

The Vampire 110

Chapter 110 110: Frost Walker Magic

"Fountain. Flow. As I will," Hauke intoned, his iridescent horn glowing with a brilliant blue aura.

What happened next was a demonstration of sorcery almost as impressive and exquisite as the mist raven that Nyrielle had conjured when Ashlynn began learning sorcery. A thin rivulet of crystal clear water rose up from the hole in the ice like a serpent, tentatively looking around before becoming thicker and flowing in a circle around the young Frost Walker.

"Amazing," Andrus breathed, his hazel eyes wide with wonder. Despite Hauke's warning to stand clear, he edged closer to watch, reminding Ashlynn of an excited child at a festival performance. "I've seen Sir Thane shape the mists in the vale, but this is..."

"Mind your position," Virve said, placing a restraining hand on his shoulder and gently pulling him back to a safer distance. Even as she spoke, she found it difficult to keep her focus on their surroundings while Hauke demonstrated his sorcery.

Compared to the humble blocks of ice she'd seen other Frost Walkers conjure in the past, the scale of Hauke's work alone was enough to take her breath away to say nothing for how skillfully he guided the water into the shape he wanted.

"Frozen. Dome," he intoned once the water began to flow rapidly. The color of his horn's aura shifted, brilliant white mixing with the deep blue as the water began to freeze, building up layer by layer until it formed a large dome more than twenty feet across and ten feet tall at the center. The ice was so thick and frosted in texture that Ashlynn couldn't see more than a vague shadow of Hauke's figure within the dome.

"Lady Ashlynn," Andrus whispered excitedly as the dome took shape, "do you think you could learn to do this in the Vale? If you could freeze the mists solid in a dome like this, I bet you could trap Lothian soldiers under it or..."

"Don't forget yourself, little one," Virve hissed, placing a hand on Andrus' shoulder and squeezing firmly. "We're here to protect Lady Ashlynn. If you can't remember your duty, you won't be allowed to serve as her guard again."

"It's fine," Ashlynn said softly, never taking her eyes off the glittering dome of ice. "I would forget my place too the first time I saw something this impressive." Thankfully, the first time she'd seen sorcery on a large scale had been with Nyrielle who enjoyed seeing Ashlynn become absorbed in the sight of her magic, but she could understand how mesmerizing a powerful demonstration could be.

"Still, Virve is right," Ashlynn added, not wanting to undermine the veteran soldier. "If you're too easily distracted, enemies could take advantage of a moment of inattentiveness. You should learn from Virve," she said with a nod to the large woman.

"Yes, my Lady," Andrus said, ducking his head in embarrassment. He'd worked so hard to join Captain Lennart's squad this year and this was already his second time going on an important mission with Lady Ashlynn. He didn't want to do anything that could cost him his position when it hadn't even been a year yet.

"Ice. Melt. As I will," Hauke's voice sounded from within the dome. The next moment, a thin line appeared on the dome where the ice melted before Hauke shoved the 'door' out of the way and beckoned for Ashlynn and the others to join him in the ice house.

"What do you think?" Hauke said, a wide grin on his face as he spread his arms wide to indicate the size of the dome. "Most people can't conjure a whole ice house at once, they have to conjure blocks and build it like Virve said. Even the ones who can make a whole ice house at once usually can't make one big enough to stand up in," he boasted.

"It, it's very impressive," Ashlynn said, stepping into the ice house and reaching out to touch the thick icy walls. She expected that the walls of the ice house might be slick, like an ice cube held in the hand and beginning to melt since they had just been frozen.

When she touched it, however, she was shocked to find that it felt even colder than the ice of the lake's surface and it had only taken a minute or two from the time Hauke had called forth the water until the dome was complete!

"I don't think I could make one this large," Ashlynn praised as she tried to estimate how much energy it must have taken to command so much water and freeze it in an instant. Her powers had grown since her trip to the Summer Villa but not to this extent.

"My Lady has just started learning sorcery," Heila said, stepping up next to Ashlynn as though she had to speak up for her lady's capabilities. "I'm sure that you will surpass this soon enough once you learn from the Mother of Thorns."

"Maybe I could," Ashlynn said, slowly walking around the interior of the ice house. Now that she had a moment to examine things, she instantly realized how much warmer it felt inside the ice house, just by virtue of blocking the wind.

"And maybe not. I feel more power with living and growing things," she explained to Hauke. "I draw more strength from trees than anything else. This," she said, gesturing at the ice dome.

"This is a different kind of magic. It's okay if I never master it to little lord Hauke's extent. I'm sure this is why Mistress Nyrielle wanted me to learn a bit from little lord Hauke," she said, smiling at the young man. "So, today, I'll call you 'Teacher Hauke' and you can be my tutor."

"We should set up for fishing first," Hauke said, retrieving the sled of supplies and pulling it into the ice house. Once he did, he began to unpack a few furs, fishing rods and spools of fishing line, and even a pair of oil heaters to warm the space in the ice house.

"I guess I can teach you the first form of ice sorcery," Hauke said, furrowing his bushy brows as he looked at the supplies. "It's like the one I used to make the ice house. We call this the art of 'Formed Ice' when you command ice to take a specific shape."

"First, I'll make a block of ice that you can shape," he said, summoning another rivulet of water and forming a block of ice just over a foot tall and wide. "For formed ice, it's important to have a clear image of the shape you want to create. The details are really important or the ice construct will be weak with hidden flaws," he explained, holding out a hand to demonstrate.

"Ice. Shape. Stool," he intoned, unleashing a small wave of dark blue energy that enveloped the block of ice.

As Ashlynn watched, the ice seemed to 'flow' without melting, reshaping itself into a three legged stool with cross braces between the legs and a wide, cupped seat large enough for Hauke to sit on.

"See?" the young Frost Walker said, kneeling down and pointing at the cross braces. "I'm heavy so it has to be strong. Just making the legs thicker doesn't give you the best strength for the amount of ice you use and the more ice you use, the more energy it takes. But now, even if we have to sit for hours before something bites, we don't have to sit on the lake," he said with a wide grin.

"Let me try," Ashlynn said, stepping forward while Hauke conjured another block of ice for her. Despite the amount of energy he said it consumed, he seemed to have a nearly inexhaustible supply as he manipulated the ice with ease.

"Ice. Shape. Stool," Ashlynn said, staring intently at the block of ice. The stool she envisioned was taller and more slender than the one Hauke had conjured, with four legs and braces between them. While Hauke seemed content to sit just off the ground with his legs splayed out in front of him, Ashlynn refused to imitate such an undignified pose.

When the ice formed, however, she couldn't help but laugh at the misshapen lump she'd created which looked like a crudely formed woman sitting atop a wobbly stool.

"I, um, I think my attention wandered," she said, her face heating in embarrassment.

"It's all right," Hauke said, awkwardly trying to comfort her while Heila translated for them. "We have all day to practice..."