

THE RISE OF A FROZEN STAR

Chapter 15: Two Souls

[POV Liselotte]

I followed the wolf for a short while, stumbling over damp roots and thick underbrush. The air was heavy with a strange silence, as if the forest itself was holding its breath.

And then it stopped.

The sun was just beginning to filter through the high treetops, staining the sky with brushstrokes of pink and amber.

On a small hill, silhouetted against the dawn light, its form stole my breath. Majestic. Serene. Strong.

The she-wolf's silver fur glistened like frost in the sun. Her amber eyes were fixed on mine.

A gaze I would recognize no matter what happened.

And in that instant, I knew.

"Chloé..." I whispered without thinking, as if that name had always been hidden in my heart, waiting for the moment to bloom.

She descended with an almost ethereal grace. Every step was firm, silent. The same being who had made the bandits tremble, who had condemned them with a single look, now approached me like a reflection of peace.

I ran towards her without thinking. My legs moved before my mind. Tears burst forth like a broken dam.

"Thank you... thank you for saving me..." I choked out.

Chloé didn't speak, but she didn't need to. Her eyes said it all. She nudged me with her snout, warm and firm, as if taking me under her protection.

I sat down beside her, stroking her neck. For the first time since I arrived in this world, I felt protected. Alive. Not alone. I lay down next to her, my body exhausted, my heart beating slowly. The forest whispered with the wind, but it was no longer an enemy.

Finally... I could rest.

[POV Chloé]

The forest was my cradle. My home.

I was born under the whisper of leaves, on a bed of roots and moss. I was the second of five, strong from the start. Our mother was the soul of the pack. Our father, the alpha: a giant among his kind, steadfast and wise.

Childhood was short. Life demanded from us from the first breath.

Hunt, guard, run. Be invisible, lethal, swift. I learned to read the signs of the earth, to sense footsteps in the distance, to distinguish fear from fury.

But I... was different.

While my siblings were content to tread the same paths over and over, I dreamed of the unknown. I looked beyond the hills. I yearned for what I didn't understand.

And so, one moonless night, I left.

There were no goodbyes.

The forest stretched before me like a promise. I crossed murky rivers, wandered through dark mountains. I howled at skies I didn't know. I nearly died more than once. But I also discovered... freedom.

And then... humans.

Fragile. Stupid, sometimes. Dangerous. But also... beautiful. Persevering. Tender. I watched them from a distance. Some killed without reason. Others healed without reward. I learned to understand them without truly comprehending them.

One day, I saw something I would never forget.

A girl. Alone in the forest, with nothing but a sword in her hands and a small bag slung on her back.

From that moment, I followed her. From the shadows. From afar. Protecting her when she slept. Driving away beasts. Silencing threats.

Waiting for her to see me.

And today it finally happened.

The girl surrounded by humans with eyes like blades. They weren't protecting her. They were stalking her.

And then...

My body reacted without thought. I ran. I leaped. I attacked.

In that moment, I saw her up close.

She didn't tremble. She didn't scream. She looked at me... as if she already knew me.

She called me by my name.

"Chloé."

That name... I hadn't heard it in years. Not since before I left my kin. Not since that person... the only one who ever truly cared for me.

The only one who petted me without fear, when I was a pup, before I awoke in this forest, where buildings reached up to the clouds.

The one who gave me that name.

Edward.

I never expected to see him again after awakening in this forest, but...

That girl... this girl... has his eyes. His soul.

"Edward..." I whispered, though my voice had no human form.

It can't be a coincidence.

Fate doesn't play dice... not with something this important.

That girl...

She is more than a reflection of the one I loved like family.

She is his echo, his legacy, his hope.

And if the world wants to extinguish her, it will have to tear me apart first.

If shadows claim her, I will become flame.

If the gods abandon her... I will become her faith.

I swear by the blood flowing in my veins, by the moon that gave me strength, and by the earth that forged me—no one, absolutely no one... will ever again take what I love from me.

Because now, she is not alone.

She is my destiny.

She is...