

Frozen Star 27

Chapter 27: The Groan of the Earth

[POV Liselotte]

From the darkness of the north, pushing through the trees like an icebreaker through a sea of black ice, a creature emerged.

Gigantic. Monstrous.

At least three meters tall—perhaps more.

Its body was covered in plates of a black, smooth material like polished obsidian, reflecting the flames in sinister flashes.

It had no defined shape; it was a mass of armored power, with legs as thick as oak trunks that left deep footprints in the earth.

But the most terrifying part was its head—or rather, the absence of one as we know it.

Instead of eyes, mouth, or snout, it had a single central eye, enormous, the size of a shield, composed of what looked like deep blue crystal, almost black.

That eye turned slowly in its socket, scanning the battlefield with a cold, inhuman intelligence—a frozen beacon in the night.

And mounted on its broad back, between the black plates like a rider atop an infernal steed, was a figure.

Tall, wrapped in garments that seemed made of living black mist, twisting and flowing around its body without ever truly touching it.

Its face wasn't visible, only a deep hood that hid everything in impenetrable shadow—except for two fixed red points of light, like glowing embers, that must have been its eyes.

Its voice, when it spoke, didn't echo through the air. It slipped directly into my mind—cold, dry, like ice scraping bone.

A voice without emotion—only declaration.

"You will all die here."

The words were not sound, they were sensation. An absolute certainty of the fragility of life, of hope, of everything that wasn't its dark will.

The monster, as if that mental voice had been a command, charged.

It didn't run. It advanced with terrible, relentless weight.

It didn't aim for the gate or a weak point. It headed directly for a section of the wall—the very heart of our defense.

Its front legs, ending in claws that tore the earth like wet clay, lifted.

There was a moment of suspension, the blue eye locking onto the impact point.

Then they came down.

The sound was that of thunder trapped in a box.

The wall we had rebuilt with such effort, the palisade of thick logs that had withstood axes and assaults, exploded as if it were wet paper.

Splintered wood, massive fragments of trunk, sandbags, and defenders' bodies were hurled into the air like broken toys.

The creature didn't stop.

It advanced into the village, trampling the debris, its blue eye rotating indifferently.

Its tail—thick as a horse's body and ending in a bony mace—swung to the side, sweeping through a nearby house.

The adobe and wood walls collapsed like a house of cards, burying whoever was inside or near.

Another leg lifted and crushed another dwelling.

Smoke. Dust. Screams of pain and terror rose from where there had been relative safety.

Flames burst from the ruins, fed by overturned braziers or shattered lamps.

Burning wood, blazing straw, and the sweet stench of charred flesh mixed with the stench of battle.

It killed both its enemies and its allies.

I ran.

Limping from the pain in my leg—wounded during the mage’s earlier attack—I supported myself on a broken spear I’d found among the rubble, using it like a cane.

The smoke made me cough, tears blurred my vision.

But I saw the silhouette of the monster advancing, its mist-shrouded rider watching the destruction with ember-like eyes.

I saw Chloé—covered in blood and mud, her golden eyes blazing with homicidal fury—launch herself at one of the monster’s legs, biting, clawing, trying to stop the impossible.

"Chloé!" I screamed, my voice hoarse from smoke and despair "With me! Go for the rider!"

She lifted her head, her eyes met mine through the chaos.

There was no hesitation, only fierce recognition—a pact sealed in blood and fire.

"Let’s go!" she roared, a sound more wolf than human, and launched again.

Not at the leg this time, but climbing with feline agility up the black plates of the monster, using cracks and protrusions as footholds, heading for its back—toward the rider.

I dodged a tail swipe that whooshed by centimeters from me, raising a cloud of dust and debris.

The pain in my leg was a living flame, but adrenaline and fury drowned it out.

Clutching at the cold, slippery plates, I climbed after Chloé.

Every movement was agony, each push from my wounded leg sent waves of nauseating pain through my body.

But I climbed.

Up there, on the ridge of that living mountain, the dark mage saw me approach.

His ember eyes locked onto mine.

I felt his attention like a physical weight—a cold pressure in my mind.

"You?" His mental voice now held a contemptuous whisper, loaded with infinite patience like an adult scolding a bothersome child "Ah... you're the one who made a fragile ice sculpture down below."

"Give back what you stole!" I shouted at him, even though I knew my words were useless in the air.

I hurled them with all the hatred, all the helplessness I'd been carrying for months.

There was a pause.

A slight tilt of the hooded head.

The embers of his eyes seemed to flicker.

"What?" The mental question sounded genuinely perplexed, as if my demand was so absurd it couldn't be understood "What could I have stolen from you, little nothing?"

"Peace!" The scream tore my throat "The peace of this place! The safety! The hope! Everything you destroyed! GIVE IT BACK!"

A cold sensation, like infinite disdain, flooded my mind.

Then, without warning, without any gesture, he launched his attack.

It wasn't a fireball, nor a visible bolt.

It was a spear of pure darkness—of absolute cold and concentrated malignant will.

It emerged from the mist around him and struck my chest like a hammer of black ice.

There was no impact sound.

Only an explosion of cold that stole my breath—that stopped my heart for an eternal heartbeat.

The darkness wasn't the absence of light—it was a living entity trying to extinguish my very essence.

I felt it tear me from the monster's back.

I flew backward, several meters through the air, a lifeless weight.

The world spun: black sky, fire below, the rotating blue eye, the misted hood...

Then the ground.

The impact was brutal.

Something cracked horribly in my right leg—a sound that echoed inside my bones before the pain, sharp, white, blinding, tore a scream from me that mingled with the roar of battle and the monster's fury.

I fell hard. Very hard.