicator... do you know how many nations would wage wars for that kind of device, and how many could fall due to it? And you're just making desserts..."

"Eee... uhm... I guess we are?" - Avi muttered.

Virka tasted the cream and pondered with a spoon in her mouth. - "Eh, maybe it's better this way... do you have anything else that could also surprise me?"

Avi put a finger to her lips. - "Probably not... but we have a lot of films, games, and music. I'm sure you'll like them."

"Are those mementos from your home planet?" - Virka asked, still savoring the parfait.

"Yes."

"It'll be nice to learn a bit more about your culture." - Virka said, licking the spoon clean. - "Show me what you've got..."

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When Luna entered the recreational room, she found Avi and Virka, both sitting on pillows in front of their TV with gamepads connected to their console. Hearing their laughs and victory cheers, Luna deduced they both had a lot of fun. She smiled gently and watched from afar, even Avi didn't notice her because of how immersed she was in the gameplay. It was Virka who paused their game and put the controller aside first, then waved to her.

This book was originally published on NovelBin. Check it out there for the real experience.

"Oh, Hi Luna!" - Avi uttered.

“Hello, Avi.” - Luna said, sitting down behind them. - “Ah, I see you are playing 'The Faraway Place'.”

“It's Luna's favorite game.” - Avi mentioned, a bit shy.

“Will it bother you if I watch a little?” - Luna asked.

“Of course not, make yourself comfortable.” - Virka replied and resumed their game.

Avi's character was standing in a shallow pond, surrounded by waterfalls from all sides. Next to her, Virka's black cat was standing on a lily pad. The woman pressed her buttons to jump up a few times, then she bounced along some green platforms. Avi rushed to the left, finding a cave behind the falling water.

It was a co-op game with a split-screen, a gift from Avi's parents, but she wasn't able to play it until she met Luna. When they played together, Avi was usually the cat, so playing the main heroine now was a new experience for her. Currently, she and Virka were trying to solve a skill-based riddle with a logic puzzle. While Avi was supposed to properly time pulling the levers that moved platforms, Virka had to choose an appropriate path to the top of the waterfalls and call an elevator for Avi.

“I see that you're still at the very beginning.” - Luna commented, she knew it usually took about three hours to reach their location. - “If you would like, I can point out a quicker way to do it.”

“No hints!” - Avi protested, her tongue sticking out in focus.

“Ah... so there is a shortcut, yes?” - Virka guessed and looked at the protruding rocks. - “Let's try... this way!” - Her cat, however, ended up falling into the stream and returned right to the beginning of the level. It shook its tiny body to dry off, and the girls had to restart the riddle. - “Oops...”

“Nice try...” - Luna commented. - “...but this game requires two people.”

“Luna! Quiet!!” - Avi reprimanded her once more.

“Okay, okay... I won't bother you, keep playing.” - Luna shifted away, lying on her stomach on the pillow and resting her head on her arms.

When Virka and Luna figured out the solution, there was an auto-save, then a boss fight with a giant, flying jellyfish. After three attempts, they finished the level.

“Ahh...” - Avi stretched out her arms. - “A little break, okay?”

Virka yawned. - “I'm tired too.” - She put her gamepad away and jumped back to her pillow, turning to Luna, then gave her a meaningful glance. - “The daughter of Anaari... in person.”

Luna allowed her to continue.

"In a humanoid shell, your people are way more beautiful." - Virka added.

"You sound like you knew more of my kind." - Luna said. - "Is it another secret that I'm not supposed to ask about?"

"Who knows..." - Virka uttered. - "...I met many entities akin to you, but I can't tell you the details. However..."

"However?" - Luna asked.

"One of them had eyes just like yours, enjoying a genuine freedom." - Virka added. - "You just want to get lost in that gaze... and draw even more intensity from it."

"Hmpf. You're good with words, but it's a pity they don't contain any useful information for us." - Luna responded.

"Mmm... you want me to become useful to you? That's a lot of pragmatism, but not enough joy... with three of us, things could get fun... or even wild." - Virka replied with a tempting smile.

Luna sighed. - "For now, I'm not interested. We have to track down some sentient beings. I'm sure you know a lot."

Virka puffed her cheeks, feigning innocence and disappointment. - "How not nice... we still have plenty of time to get to know each other better."

"That's true, Luna. We don't have to hurry." - Avi added. - "Lately, you seem so tense. Maybe you'll play with Virka together, and I'll prepare dinner?"

"Eh." - Luna had a sour expression.

"Luna... don't make me beg." - Virka uttered. - "We'll have a lot of fun... and I promise to help you ease all the stress that you're carrying."

Luna sighed. - "You two devils. Did you scheme together when I wasn't around?"

Avi and Virka looked at each other, then both laughed inwardly.

"Then, it's decided!" - Avi exclaimed. - "I'll be back in a bit less than an hour." - Then left the room.

Luna crossed her arms and looked at Virka reluctantly. - "What do you want to do, then? I'll give you a warning, though. I'm very competitive, so if you want to try me, I won't make it easy."

Virka leaned in close to Luna, their faces were only inches away. - "Ohh, is it so? Because I know enough games to make even a brave little being like you back off."



“Are you challenging me?” - Luna asked, not moving even slightly.

“Maybe...” - Virka whispered, fluttering her lashes, and drew nearer until their lips nearly touched.

“Bring it on.” - Luna furrowed her brows.

Virka pulled her head back, giggling. - “Oh, you're in such a hurry to taste the main course, sweetie... but we didn't even touch the appetizers yet.”

Luna lifted her brow, completely clueless about what Vrika was getting at.

Virka stood up, glancing at the gramophone. - “Come, come... I heard you've got a collection of good music here. Please, play something.”

Luna's gaze settled on Avi's records. She walked over to the shelves, running her fingers along the covers. She didn't want to confess this, but she felt like she was losing something intimate, something that was just between her and Avi. She recalled all the days when they both listened to the melodies or sang together.

It was an appropriate time to let it all go, so she chose an adequate melody called 'Pale Blue Moon'. She hesitated before setting the record on the player, but finally gave in, and a melancholic song filled the room.

“A sad one...” - Virka whispered, surprised.

“You don't like it?” - Luna asked.

“No, no, it's beautiful.” - Virka said, a bit teary.

When Luna turned to her, Virka quickly wiped her eyes.

“Is everything okay?” - Luna asked.

“Yes. It brings back memories. These painful ones, but worth remembering.”

“Maybe I should change the song.” - Luna suggested hesitantly.

“No, no. It's already fine. Shall we dance?” - Virka extended her hand to Luna.

“Dance?” - Luna had no idea what Virka meant.

“Come, let me show you.”

Luna moved closer to Virka, who gently held her back, guiding her slowly in circles.

“Do you like it?” - Virka asked, her eyes met with Luna's. She, however, was sad.

“I think I understand the idea....”

“You are thinking about doing it with Avi, right?” - Virka asked.

Luna blushed. - “How... how do you know!? Are you reading my mind!?”

Virka giggled, then smiled playfully. - “Not yet, sweetie. You're just making it too obvious... ouch!”

Luna stepped on Virka's foot. - “Sorry!” - She exclaimed, trying her best to regain her composure.

“Don't worry about it. You're learning, and I wasn't careful enough.” - Virka calmed her down.

Luna decided to stay silent and pay better attention to movement. It also helped her to hide her embarrassment.

"Back to the topic..." - Vrika continued.

Luna interrupted her. - "There's nothing to go back to. The situation is as it is, nothing will change it."

"Why are you trying so hard to distance yourself from her?" - Virka asked. - "Do you really think it'll fix everything?"

"I... I think that's for the best. Avi doesn't tolerate the person that I want to be for her." - Luna said with sadness.

"And that's why you want to cut ties with her?"

"No, I don't want to... but..."

"...but you think she will feel better due to that?"

"Yes." - Luna admitted. - "She seems happy right now."

"Do you think those are her real feelings? Maybe she smiles, avoids you, and hides how much she misses you... because she trusts your choices? But deep down, she's crying."

Luna stepped back from Virka, she didn't want to dance anymore. - "Then, what am I supposed to do? When I'm next to her, it's wrong. When I'm away, it's even worse!"

"I was thinking about what you've told me earlier, Luna, regarding how you experience her lack of reciprocity. Avi, she needs time to understand, feel, and for the bond between you to properly form. Don't treat it as rejection, but as a delicate flower, still in bloom. It needs balanced care, so that one day you and Avi can both mature and enjoy what truly unites you, regardless of its final form."

"It's like my garden... too much water, or not enough, and the plant will die." - Luna replied.

"Remember, people aren't flowers. Moderation is important, but don't reduce it to homework... this requires an intuition, like dancing."

"Virka, I don't know if I can. I was living as a computer for over four hundred years."

"...but for several months now, the light of your heart has been pulsing brighter than the stars. I know that you'll try and give your best shot, because you care about her."

Luna sat down on the couch, spreading her arms on the headrest and staring at the ceiling. - "It's all moving too fast." - After a long pause, she added. - "Virka, how did you learn to notice these things so effortlessly?"

Virka backed away, hiding in the shadows. - "That was my job."

"Can you tell me more about it?"

Virka tightened her lips. - "Maybe... one day."

"Even you need time..." - Luna stated. - "...now I get how much I still don't understand. I'm sorry, I won't insist."

Virka sat down against the wall, and there was a moment of silence until she asked. - "Is there a place to smoke?"

"No. The spaceship doesn't like pollution."

Virka crossed her arms over her knees, looking downcast. - "Three days... I'll survive somehow."

"Do you want to be alone?"

"Quite the opposite." - Virka muttered. - "...your quiet presence is soothing."

Luna accepted it and didn't say a word more.

