

## Frozen Star 34

### Chapter 34: Magic Lessons

[POV Liselotte]

The pages crackled beneath my fingers, fragile with time but firm in purpose. Introduction to Magic wasn't an imposing grimoire or a treaty sealed with enchantments. It was slim, humble, written in a patient, almost teaching hand. But it was clear—this book wasn't just a manual. It was a door.

"Every mage begins their path not with the thirst to conjure fire, but with the ability to hear the heartbeat of their own mana."

So it began. A truth as simple as the first breath of morning, and as deep as a starry well.

I settled into the solitude of the guild library, a crypt of knowledge carved beneath the laughter and bustle of the Flames of the North. The table was bare oak, rough under my elbows.

At my feet, Chloé dozed, a ball of fur and trust, her snoring a rhythmic counterpoint to the silence. Outside, the world remained wrapped in the relentless mantle of snow, an eternal white sigh. But here, the outer cold seemed to halt at the threshold, as if even it—the old winter—bowed its head before the sleeping weight of words that lived within these stone walls and crowded shelves.

The first chapter unveiled the foundational principle, the bone upon which the entire body of sorcery stood: mana. The vital energy, the breath of the world flowing through every being, raw and formless like spring water before it is channeled.

To weave it into spells, to give it shape, it had to be refined. Purified within the body.

"The primal elements are the pillars of the world and, thus, of sorcery. Fire, Water, Air, Earth; Light and Darkness. All magic is a child of their essence or an echo of their eternal dance."

I turned the pages with reverent slowness. Each element paraded before my eyes, not as blind forces, but as archetypes—as dancers with their own personalities:

Fire: Quick as a thought, impulsive as desire, a wild heart hard to tame.

Water: Adaptable, deep, remembering. It flows, remembers, absorbs.

Air: Light, unpredictable, sharp as a blade's edge. It plays, it cuts, it whispers secrets.

Earth: Steady, patient, protective. Deep roots, immovable strength, the embrace of origin.

Light: Clarifying, life-giving, inextricably bound to the soul itself. It reveals, it heals.

Darkness: Enveloping, ancient, mother of mysteries. Dangerous if misunderstood, necessary like the shadow that defines the light.

Each symbol was an elemental geometry—pure lines, essential curves. Nothing ornate. The next page urged the apprentice to feel which of these essences resonated within their core, which one vibrated in harmony with their own mana.

I skipped that page.

Not out of disdain or fear. But because a cold whisper in my blood told me my mana didn't fit in those gilded boxes.

I moved forward into the heart of the mystery: inner refinement. That's where the path became rocky for me, where the door seemed to slam shut with a dull thud.

"To refine mana, the heart must be the crucible. Mana flows from the spiritual core, rising like sacred steam into the heart's cavity. There it is purified, aligned with will, and channeled into the exit paths. Only then, cleansed and obedient, can it take shape and be born into the world as a spell."

I closed my eyes. Took a deep breath, focusing on the center of my chest, seeking that ascending flow, that warm crucible. My body responded.

But not with harmony.

There was no flow. There was a storm.

It spun on itself, a desperate whirlwind without course, without release. A hurricane trapped in a crystal cage too fragile to contain it.

A long, cold sigh escaped my lips. I turned the page with a finger that trembled slightly. There was vertigo in that untamed force.

The final chapter offered a tool—a lifeline for the apprentice: magic circles.

The simplest example was a basic elemental circle. A perfect ring containing within three interlinked symbols: the element, the intent, and an anchor. The book promised that, when drawn with ink imbued with intent on parchment, and with mana focused through it, it could cause a minimal but tangible effect: a spark of fire, a droplet of pure water.

A challenge. A beginning. My beginning.

I found a jar of thick ink, black as pitch, and a bird's feather. On the back of a loose parchment page, I drew. My hand was no scribe's. The circle wobbled, trembled, its lines more valley than mountain. The inner symbols I chose: Water, Summon.

I placed the palm of my right hand over the center of the circle. Bare skin on still-wet ink, cold. I breathed—not the library's air, but the inner air, the one inhabiting the space between bones and skin. I closed my eyes. I didn't seek the heart's crucible. I dove into the storm.

And I felt it.

The frozen mana recognized the form. It sensed the limit, the contour of the circle like a promised channel. Something inside me—a muscle of the soul I'd never used—stretched. A subtle, cold, vibrating pressure began to gather in the center of my palm, right where the skin touched the parchment. The drawn circle trembled beneath my hand—not physically, but in my inner perception, as if resonating.

It lit up.

For a fleeting moment—briefer than a moth's flutter—a bluish light, cold as the heart of a glacier, ran along the shaky ink lines. It was a ghostly flash, a constellation drawn with ice in the darkness of my closed eyelids. No thunder, no spark, not even the promised drop of water.

Then... nothing.

The parchment was inert again, just black smudges on animal skin. The pressure in my palm faded, leaving behind a persistent tingling, like tiny stars of ice dissolving in my veins. The library's silence returned, deeper now.

"That was strange..." I whispered, voice hoarse from silence and focus, an echo in the stone chamber. It had worked. Partially. The mana had moved toward the form. It had recognized the channel, had tried to flow. Like an underground river touching light through a hairline crack.

I stood, bones protesting after hours of tense stillness. I needed to move, to feel the solid world beneath my feet. I needed air that didn't smell of parchment dust and ink. Maybe go find Iram, share this breath of connection, this almost. Maybe try another circle tomorrow—with a steadier hand, different symbols. Maybe... learn to breathe with the storm, not against it.

As I gathered the humble Introduction to Magic, with renewed respect for its simple truths that my complex reality defied, something caught my attention. Not a sound—but a presence.

A bookshelf embedded in the shadowy back, nearly devoured by darkness behind a rough stone column. Forgotten. Relegated. A tomb of abandoned knowledge. Dust covered it like a gray shroud.

I approached, not with my feet, but with something deeper—guided by a cold, clear intuition like spring water from a mountain source. I didn't know how to name it, but it pulled me.

Among thick tomes on siege tactics that smelled of rust and sweat, and bundles of failed missions tied with worn string, rested a thinner, austere volume. No gilding, no engravings, no pretense. Its leather spine was cracked, worn by time and disregard. The title, written in ink so faded it nearly blended with the cover, required effort to decipher. But the letters—like bones rising from earth—asserted themselves:

“The Victory of the Chosen Heroes.”

I slid it from its niche with instinctive softness, as if afraid of waking an ancient sleeper. The air around it seemed to change—denser, older. It didn't weigh much in my hands; it weighed in the arc of my destiny.

Chloé, always attuned to changes in my energy, lifted her head from her dog-like slumber. Her golden eyes met mine, then locked onto the book, as if she too sensed the echo of something meaningful.

I opened it. The parchment crackled—a sound of centuries breaking. Dust danced in a faint beam of light from a distant lamp.

And the first word, etched in bold black ink on the first page, was a lash, a promise, an enigma.

Summoning.