

## Last Star 59

Star XXIII ~ HELP

Luna's spaceship began its flight to the twenty-third star. It was a long journey across the void, but the crew needed that long rest.

Avi, drinking tea, was collecting the data from the ship's registries. A few minutes before reaching their next destination, Virka joined the girl, sitting down on the front windowsill and gazing into the far space.

"Hi, Virka!" - Avi exclaimed. - "How are you feeling today?"

"Moderately." - Virka replied.

"You would prefer our spaceship to be a tad bigger, isn't it?" - Avi asked.

"It wouldn't hurt."

"I understand. You have nowhere to go when my parents occupy the recreational room." - Avi noticed.

"It's not that bad, Luna's garden is still there." - Virka said.

“Do you like her flowers?”

“Yes, one can easily relax in that small sea of greenery.”

“I'm glad you've found some time to unwind.” - Avi replied. - “I was worried you would be too overwhelmed.”

“I don't feel like a prisoner, if that's what you implied.”

Avi smiled heartily. - “That's good! If you still need something, don't be shy to tell us. I'll do my best to accommodate you.”

Virka nodded, although she was still gazing beyond the window. The spaceship slowly decelerated until the light of a white hyper-giant star illuminated its interior. Avi quickly ran up to the scanners and started counting.

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“One... two... three... four, five... six planets!” - She exclaimed, excited.

“Really?” - Virka uttered without passion.

"The second one is habitable." - Avi added.

Virka sighed. - "Well, then it seems it's time to get into our spacesuits."

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The spaceship landed on a pink meadow between leafless, twisted trees with red bark, which resembled dried flesh.

Luna took a single step after leaving the ship, then immediately stopped.

"Luna, you're obstructing the way." - Avi complained.

"I hear them..." - Luna muttered.

"Who do you hear?" - Avi asked, squeezing outside.

"The trees." - Luna answered. - "Avi... this place..."

Avi pushed her lightly, forcing her way outside, but she couldn't notice anything extraordinary, other than insects that fed off the twigs, some small mammals that bit into the trunks, and a few birds that pecked holes in the bark.

"We should go back." - Luna said, trembling. - "No reason for us to stay."

"What are you talking about!?" - Avi protested. - "We didn't see anything yet!"

"Avi... trust me, you don't want to know." - Luna replied.

"Just speak already, Luna!" - Avi demanded.

Luna sat down on the wet ground and, with a blank stare, observed what was in front of her.

"These trees. They live, think, speak, and feel. Feel everything. Most of what I can hear is their screams and pleas to end their torment."

Avi's face became pale. - "You... you are not serious, are you?"

"That's... horrible." - Charlotte commented.

"We can't do anything..." - Luna said. - "...but they still need help. I really don't know what to do."

Avi felt nauseous and soon fainted, so Luna had to catch her. She led Avi back inside the ship, let her rest on the couch, and left to bring her a glass of cold water. Everybody else didn't stay outside for long. They joined them with quite gloomy expressions.

"I didn't expect the space to be so hostile." - Nicolas said to Charlotte.

"Do you think that Avi encountered things like this before?" - Charlotte uttered.

"I don't know, but if she did, she hides it well." - Nicolas mentioned.

Luna returned, but Avi didn't feel like drinking.

"Avi... my darling..." - Charlotte leaned over the girl.

"I'm fine, Mom." - Avi barely whispered out. - "We should continue our journey and find Goliath." - She said, trying to get up. - "They might be able to help."

"Please, rest up, honey." - Charlotte said, but Avi staggered towards the wall and, leaning on it, walked to the bridge.