

Frost and Jury found themselves walking along one of many colorful isles. Walls and pillars of clothing climbed to ridiculous heights. They couldn't even imagine a world with more clothing than the mall-like building.

It housed so many kinds of apparel that it was like a world of its own.

Ignis returned to Carpal Tower along with the Triplets and Carpalis. There was no reason for her to gather new clothing considering she was able to make her own, although she still could have tagged alone.

*You and Jury haven't spent much time together. She doesn't want to get in the way. Besides, she wanted to check up on how Stella's fairing.* Nav explained, causing Frost to smile.

It seemed like Ignis had made a new friend. Unfortunately, there was a certain other that wasn't as thoughtful as Ignis. Cer was close to imposing herself upon them, arguing that she couldn't wear the maid outfit any longer and wished to return to wearing her suit.

Frost wholeheartedly agreed, but Cer's argument of wishing to go with them *clothing shopping*, when she already had her alternate outfit, made it obvious that she just wanted to come along for the sake of it.

Or more specifically, to sabotage their 'date'.

Thankfully, her Hired Arm proved to be a valuable decoy. She was so effective in fact that Cer *willingly* bathed just so the Hired Arm would even consider the trouble of glancing over her.

But Frost digressed and softly sighed.

This luxurious mall was built directly as one of several compartments of the Golden Guild, and unsurprisingly focused primarily on clothing, costumes, and armory. Iles of suits, leather tunics, cardigans, undergarments...

Hell, even every flavor of *bikini armor* ran so far that Frost had to wonder just who on Earth was going to go through a selection of hundreds upon hundreds of bikini armor variants. Was it nice to have so much? Maybe. Was it necessary? Not to Frost, but then again, what did she know?

"I say that, but people are combing through them." Frost noted as she and Jury travelled along one of the upper balconies, spotting a small crowd gather by the rows of exhibitionist wear.

"I think they're just curious. You really do hate revealing outfits, hm?" Jury harped, running a hand through the countless wears, feeling their delicate fabric.

"Not so much hate. It's more like a gut reaction. I've been living in a world where DEF didn't exist, so it wearing something revealing in a fight is basically a one-way trip to the hospital. That isn't going to stop someone from stabbing you."

"You're talking about inherent DEF, right? I guess it is weird when you put it that way. No matter how hard or soft your skin is, as long as your DEF is high enough then nothing's

getting through.” Jury gently plucked at her skin, testing its elasticity as she eyed Frost happily.

“Well, bikini armor is just another one of the mysteries of this world. Right up there with the Corrupted.” Frost jokingly said. “I can’t imagine wearing something like that.”

Despite their conversation, the mood was delightfully cozy. They both affectionally stayed shoulder to shoulder, and subconsciously matched each other’s pace perfectly. Frost found herself glancing over at Jury more than the clothing, elated that she was ok.

A part of her worried deeply that her technology would have changed her. Thankfully, that wasn’t the case. This was still the same Jury she knew and loved. They further explored the store and stopped by a food court-like area that housed dozens of food stalls.

Barbeques powered by fire magic sizzled meat on cast iron blocks caused a savory smell to cascade the air. Vegetables were rapidly chopped by multiarmed Insectids, who produced salads and medleys, all the while the hissing of steam could be heard from another stall that brewed freshly pressed coffee.

“Jury. How about we get those skewers I promised?” Frost shot her a smile.

“Skewers~ Skewers~” She hummed like her old childlike self, clapping onto Frost’s hand as she suddenly took the lead, salivating at the thought of devouring the succulent meat.

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They tried on various wears. Jury had an extensive library to select from whereas Frost limited herself to anything that wasn’t a skirt, a dress or something too revealing. The Blessed was known to wear shabby gear that favored stat gains, and Frost did have that mindset as well, but there was only so much that could be gained with her insane stats.

If she lacked any decency, then going naked would be the better call. Her appearance would matter more than ever now if she wished to be recognized as the Black Dove. Though this was an easy fix with her Coat of Prejudice, she still wanted to at least present herself nicely.

Mostly because she wanted to pull herself back to a sense of normality. She didn’t want to be hard wired into the grit of the world. Doing so had already violently transformed her. Whether it was a good or bad thing was unknown, but it didn’t change that innocent people were caught in her line of fire as a result.

L.S was the prime example.

*I’m doing it again...*

“Frost. How does this look?” Jury rubbed her head as if sensing her worries. She held up a pale fur coat over herself, and Frost couldn’t help but to nod in approval.

"It looks great. But it's not that different from your coat. Are you sure you don't want an entirely new look?" Frost wondered.

"I like this color scheme." Jury said, her mouth parting to say more before she flushed slightly red and glanced off to the side. "... I'm kind of attached to it. We made lots of memories along the way, so I don't want to scrub my image."

"Hey. It's not like I'm going to see you any differently." Frost assured. "But I'm happy you cherish those memories... Maybe I'll do the same and just find a replacement coat."

"You don't want to try something else on?"

"Nooooo thank you. I know what you're thinking, and there's no way I'm doing it." Frost firmly refused. "When I first arrived in this world, I only vaguely remembered my male body. Now that I know what it's like, I guess it feels kind of weird looking at myself now."

She remembered her hands being larger, and her frame much sturdier. The Hired Arm was a better representation of her male self, except for the blown-out proportions she possessed that out shadowed hers.

Jury suddenly took Frost's hands and interlocked her fingers with them.

"Hmm? Jury? What's wrong?"

"You told me that Jury is Jury. So you're you. I remember a bigger hand as well... but so long as it's you in there –" Jury brought the back of Frost's palm to her lips and she kissed it, causing Frost to gulp as she surrendered to her attack. "– Then that's all that matters. I didn't fall in love with that you. I fell in love with this you."

*A-Ah. I forgot how assertive Jury was.*

"Mhm. Thank you. Really, thank you. Er... Sorry. I'm drawing blanks." Frost said sheepishly, her supposed indestructible confidence fizzling away. "I'm not all that used to being on the receiving end of this. I'm usually the one telling people that. That's my job, Jury~"

Jury brought the back of her hand against her cheek and gently rubbed it across her supple flesh, further degrading Frost as she tried to compose herself.

"How do you think I felt when you told me that? I really couldn't have been happier when you told me that this world is our home." Jury then pulled her into an overbearing embrace, which reminded Frost just how little she was compared to her.

In fact, she was almost snatched right off the floor. Jury's strength was about on par with hers now. She was always overshadowed by the Moons and Ignis ever since Divas Pass, and now she had finally overtaken them thanks to the ebbs of time.

*... I love her so much... I hate being a bum, but I'm kind of sad that there's still so much I don't know about her.*

*"How about you use this time to get to know her better? Get closer with each other."*

*For sure. Thank you, our disemboweled wingman.*

*"I shall add that to the list of names you have given me. It will be next to electronic GPS."*

Frost noticed other couples roaming alongside them. She was constantly reminded that they only knew each other for such a short amount of time. When she witnessed another plant a steamy kiss with their partner, Frost was also reminded that they haven't shared a proper kiss yet.

It was always a damp peck on the cheek or forehead. Never the lips. It made her jealous.

What's worse was her first night spend with Jury in a proper room was uneventful. Not that she was expecting anything to develop, but she probably would have tried if it wasn't for her condition. On the other hand, Jury was also mindful enough of Frost's condition.

It also didn't help that Frost slept like a boulder. Nothing was going to wake her up.

*You have an abnormal heart rhythm. What's wrong?*

*Don't play dumb with me Nav. You can read my mind... Ugh... Forget it.*

*"Do you wish to advance your standing with Jury?"*

*Huh? Relationship. Don't call it a standing.*

Jury's eyes fluttered suddenly, her grip strengthening around Frost's waist. She turned red in that moment, realizing that Nav had been transmitting her thoughts to Jury this entire time.

*"... Hey Jury..."*

*"Mm?"*

"Can I kiss you?" Frost asked with as much confidence as she could muster, staring deeply into Jury's golden eyes.

Jury then smiled.

"I'd love to." The passion burning a hole into their hearts were mutual, and Frost rose to the tips of her toes in hopes of melding them together.

As much of a badass Frost was in the eyes of many, she was rather innocent when it came to these things. Still, she desperately clung onto her bravado and pecked Jury's eager lips. She pulled away and was already longing for another round, her body battling with her heart, and her mind attempting to tame both.

Frost was hungry for an entirely different reason.

A heartbeat and a rapidly ticking clock clashed as their chests were held together. Frost wished she could remain like this forever, her worries, woes and lament becoming arbitrary in the face of love.

They both eventually broke away, suddenly crackling before they burst into a small fit of laughter.

“Let’s finish up so we don’t keep everyone waiting.” Jury hummed as they began picking out clothing again.

“Yeah. I’ll quickly find something.” Frost hummed before she took Jury’s hand and mashed her head against her arm. “Ahhh... Mmm... You have no idea how happy I am right now.”

“Me too. I’m so thankful you’re with me.” They passed through a dark tunnel as Frost led the way, eventually dragging them both into the light at the other end.

Frost tried out all sorts of pants, shorts, and other similar wear. In the end, she couldn’t get over the maneuverability and overall snugness tights provided. She paired her legs with black, opaque tights and shorts, which were covered by the hems of a large fur coat not too dissimilar from her Coat of Prejudice.

The collar was black, puffy, and sleek. It didn’t tickle her nape and just like her broken coat, it felt like a comfy pillow.

The hems were just long enough to reach her knees, and they were weighted to keep them permanently down. It was kind of like a dress now that she thought about, but so was the Coat of Prejudice. As long as it was a coat then it was fine. The coat itself was more accurately like a combination of a trench coat and a fur coat.

It was then finished off with back boots that reached just above her ankles. Jury wore something roughly the same, just in grey, but hers was much fluffier. She could easily be mistaken for nobility, or royalty from a distant land.

What surprised Frost in the end however was that ended up going back to the tights.

Was it the first step to accepting her new body? Maybe, and she foresaw more events down the line that would either further her acceptance, or grate against her. She was comfortable enough to bathe and wash up, but there was still an air of awkwardness about it.

Time will tell, and Jury promised to be there with her at every step of the way.