

“Why do birds fly?”

Frost tried to find a hidden meaning behind this question. But no matter how hard she pondered, she could only arrive at only one logical answer.

“Is it because they’re given wings?” She uttered, causing Kissaira to smirk, then slowly shake her head with sealed eyes.

“Then why can’t healers fly? The roost of the slaughter looks to the skies and flaps their wings in their pastures. They cannot fly either, yet they were given wings.”

She recited heartfully as the hearts began to beat again.

“Do you think purpose itself is cruel? When we think of our existence, do we point our fingers at a creator to blame? Or do we wallow in self-pity, realizing that we are so imperfect? Temper Aspirations. Amalgam. Just because a bird has wings does not mean it should fly, but its purpose calls for it to.”

“But what if they can, but they’re just unable to? You mentioned a bird’s cage. A bird wouldn’t be able to fly either inside of one.” Frost said, her mind turning to environmental factors.

As a nurse, she knew that the environment is what fundamentally influenced people, rather than themselves at the core. But in Elysia, she didn’t know if there was an unknown force that caused people to behave in such a way...

No. There was. Racial traits were a truth that influenced people well before they were born. It was a calling in life. A purpose in a way. The saying of the ‘apple doesn’t fall far from a tree’ was something she despised, because it was never the apple who chose where to land in the first place.

It was the world that dictated where they landed.

Still, and apple was an apple. Predetermined, with a purpose of being *eaten*.

Kissaria was pleased to hear Frost’s reasoning. Surprised, actually. She was among the first people to ever admit that the environment itself was a factor that influenced her riddle of ‘why do birds fly?’.

And therefore, the answer was simple.

“Birds can fly because they are free. They have that choice. Or at least it’s what they want. From their bottom of their hearts, in spite of what their purpose is.”

“We ask the same question whenever we temper aspirations. Workers. Employees. Overseers. Navigators. Impulse Defenders. Retrofitters. And us. We are the few that have concluded our journey of tempering our aspirations. Your answer is unique. Freedom. But freedom is also a limiting thing.”

She pulled out a golden apple from her Dimensional Storage and nibbled at its sweet skin, and its irresistible puss. Then, she threw it into the air and it turned into a golden bird.

“Birds fly because they wish to. It is as you say. It is their choice. But it is their wings that enable them. When we temper aspirations, we must change either our wishes, or ourselves. A true temperament will change both. Our freedom of choice is the sweetest fruit of existence. Desires... are everything to us.”

Then, the bird returned to its apple form and fell back into her palms. She slowly began to draw out various materials from the Dimensional Storage, placing them like prized jewels along the workstation.

These were Corrupted materials.

“Heavens tears lie in the blue skies, and there, all the little Doves will fly. But the wingless Doves will caress their broken wings, wondering why they had to endure such a thing. They will help others reach the same skies, for that aspiring paradise they will never reach.

The Wandering Healers are an example of a failed tempered aspiration. They have fractured. Their purpose twisted, their desires mangled, all because of their mistreatment. Not even we can save them. We, who can venture into the hearts of others, including yourself, Amalgam.”

Frost listened to her motherly lullaby as Nav replayed them in a monotone tune. Eventually, the solemn atmosphere cleared as she went back to Frost and smacked her shoulders with a wide smile.

“You’re interesting. A big heart is seldomly seen anymore. But it makes you vulnerable. Ahhhh~ Ya don’t know how happy it makes me seein’ such a big red heart that *isn’t* tryina kill everyone in sight!”

“A-Ah... About that – Those Corrupted items are for our Atelier Item, right?” Frost asked, and she rapidly nodded.

“Yep! And place yer Corrupted Item here with the materials from the same Corrupted. I’ll get straight to work on it. Didn’t think I’d get so deep with ya! Brings me back to Carpalis and Galia. Marionette as well. Can guess what that Nilhinid answered with. ‘Bird fly because it’s their purpose to’. Typical of those string lovers.”

Kissaria then cleared her throat and tapped on the Corrupted materials. “So, these are the Corrupted Materials we’ll be usin’ for your Atelier Item. All from Monsoon Corrupted. If you got anything better then all the more better! I’m expectin’ at least an Eternal Night from ya judging from this coat!” She said, marveling at the ruined Coat of Prejudice.

Frost didn’t know how to exactly tell this woman that she indeed had a better source of Corrupted material. But seeing that she had been relatively straight forward this whole time, she reached out to Kissaria’s shoulders and looked right at her in the eye.

“What’s wrong? Got somethin’ in mind?”

“Can we use a Woe of the Fallen Star materials?” Frost asked, causing her to blink like her mind had just gone blank all of a sudden.

“Come again? A *Woe of the Fallen Star*? You got items on ya? That’s pretty impressive! Should be expected for an Archetype! So, where’s it at!?”

“The Derma layer. I don’t actually have it on me right now, but we can go for a quick trip and bring the material back. It shouldn’t take long.” Frost said, further causing her to look at her like she was insane.

“C’mon... Derma layer? Ya think we can just go there on a whim? What, next you’re gonna tell me that this *Woe of the Fallen Star* is actually the Big Red Heart! Hahahaha...”

“Haha...”

“Ha...”

“... Amalgam. Please say somethin’.” Kisarria realized that Frost was not joking, and it finally dawned on her that the Big Red Heart was exactly the Corrupted Frost wished to utilize for her Atelier Item.

“Kissaria. I want to use the Big Red Heart for my Atelier Item. Take a look at my badge, and my gloves. These are the Corrupted Items from the Big Red Heart.” Frost revealed, causing Kisarria to press a small button on her goggles which caused several lenses to stack up like a pyramid as she took a closer look.

Her face instantly turned pale.

“... Archetypes are insane, huh... Good thing you’re on our side.” She wiped off a bead of sweat. “Alright. ALRIGHT.” Then, she slapped her face again. “Show me the way! This is big news for us! A confirmation’s gonna be necessary!”