

## The Vampire 126

### Chapter 126 126: Abomination

In the dimly glowing cavern, Ashlynn's mind worked rapidly as she tried to find a way out of this nightmare without doing as the ghostly Frost Walkers demanded. She wasn't sure what the floating glyph the Frost Walkers had conjured would do to her, but if they wanted her to 'give energy' to their work, she had no faith that they would stop at a point that was healthy to her.

They wouldn't wait for Hauke to recover on his own and instead seized control of his body. That told her everything she needed to know about these 'ancestors' and their respect for the living. Nyrielle had warned her several times that overdrawing sorcery could leave her an aged and withered husk and she feared that these ghosts wouldn't stop using her energy until there was nothing left of her to give.

"Wait," she said, holding up her hands and casting her gaze around the room as she backed away from the menacing glyph in the air. "There should be another way. I don't have enough energy to give. I will still help you break the ice," she insisted. "Let me find another way."

"Lies," the dark voice controlling Hauke said. Hauke shuffled toward her, moving as if he was a puppet controlled by strings. "Earth Children, endless energy. Use your witchcraft."

"No, no I can't," Ashlynn protested. "Not here. No trees, no soil, no wind, no energy," she explained. "But, but I still have strength," she said. From the floor of the cave, she picked up a large rock the size of a small melon.

"Those glyphs," she said, pointing at the glyphs carved into the wall of ice. "What happens if I destroy them? Will that make it easier to break the wall?"

"Give your energy," the gravely, imperious voice said from Hauke's mouth. "Do not delay!"

"Don't kill if we don't need to," the feminine voice said an instant later. The claw Hauke held to Heila's neck seemed to tremble as the voices fell into disagreement. "He is like me, like you, like us. Will join us. He cares for these outsiders. Harming them harms him, harms us, harms you."

"Lytle Sweestor, strong is," the childish voice said as Hauke's head tilted at a strange angle looking at Ashlynn. "Break glyphs will, break spell will, break wall will."

"So if I can break the glyphs, it will break the spell?" Ashlynn confirmed. Seeing a lurching nod from Hauke, she put her full focus on the wall.

At the moment, she was grateful that her sword had gone missing in her struggle with Imnek and the plunge into the lake. Whether it had fallen on the ice or sank beneath it, she didn't know, but she knew that using a rock to smash the glyphs in the ice would be much slower than using her darksteel blade to do the same.

"This one first," an aged voice said as Hauke stooped low and extended a shaky hand to point at one of the glyphs. "Break it."

Taking a deep breath, Ashlynn took a moment to feel the echo of Nyrielle's heartbeat in her chest drawing closer.

"Come quickly," Ashlynn prayed in a voice softer than a whisper. Then, aiming carefully at the glyph the ghost pointed at, Ashlynn hurled the stone in her hand at the barrier.

Ice cracked and shattered, shards of ice flew and the stone stuck in a shallow indentation in the ice for a moment before falling to the ground and rolling across the floor. A moment after the stone fell, a wave of rippling ice blue energy danced across the surface of the barrier, and cracks spread across the surface of the ice wall.

"Good, good," the aged voice said as it jerked Hauke's arm roughly to point at another glyph. "Now this one!"

As much as Ashlynn had hoped that it would take more time to destroy the glyphs, the ancient magic seemed to have become almost brittle with age. As soon as she hurled a stone at one of the glyphs, the rock pulverized the ice and shattered the glyph. With each one that she destroyed, the magic rippled and flowed, becoming thinner and frayed like a wool scarf with threads pulled loose.

When the eleventh glyph shattered, the entire cavern shook. Ice began to rain down from the ceiling and thunderous cracking sounds filled the air.

"Get back!" Ashlynn shouted, dashing out of the way of a falling block of ice. For a moment, a disdainful look appeared on Hauke's face, looking far too old and imperious for his youthful features before one of the spirits seemed to realize that while they had nothing to fear from physical objects, the same couldn't be said for Hauke's flesh and blood body.

In a moment of panic, the ghosts dropped Heila to the stone floor while Hauke's body lurched awkwardly away from the crumbling wall.

"No!" Ashlynn shouted, springing forward and dodging falling blocks of ice the size of a small cart to reach Heila's side. Scooping the diminutive horned woman up in her arms, she sprinted for the back of the cavern, as close to the tunnel as she dared to go. Part of her wanted to run and escape with Heila or at least take the slumbering woman to safety but she couldn't leave Hauke behind in the clutches of these ancient spirits.

A thick mist of drifting icy crystals filled the air, obscuring Ashlynn's vision until Hauke's horn glowed a pale icy blue and a sudden gust of frigid wind blew through the cavern, revealing the space beyond the barrier.

Hauke had described the interior of ancestral caves to her before, but nothing he had described matched the horror that Ashlynn saw in the depths of the cavern.

There were no pillars with horns mounted atop them, only five enormous ice sculptures topped with iridescent horns. Unlike what Hauke had described, however, these ice sculptures were shaped from a deep, crimson ice that pulsed with a sick, regular rhythm like a giant frozen heart.

Around all of the sculptures, clear ice had welded them together into a misshapen amalgamation that looked like the incomplete form of a monstrous Frost Walker far larger than any Ashlynn had ever seen. The crimson figures were trapped within its half-formed limbs and torso, like organs suspended in clear flesh, their bodies merging with the larger form wherever the bloody ice touched the clear.

At the top of this abomination, a tall, proud-looking crimson Frost Walker had been trapped from the waist down, positioned where a head should be. Below him, a smaller, almost childish statue was entombed in ice up to its neck, frozen within the giant's chest, its body beneath the ice almost completely reshaped into a pulsing, beating heart.

Still another figure, looking more delicate and feminine than the others, had one entire side of her body free, but the other side had already begun to merge with what appeared to be the giant's forming chest, connected to vast half-formed lungs filled with swirling icy air.

The clear ice between them seemed to shift and flow, slowly working to join the separate pieces into one unified horror. Where the figures merged, the crimson ice spread through the clear like veins growing through crystal, tying them together into one monstrous being.

"Free," the voices spoke together, each one overlapping the next as they emerged from Hauke's mouth.

Slowly, the blood-red figures trapped within the ice began to move, their iridescent horns glowing in a myriad of colors while their eyes 'opened' to reveal brilliant blue glowing orbs.

"Now, descendant," the crimson Frost Walker at the top of the horrifying amalgamation said, his imperious voice booming off the cavern walls. "Spill your blood on our ice. Join with us!"