

Last Star 97

Star XXXIII ~ Cage ~ Part XV

When Avi's eyes opened, she was being dragged into a dark tunnel, somewhere deep inside the Prison of Aeons. Soon, she was thrown onto the floor, tied, and without armor. In front of her face, she could notice the same prisoner who had helped her get to the transporter, but in her dimmed, lifeless eyes, there was an expression of excruciating agony. All around, other passengers and members of Una's group lay dead.

Avi raised her head. In the light of a thousand candles, on the edge of a ring of blood, there were two silhouettes in hooded robes. One of them was Una, with a dripping-red dagger, and next to her was Goose. Right behind them, beyond a hardened glass, an ominous red sun rose.

"Una? Goose?" - Avi uttered. - "Why...?"

Goose nodded at Una, who approached a book pedestal and began to read in a language that Avi couldn't understand. Avi could notice that, one by one, Una's tears were falling onto the pages.

Goose hissed, full of hatred. - "Do you know what it feels like when your soul burns in eternal flames?"

"I thought that... that you..." - Avi quietly replied.

Goose's anger was evident. - "That what? That I'll be friends with someone so ignorant and someone who takes lightly the suffering of my brother? Who do you think you are, with your condescending attitude, making those empty promises? You have no idea how disgusted I was by having to pretend that I could tolerate you."

“What are you planning to do?” - Avi asked.

“I only want to get my brother back.” - Goose revealed. - “What happens to you once I keep my end of the bargain – I don't care.”

“Una... but why, why you?” - Avi uttered.

Una stopped reading, but Goose gave her a piercing look. - “Continue.”

“I-I'm sorry A-Avi.” - Una stuttered, then began reading once more.

The candles were extinguished one after another, only to soon reignite with black flames. Beyond the window, the sunlight that used to be white, and now was red, slowly darkened until it was utterly black too.

“O' the dead star, stealing the last hope. Carry our plea to the edge of darkness. May she, who was forgotten by time and fate, return whispering the names of her apostles. When all life fades away, your prophecy shall be fulfilled. I'm not afraid, because I know that in eternal oblivion, I'll find peace...” - Una uttered at the very end.

“Una... please, don't erase what's still good within you.” - Avi pleaded.

Goose laughed. - "Good? You don't know her at all! She murdered her own flock of sheep to save her skin!"

Avi still didn't resign. - "Goose... you, you both. You can still stop. It's evil. We can find a better solution, together."

"You still don't understand!" - Goose hissed with fury. - "We're all cursed! There's no forgiveness for any of us, not after what we've done. In every cycle of our rebirths, there won't be anything but suffering, but this way, we at least can prevent that fate!"

"I don't believe in it." - Avi uttered as she barely lifted her body to a kneeling position. - "I don't want it."

"You are so stupid." - Goose replied. - "All that matters to you is what you believe, not how things really are!"

"How things are, can be changed." - Avi countered.

Goose raised her voice. - "It's another stupid belief that I was talking about!"

"Avi... surrender." - Una requested. - "It'll... hurt less if you do."

"I'm not afraid of pain. I'm afraid to lose you both." - Avi declared.

"You never had us in the first place." - Goose replied and nodded at Una.

Una, however, hesitated. - "Please... let's give her a chance. She might understand..."

"By the abyss! SHE HAS A TWIN HEART, WE CAN'T STOP IT!" - Goose blew up. - "Do you want 'HER' to come!?"

Una shrank back, frightened.

"Una. I don't know why you stumbled on your path, but you're courageous enough to get up again." - Avi said. - "We still have hope. It doesn't have to be the end."

"No, Avi." - Una whispered. - "I already know that even another purification won't save me. Even if I wanted it... I'll never get there alive. You don't understand what awaits people like me."

"You are right. I don't..." - Avi admitted. - "...but I still care about you both and won't stop fighting."

"Let us leave in peace. Please." - Una sobbed. - "At least that little. Forgetting... everything."

“Una. I won't forget you, even after my death.” - Avi declared. - “I want to walk this path with you, in light. I won't let anything else happen... so please, you both, don't let it happen, too.”

“Enough.” - Goose hissed through gritted teeth. - “Finish it, Una.”

Una approached Avi, then moved the blade of the dagger to the girl's heart, but her hands were trembling. Avi looked at Una one more time, silently begging for her to change her mind.

“I-I can't.” - Una uttered before moving the blade away. - “You do it.”

“Weak.” - Goose said, and soon was next to Avi. She took the dagger and, without a moment of doubt, pushed it between Avi's ribs. Blood began to slowly seep through Avi's clothes, yet her heart still beat, as if it wasn't pierced. From the wound, a black substance slowly began to ooze, its tentacles wrapping around the dagger and Goose's hand.

This narrative has been unlawfully taken from NovelBin. If you see it on Amazon, please report it.

“It's... alive?” - Goose mumbled, shocked, then turned to Una. - “Was it supposed to look like this?”

Una took a step back. - “I-I don't know!”

Avi felt a sharp pain in her chest. The same black liquid began to flow from her eyes, nostrils, and mouth. It dripped down, forming a vast pool of tar.

"Continue the ritual!" - Goose ordered.

Una quickly began reciting. As she spoke the first words, Avi screamed in pain and collapsed. The black liquid inside and outside her began to bubble, as if it were boiling. An unpleasant smell of burning filled the air, and the dagger was pushed out of Avi's wound by a black river of thick blood. She thrashed and writhed in agony, as though she were being burned from within.

Una stopped, unable to utter even a single word. She recalled the image of hundreds of people she once knew, condemned to similar, never-ending torment. - "Your place is with them... but you can cheat your destiny." - She remembered these words perfectly, but she still wobbled away from the book, her eyes locked on Avi.

"We almost won!" - Goose turned to her. - "FINISH IT RIGHT NOW!"

"No..." - Una refused. - "...I ...what have I done?"

Goose ran up to Una, shaking her by both shoulders. - "Snap out of it!"

When both cultists were busy, Avi crawled toward the dagger, her hands reaching for it. She clenched her teeth, overcame the excruciating pain that came with movement, and first freed her hands in a single motion, then her legs.

She got up, weapon in her hand, and staggered forward. When Goose finally realized what was happening and turned her face, Avi was right in front of her. The blackness on her cheeks and tar dripping from her forehead, hair, and neck made her look worse than a living corpse, which sent shivers through Goose's spine and left her paralyzed.

"G-Goose." - Could be heard from Avi's throat. - "I-it h-hurts. H-hurts so b-bad."

Without a second thought, Goose grabbed Avi's dagger and began to stab her entire chest, causing more dark liquid to ooze from the wounds.

Una covered her mouth, now full of tears. Despite Avi's injuries, the girl kept moving, forcing Goose to back to the corner.

When Goose had nowhere to run, she could only watch as Avi's presence crushed her. - "Don't come any closer! Don't come any closer!" - She screamed, but Avi, with a gaze seemingly devoid of will or consciousness, pressed Goose against the glass with her full weight, then collapsed onto her.

"Goose..." - Avi whispered as she hugged Hoose. - "I forgive you both... so please, return to the light." - She added, then fell to the ground, showing no hints of life.

"Una..." - Goose uttered with drops of cold sweat on her forehead. - "Finish it, once and for all."

Una, however, collapsed onto her knees and whispered. - "I-I can't."

Goose grabbed the dagger, forcefully lifted Una to the book, then put a knife to her neck. - "Read, or you'll meet a fate worse than hers."

"Goose." - Una muttered. - "I gave up. I don't believe our sins will be forgiven. The punishment is inevitable."

"Then do it for my brother! Give him a chance! He's innocent!" - Goose begged.

"They all were innocent." - Una spoke in a faint voice. - "I accepted my fate. You should accept yours, too."

"No.... no, no, no!" - Goose shouted. - "Don't waste our only chance!"

Una looked at Goose. - "I already made my choice. She doesn't deserve this. For my sins, I'll suffer eternally, but I don't want to condemn the only person who has shown me love to this fate."

"Listen, you..." - Goose wanted to threaten Una, but was interrupted by coughing. Tar-like substance slowly retreated into Avi's wounds, and she, disoriented, opened her eyes. Goose smiled like a madman. - "Oh, do you think it is over!? You will look as I gouge her eyes out, pull her fingernails out, rip her open alive... I won't forgive any of you. She'll suffer first, and you're next."

"No!" - Una shouted and protected Avi with her own body. However, Goose was stronger and pushed Una aside, ready to attack Avi, and not realizing that the ceiling had collapsed. When Goose regained awareness, she was pinned under heavy steel rods.

“What an aggressive aroma. It was worth waiting for it to mature so much.” - Goose overhead above her and instinctively reached for the dagger, which, unfortunately for her, was too far.

Seeing the insatiable hunger in the eyes of a massive beast, Una backed away.

Avi was seeing everything, but her vision was blurry. Kraken was towering above Goose, and in one swift move, she tore off the upper part of her victim's torso, then stuffed it into her mouth. The sound of crushed bones and the guts dripping from between Kraken's teeth brought Avi back to consciousness.

“K-kraken... w-why... w-why you?” - Avi stammered.

Kraken swallowed and licked her lips. - “I have promised it to you... And you did me a favor. I have never tasted such an exquisite dish before.” - She then turned to Una. - “...and what do we have here?”

“No! Leave Una alone!” - Avi called, crawling to Kraken.

Kraken smelled her to-be victim. - “Eh... you'll not be as excellent, but you, too, will suffice.”

“KRAKEN!!” - Avi shouted at the top of her lungs.

“SHUT YOUR TRAP!” - Kraken grabbed her own head, as if it was aching for some reason.

"KRAKEN!!!" - Avi shouted again. - "LEAVE UNA ALONE!"

"You give me nausea." - Kraken spoke to /Avi, then grabbed Una by the waist.

Seeing Goose's leftover entrails between the Kraken's teeth that were about to tear her apart, Una began wildly hammering the Kraken's hand with her fists. - "No! NO!" - Una screamed, crying from fear. - "I DON'T WANT TO!!"

"KRAKEN, STOP!" - Avi let out a full-throated scream.

For a moment, Kraken was hesitating. - "You can't change it. I can feel the hunger of all her victims, calling for justice."

"Kraken! Put an end to this! KRAKEN! I beg you..." - Avi sobbed as she continued to crawl.

Kraken didn't react anymore. She lifted Una above her jaw and was about to drop her between her teeth when Avi finally got up, and, struggling, grabbed the dagger and pushed it into Kraken's back. Feeling pain, Kraken dropped her to-be victim, giving her a chance to run away.

Now, Avi was alone, facing the bloodthirsty giantess. Kraken inspected her wound, still in disbelief. Her steaming nostrils drew close to Avi, who fell onto her back and began crawling as far away from the Kraken as she could.

"You. Did you really do it?" - Kraken asked.

"Leave Una alone, you monster." - Avi uttered.

Kraken just laughed. - "Me? Monster? Don't you see all the corpses around you? Can't you smell her cowardice as she left you to face my wrath?"

Avi was silent.

"You're blind..." - Kraken added. - "...and I became hungry, even more hungry."

"I-I'm sorry, Kraken." - Avi spoke, trembling in fear.

"Tell me. Why are you saving her? It can't be because you're a fool..." - Kraken requested, leaning over Avi in such a way that saliva dripping from her mouth fell onto her cheeks.

"Una... she might have lost her way, but she's still my friend. Please... let me save her from the darkness." - Avi responded.

"Your choice might have consequences." - Kraken said. - "Will you take that risk?"

Avi only had a second to answer, yet she didn't hesitate. - "Y-yes."

Kraken stepped away. - "Run, before I lose my mind. I'll find a different meal."

Avi moved away from beneath the torso that towered above her and stood up, speaking. - "Kraken... block zero-six will be purged. Forget your hunger and just leave this place."

Kraken turned to the black sun. - "Anna. You can't save everyone. I'll hunt as long as I live. It's the role of the predator. Don't waste your time on me, and maybe you'll get to return to those who you so dearly love."

"Kraken..." - Avi uttered.

"Run and don't look back, because the only thing that will be soon left of me will be a mindless beast." - Kraken replied.

"Overcome it and survive." - Avi said one last time, then hurriedly disappeared.