

There were so many things to do but there was only one Frost. The induction of the Black Wings had taken much longer than she anticipated. A few hours turned to sixteen as she thoroughly imprinted herself onto them.

The healers were ignorant to everything that wasn't within their sphere. It was as much of a teaching session as it was one to get them attuned with the Talons. Nevertheless, it worked out as both helped prepare them for the inevitable transition into their new roles.

It wouldn't take a day. A week was too short as well. A month minimum was a more realistic timeframe. They were fast learners, but their inexperience was a pitfall Frost wanted to avoid. So, she devised a plan to have them partake in simulations under the guidance of the Golden Middle.

Frost was by far the least qualified person to teach tactics, combat, and anything similar. What she could do however, was lay down a code of conduct and pass on her modern healing techniques, such as CPR, the proper usage of tourniquets, what vital signs meant (for humans), etc.

In a world where warfare was centered around magic and the equivalent of extremely mobile artillery – anything she knew was either useless or dangerous to teach.

Additionally, the ImpulseWorks Sites would work well to prepare them for real world situations. Fighting against Corrupted and supporting Workers with their Talons is how Frost envisioned them to function in the future.

“Am I tackling too many things on my own again?” Frost wondered to herself, followed by a long sigh.

The roaring winds blew her hair back as she rode along Snap's back. She was alone for the first time in what felt like forever. Grass plains surrounded her as the distant silhouettes of the great wall of the Nex Megalopolis sat in the backdrop, barely moving.

It was midnight. Not a single soul could be found in Brandar's vast plains she traversed along Snap's back, basking in the moonlight as she fell into deep thought. She travelled with Snap out of the City of Clubs, heading straight to H10.

“Brrr. Zzzzt!” Snap buzzed, causing Frost to softly smile.

“Yeah. The Black Wings aren't the only group I have to keep my eye on. We have the Moons, Time Reverberation, the Ateliers... Ugh. Until we get everything working, I'll be up all day and night with you. Sorry if it's tiring for you, Snap.” Frost caressed its coat apologetically. She couldn't be more thankful for Snap's eagerness to help her out.

“Zzzz!” Snap enthusiastically whined.

“At least you're having fun.” Frost laughed, watching the now peaceful plains that were once plagued by the Impuritas.

The endless swarms that once spilled into Brandar felt like a bad dream. No one knew why they stopped appearing, and she hoped it would stay this way. But that would be wishful thinking.

There was no end in sight so long as the Hearts were alive.

Was it the Heart of the City that stopped it?

Suddenly, a soft snore could be heard somewhere behind her. It broke her out of her trance as she turned to see the pale hair of a certain healer.

Nestled deep within Snap's fur, and wrapped cozily in a cot made from steel string was Abigail. Frost had promised to reunite her with Mimicry, as per its request. Mimicry never explained why it wished to see her, only that it was an indescribably desire.

"Maybe Mimicry imprinted on her like a duckling. Ducks do that right? They think the first person they see is their parent?" Frost wondered, watching a giant train in the distance chug towards the Nex Megalopolis.

It arrived from the far east where the continent of Spiritas resided. The coast was apparently a safe haven much like that tiny village where they met the healer Pina. A cruise ship-sized train periodically arrived and transported hundreds, to thousands at once.

Curious, Frost wondered if Caldera Industries also manufactured ships. How else were they supposed to traverse the seas separating the major landmasses?

"Likely. But they could also use the same trains to traverse the seas." Nav, her trusty living handbook, immediately answered her call.

"I thought so. Would be cool to see ships though. Aquatids or giant whales would work too. Like with what we saw in H3." Frost spoke out loud.

"Brrrrr! Bzzzzz!"

"You think so too, Snap?"

"I'd love to see that for myself." Nav whispered tenderly. *"But the work is piling on rapidly –"*

"I'll make some time for you tomorrow, or the day after. I gotta deal with the Moon first thing in the morning. Maybe we'll go for a midnight visit! H3 isn't that far away from H10. I'd teleport but we need to wait 24 hours. But with Jury, we can cut that down to less than three hours."

"Very well. I shall take you up on your offer."

"Good. It's not good to stay holed up in the Nexus all the time... is what I want to say, but there's no safer place for you." Frost wore a smile as though Nav was right next to her. "I asked Enoch to consult Kissaria for repairs. If we're lucky, we can go get you another cupcake at the same time!"

"I'd love that."

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Snap scaled the side of the Nex Megalopolis, jumping from side to side. Industrial pipes ran alongside them, venting steam from the many forges and amenities found throughout the cities. They were massive and made from an orange alloy Frost believed to be copper. Knocking on one caused the high-pitched vibrations to travel for hundreds of meters on end.

She held her breath as Snap reached the tip of the wall, allowing them both to share a sight that many could only dream of. The world went on as far as their eye could see. Grassy plains meshed with the countless cityscapes. Villages the size of the Village of Virt could be seen prospering beside peaceful rivers.

The walled sanctuary caused her heart to flutter as she watched the world move regardless of the wars, the Corrupted, the problems... She was awed by the tenacity of the living.

And the world was too big to be the center of it all. She was the protagonist in her own tale, but a mere side character in the lives of others. A passing blip in the forward of a grand tale.

What would life be like living as a normal person there? A part of her wondered how different her life would have been had Iscario left her alone. A sentimental wave crashed upon her as her eyes glistened beneath the countless stars.

As much as she dabbled on the 'What ifs', nothing made her prouder than her contribution to the world before her eyes.

"... A normal life's pretty impossible for us, huh?" Frost patted Snap's head. "We saved the Nex Megalopolis. The lights are still on because of us. No one but us knows how much you helped us fight for their lives, Snap. No one's going to know a page of what we did. But I'm happy that we did something."

Frost panned her head around, seeing the mysterious blue glow that filled the skies above the City of Strings. The distant Asclepien could even be seen from where they stood, as well as Scarlet Logic's ravaged spire. She saw the big red heart that illuminated the heights of the City of Hearts, and Carpal Tower which shimmered like a diamond in their city of gold.

Then, Frost looked over her other shoulder, seeing the mountains of Dwarhelven. Further to the east of it were the dunes of an endless desert. West was nothing but Brandar's plains, and south was much the same until it was blocked by a mountain range within Emvita's shallows.

"Bbbbrrrrrr~"

"Exactly. The Nex Megalopolis is so small. And we're even smaller." Frost looked up at the Nexus, her eyes climbing its pale form until she could physically no longer climb any further. "One step at a time. I don't want to trip on my own feet or run before I can walk. I'm already

feeling the pressure, but it's not so bad when you get a sight like this to wake up to every day. Right Snap~?"

"*Snap*"

"Ahaha. One day, there'll be no ruins. There'll be no bloodshed or monsters that terrorize the night. The walls remind me a lot about that world. Let's make it better."

"Brrrr~!"

"And Abigail."

"... Did you know I was awake?" Abigail whispered, awed by her perception.

"Nothing gets past me." Frost casually spoke, throwing off Abigail who suddenly found it difficult to believe that this person was actually the Head. "Oh, and don't look down if you're afraid of heights."

"... I'll be fine. Um... what are we doing up here?"

"Returning to H10. You'll be meeting Mimicry there. Just don't call it Mimicry. Please."

"I can do that. No problem... er... t-thanks for the ride." She wondered where the steel strands even came from. "This Anid can make metal strings... it's tough."

"Oh, no. Those are mine~" Frost stuck out her hand, demonstrating her power.

Abigail couldn't act any more surprised.

"What the hell – How many skills do you even have?" The girl nearly shouted.

"Too many to count. Why do you think I'm called the Amalgam?" Frost joked.

"Good point..."

"Oh!" Frost accidentally scared the girl with her quick shout. "By the way, did you want something to eat? We're going to head past a few towns before we hit the 6th Branch. Chances are people are still selling food. I know Snap's hungry. Sorry. The Asclepien didn't have anything to give."

"Brrr~"

"W-Wait a second... Time out. Are you *really* the Head?" Abigail wanted to know once and for all. Frost's casual tone was so different from the one she used when inducting them that the girl nearly believed she was an entirely different person.

The question came from out of the blue, taking Frost by surprise as she brought her gaze down from the Nexus and kindly drilled them deep into the girl's starlit eyes. Whilst hers reflected the dazzling stars above, Frost's seemed to *carry* them all. They were not a reflection, but a window to the cosmos itself.

Her golden eyes held a subtle glow, appearing like stars as she gave the girl a motherly smile.

"I am. I am the Head of the Nexus. I thought I made myself clear. But I can't blame you for suspecting me. Proving it is always the hard part. Harder when people are afraid."

"... I still don't know what to think." Abigail averted her eyes.

"Maybe Mimicry can convince you. We shouldn't keep them waiting. I'm sure our friends are expecting us soon." Frost said. There was no point in trying to convince someone when she had little proof to begin with.

But hearing it from others would certainly cement this as a fact sooner or later. Regardless, Frost had her moment of respite and that was all that mattered to her in the end. Long days were ahead of her, and they'd only get harder until the end of the year.

And as they descended the wall Frost couldn't help but wonder what the triplets were up to now that they had newfound titles.

A wry smile suddenly formed on her face.

Hopefully not to brag or abuse it. I trust Res to keep them in check...