

Frozen Star 142

Chapter 142: End of the Battle

[POV Liselotte]

The air became so dense it was almost thick, as if every breath we took was being torn away by a world that no longer wished to lend us oxygen. The forest—this clearing between split trees and exposed roots—shivered with the presence of the demons that had surrounded us from the moment we tried to retreat. Their stench of damp ashes mixed with the smell of disturbed earth and raw magic, that electricity that makes the skin prickle before a spell takes shape.

The entire group was panting. Around us, the soldiers raised their useless weapons—not because they could hurt anything, but because they needed to cling to something while facing creatures that completely ignored steel. The adventurers tried to maintain defensive formations, shout orders, think... but the truth was in everyone's eyes: fear, pure and undiluted.

My sword, gripped tightly, was useless. Every time it touched a demon, the blade sliced through the dark body as if it were compacted smoke. Striking didn't matter. Retreating didn't matter either. They had closed the circle. There was no escape.

Only magic remained.

Only Leah remained.

She stood a few steps behind me, both hands raised to the sky. Threads of trembling light hovered around her fingers, but they weren't truly luminous—they were almost transparent, as if she were

pulling raw energy straight from the air. She was sweating. Breathing with difficulty. And yet... she continued.

The demons advanced. Dozens, perhaps more. Black, twisted silhouettes, with claws like burning coal and eyes without pupils, white like polished bone. They moved without sound, but every step made the ground vibrate as if some invisible giant walked beside them.

Alistair shouted orders, but his voice was swallowed by panting breaths and by the impossible sound the demons made when tensing, like burning wood splitting apart.

I tried to cut one out of pure instinct. The sword passed through it as if it were condensed smoke. The demon didn't react. It was as if I didn't exist to it.

But then I saw one of the mages shoot a blue ray. The impact pierced through the dark mass, making the demon convulse before breaking into fragments of shadow. It disintegrated within seconds.

"Magic! Use magic!" I shouted.

The soldiers looked at me with desperation. Most had no access to any spells.

Then Chlo  , with her fur completely bristling and her fangs clenched in a low growl, placed herself at my side. Her ears were pinned back, her breathing tense. In her gauntlet, her small dagger was secured—useless against demons, yet still prepared out of sheer habit.

"Lotte, we can't hold much longer," she growled with that rough, animal voice she got whenever she was on the edge of tension. "This is like fighting solid shadows. They're going to overrun us."

"Not if Leah finishes," I said.

She lowered her body, ready to leap even though she knew as well as I did that she couldn't hurt them physically. But she could protect me. She could get in the way. She could attack to create space, even if it caused no harm.

The demons lunged.

One jumped on a soldier, passing through his shield and chest like solid smoke. The man fell without even screaming, eyes open, unmoving.

Another demon brushed past me, almost without touching me, but a freezing pressure speared through my abdomen, stealing my breath. I had to stumble back a step.

At least three mages collapsed, exhausted, no longer able to cast.

Every time a magical ray hit a demon, it burst into silence. But the mages were too few... and the demons too many.

Alistair tried to group the soldiers into a semicircle, but the line broke in seconds. The demons simply passed through bodies, ripped life away, and continued advancing.

The adventurers began retreating toward the place where Leah continued gathering energy, but even they, with enchanted weapons and experience, were falling. I saw a rank A adventurer get pierced by two demons at once, his body twisting before dropping like a rag doll.

"Fall back toward me!" I ordered, raising my voice as much as I could.

Chloé leapt to intercept one of the demons rushing toward a mage. She didn't touch it—she couldn't hurt it—but her lupine body worked as a wall. The demon passed through her, but its movement was interrupted just long enough for the mage to fire a spell and destroy it.

"Lotte, behind you!" Chloé roared.

I turned just in time to see a black claw rushing toward my face. I rolled on the ground and stood up with my heart in my throat.

Leah was still struggling to sustain the spell. Her face was flushed. Her legs were trembling.

"I... can't stop..." she whispered, more to herself than to us.

"Don't. Finish it," I said, planting myself in front of her.

The demons were approaching. Many. Dozens. And each looked more restless, more aggressive, as if sensing the magic gathering and wanting to stop it at any cost.

Chloé moved with incredible speed, using her lupine agility to push, distract, jump on them, and force them off balance. She couldn't hurt them, but she could buy seconds. And seconds were life.

"Lotte, they're coming in fast," she growled.

"Hold on," I whispered.

One demon leapt straight at Leah. I didn't even have time to think. I stepped in front, its dark body piercing through me. The pain was like burning ice tearing through my insides. But I stayed standing. Even if just for a moment, I had stopped it.

Chloé rammed the demon—not to hurt it, but to knock it off its axis. Another mage seized the chance and launched a spell that disintegrated it.

The soldiers screamed. Died. The adventurers continued to fall back. The circle closed even tighter.

And then, Leah opened her eyes fully.

White. Without pupils.

The air exploded into absolute silence, as if every sound had been ripped out of the forest.

And then...

The world burst into light.

The spell shot out of her like a circular shockwave. It wasn't pure light. It was a translucent burst, like glass shattering outward in all directions. It moved impossibly fast, hitting every demon at the same time.

When it reached them, the demons cracked. Their bodies fractured in straight lines, like figures drawn on glass that suddenly splintered. They fell apart in silence, without screams, without resistance.

In less than five seconds...

None remained.

The forest became still again. But it was no longer the silence of stalking. It was the silence of emptiness. The silence of death.

I breathed with difficulty. Chloé too, her fur trembling from the effort, her tail low.

Leah, however, stood only because the lingering glow around her seemed to hold her up. When the light faded... she began to fall.

I rushed forward and caught her before she hit the ground. Leah was cold, drenched in sweat, her gaze unfocused.

"You did it," I said, my voice trembling.

"You... protected me..." she murmured.

"Always."

She closed her eyes. Her legs wouldn't respond. Her body was completely drained.

Chloé approached, lowering her head, ears drooping.

"She's completely spent," she growled softly. "We need to move her."

"I know."

I carried her carefully, arms beneath her back and legs. She was light—too light. I brought her to a large, half-leaning tree and laid her down slowly. Leah let out a faint sigh when I rested her head on my lap.

The soldiers and adventurers who remained—barely half of the former, and slightly more than half of the latter—began regrouping around us in silence, some still shaking.

The wind blew again. And this time... it wasn't a threat. It was just wind.

I stayed there, stroking Leah's damp hair while Chloé kept watch, her fur still bristled, her eyes alert.

The forest was no longer filled with demons.

But the night was still there.

And we knew this had only been the beginning.