

Frozen Star 65

Chapter 65 The Final Warning

[POV Liselotte]

Dawn found the three of us in the training yard, each immersed in our own exercises. The first rays of the sun bathed the stone walls in a golden light that seemed intent on driving away the last vestiges of night. Only a week remained before our training time would come to an end, and that awareness manifested in the intensity with which we prepared for what was to come next.

I stood at the center of the yard, feeling the morning's fresh air brush against my face. I extended a hand, focusing on the glacial current now flowing beneath my skin with a docility that would once have seemed impossible. It was no longer that uncontrollable torrent threatening to sweep me away, but a river whose course I had learned to guide.

I exhaled slowly, and the ground before me was covered in frost within a radius of several meters, forming an intricate mosaic of crystals that shimmered under the newborn light. Small icicles rose from the stones, growing in delicate patterns before breaking in the wind, falling like fragments of diamond.

It was minimal compared to the power I had glimpsed in my visions, but it was stable. Controlled. And that difference changed everything.

"The flow is steadier," I murmured to myself, recalling Kaelen's lessons. "Don't let the power use you."

Lifting my gaze, I searched for Chloé. Her silver figure shimmered briefly under the morning light before vanishing entirely. No smoke, no distortion of the air, no trace of her presence. She simply blended into the shadows, becoming one with them.

A moment later, her voice resonated inside my mind, clear and sharp. "I'm here."

I turned and saw her emerge from my own shadow, her fur bristling, her eyes glowing like twin moons. She no longer fought against her shadowy nature, but had become its master, able to merge with the darkness as naturally as others breathe.

"I almost leave no trace now," she remarked with a hint of pride in her mental tone, giving herself a light shake. "Even you couldn't sense me for a moment."

A smile curved my lips, and the simple sight of her so confident filled me with a warmth that contrasted starkly with the cold of my own magic.

At the far end of the yard, Leah was immersed in her own ritual. Surrounded by a circle of runes drawn in chalk, she breathed with deep concentration, her hands extended with palms upturned. Between her fingers, a blue flame emerged that no longer flickered with uncertainty, but burned with a steady, controlled blaze.

She murmured an incantation in an ancient tongue, and the flames condensed into a sphere of compressed fiery energy. With an elegant flick of her wrist, she hurled the sphere against one of the training dummies, which erupted in a jet of heat perfectly contained. It did not crumble into scattered ashes as in her first attempts, but burned in a controlled manner, as though every particle of fire obeyed her command to the letter.

“Intermediate magic with advanced-level precision,” Kaelen had said a few days earlier, and though Leah had lowered her gaze modestly, I had seen the spark of pride in her eyes. She, who had once seemed the most fragile among us, now wielded power to rival any seasoned adventurer.

The three of us were different now. We were no longer the same as when we had stumbled into the Guild, burdened by fear and open wounds. Now there was fire, ice, and shadow working in harmony. Where once there had been raw metal, now stood weapons forged with care and precision.

I was still admiring the serenity with which Leah extinguished the last embers when a loud slam echoed through the yard, shattering the morning calm.

The heavy oak door swung open wide, and an imposing figure crossed the threshold. It was not Kaelen.

The man who entered wore a long dark leather coat with the Guild’s emblem embroidered on his chest. His graying hair fell in waves to his shoulders, and his gray eyes observed us with a sharpness that could almost be felt physically, as though he could see beyond our newly built defenses.

The Guildmaster himself.

We straightened instinctively, adopting a posture of respect. Chloé tensed, Leah extinguished her flames completely, and I let the frost at my feet melt with a faint crackle.

The man observed us in silence for what felt like an eternity, his eyes evaluating us as a blacksmith examines the edge of three freshly forged blades. At last, he spoke with a deep voice that resonated in the yard with the authority of one accustomed to being obeyed.

“I have followed your progress,” he began, his words carefully measured. “It is remarkable. You have gone from being three brittle pieces of iron to something beginning to resemble tempered steel.” His eyes locked on me, then on Chloé, and finally on Leah. “But steel must be tested. And tested in true fire.”

His words echoed in my chest, and something within me sensed that what he was about to announce would mark a turning point in our training.

“In three days,” he continued, “you will face your final trial within these walls. A practice match that will not be a simple duel. It will be a realistic simulation, a battle where not only your individual strength will be tested, but your ability to fight as a cohesive unit.”

Leah parted her lips slightly, a shadow of surprise crossing her face. “A final match... before we depart?”

The Guildmaster nodded with grave solemnity. “Indeed. For your time here is coming to an end. You have been shaped as much as this place can shape you. The rest of your edge you will gain out there, in the world that awaits you.”

I felt my heart lurch inside my chest. The outside world. Our journey. Everything that was to come loomed over us like a storm cloud heavy with promises and dangers.

The Guildmaster turned toward the door, but before crossing the threshold, he stopped and added in a tone that allowed no contradiction:

“Prepare yourselves as never before. Not all who pass through the Guild emerge as polished weapons. And in three days, we shall see whether you are destined to shatter under pressure... or to forge your own destiny with a steady hand.”

The door closed behind him with a muffled sound that seemed to seal his words into the air. The echo of his footsteps faded, leaving us alone with the weight of his announcement and the quickened rhythm of our own breaths.

I looked at Leah, whose hands still carried the faint glow of her newly mastered fire, and then at Chloé, who stood firm as a living shadow yet alert.

Three days.

That was all the time we had to prepare for the trial that would determine whether we were the weapons the world needed... or whether we would end up as nothing more than scrap forgotten in some corner of the Guild.

The very air itself seemed to grow denser, heavy with the promise of the challenge approaching. And deep within my being, I knew that nothing would ever be the same after what was to come.