

Frozen Star 115

Chapter 115: The Royal Family

[POV Liselotte]

The air inside Whirikai Castle possessed a quality unlike anywhere else in the kingdom. It wasn't merely warmer or colder. It was denser, more solemn—each breath seemed to carry the weight of centuries of history, of ancestral promises and silences that had endured through generations.

The moment we crossed the monumental main gates, a perfectly coordinated entourage of guards and servants greeted us with synchronization so precise it seemed choreographed. The echoes of their footsteps resonated on the polished marble floors, amplified by the towering vaulted ceilings adorned with bluish stained glass that filtered a cold, otherworldly light.

The kingdom's crest—that white sun surrounded by spirals of ice—presided over every available wall. Magical torches burned with blue flames that emitted no smoke.

Everything in that place exuded a magnificence so perfect it was almost oppressive.

A man dressed in a black uniform, clearly a high-ranking chamberlain, stepped forward and executed a formal bow.

"Her Highness Leah Alba Whirikai," he declared in a deep, measured voice. "The full Royal Council and His Majesty the King have requested your immediate presence in the throne audience chamber."

Leah nodded with regal composure.

“I understand perfectly. Lead us, please.”

The man performed a deeper bow and began to walk down the main corridor, followed by our small group.

With each step we took, the ambient tension became more palpable, heavier.

The castle corridors buzzed with restrained movement—servants halted at our passing, bowing their heads in reverence and undisguised awe. Some trembled visibly at the sight of her; others whispered among themselves, as if their minds still resisted believing what their eyes confirmed.

But the most unsettling thing of all was the attitude of the nobility.

Along the main halls, several groups of aristocrats dressed in velvet coats and silver jewelry gathered in studied silence. Their faces, carefully powdered and serene, turned slowly toward us as we passed. Some inclined their heads slightly out of mere protocolic courtesy, others simply watched with cold calculation and unhealthy curiosity.

And among the whispers floating in the air like sheathed daggers, I managed to catch revealing fragments of their conversations:

“Did she truly survive that demonic abduction? Impossible.”

“Rumor has it they found her traveling like some commoner.”

“And accompanied by a talking wolf? What kind of fable is that?”

“The Royal Council will not be pleased with this development.”

I clenched my fists inside my gloves—not for my own sake, but for hers. Every malicious word, every gaze disguised as courtesy, was another shadow trying to fall upon Leah’s restored dignity.

But she showed no sign of disturbance.

Her steps remained steady—majestic, even—amid the hostile murmurs. She walked with her back perfectly straight, her head held high, her gaze fixed forward, as though nothing else existed but the destiny awaiting at the end of that endless corridor.

Even so, I noticed the slight tremor in her left hand—the one she hid strategically beneath the folds of her royal cloak.

Chloé, walking beside me with lupine grace, emitted a barely audible growl—just enough for the boldest eyes to look away immediately.

“I don’t like those human stares. They’re too much like the dark mages we found in that village.”

I didn’t answer aloud.

I merely stepped a little closer to Leah until our hands brushed fleetingly. She didn’t turn her face toward me, but her breathing grew noticeably steadier, as if that small, silent gesture alone reminded her that she was not alone in that labyrinth of traditions and betrayals.

At last, the main corridor opened into a vast antechamber fully covered by deep-blue carpets and velvet curtains embroidered with silver thread.

Dozens of maids stood in perfect rows on either side, dressed in immaculate white uniforms. They bowed in unison as we approached, and a reverent silence filled the spacious hall.

At the far end of the antechamber, two colossal doors awaited our arrival.

They were made of black wood reinforced with polished steel, adorned with intricate carvings depicting the glorious eras of Whirikai—the dragons of ancient ice, the mythical founding of the kingdom, the Alba dynasty in all its splendor.

Amid the detailed engravings, I could distinguish female figures wearing crowns of ice and holding crystal spears—eternal guardians of the royal power that now called to its rightful heir.

The chamberlain stopped before the massive doors and turned ceremoniously toward Leah.

“His Majesty awaits you beyond,” he announced solemnly. “The entire Royal Council is gathered in full.”

Leah nodded slowly. Her eyes fixed upon the closed doors and, for the first time since I had met her on our turbulent journey, I saw on her face something that was neither fear nor doubt, but the overwhelming weight of destiny—one she had eluded for so long, waiting patiently at the end of every road.

Chloé watched her with focused attention.

“It’s the decisive moment, princess. Now or never.”

She gave a faint, nostalgic, yet resolute smile. Then she turned fully toward me.

“Lotte,” she whispered softly, her voice trembling with emotion.

Her tone was gentle, yet charged with restrained feeling.

“Yes,” I replied, trying to remain calm despite the tremor rising in my chest.

She looked at me with a serenity impossible to feign—with those blue eyes that seemed to hold the reflection of eternal winter itself.

“No matter what happens in there, promise me you won’t let go of my hand.”

“I have no intention of ever letting go,” I assured her with absolute conviction.

Leah took a deep breath, as though trying to contain centuries of family history within a single exhale. Then she turned toward the chamberlain and nodded with regal resolve.

The enormous doors began to open slowly, with a deep, solemn creak that chilled the blood.

The sound of metal scraping against ancient stone echoed through the antechamber, and a rush of cold air escaped from the throne room, carrying the unmistakable scent of ceremonial incense and ancestral power.

The bluish light from the towering windows reflected on the polished floor like newly formed ice.

At the far end, upon an elevated dais flanked by fluttering royal banners, stood Whirikai’s vacant throne.

Leah cast me one last look, serene, yet filled with absolute trust.

“Let’s move forward together,” she said simply.

And together, with Chloé advancing silently as our protective shadow, we crossed the sacred threshold into the beating heart of the kingdom.

The echo of our footsteps resounded across the ancient marble, as if each step marked the irrevocable beginning of a new chapter in Whirikal’s history, and of the destiny that, at last, was reaching us both in all its magnitude.