

She barged into the northern room and left the crowd of Workers and Employees shocked by the state of the hallways. They could not believe a healer was capable of such combat prowess, and not to mention that her speed was so swift that she *leapt* over them as the Overseer immediately opened the westmost door, where she was surprised to find it empty.

This L-shaped hallway was one of the few spared from the invasion. Usually, upwards of 4 hallways on each floor would spawn the Impuritas. It took her less than a minute to thoroughly comb through her entire half and eliminated another hallway.

And much to her amazement, one of the hallways were littered with the remains of the Flesh Clots. Her strands had done their job, and a blitzing Cer came rushing right around the corner.

"I got one! What about you!" Cer called out, biting through the strands as she approached Frost.

"Finished three! That's all of them!" She said, kicking one of the eyes of the Flesh Clumps away like a ball. "Looks tasty, huh?"

"You'll eat that but not me. I think there's something wrong with your brain after all." Cer poked at one with her foot.

"*You're* telling me." Frost sighed.

She began sifting through the meat as the sirens soon subsided. The flashing lights returned to normal. The Tribulation was over, and at once, Employees arrived with giant, metal containers and sticks. Workers followed with sharp weaponry, presumably to butcher the Flesh Clots.

This was part of their clean up protocol, which had them collect all forms of waste and dump them into a vat of acid. They looked at Frost like she was crazed lunatic as she searched for something within the carcasses.

"Go clean up somewhere else. This is *our* catch." Cer warned as they stood their ground, waiting for the orders of the Overseer.

"*C-Could you please step aside for them, Black Dove.*" The Navigator asked.

"Sorry, but I want these ones for myself. Let them clean up the rest. Tch... It doesn't look like they have any coins. Weird. So how the hell did they end up here in the first place?"

A Spatial Distortion Etched Coin was what Frost scoured for. She could not believe that the Impuritas emerged without the aid of one, but much to her surprise, she found nothing. Granted, Etched Coins disappeared on use, but she still wanted to be thorough with her search just in case.

"*Coins? Um... We don't know. Normally, the existence of a Site Core prevents them from entering. Or big Caldera Industries machines, like the ones in the Cities. That's why it's impossible for Dungeons to appear there.*" The Navigator mentioned something incredibly intriguing.

*So that's why the inner Sectors don't get invaded. Caldera Industries can prevent them. But it also has its drawbacks, huh.*

*"Implementing them city-wide is akin to setting up bombs across the city. It will eat itself up."*

*Yeah. Absolutely. I thought they just hated everyone else outside their walls, but I guess they do have a reason to keep that prevention machine to themselves. The demand for Nex must be crazy.*

The Navigator then added:

*"We've been experiencing regular invasions for the last 2 months. Right as we lost access to the Hyperlinks. We don't know if they had the capabilities prior and were waiting for the right moment, or if their loss was what allowed them to invade us in the first place."*

"And you don't think it has something to do with the Site Core?" Frost wondered as she began to move the chunks of meat towards one end of the hallway. "You guys don't need to stay here. I'm cleaning this up."

"How exactly... I-if you don't mind us asking?" One of the Employees asked.

"It's better if you don't know anything." Frost warned, inflicting them with Scrutiny before she went back to hauling her meal. "Anyway – Navigator. Let me rephrase my question. Why isn't it caused by the Site Core?"

*"Two reasons."* The Overseer took over right as Jury, Ignis, Ber and Res entered the room, stomping all over Frost's meal.

It made her a little sad to see it all trampled on.

*"The Aberrations will prioritize the destruction of the Dungeon monsters. Doesn't matter if they're a Page or the Hungry. They will destroy them and ignore us, even if we attack them during their hunt."*

*Weird...*

*"Secondly, the Navigator is wrong. Luckily, she is still learning, and will not be punished for misinformation in a Site."*

"ImpulseWorks lapdog." Cer rightfully spat. "Good to know the Ateliers like to operate on fear like Scarlet Logic."

"... Be respectful. Were in Atelier territory." Res agreed wholeheartedly, and she spoke these words out of reflex rather than necessity.

"So what? They're trapped here with us. Not the other way around." Ber stated, cracking her knuckles.

As a fellow Blessed, the triplets had taken a liking to the Navigator.

By now the Workers and the Employees had disappeared as Ara came running straight for them. Luckily, Frost had already removed her strands in this hallway. As for the others, she

could hear the Navigator expressing the difficulty the Workers faced when trying to snip her strings.

The Overseer cleared his throat and continued.

*"They did not arrive as soon as the Hyperlinks and Relay Sites were destroyed. They arrived no sooner than the first rounds of the wish-granting rumour was brought to our attention. From our knowledge excessive Nex is generated as a by-product of a granted wish. It is how we can locate things like... 'Ara'."*

"I certainly hope you don't consider Ara as something less than a human." Frost warned in the politest way possible.

*"You and the Navigator are Corrupted sympathizers, so it's no surprise that our views are different. Our lives were taken away from us by them. Monsters will forever be monsters."* The Overseer argued, matching Frost's tone.

"You don't think they can be better?"

*"... Do you think so as well?"* The Navigator asked as Frost felt Jury press herself against her back.

"I know it. But I understand as well, Overseer. Naivety is deadly in our line of work. I'm sure you mean well." Frost deeply understood that he just didn't want the Navigator to get hurt, because while Frost had good interactions with the Corrupted, they still made up an overwhelming minority of them.

Optimism was good. But in this line of work, it would inevitably lead to unfortunate deaths.

*"I'm happy we can come to a middle ground."* The Overseer said. *"They are probing our Sites, and I'm sure you've witnessed larger scale Dungeons emerging all of a sudden. We always thought they emerged whenever and wherever they saw fit. A whim if you will. But there is a pattern we have found."*

"... the wish-granting rock. They're popping up where they think it is, huh?" Frost was quick to draw the dots together as Res slowly nodded, also arriving at the conclusion.

"So Leitmotif wasn't just full of shit." Ber growled. "They want to become –! Mmmph!?"

Ignis swiftly cupped her mouth.

This information was highly confidential.

*Corrupted. They want to become Corrupted. Can't the Impuritas undergo a Corrupted event? Don't answer me, Nav. They can hear you.*

< But they can't see this, can they? >

*Not at all.*

< The Archivist is also very curious. She's scared that maybe one day her Library will be invaded like the Sites >

*Is that even possible?*

< Unknown. But we are dealing with threats that have shown they can steal magic and Atelier technology. She's just worried about the future >

*Can't she see the future by reading a book?*

< It is not as easy as you think >

One revelation here led to the discovery of countless more questions. But it was all a matter of time before they'd be back in the thick of things again. The answers were not that far off either.

A picture was slowly forming. While they understood that the goal was to take down the Nexus, she realized that it may be possible through a granted wish. The destabilization of the Nexus and Nex Megalopolis made it easier for them to conduct their search.

But with the existence of Carpalis and herself, the Impuritas still had much to worry about.

She could not wait to completely thwart their plans.