

## Frozen Star 123

### Chapter 123: Whispers in the Guild

[POV Liselotte]

The next morning dawned clear, though the cold remained biting.

The sky, as pure as a pane of crystal, let the sunlight reflect over the snow-covered rooftops.

Every step we took on the cobblestones crunched as if we were walking on frozen sugar.

The air smelled of iron, old wood, and freshly baked bread.

Whirikal was waking slowly — shopkeepers opening their stalls, smoke from chimneys rising in silvery columns.

In the distance, the banner of the Adventurers' Guild waved before its main building, a dark-stone structure with tall windows and the golden eagle emblem engraved above the doors.

"Today we'll know if the letter arrived," said Leah, tightening her scarf.

"Kaelen never delays," I replied, though inside I felt a faint nervousness.

"If he said he'd send the document through the artifact, it's already here."

"And if not, we'll wait," added Chloé, walking beside us with her usual calm step.

"There's no need to rush when what's at stake is reclaiming the truth."

Claire hopped from one paving stone to another, humming a tune she had invented that morning. Her cheerful voice stood out against the frozen air, a spark of life amid the winter.

The Guild building appeared before us — imposing yet familiar.

Inside those walls we had lived through battles, laughter, arguments... and the first trials that had bound us together.

I pushed open the wooden doors.

A wave of warmth and noise wrapped around us immediately. The fireplaces in the hall were lit, the smell of tobacco and wine mingled with parchment, and the voices of dozens of adventurers filled the space.

But after only a few steps, something changed.

A group of young people — four boys and a girl, all wearing cloaks embroidered in gold with fine swords at their belts — turned toward us.

The insignia on their cloaks revealed their origin: the Northern Noble Academy, where the sons and daughters of royal and military families trained.

Then one of them spoke.

"Well, well..." said the boy in the center, with a crooked smile. "If it isn't the impostor everyone's been talking about."

Leah froze.

The air seemed to tense.

"Excuse me?" I asked coldly.

"Oh, don't play dumb," added the girl from the group with a sneer. "Our parents told us what happened at the palace — a stranger claiming to be the lost princess, almost fooling the king himself. What was it they said? A delusional orphan with fantasies of grandeur?"

Laughter rippled among nearby adventurers.

Some turned to watch, curious.

Others looked away, uneasy.

Leah said nothing.

She lowered her gaze slightly, as if every word pierced through her.

Her breathing became slow, measured.

But I... I felt anger rise from my chest.

"Watch your mouth!" I said, stepping forward. "You have no right to—"

A hand touched my arm.

Leah's.

"Leave it, Lotte," she whispered.

"But they—!"

"It's not worth it."

Her voice was calm, yet firm.

And in her eyes there wasn't weakness, but a quiet sadness that weighed heavier than any insult.

The nobles kept laughing among themselves.

The boy in the center clicked his tongue.

"Look at her — even imitates the princess's composure. How shameless."

Chloé growled — low and deep — a sound that made some of them step back in discomfort.

"Let's go," Leah said softly. "We came here for something more important."

I swallowed my anger and followed her.

With every step toward the counter, I could feel their eyes drilling into our backs.

But Leah didn't turn around even once.

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The receptionist saw us approaching and smiled warmly.

"Lotte! Leah! It's so good to see you again. I was just thinking about you two."

"Did something arrive?" I asked directly.

She nodded and rummaged through a pile of magically glowing envelopes that emitted a faint blue light.

Then she pulled one out — sealed with the emblem of the Adventurers' Guild.

"Official letter, sent by artifact from Kaelen," she said. "Sealed and verified less than a day ago."

My heart skipped a beat.

Leah took it carefully, as if it might crumble in her hands.

The magical seal shimmered at her touch, recognizing her mana.

A sigh escaped her lips.

"He did it," she murmured.

"Kaelen never fails," I said with a smile.

The receptionist looked at us with curiosity — and a touch of emotion.

"And there's something else. The Guild received another notice from Kaelen himself. In two weeks, there will be a special rank-advancement trial for distinguished adventurers. You two were personally recommended by him."

Leah blinked, surprised.

"Us?"

"That's right," the woman confirmed. "Apparently, Kaelen also sent a full report of your recent missions. It includes your performance in the regional tournament..." — she checked a parchment — "and the note that you defeated teams of Rank B, and even one of Rank A."

Claire let out a tiny squeal of excitement.

"Really?! That means you're going to rank up!"

For a moment, I couldn't speak. Neither could Leah.

Then we looked at each other — and a slow smile spread across her face.

"I never thought he..." she whispered. "That he'd recommend us like this."



"Kaelen always keeps his word," said Chloé, tilting her head. "Even if it takes him a while to admit it."

The receptionist handed us the opened letter, now freed from its seal.

Kaelen's handwriting was as firm and deliberate as ever:

> "To whom it may concern,

I hereby confirm under my authority and seal as Guildmaster that the adventurers Liselotte Carl and Leah Alba Whirikai have demonstrated competence, courage, and leadership beyond their current rank.

Both have participated in high-risk missions and faced adversities that would challenge even Rank-A teams.

I therefore recommend their immediate evaluation for advancement.

— Kaelen Northfall."

Leah read it twice, unable to stop her voice from trembling at the end.

"He... acknowledged us," she said softly.

I nodded.

"And now, the entire Guild will too."

The receptionist smiled knowingly.

"The Evaluation Council has already received the notice. In two weeks, your performance will be officially tested. But..." — she lowered her voice — "if you ask me, you've already earned the respect of many here. Not all the rumors about you are bad, you know?"

Leah blushed slightly.

"Thank you."

"Thank you," the woman replied, bowing her head. "For showing what true courage looks like. Now, if you'll excuse me, I must post the new quests. But do enjoy your day — you've earned it."

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We stepped away from the counter.

The group of nobles was still in the hall, but silent now.

They watched us as Leah passed by them.

Without losing her calm, she raised the letter and said clearly:

"Kaelen, Guildmaster of the Adventurers, confirmed who I am."

Then she kept walking.

The silence that followed was stronger than any shout.

I couldn't help but smile.

When we stepped outside, the cold struck again — but this time, I didn't care.

Leah held the letter to her chest, and the sunlight hit her in such a way that her skin seemed to glow faintly, almost golden.

"We did it," I said.

"No. Not yet," Leah replied, her smile serene. "But we've taken another step."

Claire jumped into the snow, laughing.

"Then the next Rank-A adventurers will treat us to dinner!"

Chloé snorted.

"With how much you eat, you'll have to hunt it yourselves."

We all burst into laughter.

The tension from the Guild dissolved among those laughs, as if the cold itself had vanished.

And as we walked home, the sound of our steps on the snow beneath us, I thought that perhaps Kaelen hadn't just sent a letter... but a reminder:

that even in the midst of doubt, the truth always finds its voice.

The wind blew from the north.

And for the first time in a long while, Leah faced it with her head held high.