

One hour was more than enough time for Frost and Jury to enjoy themselves before the fireworks. Brigades of pyrotechnics wearing the uniforms of various Academies made final checks. The Academies and renowned figureheads outside of Inflow Direct were in charge of everything, which Frost figured was probably the reason why it felt so...

... free. Not a single person here was angry or sad. She had seen countless faces already and each one cherished these fleeting moments like it was their last. It was impossible to compare them with the despair of those in Grandis and the world beneath.

This was the fantasy world that the books from Earth illustrated. Being with Jury now felt like a dream. But every time her mind touched on this thought, Jury would squeeze her hand all that much more to remind her that this was real.

Nothing made her happier than knowing that Jury could tell what was on her mind.

They fished for goldfish; threw balls at cups for a chance at a prize; tossed darts; sight saw in the textbook world depicted only in fantasy literature; and stuffed their bellies full of food from all over the continent.

In the last ten minutes they made their way up the stone stairs of a remote hill. C5 had many hills and held the only mountain in the Nex Megalopolis. That mountain was where the fireworks would soon be ignited.

Serene plants and gardens surrounded them. The hill was the same place Frost had scouted during her visit with the Triplets. The two stood behind a wooden handrail as few other couples and families joined them, greeting them with small smiles and waves.

Less than five minutes remained now as darkness took over them. All lights across the cityscape beneath were cut off. Hundreds of thousands of paper lanterns then took to the skies, carrying the hopes, dreams, and memories of those that were lost.

“Jury.” Frost spoke first.

“Mhm?”

“We made a lot of friends this year, didn’t we?”

“More than just friends. They’re family to us now.”

The silence returned as they patiently kept their eyes glued to the skies. The fireworks were bound to appear at any moment now. Anticipation built and the excitement from the few couples and families around them became palpable. Frost had so many things to say. Some of them were not all good because there were people that they lost along the way.

Jury’s hand tightened again, understanding how Frost felt. But the two knew better than to say anything. After all –

“Wooow!”

“I hope you’re doing well in heaven mommy!”

“Please continue watching over us. Thank you for giving us a good year.”

– The purpose of the Blooming Week was more than just to mourn the dead. It was more than a celebration for the new year.

It was a time of rebirth. A time to turn over a new leaf. The fact that it came after winter only further reinforced this.

That's why Frost focused on the good things as a fond smile crept onto her face.

"We saw a lot of new things this year too." Frost continued.

"More than I can count. If it weren't for you then I wouldn't have known how beautiful the world was." Jury bounced off her, their voices somber.

"Let's not forget about the food."

"There was more to life than just eating raw chicken~"

"The cultures and people we met."

"It's all proof that this world is much larger than we know, and ten times as much as can imagine."

"The people we saved."

"They're all living better lives now. A lot of them became people we can trust."

"Yeah. Remember our promise on the cliffside?" Frost briefly looked up at Jury.

She returned Frost's gaze and tenderly smiled.

"I do."

"We only sought out to discover more of the world. But we did so much more than that. We learned many new things together. Even now I'm still learning new things about the world... and you too, Jury."

Frost then rested her head against Jury's arm, her hands slowly wrapping around it too.

"So let's keep on discovering things together. You and I."

"Always Frost. Always."

The lanterns burned to ashes. The flaming paper joined the stars above as their eyes were drawn back to the skies.

"We found our small slice of home in this world. Let's keep taking care of it. I also have dreams that I want to achieve but it's hard to see it happening anytime soon." Jury's tail coiled up Frost's body. "... I'll keep it at that. Frost. I love you."

"I love you too, Jury. More than anything in this world."

Streaks of light flew into the skies with a brilliant symphony of whistles. The fireworks erupted over the cityscape, illuminating the world with dazzling colors. In the meantime, the

cannons above the C5 Injector Site atop the mountain's summit fired the largest firework Frost had ever seen.

It was a star. Nothing described the fireworks better than a star. The light was only a hair from being unbearable. So many streaks of light flew across every corner of C5, creating an umbrella of colors.

Jury was rendered speechless. Her first firework viewing became an irreplaceable memory in an instant. Frost moved her eyes to Jury, her head tilting as she savored her bewilderment. That was until tears tumbled down Jury's cheeks.

"Jury?"

"It's ok." She immediately cut Frost off, wiping them with the back of her thumb. "Because I'm happy. I never knew how beautiful fireworks were. I never knew how amazing all this was. All because I was stuck inside of a place all alone."

Jury was on the verge of breaking down, her voice quivering. But she never allowed herself to become swept by her emotions.

Because those tears were not out of sadness.

"Jury... Here. Let me do it for you –"

"I know I'm not supposed to cry. I'm just so happy right now that I can't express it in any other way than this."

Frost reached out to help her wipe those tears away, but Jury clasped onto her hand midway and suddenly dropped to her knees. Her heart skipped a beat as Frost's mind began to swirl.

Her heart throbbed like a caged beast as she watched Jury pluck something out from her dress.

"Ever since Wharftow... I've been wondering when it'd be a good time to tell you this. We both want to be more than partners. But I had no way of conveying that because we were already more than that."

What Jury revealed was an onyx ring. Words could not begin to describe how Frost felt as Jury fitted the ring onto her finger, and then slipped another on herself. The matching pair made it clear all just what their relationship was.

"I made this ring just for us. It's the only item imbued with Angelic Kiss. So even if we're torn apart, I'll always be there with you. Frost? Now you're the one crying~"

Tears now ran down Frost's cheeks as she silently nodded, accepting Jury and her proposition with every fiber of her being. There was no better gift than this, and she promised to cherish it for as long as she lived.

"How can I not? I'm just like you. These are happy tears. So that means we're married now, huh?"

“We weren’t?” Jury teased as she rose to her feet to finally take Frost’s hands into her own.
“Do you like it?”

“I love it. I’ll cherish it. It’s everything to me.”

“It’s our symbol of our love. But we never needed one in the first place. I just wanted to do something special for you... since you’re always doing everything for me.” The last of the fireworks ended, the remnants causing their rings to glow as their faces gravitated to one another. “Thank you for letting me see a new year full of light.”

Those words nearly broke Frost. So before they could finally take a toll on her, she rose on her toes and before Jury knew it – her lips were sealed around hers. They shared a passionate kiss underneath the stars and moon; their first kiss of the year and certainly not the last.

Their tongues and fingers intertwined as Jury’s tail wrapped their waists inseparably.

The memories they made that night were irreplaceable.

The moments they shared became their happiest.

The emotions they felt reminded them they were alive.

And the love they embraced was all that mattered to them now.

< Do you accept Jury’s proposal? >

< Yes | Of course >

< Confirm? >

< 1st of the 1st, 351 PA >

< Frost is now engaged to Jury >