

Frozen Star 26

Chapter 26: Signs of Power

[POV Liselotte]

The world... slowed down.

It didn't freeze entirely, but movements became incredibly sluggish, like swimming through thick honey.

I saw his triumphant expression turn to surprise, then to panic.

I saw the vapor of his breath suddenly condense in the air, forming a thick white cloud.

I saw how the arm holding the dagger—the arm raised for the killing blow—began to be covered in frost.

It wasn't a gentle dew.

It was a ravenous, relentless growth.

Frost burst from his skin, crackling with a high-pitched sound like a thousand glass needles breaking, advancing from wrist to shoulder with terrifying speed.

His skin beneath the rapidly thickening ice took on a bluish tone, then a deathly white.

Small fractures—white lines like spider webs—appeared on the frozen surface, spreading.

The arm was no longer flesh—it was a grotesque sculpture of opaque ice, rigid, stripped of humanity.

The dagger fell from his frozen, motionless fingers and shattered when it hit the ground.

"W-what...?" his voice was a terrified whimper, barely audible over the muffled roar of battle "W-what... is this?"

His wide eyes locked on mine, searching for an answer in my face, which surely mirrored a terror as deep as his own.

My heart beat like a caged bird battering against my ribs, so hard I feared it would burst.

I didn't know what I was doing.

I didn't understand the source of that devastating cold that flowed from me, that turned my raised arm into a channel of winter.

But a part of me—dark, instinctive—didn't want to stop.

It was power, an unknown power that erupted from within me.

The frost kept advancing, climbing toward his neck.

He tried to retreat, to scream, but his movements were slow, clumsy, as if the cold had already invaded his muscles.

With inhuman effort, driven by terror, rage, and that new and terrifying power, I dragged myself toward my sword, which glowed faintly to the side.

I grabbed it with my good hand—the one I could still use—but now even it felt a penetrating cold.

I got to my feet, staggering, and with a scream that was more a sob of anguish than a battle cry, I lunged.

The steel blade found his chest, just above the heart.

But there wasn't the usual sound of metal piercing flesh.

It sounded like glass breaking.

The blade pierced the layer of ice already forming over his torso with a sharp, dry crack, and then found the flesh and bone beneath.

But the impact was different—fragile.

He fell backward—not with the dull thud of a body, but with the sound of something brittle hitting the wood.

His frozen arm, striking the floor, shattered into a thousand white shards, sharp as glass splinters.

The rest of his body lay stiff—a grotesque statue of ice and frozen flesh, eyes still open, frozen in an expression of eternal horror.

Silence.

A sudden, deep silence spread for an instant in our small corner of the wall.

The nearby fighting seemed to halt, as if all—friend and foe—had felt the unnatural wave of cold, the crack of ice, the grotesque and sudden end.

My own defenders looked at me with a mix of awe, relief, and a new fear—directed at me.

Then, as if the silence had only been the calm before another explosion, the screams, the roars, the clamor of war returned with redoubled force.

But something had changed.

The air smelled of blood, of smoke, of sweat... and now also carried a newly formed cold.

The battle continued, but a new and terrible variable had entered the field.

And I, trembling, with my left arm frozen and my right hand numb from a cold that came from within, didn't know whether it was the ultimate weapon... or the seed of our own destruction.

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No one knew how much time had passed.

The fighting raged throughout the village, now turned to ruins.

And then...

A different roar cut through the clamor of battle.

Deeper than any other, more resonant.

It wasn't an animal sound, but geological—like the cracking of a collapsing glacier, like the earth itself groaning under unbearable weight.

A shiver, different from the cold I had created, ran along the wall.

The enemy torches seemed to flicker, their flames shrinking in the presence of something approaching.