## Frozen Star 160

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Chapter 160: Voices in the Darkness
[POV Liselotte]
The exhaustion didn't disappear when I closed my eyes.
It was still there—heavy, like a damp blanket weighing down my body. And yet, the shelter of the cave was the closest thing to peace we had known in days. The distant murmur of the wounded, the low sound of someone tending the fire, and the constant drip of water from the cracks in the ceiling created a slow rhythm, almost hypnotic.
Leah slept leaning against the wall, wrapped in a blanket far too large for her. Her breathing was deep, though uneven. Every so often, she frowned, as if even in sleep she were still fighting.
Chloe was sitting a few steps away from us.
In her new human form, with white hair falling over her shoulders, wolf ears upright and her tail resting to one side, she looked different. Not dangerous. Not threatening. But more complete, as if she had finally settled into a place that had always been waiting for her.
I couldn't stop looking at her.
Eventually, Leah opened her eyes.



"For several days now" she finally said, her voice calm. "I've felt strange."
Leah tilted her head.
"Strange how?"
Chloe looked at her own hands, slowly opening and closing them.
"My senses were changing. Not all at once little by little. I started hearing things I couldn't hear before Smelling presences that weren't close. Sensing intentions before they manifested."
I swallowed.
"You were always sensitive," I said. "But this sounds different."
"It was," she nodded. "And so was my mind. My reasoning it became deeper. Broader. I began to understand connections I had only ever sensed before."
Leah frowned.



I remembered her disappearing among the trees without looking back.
"I ran," she continued. "Deeper and deeper into the forest. Where the light barely reached. Where even animals avoided going."
Leah listened in absolute silence.
"When I crossed a certain point" Chloe closed her eyes for an instant. "Everything turned black. Not normal darkness. It was as if the world had been shut off."
A shiver ran through me.
"And there" she went on. "My power changed completely. It didn't expand it organized itself."
She opened her eyes again.
"And I wasn't alone."
I leaned forward.

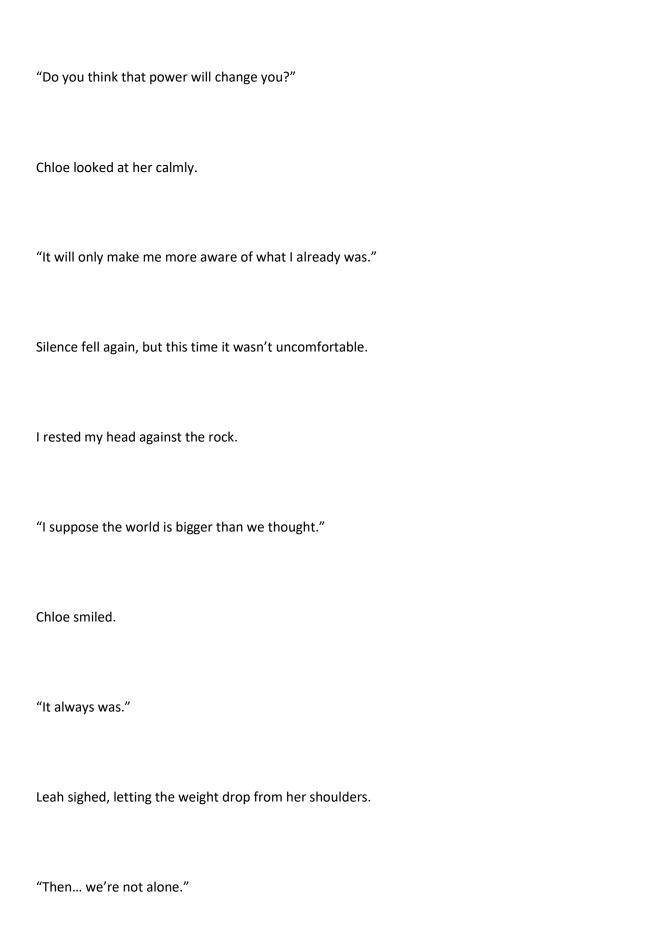


"It spoke to me about my power. About its origin."
Leah tensed.
"And?"
"It told me it didn't come from me alone," Chloe replied. "That it was part of an ancient source. As ancient as the first pacts of the world."
My fingers clenched tightly.
"Like?" I murmured.
Chloe looked straight at me.
"Like yours, Lotte."
For a moment, I felt the air leave my lungs.



"For me to be ready."
Leah slowly closed her eyes.
"That explains many things"
Chloe nodded.
"When I returned to you and felt the chaos of the elemental I didn't hesitate anymore. I knew what to do. I knew how to use the shadows. Not as something external, but as an extension of myself."
I looked at her hands again, remembering how she had stopped the elemental, how she had summoned that shadow wolf.
"And your form?" I asked carefully.
Chloe smiled faintly.
"That figure gave me a choice. To remain as I always was or to accept a form that reflected what I am now."





"No," Chloe replied firmly. "We never were."
I closed my eyes.
For the first time since everything had begun, I didn't feel fear when thinking about what would com next.
Only uncertainty.
And strangely
That was enough.