

THE RISE OF A FROZEN STAR

Chapter 2: The One Left Behind

Rain struck the windows of the small apartment as Edward Celium, now 20 years old, watched the drops slide down the glass like tears.

Five years carrying a weight no one else could understand—being the only one who didn't disappear that day.

The day a white light devoured his classmates, leaving him alone in an empty classroom.

"Why me?" he murmured, clenching his fist around a cup of cold coffee.

The first few months had been hell. Journalists camped outside his house, shouting questions he never answered.

"What did you see? Was it a ritual? Are you connected to a cult?"

The school principal and his parents had to intervene, assigning him private tutors.

But nothing calmed the silence. The silence of the hallways that once echoed with laughter, of his empty home since his parents buried themselves in work and moved away, and of his own heart, which hadn't beaten joyfully in five years.

"Edward! Wait!" Mia's voice, his university classmate, reached him in the parking lot.

He stopped, adjusting his backpack on his shoulder. Mia was persistent—always trying to drag him to parties or study groups, as if she believed this normality was a remedy.

"Heading to work again?" she asked, panting.

"I have the night shift today," he replied, avoiding her gaze.

"You could skip just once..." she insisted, but Edward was already walking away.

The restaurant was his refuge. There, among trays of food, he could pretend the world was still in order. Even though he was just a waiter, he had mastered three dishes perfectly: mild curry, beef stew, and lasagna. The same dishes she loved.

"Order for table 4!" the manager shouted, pointing at the tray full of exquisite plates.

As he carried the plates, his mind drifted to the past. That lunch they shared under the courtyard tree, her laughter drowning out the rustling leaves...

The last time he saw her, she was crying. He had confessed to her in front of half the class, and she, red with embarrassment, had rejected him. Days later, she disappeared with the others.

"Edward! Order for table 9!" The manager snapped him back to reality with a spatula tapping his arm.

The walk back home was always the same: flickering streetlights, stretched shadows, and the echo of his solitary steps. Until one night, something changed.

A high-pitched squeal made him stop. Between the parked cars, a small white dog was running in circles, terrified by a truck roaring toward it.

"Oh no!" Edward acted without thinking.

He ran as fast as he could, reaching a speed unimaginable even for an athlete, and threw himself over the animal, wrapping it in his chest.

The truck passed by inches away, leaving behind a gust of hot air.

"Are you crazy, kid?" an old man scolded him from the sidewalk. "You could have died!"

"Yes..." Edward responded, looking at the dog in his arms, not understanding how or why he had moved that way—he was in shock.

When he came to his senses, the old man had vanished.

Back in his apartment.

He called her Chloe. He didn't know why; the name just appeared in his mind the moment he saw her.

He bought dog food and a red collar that contrasted with her snowy fur. Chloe became his shadow.

She waited for him at the door after work, slept at his feet while he studied, and for the first time in years, reminded him what companionship felt like.

"Do you like curry, Chloe?" he asked one night, sharing his dinner with her.
"She... she loved it too."

Chloe let out a high-pitched bark and laid her head on his lap. Edward stroked her fur, a lump forming in his throat.

"Sometimes I think they're all alive somewhere else," he whispered, already in bed, about to fall asleep. "And I... I was just forgotten here."

The fire started at dawn. Edward woke up choking, smoke filling his room. Flames licked the walls, and the ceiling creaked like breaking bones.

"Chloe!" he coughed, crawling to where she slept.

He found her frozen under the rubble of a fallen shelf. With strength he didn't know he had, he freed her and held her tightly against his chest.

"Come on, girl... we need to get out of here," he gasped, crawling toward the exit.

But the flames blocked every path. The heat melted his skin, and the floor gave way under his feet. In the final moment, he hugged Chloe, watching her red collar glow amid the chaos.

"Thank you..." he murmured, before the ceiling collapsed on top of him.

A few meters away, a hooded figure calmly watched everything.

"Everything is going according to the goddess's plans." Snapping their fingers, a fireball the size of a soccer ball appeared.

They raised their hand, aiming at Edward's house.

"It's time for the true hero to appear." With another snap, the fireball shot forward and slammed into the building, destroying it completely.

Edward unexpectedly regained consciousness, and the light enveloped him again. It wasn't fire, but that same cold, pure radiance that had taken his class. This time, however, he wasn't alone.

"Edward?" A voice, unknown but strangely familiar, echoed in his mind.

What he saw was a girl—a young woman with red hair and wolf-like ears, smiling through her tears.

"You're not alone," she said, taking his hand. "Not anymore," sending Edward back into darkness.

And thus, Edward Celium ceased to exist. In his place, Liselotte was born—a girl with green hair and shining eyes, destined to change fate.

Not the fate of a single person, a country, or a world, only the fate of herself.