

H10 was one of 12 locations in Elysia collectively known as an 'Adventurer's Hub'. Each location was defined by a great, crystal spire belonging to Justica Arms, ran by one of Beholder Galia's trusted Apostles.

Only 11 locations remained after the Iscario debacle.

The fate of the 12<sup>th</sup> Branch, which was constructed in Grandis, was unknown.

Major Associations, Offices, Branches and Adventuring agencies tended to flock and build their head of operations within their turf. They worked hand in hand with the Guilds of the Golden Index and Justica Arms to uphold certain values, rules and conducts when engaging in high-risked or specialized tasks.

Where the Guilds set out the guidelines, Justica Arms enforced it. In exchange, Justica Arms they promised protection and acted as the judicial body between all those within their jurisdiction. This was to prevent as much bloodshed as possible. Despite the Associations being morally upstanding, they had their aspirations and goals to fulfil at the end of the day.

These Associations and bodies were regarded as 'sponsored' by Justica Arms.

However, not all bodies found themselves within the shadows of a Branch. The reason was because of Justica Arms' ridged rules that did not allow combat to occur unless they were provoked first.

In a perfect world this was a reasonable rule, but here? A single arrow was all it could take to end a life.

How could one retaliate if they were already mortally wounded? Although if they were strong, then that was a different story.

Additionally, there were other morally grey dealings other Associations dabbled in which would normally spark a reaction from a Justicer – the Justica Arms enforcing personnel – to deliver their rightful punishment.

An example would be undertaking morally dubious activity for a client or personal gains. Of course, if Justica Arms caught wind of an outside Association committing such crimes then they would instantly demote them to a Syndicate unless they could answer for it.

Justica Arms was fair, just, and trustworthy to all forms of life. But their reach was unfortunately limited.

Their Branches were a beacon of light and righteousness in a world where savagery was rampant. They were also the true 'beginner locations' that were masked from Frost due to Iscario's tampering with her mind thanks to the Cognition Scrambler.

However, because they were held to such high standards and reverence their image was permanently sullied by Iscario's betrayal. H10 was relatively barren. The vast plains were used by Adventurers of various Offices, Firms and Associations as a training ground. Nearby settlements were militarized. There were more Adventurers than there were citizens.

Frost was whistled at by a band of adventurers donned in blue, full-plated armor similar to Perla's. They ceased all activity on their aligned dummies and hailed at her group, marveling at their golden mount as they passed through.

### **Vanguard**

**Office:** Blue Watchdogs

**Soul Rank:** Blue | **Adventurer Rank:** Silver

"They must think you're another Apostle." Cer blew at the stray strands blocking her vision. "No one besides them can tolerate the feathers getting into their eyes."

"Good. It should get Justica Arms' attention then. Unless one of their rules states you can't wear a feathered coat." Frost said.

"Never heard of it. Hard to get matching coats as well, so they'll absolutely spot you. Not that far off now!" Ber yelled with infectious enthusiasm.

Frost hoped to at least meet with the 6<sup>th</sup> Apostle, or someone in charge of the Branch. If anyone was going to help them on their quest to take down the Scarlet Logic, then it would be them. By now she was ready to waltz right into the City of Spades and make a mad dash for the inner city.

The only thing preventing her however was a potential war, which Carpalis wished to avoid at all costs.

So did Frost. But unlike Carpalis, she was willing to bend a few rules because there was no way in hell the Scarlet Logic were going to announce their attack. It would occur suddenly, swiftly and without any warning.

Therefore, she could not afford to standby and wait for something to happen.

ImpulseWorks was already suffering with the mysterious losses of their Retrofitters and randomly scattered anti-healing, radioactive material. Throughout their journey through the City of Hearts they heard much about the mysterious glowing rocks, which soon disappeared thanks to the efforts of the Anomaly Recovery Units.

And finally, Frost wanted to let them know that she was the Amalgam.

If anyone was going to know who she was, then it would be them. She pondered on the methods of convincing them if they failed to believe her as they passed by a plethora of training Adventurers.

### **Vagabond**

**Central Branch:** Wanderers

### **Savior**

**Firm:** Helper-Aid

### **Pitcher**

**Agency:** Spearingale

### **Shield Defender**

**Bureau:** Rook & Towers

*Man... There are so many cool names. I could do this all day.*

Frost couldn't help but to feel like a child again upon reading the countless group names. Res glared at her for some reason as if able to read her mind. She knew exactly why Frost looked so happy.

*"... They sound so childish. But I suppose that's why they're entertaining to you."* Nav jabbed.

She deeply inhaled the clear air, which held a sweet note as the grass was soon replaced with pearlescent, pale brick. The outer edges of the brick were trimmed with a purple highlight, giving it a unique, near divine quality.

When she exhaled, they found themselves in a sea of Adventurers. A plaza stretched further than the eye could see, and in the center stood the benevolent 6<sup>th</sup> Branch. It was opaque, and the cut edges of its crystal construct were like purple panes. The quality of the Adventurers varied widely.

But the best came from those armed in a tunic made from red fabric, and an animal-fur mantle that covered their entire body aside from their arms. Their weapons were varied, which was apparently uncommon to see in organized groups. A large variety of weaponry within an organization reeked of incompetency according to Res.

"They're likely an Association made from a bunch of absorbed Offices, or just decided being united was better." Cer skillfully pointed out. Frost would not have noticed this otherwise, and neither would have Jury or Ignis. "Raoul used to say that people are like a puzzle. If they don't fit, then they don't belong, so you have two options. Throw them away, or mold them into shape."

"He has some good sayings sometimes..." Ber fondly spoke before gritting her teeth. "Too bad he's a sack of bad choices. Snake has him in her wraps as well. Shall we, Cer!?"

“6<sup>th</sup> Branch Apostle, huh. 3 Moons verses one Apostle. Child’s play!” Cer shouted, gathering a few eyes as Frost immediately pulled her close to seal her mouth shut. “Hear that Justica Arms – We’re gonna –! MMMMMPH!? Mmm? MMMM!”

Ignis did the same, except she did it in a less violent manner. She simply tapped Ber on the shoulder and politely asked her to stop with her antics, which she completely obeyed with a nod.

“Only if you pat me!”

“There there... You feel like a pet sometimes...”

“Little did you know that by acting like this, I’m getting exactly what I want!” Ber said proudly, still being pat down by Ignis.

“Mm. Clever...” Ignis nearly laughed.

Cer on the other hand was instantly hand gagged by Frost, who was then transferred over to Jury. Her tail wrapped her up like a wolf-burrito, her mouth unable to express anything other than a muffled groan... which then quickly turned into a suggestive moan.

“Res. Electric therapy?” Jury asked, causing Cer to instantly freeze as Res hovered above her trapped sister.

“A lobotomy would be better. But there’s no brains in there so I guess death by electrocution – I mean, cure by shock will have to do.” Res threatened, her eyes sparking dangerously.

Cer’s mischief thankfully disappeared moving forward. An angry Res was no joke, although it was sort of funny whenever she tried to make herself seem intimidating. That being said, the name of this large Association was the D.O.T Association, short for the Defenders of Tomorrow.

Frost revealed this to the others and followed it with: “Now that’s a good name for an organization.”

She was instantly met with judging eyes.

“I’m sorry Frost. I love you. I really do, but... I think your naming sense isn’t very good.” Jury was the first to admit, causing Frost’s heart to shatter.

“Jury. If you let this lunatic name your Atelier then you’re going to be the new Jester.” Res warned, finally giving Frost a piece of her mind. “I cannot believe you Frost... Your naming sense is a tragedy.”

The figurative knife in her chest twisted.

“Frost... Defenders of Tomorrow sounds...” Even Ignis couldn’t help but to chime in.

“Are you all really turning your backs on me now?” Frost argued in a joking manner, finding it all hilarious. She was definitely conscious of her poor naming sense, but it was till fun hearing their reactions.

“Defenders of Tomorrow. They sound like a bunch of Lazy Adventurers.” Cer barked.

“I agree Sis. Even a puppy will try to protect its home today.” Ber nodded.

“Right? What kind of Association does their quests the following day?” Cer and Ber misinterpreted the name of Defenders of Tomorrow. They took it literally and were offended that such a motto existed for an organization that rose to the Association status.

Frost couldn’t help but to laugh. In time, they eventually passed through the grand plaza of Adventurers and entered the glowing shadow of the grand spire. They were immediately met with the eyes of distant Justica Arms personnel perched atop the crystal branches; their weapons held closely.

Snap became worry, but Cer assured them that so long as they didn’t prove them, then they couldn’t do anything to them. If they did, then they would be in for a one way ticket straight to hell. Frost’s appearance drew their attention, and the pair of armed Elves stationed by the base of a steep staircase inspected her with a sharp eye.

They were adorned in a purple-colored coat, a long, draping mantle which wrapped around their necks like a scarf, and their weapons were fantastically embellished with gold, black and white decorations.

Furthermore, their ears were pointed, indicating that they were Elves.

### **Point Scouts**

< Followers >

**Soul Rank:** Violet | **Atelier:** Justica Arms

**LEVEL :** 90   **ORIGIN :** Elf   **HP :** 2,800   **ATT :** 1,200   **MAG ATT :** 1,200

**ATT DEF :** 1,000   **MAG DEF :** 1,000   **MP :** 200   **RESIST :** 35   **AGI :** 30

They didn’t look at her companions. Only her, for she wore the apparel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Apostle. A part of her worried, but she dismissed those thoughts and held a posture of pure elegance and power. She made it clear that she was far higher than they were, but not the point where it appeared obnoxious.

Frost always had a natural aura of mystique and reverence thanks to her eyes. The coat only amplified it to greater heights. They turned on their heels, glanced at one another, then back at Frost with raised brows and their Justica Arm held close to their shoulders.

Suddenly, the pair marched towards them, holding out a hand to cease all movement. Snap immediately obeyed and prepared to flee at a moment’s notice to preserve its life. The tension rose so sharply that the triplets were also unexpectedly on high alert.

They did not expect them to move from their post.

One tapped on their ear, likely communicating via a Cognition Receiver. They shared one last glance before they nodded simultaneously and, much to Frost's surprise –

– They erected their posture and threw a hand over their hearts, with the other closely guarding their weapon. The display was like a respectful salute, and Frost realized that they believed she was the 1<sup>st</sup> Apostle.

However –

“An Incandescent Color approaches! State your business!”

– Due to the 15<sup>th</sup> Peace Flock she saved on that faithful night, they managed to immediately recognize her as the Black Dove.

Her name had oddly spread to the 6<sup>th</sup> Branch, but not throughout the City of Hearts. Could this mean they had access to long-range communications? Even further than the CogitO ones?

Frost was suddenly intrigued, and, with a respectful nod, she greeted the two Justica Arms Followers in her esteemed persona:

“I believe this is the 6<sup>th</sup> Branch? I was invited to come collect a reward as thanks for gallantly rescuing the 15<sup>th</sup> Peace Flock from the Pages. I apologize if there was no such arrangement.”

She was like an entirely different person all of a sudden. Just like how the moon had many different phases, Frost had a set of her own.

This one had become her staple when dealing with the likes of an Atelier.