

Frozen Star 29

Chapter 29: The Heart of Winter

[POV Liselotte]

I don't know how much time had passed, but when I opened my eyes I saw something breathtaking.

Everything is white.

Not a blinding white, but a deep, serene, limitless white.

The sky is white, without sun, without clouds, just a luminous and uniform vastness.

The mountains in the distance are white, soft profiles carved in eternal snow.

The trees, if they are trees, are petrified, skeletal silhouettes covered by a thick layer of shining frost, branches extended like crystal claws toward the pale sky.

There is no defined horizon; everything blends into that infinite, serene, unsettling whiteness.

I am standing on a lake.

But it's not water. It's ice.

Ice black as obsidian in the depths, but on the surface, as transparent as the purest air.

I can see through it, down, to an abyssal depth, but there is only more ice, more darkness, more stillness.

The ice creaks under my feet with a musical sound, sharp, like crystal bells, but it doesn't break.

It's solid, eternal, unbreakable.

And there is silence too.

Absolute silence, complete, that does not oppress but envelops, like a cloak.

There is no pain.

Neither the sharp sting in my leg, nor the fire in my arm, nor the heaviness of fatigue.

Only a strange lightness, an absence of physical weight.

As if my body were made of air, of snow.

In front of me, emerging from the white plain like a dream carved in diamond, stands a castle.

It is not made of stone. It's made of ice. Ice so pure it looks like smoky crystal.

Towering, needle-sharp spires rise toward the white sky, capturing diffuse light and refracting it with iridescent flashes.

Thick translucent walls reveal empty interior passages and rooms, frozen in time.

Huge doors, carved with intricate patterns of snowflakes and icy winds, are closed, sealed by a layer of smooth ice.

The windows, tall and narrow, are blinded by accumulated snow, sealed like blind eyes.

The castle didn't seem inhabited.

The wind, a wind you don't feel but hear, sings.

Not with human words, but with whispers that are echoes of memories.

Fragments of children's laughter in a sunny garden, the crunch of snow under boots in a winter forest, the sound of a door closing in a warm house, the fading battle cry in the distance...

The memories are not mine, or maybe they are, but filtered, transformed, made part of the wind's song in this timeless place.

I walked toward the castle.

My bare feet — when did I take off my boots? — don't sink in the snow.

They leave a slight frost behind, a shiny trail that forms moments after my foot lifts, as if the cold emanated from myself.

Each step is silent, each movement fluid, effortless.

I advanced over the frozen lake, toward the sealed doors.

Looking at my hands, a shiver not caused by cold runs through me.

They are no longer covered in blood, mud, or the battle burns.

They are pale, almost translucent, like carved from the very pure ice forming the castle.

The ice does not cover them; it seems to emanate from them, to be part of their substance.

They are transparent in places, showing glimmers of inner light, like veins of cold energy.

They glow with their own faint bluish light.

They are strong. They are cold. They are... alive.

As alive as the ice of a moving glacier.

I don't feel fear.

The panic, rage, despair of battle... all have dissolved in this serene whiteness.

In their place, there is a deep calm, a strange acceptance.

A feeling of belonging.

As if a huge weight had lifted, as if a layer of alien skin had been shed.

I feel... I have returned.

To a place I never knew existed, but that was always my origin.

The white stillness transformed without warning. Like an invisible fabric folded by someone, the space between the castle and me opened... and She was there.

She didn't come walking. She didn't appear suddenly. She simply existed, as if she had always been in that place and my eyes had just focused on her.

A woman sculpted from living ice. Tall, serene, with a beauty that chilled the soul. Her hands joined as if in prayer. Her skin was not ordinary ice, but milky crystal emitting light from within, like a snow lamp.

Her voice didn't sound in my ears. It resonated in my bones.

"Your body rejects the magic you carry inside" she said, and I felt her words like icicles in my chest
"Because it is not made to contain it. Your soul sustains it. Your willpower contains it. But your body...
Your body is human."

A tremor ran through the frost at her feet. The ice crystals slowly rotated, as if paying her reverence.

"You are a clay jar trying to hold the ocean. What lives inside you is not a spark. It's a blizzard. An
endless winter."

She raised a hand. Not to touch me, but to show me.

The air between us thickened, and I saw snowflakes appear that formed familiar faces, icicles drawing
songs from my childhood, frost swirls tracing maps of beloved places, they were my memories,
crystallized in the air.

"Pure magic seeks to express itself" she whispered as the images faded "In you... it has chosen the cold."

A shiver ran through me. Not of fear. Not of cold.

"You cannot lock it away" she continued, and now her voice sounded almost compassionate. "Nor
should you try. But releasing it without control... would destroy everything you love."

Then she opened her other palm. And this time, the magic responded with purpose.

A rose of ice bloomed in her hand.

A crystal shield grew from her breath.

A shining ice spear materialized.

I even saw a human figure — my silhouette! — made of living snow.

Each creation lasted a heartbeat before melting into light.

"Your gift is not controlling ice" she said, and her shining eyes seemed to smile. "You are winter. Your power is an extension of your being. Your magic does not burn nor illuminate. It preserves. It stops time. It protects. And when necessary... it breaks."

"If you learn to let this force flow without emptying yourself... If you let it run like a river in its course... Then it will take shape. You will be able to sculpt it. Without destroying yourself."

I tried to speak. I wanted to ask her name, why me, how to achieve it. If I could rebuild the village, heal myself...

But time was running out.

She stepped back. Behind her, the giant castle doors opened silently, melting like sugar in hot water.

Her last gaze pierced my soul.

"Remember, winter child. Don't fight the storm. Become the snowfall. And give it the shape of your heart."

And then, like a snowflake touching warm earth, she vanished.

Only her truth remained vibrating in my chest.

I was the cold.

And the cold was me.