

## Frozen Star 106

### Chapter 106: A Glimpse of Ice

[POV Liselotte]

The pale sun of the Polus Empire began to descend slowly, tinting the towering marble walls of the capital city with bluish and silvery hues. The streets, which during the daylight hours overflowed with meticulously ordered activity, were gradually emptying as the magical lights of the floating lamps lit up one by one. Averis possessed a peculiar calm as night fell — a serene, almost solemn silence that enveloped every corner, as if the entire city rested in unison under a single, collective breath.

“I think this place will do nicely,” said Leah, stopping in front of a discreet inn nestled between two gray stone towers. The dark wooden sign swayed gently in the night wind, displaying the name *The Morning Star*. From inside came a warm, welcoming glow, along with the tempting scent of freshly served vegetable soup.

We entered without hesitation. The interior was modest but undeniably cozy, with dark wooden tables worn by time, a crackling fire in the central hearth, and thick curtains effectively keeping out the cold. A woman with long braided hair and a genuinely kind smile greeted us from behind the oak counter.

“Do you need a room for three travelers?” asked Leah in her usual practical tone.

“For two humans and a wolf who speaks quite clearly,” added Chloé in her characteristically dry voice, causing the innkeeper to let out a restrained but genuine laugh.

“As long as your wolf companion doesn’t destroy the furniture, there won’t be any problems, dears,” replied the woman, handing us a heavy key carved from dark wood. “You can stay the night without worry. Breakfast is served promptly at dawn.”

We climbed the spiral staircase to the second floor, where the hallway smelled strongly of freshly polished beeswax and dried herbs hanging from the ceiling. Our assigned room was simple but clean — three single beds lined up against the wall, a plain desk, and a large window overlooking the city’s slanted rooftops. From there, one could clearly see the distant reflection of the white towers gleaming like icy needles under the growing light of the moon.

Leah dropped her heavy pack beside the nearest bed and sat near the window. “One more day of rest and we’ll officially be on our way to Whirikai,” she murmured, gazing out over the city. “After everything that happened in Kreston, all this feels almost... unreal, like an undeserved respite.”

Chloé settled elegantly near the flickering fire, curling her fluffy tail around her front paws. “I’d say nothing that happens to us feels real or normal anymore. But if tomorrow’s breakfast tastes as good as it smells, I’ll accept this temporary illusion without complaint.”

I smiled faintly at her practical remark and began removing my dusty travel coat. “Just one more day of rest, and we’ll set off into the unknown. I can’t deny something about this place deeply unsettles me... yet it also draws me in with inexplicable force.”

Leah looked at me quietly for a long moment, as if she wanted to say more — something torn between her thoughts — but finally just nodded with understanding. “Rest well tonight, Lotte. Tomorrow will no doubt be long and full of new challenges.”

The room fell into a gentle twilight. Only the crackling fire and the distant murmur of the sleeping city accompanied our dreams as we surrendered to rest.

I couldn't tell exactly when sleep began to take me.

Everything around me became silent — too silent. When I opened my eyes in this new dreamscape, the comforting fire was gone. The familiar walls of the inn no longer existed, nor the soft bed, nor the soothing sound of Leah's calm breathing or Chloé's faint snoring.

I stood completely alone in the middle of a frozen world.

The ground beneath my feet was an endless expanse of smooth, translucent ice stretching into the horizon. The light illuminating it didn't come from any visible sun, but from a diffuse, uniform glow that seemed to emanate from the very air itself. The sky was a vast dome of bluish-gray, utterly motionless, with no clouds or stars to break its monotony. And the wind... the wind was a deep, constant murmur that sounded like ancient voices whispering from afar, from the depths of time itself.

I tried to take a deep breath, and a thick white mist escaped my lips. My own breath echoed strangely, as if it didn't entirely belong to me.

Before me, arranged in near-perfect military formation, stood countless statues of ice.

Hundreds of them. Perhaps thousands.

They were humanoid figures, carved from pure ice with chillingly realistic detail. Each wore intricate armor, long swords or sharp spears in hand, their faces hardened with determination, eyes closed as if in

deep sleep. But there was something about them that sent shivers through me. They didn't look like mere works of art. They looked like... real people, frozen in time, preserved against their will.

I walked among them slowly, the crystalline sound of my steps echoing like breaking glass through the vast silence. Each statue bore a distinct expression — some with unwavering courage, others with palpable fear, many with restrained fury. A few even seemed to be screaming silently, their mouths open in mute torment. A deep chill ran down my spine as I advanced.

“What is this place...?” I whispered to myself, my voice lost in the immensity.

No one answered. Only the echo of my own words returned the silence.

The air quivered faintly around me, as if the ice itself held a living, beating memory. Then, in the distance, something changed perceptibly. A faint glow — a soft, pulsing light — began to rise slowly on the far horizon.

Without hesitation, I moved toward it.

Each step carried me farther from the forest of silent statues and closer to that mysterious radiance. As I walked, the temperature dropped drastically, until frost clung to my eyelashes and my breath crystallized midair. The light grew brighter — warm, yet unreachable — and when I finally came close enough... I saw her.

At the exact center of a plain of cracked, brittle ice stood a young woman suspended in time.

She looked around twenty-five, perhaps a little older. Her hair was a deep golden blonde, cascading to her waist, spreading across the ice like a frozen river of gold. Her skin bore the faint bluish hue of someone trapped between life and death, and her face — beautiful and serene — was covered by a thin layer of translucent ice, as though winter itself had sealed her away, either to protect her or to imprison her forever.

She wore a spotless white robe adorned with runic symbols I couldn't recognize, and on her chest, right over her heart, shone a fragment of glacial blue crystal — the same hue as my own magic.

My heart pounded wildly as I approached. There was something painfully familiar about her ethereal presence, something that stirred a distant, nostalgic echo within me — as if I knew her from another time, another place my conscious mind had long forgotten.

"Who are you?" I asked in a trembling voice, nearly breaking with emotion.

Silence answered first. Then, the air around her began to shimmer with growing intensity. Fine cracks, thin as hair, spread across the ice covering her serene face. For a fleeting second, I thought I saw her move.

Her pale lips parted slightly, releasing a whisper so faint I barely caught it:

"...Lotte..."

My breath froze completely in my lungs.

“How do you know my name?” I stepped forward instinctively, but the ice beneath my feet split with a sharp, tearing sound. The crack spread rapidly like a deadly web, physically separating us.

“Wait!” I cried desperately, reaching out my hand. But before I could touch her, the light burst in a blinding flash.

A pure, white radiance engulfed me entirely, pulling me violently backward, tearing the frozen landscape into a thousand shining fragments. I felt the familiar pull of ancient magic — an unstoppable force dragging me out of the dream and back into reality.

I woke up suddenly in bed, gasping, heart racing.

The fire in the hearth still burned faintly, casting dancing shadows on the walls. Outside, the sky remained dark and deeply silent. Leah slept peacefully in her bed, her face relaxed, and Chloé had shifted during the night to the edge of the mattress, breathing with calm, feline rhythm.

I placed a trembling hand over my chest, where my heart still pounded hard. I could feel the cold of the dream still there, anchored deep within me — as if a piece of that frozen world refused to let go.

It hadn't been an ordinary dream. I knew that with every fiber of my being.

I closed my eyes once more, trying to steady my breath and calm my thoughts, but the vivid image of the frozen woman — her voice whispering my name with such familiarity — remained etched in my mind with impossible clarity.

And for the first time in a very long while, I understood with absolute certainty that the winter dwelling within me... was not truly asleep. It was only waiting, patiently, for the precise moment to awaken again in all its power.