

Frozen Star 96

Chapter 96: The Weight of Synchronicity

[POV Liselotte]

The air in the arena vibrated with a living, tense energy—like the charged instant that precedes a summer storm. The golden dust covering the ground lifted in small spirals with every faint breeze, and the rays of the midday sun beat down mercilessly on the crowded stands, making polished armor, colorful fabrics, and freshly sharpened weapons gleam. It was an organized chaos of noise and mounting anticipation. I could feel the crowd’s excitement like an electric current running over my skin.

“The first match of the day will be between the Silver Pack and the Crimson Wings!” announced the powerful voice of the host, amplified by echo crystals placed strategically around the coliseum.

The roar of the crowd was immediate and deafening—a wave of sound that slammed against the tall stone walls and returned multiplied.

Leah took a deep, slow breath beside me, her chest rising. “Showtime,” she murmured, her green eyes glinting with pure adrenaline.

Chloé, imposing and serene, turned her lupine head toward us. Her silver fur seemed to absorb the sunlight.

“Don’t lose the rhythm. If we keep the natural flow, they won’t be able to break it.”

I nodded silently, feeling the truth in her words. My hands tightened around the familiar hilt of my sword. The cold metal pulsed faintly beneath my fingers, as if the steel itself were also waiting eagerly for the fight to begin.

Then the gong resounded—a deep, ancient tone that spread through every corner.

The ground trembled slightly beneath our feet. Four warriors from the Crimson Wings advanced with well-rehearsed precision—two lightly armored swordsmen, a swift archer, and a fire mage whose hands already glowed with power. Their dark red cloaks rippled in the hot, dry wind rising from the arena floor.

“Forward!” they shouted in unison, charging toward us with military precision.

But this time, the perfect synchrony wasn’t theirs. It was ours. It belonged to us by right.

Leah raised her right hand in a smooth motion, and a ring of pure white fire ignited beneath her feet, expanding outward in a flaming wave that sought not to harm but to signal. It wasn’t an attack—it was a clear, unmistakable cue for us.

I moved along the left flank at the exact moment Chloé leapt forward, transforming into a silver streak that crossed the air like a living comet.

The first enemy swordsman never saw me coming. His downward strike, meant to split me in two, was blocked cleanly before it even landed—deflected by my blade, already sheathed in a bluish frost. A

clean, fluid motion, effortless in appearance. His steel was coated with ice at the contact, fogging, then shattering into glittering fragments that fell like glass onto the sand.

“One,” I muttered through clenched teeth, keeping my breathing steady.

Chloé landed silently behind the second fighter and, with a swift, precise swipe, took his legs out from under him. The golden dust rose in a cloud around them as the wolf twisted her powerful body—graceful and fierce all at once—charging again before he could react or counter.

Meanwhile, Leah summoned a spiraling burst of fire that appeared out of nowhere. The orange and gold flames formed a luminous, serpentine dance that coiled with precision around the archer and the mage, forcing them to stagger back and break formation. The heat warped the air around them, and the crowd, witnessing the spectacle, erupted in cheers and applause.

“Keep the tempo,” Chloé’s calm, steady voice echoed in our minds. “Left side, Lotte. Now.”

I moved before conscious thought could even form. My body already knew. My sword drew a clean, icy line across the ground that raced toward the enemy mage’s feet, trapping her in a sudden, crystalline prison of frost up to her knees. Leah, without even glancing, extended her other hand, and a controlled column of fire descended from the sunny sky, dissolving the archer’s enchanted arrow midflight with a crackle of released energy.

In a matter of seconds, it was over. No more was needed.

The momentary silence from the crowd was almost comical. Thousands stared, stunned, at the four defeated bodies lying across the sand. Only when the announcer stammered through the victory declaration did the stands explode into a thunderous ovation that seemed to shake the foundations.

“A crushing victory for the Silver Pack! They advance straight to the next round!”

Leah raised her fist skyward, her smile tired but full of pride. “Did you see that? Not a single beat missed. Not one.”

“I know,” I replied, my heart still pounding against my ribs. “It was perfect.”

Chloé stretched like a cat, her thick fur reflecting the blinding sunlight. She looked satisfied.

“That was pure coordination, not luck. If we keep this connection steady, the next opponents won’t stand a chance.”

While the crowd kept cheering and calling our names, white-clad guild attendants ran into the arena to carry the defeated away carefully. Leah and I shared a long, meaningful look. What we felt wasn’t arrogance, but a quiet, deep sense of fulfillment—the satisfaction of finally achieving what we had spent months trying to master: flowing as one entity, three parts of the same being.

But that inner calm, that serene moment of triumph, didn’t last long.

“And now,” the announcer’s voice rose again, struggling to regain control of the spectacle, “the next battle promises to be epic! The Bearers of the White Veil versus the Northern Fangs!”

The atmosphere in the coliseum shifted instantly. It grew heavy, cold.

An unnatural, icy breeze swept through the arena, making more than a few shiver. The crowd, still buzzing from our match, fell into an uneasy, creeping silence. The Northern Fangs—four burly men, their skin weathered by the icy winds of their homeland—stepped forward with steady, determined strides, long spears of bone and steel ready in their hands.

Across from them, the White Veil didn’t enter. They appeared.

They didn’t walk through the tunnel. They didn’t cross the great iron gate. There was a flicker—a shimmer in the air—and suddenly, they were there, standing in the arena as if they had always been.

Their immaculate white robes barely moved, as though the wind avoided them deliberately.

“I don’t like this,” said Chloé, her pointed ears flattening back in full alert. “Not one bit.”

I couldn’t look away either. There was something about their very presence that broke the natural laws of the world—an oppressive silence that seemed to absorb sound itself, creating an acoustic void.

The gong sounded again, marking the start.

And the battle ended.

Not a minute.

Not even half.

Exactly thirty seconds—that was all it took.

One of the Northern Fangs took a determined step forward, and his spear froze midair, suspended as if seized by an invisible, immovable force. The second man dropped to his knees without a sound, his chest apparently pierced by something no one—no one in the audience—could see. The other two tried to retreat, pure survival instinct, but a dense white shadow enveloped them before they could take two steps. There was no explosion, no magical flare, not even a splash of blood. Only an absolute, terrifying silence.

When the pale mist dissipated as quickly as it had come, the four warriors lay motionless on the ground. Unconscious. Defeated.

The crowd didn't cheer. There were no shouts. No one seemed to understand what had just happened. Confusion reigned.

The White Veil remained still a moment longer—living statues. Then, as one being with four bodies, they slowly turned their empty heads toward the upper stands—toward the exact place where we stood.

No faces. No expressions. No emotions to read. Only that dull, dead reflection of sunlight on smooth masks.

Leah swallowed hard, unable to look away. “That wasn’t normal magic,” she whispered, her voice trembling slightly. “That wasn’t anything I know.”

“No,” replied Chloé, her mental voice firm but laced with a tension she rarely showed. “That was something else. Something not of this plane. Something ancient.”

I said nothing. Words failed me. I could only watch, obsessively, as the announcer, his voice clearly shaking, tried to keep his composure and declared the victory with short, hollow phrases.

But what disturbed me most—what branded itself into my mind—was not their overwhelming power or supernatural speed. It was that, just before the shadow enveloped them completely, one of them—the one standing slightly ahead—tilted his head toward me, barely perceptible, in a brief yet deliberate gesture.

A silent greeting.

Or a silent warning.

The roar of the crowd gradually returned, like a low tide trying to fill an unbearable void. But I knew—with every fiber of my being—that it wasn't genuine excitement filling the air now. It was fear. Raw, confused fear.

And for the first time since I had set foot in that coliseum—since I had decided to join this tournament—I felt with absolute, terrifying certainty that the real contest, the battle for which none of us were truly prepared, was only just beginning.