

The Corrupted Skills of the newly acquired Corrupted Persona did not appear immediately. A short while was required, and she wondered if she had eaten the Corrupted far too early.

Such things concerned her more than these condemned Red Giants.

“It never mattered what you or they thought to begin with. It was all predefined from the moment I laid eyes on you.”

The Red Giant closest to her entered a state of irrecoverable shock. Their catatonic state made it impossible for Frost to rouse any further reactions from this one, but even so, her presence caused the hairs on their body to rise for they feared her at an instinctual level.

She left their cell and methodically moved from Star to Star.

“I wasn’t born like this. I don’t believe that people can be born so evil. So let me tell you a tale.”

The bodies of the Stars were carved to imprint her fear into their souls.

“Once upon a time this Amalgam was born as an ordinary human.”

She ripped the hearts from the Stars, keeping them alive with Healing Magic. Their organs were rearranged as she tried to find a semblance of meaning inside of them – which in of itself was meaningless.

“I believed that there was always good inside of a person, no matter how depraved or ruined they were. We are products of our surroundings. The world shapes us. This is a truth I’ve learned both then and now.”

The innards of the Arachnids, the Insectids, the Dragnoids – they were all so different. But they all bled the same way.

“One day I put my faith into a star. The brightest star of the Nexus.” The light of her bulb was the only light they could see.

The rage of the Moons resonated with her, as did hers.

“I was a stranger to this world and the Star pointed to where I should go. I was naive. I knew better than to trust them. But I still believed them. I ended up in a place where people like us were forbidden to tread.”

The Stars were silenced by the Amalgam’s morbid curiosity. It was as she said. They were born like any other person. Their innards proved this. Finally, she moved to the last Star whose mind was already long rendered.

“Then – my world was destroyed. It was through the betrayal of that same Star that caused my goodwill to dry up. My hatred for the world was born that day until it spilled over, resulting in the recent Atelier War. I believed that the only solution was to burn everything down.”

Frost now made her way towards the Blood Moons. The Liquidators had long disappeared after their brief healing administration. They gulped in her presence, expecting to receive the same punishment as the Red Giants.

She reached down towards the same girl she touched and to her surprise, her hand cupped her cheek once again.

“That’s why I understand what it must have been like for you.” Frost empathized with the Moons, but nowhere near enough to allow them to walk free.

“... Will you kill us? Use us like them?” The woman asked. She didn’t fear the Amalgam. She simply accepted all punishments that were planned to befall them.

They had knowingly spilled the blood of countless.

“We’re not innocent. We’ll take any punishment. So long as they do as well!”

“I’m happy dying if it means that they die too.”

The extreme length of their spite was usable. It meant that the Blood Moons were never truly tied to the Scarlet Logic. Instead, their hearts were tied with hers.

“No one is going to walk free from this.” She announced. “However, all Moons of the Nexus have suffered enough. You have longer than many. It does not excuse your crimes. That’s why, I’m going to offer you a choice.”

Their eyes widened in shock.

“... a choice...?”

The Blood Moons were never given a choice for as long as they could remember. To hear someone offer it so casually caused them to seize up as they stared up at the Amalgam in a hypnotic trance.

Total disbelief ate at them. They wanted to ask if she was being serious, but they knew better than to speak over a being that could Corrupt an individual.

“You can live as normal people.” She said, further shocking them. “You carry the strength of a Moon but lack the magic and skills to fight the Corrupted. I can turn a blind eye so long as you turn over a new leaf. You will be closely monitored of course. Your freedom comes at a steep price. I will also relinquish you of your Blessed status.”

It was clear that this option did not resonate with any of them, but not because they would lose their Blessed status. Rather, it was because they would remain incapable of releasing their wrath.

Frost had seen what they desired in their State of Mind. What they desired the most vengeance. It was an imprinted part of them that she deeply understood.

“Our goals align by chance. The other option is to become my Moons. To fight for me. Your reward will be to rejoin the Nexus where my trusted Moons reside. It seems like another trap to work for another’s heart, but in truth – it will satisfy that burning desire.”

She brushed a thumb against the woman's cheek and swept her gaze to every individual Blood Moon, knowing exactly what it was they wanted.

"There... is so much I still want. Everything was taken away from us. *Everything.*" The woman trembled momentarily before her resolve returned as she took the Amalgam's offer in that same instant. "I want nothing more than to break them. It's not fair that they're still alive. All of them. Scarlet Logic..."

As fate would have it, Scarlet Logic's most powerful enemies would be born from their own ranks.

The role they desperately wanted was to fight.

And there was only one place Frost could think of where these vengeful Blood Moons would excel in. Where the Moons of the Nexus fought Corrupted and Individuals – the Blood Moons specialized in warfare.

Therefore, she planned to send them to the Derma Layer to assist with Cadlera Industries and the soon-to-join Inflow Direct.

*Nav. Can we ask the Arbiter for one last Council meeting?*

*"I can. Is this related to the Blood Moons?"*

*Yes. The Blood Moons, and the soon to be War in Hell. The Blood Moons. If they want to return to the Nexus then they'll have to clear their name first.*

*"In what way?"*

*"Trust. I want to be able to put my faith in them. I'm not going to pardon their crimes just because they're Moons. They'll have to work for it."*

*Then I believe a change of namesake will be appropriate for the Blood Moons.*

*"I think so too."*

Frost rose as Mimicry watched in splendor. She was everything she aspired to become, and every cell in her body memorized her mannerisms. All eyes could only see one light in the room – and that light was Frost.

"You will no longer be called the Blood Moons. That name is reserved for Moons that have not yet joined your ranks." Frost began as their pupils dilated with excitement.

"Namesakes... What are our namesakes, Amalgam?"

"Please give us a name. We're your Moons now. This last iteration of us belongs to you."

"Free us from our last shackle."

Her mind went to something red. Something more vibrant and fitting for these renewed Moons who were on their last iteration, and planned to live it like it was their first.

That was then it came to her like a stroke of lightning.

“Vermillion.” Frost uttered, basing the color from the vermilion created from powdered cinnabar, or in their case – mercury and sulfur. It was a color that began black, but as one started the compound it became a vibrant red.

There was a saying that even if one stirred the compound for twenty years it would continue to become perfect.

There was no better name to represent the Blood Moons who had lived with darkened hearts until now.

And so, she knighted them with their new name on the spot.

“You are my Vermillion Moons from this day onwards. Think of it as your proof of freedom rather than a new leash. Everything begins with trust. I trust you as much as I do with the Red Giants. What I offer you is a chance to change that. Only then will you be accepted into the Nexus.”

She announced with grandeur before her lips curved into a wicked smile.

“Although, judging from your eyes – I can tell that the Nexus is arbitrary compared what you want to do to Scarlet Logic.”

And just like hers, their mouths twisted into sinister smiles.