

Frozen Star 100

Chapter 100: Beneath the Same Fire

[POV Liselotte]

The roar of the crowd still vibrated in the air.

It was a persistent sound that echoed in my bones.

Even as the guild healers began entering the arena, the echo of cheers refused to fade.

The cold I had summoned still covered much of the coliseum, casting a whitish glow over the sand blackened by fire.

The clash of frost and flame still lingered in the atmosphere—an echo that refused to die completely.

I was breathing with difficulty.

Each inhalation was a conscious effort.

I could taste the metallic tang of blood on my tongue.

The weight of my body was overwhelming—every muscle felt like molten lead.

The voices around me were a distant and confused murmur.

I could barely distinguish the words of the master of ceremonies—until his announcement finally broke through the haze in my mind.

“The semifinals have concluded!” he shouted, his amplified voice trying to sound more enthusiastic than it truly was.

“Tomorrow at dawn, the grand final of the Golden Lion Tournament will take place. And to the victor...”

He paused dramatically.

The crowd leaned forward in anticipation.

“...will be granted free use of the Royal Teleportation Circle up to three times—without any restriction within the continent!”

A collective murmur of astonishment rippled through the entire coliseum.

That privilege was more valuable than any physical trophy—more than any monetary reward.

To use the Teleportation Circle freely meant absolute freedom.

It meant instant access to any major city in the realm.

And above all, it meant the power to escape the war—to cross the borders of the known world without constraint.

I could barely process that information.

My mind was fogged.

All I could think about was how much everything hurt—from the tips of my fingers to the roots of my hair.

The healers carefully guided us toward the resting area reserved for the finalists.

Leah supported me, holding me firmly by the shoulder.

Her arm trembled slightly beneath my weight, but she didn't complain even for a second.

Chloé followed closely behind.

Her steps were slow and measured—but steady and determined.

The corridor smelled strongly of healing herbs and damp stone.

Each step we took echoed softly through the dim tunnels.

The faint echo of the crowd still lingered in the walls.

Once inside our assigned room, Leah helped me sit down gently on a makeshift bed—thick, clean blankets stacked together.

The warm, soft light of floating crystals bathed the room in a calm amber tone—a strange contrast to the violence of the arena.

“Breathe slowly,” Leah murmured as she placed a cool, wet cloth on my forehead. “You’re not in the arena anymore.”

I nodded weakly.

My throat burned with every breath.

“Did we really win... or am I still dreaming?”

Leah let out a soft, tired laugh—but it was sincere.

“We won. And for once, we survived.”

Chloé snorted quietly, settling down beside my bed with a weary motion.

“‘Survived’ is a generous word,” she muttered mentally. Her voice still sounded hoarse from the strain.

“More like we somehow avoided dying by sheer miracle.”

Leah shot her a mildly exasperated glance but didn’t argue.

Her focus returned entirely to me.

She began wiping the dried blood from my chin with gentle, precise movements.

There was a tenderness in her touch that completely disarmed me.

“You shouldn’t push yourself that far, Lotte,” she said softly, her voice full of worry.

“You’re burning yourself from the inside every time you use that power.

I don’t know how much more you can endure if you keep going like this.”

“I had to,” I whispered, my voice breaking.

“If I hadn’t... we would have lost everything.”

“I know,” she replied instantly.

But instead of reproach, her tone carried a deep pride.

“Still... it hurts to see you like this.”

Her fingers brushed mine by accident—a brief touch.

For a second that felt eternal, our eyes met.

The strength in her gaze completely unraveled me.

There was something more there—something unspoken, hanging between us like a secret waiting to be confessed.

Fatigue slowly overtook me.

It was a heavy tide rising through my limbs.

The sounds outside grew faint.

The comforting warmth of the cloth on my forehead lulled me like a soft, steady caress.

Leah sat beside me in silence, watching my breathing become slower, steadier.

When my eyelids finally gave in to the irresistible pull of sleep, she covered me with a thick blanket.

The coarse fabric felt oddly comforting.

“Rest, Lotte,” she murmured softly.

“Tomorrow... will be a long day.”

But she didn’t move from my side.

She stayed seated there, motionless, watching my sleeping face with an unreadable expression.

The warm light of the crystals brushed against my pale cheeks, illuminating the strands of blond hair that spilled over the white pillow.

Leah slowly extended a hand—hesitated for a moment in the air—and then rested it gently over mine.

Her skin was warm against the coldness of my fingers.

“You’re such an idiot,” she whispered faintly, smiling tenderly.

“A brave idiot...”

Her voice trembled slightly at the end.

Tiny, restrained tears gathered at the corners of her lashes.

She leaned forward a little, wrapping my body in a careful, fragile embrace—making sure not to touch the worst of my wounds.

“I wish I could tell you...” she began, but her voice broke off.

The words got stuck in her throat.

“Tell her what?”

Chloé’s dry, faintly mocking tone cut through the air like a sharp blade.

Leah jumped visibly, startled at being caught.

The wolf watched her from her spot on the floor, her golden eyes glowing brightly in the dim room.

Half-closed, but utterly focused.

“Nothing,” Leah replied quickly, her face flushing crimson.

“I was just... talking to myself.”

“Uh-huh,” Chloé replied flatly, lying back down on the stone floor.

“Sure—talking to an unconscious human at midnight. Completely normal.”

Leah sighed with a hint of frustration, though the tension eased a little.

“You don’t understand.”

"I understand more than you think," the wolf replied calmly, her thoughts projected gently into the quiet room.

"Lotte has that effect on those around her.

She makes you forget you're broken."

Leah looked down at my sleeping face.

"Yes... she has this way of shining even when everything is falling apart."

Silence stretched between them for several seconds.

Only the soft sound of the night wind brushing against the stone walls filled the room.

Then Leah spoke again, very quietly.

"Chloé... how did you meet her?"

The wolf's golden eyes opened a bit wider.

She seemed to ponder her answer.

There was a pause heavy with memory before she finally replied.

“It was many years ago,” she began at last.

“I was just a cub then...

No pack, no shelter. About to be killed by a beast.

There was no escape.

No one would have stopped for something so insignificant.

No one... except her.”

Leah listened silently, absorbed.

“Lotte found me trapped and terrified.

She didn’t hesitate for even a heartbeat.

She jumped in to save me with her own hands, even though she got hurt doing it.

She took me with her.

Fed me, cared for me... and when I healed, she didn’t try to make me stay.”

“And you chose to?” Leah asked softly, smiling.

“Yes,” Chloé answered without hesitation.

Her mental voice carried a warm, almost nostalgic tone.

“From that day on, I followed her everywhere.

We slept under the same roof, hunted together, shared hunger and victories.

Sometimes... we argued.

But she was always my refuge.”

Leah looked at the wolf with a growing mix of surprise and tenderness.

“You never told me that.”

“Because it’s not a story that needs to be told,” Chloé replied, closing her eyes slowly as if reliving those moments.

“Not entirely.

There are parts that aren’t mine to reveal.

Truths that only Lotte should share—when she’s ready.”

Leah nodded quietly, understanding more than words could say.

For a long while, neither spoke again.

Only the faint crackle of the fire in the small hearth filled the space.

The steady rhythm of Liselotte's breathing was a soothing soundtrack.

Eventually, Leah lay down a little closer to me on the bed, still holding my hand gently between hers.

"Watch over her tonight," she whispered to Chloé.

"I always do," the wolf replied without opening her eyes.

"And I will tomorrow too—no matter what dawn brings."

Leah smiled—exhausted, but genuinely relieved.

"Then we agree on what matters most."

The wolf didn't answer with words.

She merely flicked her tail once—slowly, gracefully.

A silent gesture, full of meaning.

A sign of approval and unwavering loyalty.

Night moved slowly outside our room.

Beyond the walls, the entire city of Kreston slept beneath a heavy, clouded sky.

The stars were hidden, the moon only a pale shimmer behind the clouds.

Inside—amid bandages, open wounds, and quiet sighs—three souls, deeply different, rested together.

Bound by something stronger and more enduring than blood or magic.

It was an invisible, unbreakable bond—

forged in the fire of battle, tempered in the ice of adversity,

and sealed with promises not yet spoken aloud—

but promises that still echoed powerfully in the shared silence of that room.

Each of us had reached this point by different paths—

I, with my frozen dreams and forgotten heritage.

Leah, with her inner fire and unyielding loyalty.

Chloé, with her wild instinct and absolute devotion.

And now, here we were—

scarred by battles, weary to the soul—

but still standing.

Still together.

As I drifted on the edge of sleep,

I could feel Leah's warm hand holding mine.

I could hear Chloé's steady breathing on the floor.

They were anchors keeping me tied to reality—

reminding me that I wasn't alone in this fight.

Tomorrow would bring the final battle.

We would face the Steel Minstrels—a fearsome, experienced team.

So much was at stake.

Access to the Teleportation Circle was an opportunity we couldn't waste.

It could change everything.

It could grant us the freedom we so desperately sought in these dark times.

But in that moment,

none of it seemed as important as the simple, profound truth of our shared presence.

That, despite everything, we had survived.

And as long as we remained together,

any challenge seemed just a little less terrifying.

Sleep finally pulled me under.

But for the first time in a long while,

I didn't sink into visions of ice and ancient voices.

Instead, I dreamed of warm light and hands that held me.

I dreamed of a future where the struggle had ended—

and the winter within me had finally found peace.

It was a fragile dream.

But in the stillness of the night,

surrounded by my companions,

it felt as real as the stone beneath us

and the fire burning in the hearth—

as real as the bond that united us,

strong and silent,

beneath the same roof and the same sky.