

“That’s when you realize that becoming a Moon isn’t all that exciting.”

A Moon admitted, bringing Frost back.

“I’m proud to be one but being lost in the misery is the norm in this twisted profession. What can you do other than try to overcome it? We’re too dumb to think hard like this. We’ve been sculpted to just nod our heads and throw ourselves into conflict. Lash out to make ourselves feel better. We’re assholes. Nothing’s going to change that, because we’re still full of hate.”

“Just look our bodies. But then again, what kind of Moon doesn’t go through this stage of transformation? We’re no insects. We can’t undergo metamorphosis. So instead, our bodies just break. We live with it. These tubes are a fucked up way of calling us butterflies. Maybe we’re moths. Who knows. Everything tends to be up to the eye of the individual. That’s how things work.”

They vented in her presence. They gushed to their heart’s content as Frost personally lent her ear. The weight of their wrath was enough to physically crush a normal soul, but they used it as tinder. What remained of their souls held on, wanting nothing more than vengeance.

So Frost had to ask them an important question.

“When all of this is done. When Scarlet Logic falls and when you rescue the Moons from their Hives, what do you want to do afterwards?”

It hit them like a truck. None were able to respond. The minutes that went by seemed like hours as they froze, wracking their heads at the thought of respite.

“... You know, I never thought about that.” A Moon put down her stick of meat and laughed. “We’ve lived expecting to die in battle. There’s no such thing as an end for us. If we live, then we’ll just die on another mission.”

“I hate to admit it too, but even when they’re gone it’s hard to see ourselves go back to...” One let out an exasperated sigh, her eyes widening for she was entirely unable to comprehend such a thought. “... Well, what the fuck is normal anyway?”

“Someone will slight us, and we’ll snap their neck. Someone slams a door too hard, and we’ll think we’re under attack. All just at the snap of a finger. In our sleeps when the walls rocked, we’d jump awake on instinct. In our dreams we weren’t spared. It’s hell in here too. It’s hard to not brush off the instinct that’s been branded into us.”

*PTSD? They’re so hardwired for combat that loud noises create a Pavlovian response. It will be a monumental effort to help them.*

“Are you reconsidering?”

*No. Unlike Scarlet Logic, I’m not giving up on them. Everything they did isn’t easy to forgive, but it’s not like they’re purely evil like the Red Giants. They’re redeemable. That’s why I’ll help them.*

“Even so, would you still want to return somewhere?”

“... Yeah. Yeah we do. No... Of course we do. Like we said – Belonging is a big part of us Moons.” The girl directly ahead of her wore a pained smile as she looked away, unable to look at Frost directly in the eye. “But what place is going to take us? We’re just wreak havoc.”

“There’s a place in the Nexus all the Moons call home.” Frost began, illustrating that paradise. “That place is also where I call home. Healers, Moons, people we cherish – We live in the highest point of the Nexus where we make our own food, our own homes, and live together as a community. It’s a place that can handle you. The Healers will help you, and the Moons there will prevent problems that arise from your trauma.”

The Moons listened closely. As like the Moons she escorted onto her floor, their eyes were wide in disbelief. What Frost did was establish her Floor as their ‘star’. As their dream to chase. If they were lost, then all they needed to do was to remember the place that was waiting for them at the end of their tribulations.

“You are Vermillion. But you are first and foremost, my Moons. When this ordeal is over – and when you have gained my utmost trust – then my doors to the Floor of Amalgamation will open to you, and the Blood Moons waiting to be saved.”

The Nex emanating from them was rich. Though they didn’t show it on their faces, she could sense their turbulent emotions. It had been so long since they felt a sense of belonging, and like the first time she had offered them her hand, they vehemently accepted it with determined eyes.

“I want you to return to me *alive*. You’ll be at the frontlines of this War in Hell against the Impuritas. The Hearts of the Derma Layer. Everything that is defined as evil by the Head. It will not be easy, but I am counting on your experiences to guide you well.”

Though her tone was elegant and commanding, there was a parental undertone that caused the Vermillion Moons to slightly melt into their seats. Frost was done here and had stayed much longer than she anticipated.

But she didn’t mind it at all. She wanted them to understand that the reason they fought was not solely for her, but also for themselves. It was her way of getting their spirits, to impart unbreakable determination and allegiance to the Nexus.

Because what could the Impuritas or Scarlet Logic promise them now aside from death?

They were irreplaceable, as were all of her Moons.

“... you’re probably the first to tell anyone something like that. I thought the ‘terrible’ Amalgam would break us down. Kill us. Do all kinds of things that we’ve already gotten used to.” The woman ahead admitted sheepishly, rubbing the back of her head before she slumped back and exhaled. “Not this. Never this. What the hell... telling us to come back in one piece? That’s a new one. I guess people were right. There really is a heaven in the Nexus. And we’re invited. Us of all people.”

Then, another suddenly stood up from her seat.

“... Amalgam. Can we show you how strong we’ve become? These Serums have brought back our magic. We’ll probably never get it back, but I guess that’ll make it easier for other Moons to take care of us later.”

What were once seen as shackles have become the key to their freedom.