

Last Star 58

Star XXII ~ Brave the Ocean ~ Part VII

As soon as Avi stepped outside, she was greeted by two rows of soldiers with flintlock rifles, who were ready to shoot. There was even a small cannon, but it only made Luna roll her eyes in annoyance.

Macclean came forward from behind the soldiers, trying to negotiate. - "I admit it in the name of my superiors, a terrible mistake was made. Even if I'm not in a position to demand or ask for anything, I would still like to request that you leave our country and never interfere with its politics. It pains me to say it, but officially, you're no longer guests here."

Avi crossed her arms. - "What if we don't listen? Will you shoot?"

"That's my order." - Macclean replied.

"We will see it as a declaration of war." - Avi said, determined to end this. - "Think twice if you want that."

Macclean looked at his soldiers, then, with a resigned expression, asked them to lower their weapons. - "What are you trying to achieve?" - He asked Avi.

"First, we'll find the mayor." - Avi decided. - "Then you'll find us at the rostrum at the main square."

Knowing that Maccalean has failed, the mayor didn't protest his short detention and allowed himself to be led to the market square. The citizens quickly took notice of the alien visitors who were freely walking the streets and started to gather around them, speculating why guards weren't escorting them and why the mayor was with them.

When they realized that Luna approached the elevated region of the square, where the podium was, they surrounded the place and waited. Avi didn't try to be formal and simply let the survivor of the massacre speak.

Even if some of the citizens were already aware of the rumors, the crowd now seemed more than upset, and when the mayor confirmed the truth, they became enraged and started whistling at him and throwing various items in his direction, which Luna redirected elsewhere.

It was only the beginning, though, because Avi approached the podium, ready to reveal the rest of the truth.

"Brothers and sisters! When we visited you, we were treated like your family. Still, there are things you shouldn't ask of anyone, not even your own family. We came in peace, sharing our knowledge, and despite this, we were asked to help bring death..." - Avi paused for a moment, trying to watch the public sentiment. - "...but even a single death is a tragedy. Not long ago, we mourned the death of Devoted. Everyone could learn what his last words were, he wanted to forgive, not to answer hatred with hatred. It doesn't mean that the guilty ones shouldn't be held responsible for their crimes, but I would like you to remember that it's a few people who are guilty, not those who do their best to take life day by day. Most of your brothers and sisters from the Outersea alliance are innocent, but there are a few bad actors who tried to kill us and stop our support. That's why I'm asking you to be cautious, because the enemy hides among us and whispers to your ears, trying to incite war. I can't tell what the future will bring, but the threat from the alliance exists for you, just as you could pose a threat to it in the future... but I still plead, try peaceful solutions before it's too late. Share your kindness and knowledge, the same way we shared ours, and show goodwill, because we weren't born to live for ourselves, but to love each other and share the blessings on this world together." - Avi finished, then took a deep breath, staring at the crowd. She hoped that they would understand her intentions.

Despite her speech, the people were still discussing among themselves. Avi felt that the fear of the Outersea alliance is more than prejudice.

“Please... please...” - Avi whispered to herself.

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

“They still remember the conflict at the Coast of Endless Memories.” - The mayor said. - “You will not undo their pain. Many of them lost their families and experienced atrocities that can't be described with just words.”

Avi slammed her hands down on the podium and, with tears in her eyes, recited. - “Do not carry anger in your hearts, because everyone makes mistakes. Instead, be a beacon for those who have yet to hear her voice...”

“...and when the servant heard it, he dropped his sword and recognized his brother's face.” - Maccalean said, stepping out of the crowd. - “Hear my plea, for I wish you to live out the rest of your days. Please, give me hope and let me see that the person in front of me was born from the light, not the darkness. And the brother spoke – give me hope, because no offering will be enough to atone for my sins. And the servant declared – leave this night and don't let yourself be found until you redeem yourself, and I will pray for the stars' light to illuminate your path.”

“Maccalean?” - Avi uttered.

He climbed the stage and requested. - "May I?"

Avi hesitated, but allowed him to take her place.

Macclean began his speech. - "I won't lie to you. In the last days, there have been hostile attempts at foreign influence in our politics. The information about our probable scientific progress and industrial development was likely to get out already and reach the neighbouring countries. It's most likely that we will be in their sights in the coming years. Our leaders blindly tried to achieve independence for our people. But at whose cost? At the cost of innocents, like it was at the Rumbling Vault. Our greed has burdened us with sins that cannot be easily erased, and those who came from the stars have the right to deem us unworthy. The war, however, can be avoided, and our leaders are aware of that. It will not happen the way they wanted it, but it'll happen through dialogue, through finding allies willing to trust us, the same way that the Outersea alliance once was formed. That's why I would like to ask you not to worry, because the well-being of our people is in our greatest interests. What we have to do won't be easy at the beginning, but the lessons we learned in the last few days should help us to bring a better tomorrow."

When Macclean was finished, Avi stared at him. - "Wait, does that mean that you are not in any danger?"

"That's not what I said." - Macclean replied. - "The threat of war is still real."

Virka had a cynical smile. - "You must intimidate the Outersea alliance strongly. Otherwise, your new alliance will face a world war."

"That's not a thing we can change..." - Macclean declared. - "...but I can predict that our politicians, even if often focused on filling their own pockets, know how to save their own skins, too."

"You had a different solution... for all this time?" - Avi was red from anger. - "...and you said nothing."

"I'm sorry things ended up like this..." - Maccalean said. - "...but it was the decision of my higher-ups."

"They wanted to pressure us until the very end." - Virka noticed.

"So my speech meant nothing to you!" - Avi stomped her foot. - "I won't forgive you!"

"Hey, don't worry, Avi. I still like it." - Luna mentioned.

Maccalean added. - "It definitely moved at least one soul, and that's enough."

"We were worrying for all this time for no reason..." - Charlotte said. - "...but Avi, you spoke with sincerity and sensitivity."

"Yes, you really are not made for politics..." - Virka commented. - "...and consider this a compliment."

Avi sighed, fatigued. She was still trembling from the nerves. - "Despite this... Ashborn, know that we will come back one day. No wars, no tortures, no executions... otherwise, you'll be remembered in a bad light."

“We will consider your request...” - The mayor replied. - “...although this will require many legislative processes.”

“You must make the world a better place.” - Avi demanded. - “I know you can.”

“The technological advancements should go in pair with the development of humanitarian laws...” - Virka added. - “...but these are changes that you will have to supervise yourself.”

“We will do our best to be deserving of your generosity...” - The mayor assured. - “...that's why I would like to start with an apology for everything you've experienced here. We will be happy to have you as our guest one last time, I'm sure you are all tired.”

Avi waved her head. - “Sorry, but I think we should refuse today... just make sure you do it properly next time.”

“...so, this is a goodbye?” - Maccalean asked.

“Yes.” - Avi confirmed.

“Then, may the stars' light always illuminate your path.” - Maccalean responded and took out his pipe, knowing that he would need a smoke after this hard day.