

Frozen Star 50

Chapter 50: For a future Friend

[POV Liselotte]

"Tell me everything."

And I did. The words poured out of me like a torrent held back too long. I told him not only what Leah had said, but how it had made me feel, the treacherous sting of her disdain, the burning rage at her injustice, the deep disappointment of having expected, like a fool, a spark of light where there was only ice.

I spoke of my need for her to see me, to recognize my action as something pure, and the painful clash against her wall of distrust.

Iram listened. Not only with his ears but with his whole being. He didn't interrupt, didn't judge, didn't offer easy solutions. He only nodded slightly at certain moments, a gesture indicating he heard and understood the depth of my frustration.

When I finished, empty and trembling, he remained silent a few more seconds, his eyes fixed on the flame of a candle as if searching in it for the right answer. Finally, he took a deep breath and looked at me.

"Tell me, Liselotte," he began, his voice mellow and slow. "Have you ever woken from a nightmare so vivid, so real, that upon opening your eyes and finding the familiar world of your room, for a terrifying instant, that world seemed like another layer of the nightmare, subtler but equally false?"

The question took me by surprise. A distant, painful memory came to my mind: the day of the teleportation, waking alone in the forest, terrified, believing everything was an extension of some feverish dream before finding Chloé.

“Yes,” I admitted, my voice barely a whisper. “Yes, I’ve felt that.”

“Then,” he continued softly, “try to imagine, if your heart can bear it, that your whole life has been that for five long years. An endless awakening into a nightmare with no escape. Where every new face is a potential threat, every kind word a possible lure for a crueler trap, every promise of freedom the prelude to a deeper disappointment. After living in that distorted reality... isn’t it understandable that, upon finally awakening, that person does not immediately see in you a savior, but another shadow in the theater of her pain? Another actress in the endless play of her torment?”

I stayed silent, his words resonating in the empty space my anger had left. It was a perspective I hadn’t considered, an abyss of pain so vast that my own wound paled in comparison.

“So... I shouldn’t get angry?” I asked, confused. “Should I just accept her disdain and smile?”

“No!” he said, and his voice had a force that startled me. “Anger is human, Liselotte. It’s real, it’s valid. It’s the sign that you care, that your expectations, though perhaps naïve, were born from a pure place. Don’t deny it. Don’t bury it. Feel it. But...” he added, his tone softening again, “don’t let it become a chain tying you to her pain. Don’t let her bitterness poison yours. Remember, not everyone reacts the same to an outstretched hand. For some, pain has been such a cruel teacher that it’s taught them to distrust even their own shadow. To accept kindness, for them, is such an immense act of faith that sometimes fear wins out.”

I ran my hands over my face, feeling the weight of physical and emotional exhaustion. Tears, finally, appeared, hot and silent, washing away some of the ashes of my anger.

“Then what do I do?” I pleaded, my voice broken by the restrained cry. “Do I abandon her? Give her space and walk away because my presence causes her more pain?”

Iram leaned forward, his eyes shining with intense compassion.

“Do exactly what your heart dictates, but do it with open eyes. Not with the expectation of what you want to receive in return but offering what she desperately needs, even if she rejects it again and again. Sometimes, the most powerful act of compassion is not a great feat, but simply... to remain. To remain beside someone, even when they reject you, even when they wound you with their pain, even when it hurts. Because you show that your commitment is to their well-being, not to your own comfort.”

I bit my lip, tasting the salt of my tears. The idea was terrifying. To expose myself again and again to rejection.

“To remain... even when it hurts me,” I repeated, tasting the weight of the decision.

“That’s right,” Iram nodded, and a calm smile, filled with ancient peace, lit up his face. “And believe me, Liselotte, that act of remaining, of enduring the storm without demanding anything in return, has a power of healing much deeper and more transformative than any sword or spell ever invented.”

I stayed silent for a long while, absorbed in the crackle of the candles and the echo of his words in my heart. The anger hadn’t vanished completely, but it had transformed, fused into the warmth of deeper understanding and the spark of renewed determination. Finally, I nodded, a slow but firm movement.

"I'll go back," I said, and the certainty in my own voice surprised me. "I'll go back to see her."

Iram smiled, and his eyes seemed to capture the light of the candles, shining with a quiet satisfaction.

"Then," he said softly, "you've already found the answer you were looking for. It was inside you all along, waiting for the noise of anger to calm so you could hear it."

The Return

The way back to the guild felt different. My steps were more measured, firmer, though my heart still beat with anticipatory nervousness. The anger was now a controlled ember, a coal that could warm without burning, feeding a calm yet unshakable resolve.

Chloé walked at my side, her presence silent but intensely supportive.

Are you sure about this? she asked in my mind when the guild doors came into view.

“No,” I admitted softly, without stopping. “I’m not sure of anything. But I’ll go in anyway. Because it’s the right thing. Because she needs it. And because I... I need to try another way.”

As I reached the familiar hallway, the same one where I had spent the sleepless night, I felt a knot of anxiety tighten in my stomach. The door at the end of the corridor looked larger, more intimidating.

Chloé stopped at my side, brushing my hand with her muzzle in a tacit gesture of support.

“I’m with you,” was all she said.

I nodded, took a deep breath, filling my lungs with air that tasted of decision and courage. And then, with a hand that barely trembled, I pushed the door and stepped inside.