

Humid. That is the first thought that passed through Franky's mind upon exiting the giant tree with the elf Sarena.

Normally, it would make sense that it would be humid. The elven city is clearly deep in a massive forested jungle. The trees are massive and abundant greenery can be seen in every direction. Unfortunately, what doesn't make sense is that the inside of the tree he had just walked out of was cool.

Franky shakes his head at the thought of magical nature air conditioning.

"Is something wrong?" Sarena asks from beside him.

"No, nothing," he answers back as he catches her eyes gazing at his legs. No emotion is seen, but Franky would guess she is laughing inside.

Franky sighs at the feeling of the leather pants he was given. Great quality, very durable, but made for an elf.

Elves are, much to the usual stereotype, very skinny... and he is not.

"So, where to?" he asks the oh-so emotionless elf.

She shrugs, "You walk and sightsee. I will merely be here to answer questions you may have."

Licking his lips, he nods and begins walking. Each step reminding him of his very tight pants and the pressure he is feeling on his crotch.

But with a bit of will, he ignores it and instead focuses on the scenery. Bridges of wood, trees of various colors with many of them having entrances with signs on them. Some even have images like an anvil or a bow.

"It's like a videogame rpg," he says, slowly realizing how abnormally right he is. He is in a different world with game screens and is now in an elven city with the goal of becoming stronger.

And then he remembers the monster he had fought and the friend he had almost lost.

"No plot armor."

"You want to see the [Armorer]?" Sarena asks, startling Franky.

Franky gives her a forced smile, "not exactly," he says and points towards the direction he had been heading, "I want to see the training grounds."

A frown forms on Sarena's face but is removed immediately after, followed by a nod.

It doesn't take long, maybe about ten minutes, though it would have been five if many of the elves hadn't stopped to welcome him to their city. They were smiling and happy. Apparently, Silva's words hold a huge amount of weight for them to trust him so.

They enter the clearing and find many of the children training. Some are shooting bows, others are meditating, and a few of the older ones are casting spells under the direct eye of a surprisingly fit elven man.

The same one which had waved to him out of the window.

The man, as though knowing he was being stared at, turns away from his students and walks towards Franky with a smile.

"Hello, young man, nice to see you are awake. I hope your kidnapping wasn't too bad."

For some reason, Franky can't help but smile at the man's direct attitude.

"It was rather pleasant actually. I went to sleep and found myself already kidnapped. I even woke up with an elven beauty next to my bed."

The man smiles wider as his eyes mischievously turn to Sarena, "Oh? It seems my daughter has a little bit of me in her if she's already sneaking into people's beds."

"Dad!" Sarena yells with a rather noticeable blush.

Franky's eyes widen at his mistake. He only wanted to tease her a bit... but not her father of all things.

"Don't look at me that way," he says to Franky, "I may be her father, but it's not my responsibility to judge who she sleeps with."

Franky flinches as a spike of ice is released beside him towards the man who lifts his hand and grabs it right as it was to strike his chest.

He rolls his eyes.

"You should already know that dodging ice attacks is my forte. If you want any chance of hitting me, you are going to have to get even more creative than your mother."

Sarena lowers her hand and glares at her father before her expression becomes cold, like ice.

The man gives Franky a smile before he walks forward and extends his hand, "Sorry about that, I love to tease my daughter when I can. Anyway, name's Hawk Icebane, husband to Siberia Icebane and father to Sarena Icebane."

Franky grabs the man's hand, slightly surprised at the strong grip.

Franky smiles back, "Franky Sasco, [Hero] in training."

He nods and releases his grip, "Well then, it is a pleasure to meet you. I can already tell you are a good man. Your eyes scream honor, and as a [Knight], I can sense it oozing out of you.

Franky raises an eyebrow, surprised.

"A [Knight]? Aren't those only in kingdoms?" he asks.

Part of his training by Bernard involved learning about classes as well as worldly information. For example, a [Knight] class could be given by a [King] or [Queen] to a physical-based class of at least level 70, though a [Squire] or [Noble] could actually become an [knight] at level 50 instead.

Still, a [King] or [Queen] is required for the class.

"Yup. I was a [Blader] in my younger years when I was traveling," he starts, putting his hand on his chin as he thinks, "I think that was about a thousand years ago. I saved a [King's] daughter after she was kidnapped by a [Lord]. I ended up killing the lord, saving the daughter, and the [King] awarded me the class. I worked for the [King] until he died and then eventually left the kingdom."

Franky nods towards the story while trying to accept the fact that elves age so slowly. Hawk looks like he is only in his mid-thirties.

"And now you train people in combat, including magic?"

"Well, I'm actually a [Ranger Knight Archmage] and currently the head combat instructor for the entire city. Really helps when your class is able to do practically everything exceptionally."

Franky realizes now what it means to be an elf. A long lifespan allows them to reach the second tier in their classes. Heck, considering Hawk's levels, he probably trained three classes at once to obtain what he has right now.

Franky scratches his head, "It must have taken a while to get that class," he says.

“Oh, it did. Took me centuries actually. Though I am jealous of your class. Being a [Hero] means you can do what I did in only a couple of years.”

Franky can only agree to that statement. His leveling speed is several dozens of times faster than the average human. Clearly, the [Hero] class boosts experience on top of allowing many classes.

“Hopefully. I still don't understand too much about leveling and how I get it. I just know that practice gives me levels though actual combat seems to level me faster. I think that is why Silva plans on having me fight in dungeons.”

Hawk grunts, “Leveling is much faster when your life is put in danger. Though you can slowly level from training, only through truly life-threatening combat can levels be gained quickly.”

“But you have to survive the combat to get those levels,” Franky says with a frown, “I don't suppose there is another way?”

“Well, you can obtain a mark from a god and then have the god give you quests that reward levels. I think that's how most [Hero's] gain levels safely. Of course, I wouldn't recommend doing that. God's aren't beings to trust, even for power.”

Bernard had talked about getting a mark but said that the [Heros] would obtain them later. What exactly that entails, Franky does not exactly know.

Franky looks up questioningly, “any other ways? I'm already only the second-highest [Hero] in the world. If I can't get quests, then I'm going to lag behind all of the others.”

Hawk frowns now and folds his arms confused, “You know the levels of the other [Heros]?” he asks and then waves his hand, “nevermind, I don't need to know. The class is already abnormal on its own. As for your question, then yes. There is a way but it involves developing your aura to the point of creating a domain.”

Franky blinks, confused, “Aura? Domain?”

The question causes Hawk to frown.

Hawk sighs and turns around, “If they didn't tell you about aura, then it is best for me to show you first. Come, sit. Sarena, you join him too. I already know you understand what aura is but you will need training as well.

Franky follows Hawk to a bench and sits down on it. The wood is surprising soft to his butt. Sarena sits next to him, her expression neutral and unchanging.

He raises a hand, "first, do you understand what the *Soul* and *Willpower* stat means."

"Well, I was told that *Soul* is based on age and that *Willpower* helps with using some skills."

"Hmmm, it seems the church doesn't want you to know about those stats. Well, to start, *Soul* determines not your actual age but the knowledge obtained in life. The more you know and live through life, the higher your *soul* becomes. It also dictates the thickness of your aura. *Willpower* helps not only with skills but also with the strength of your mind. High willpower allows better mana manipulation, skill manipulation, body manipulation, and of course aura manipulation. Understand?"

Franky nods, "So far, though I still don't know what aura is."

Hawk smiles, "aura refers to our ability to affect people and skills around us. For example, the [General] class utilizes aura significantly. They are able to impart their own skills to entire armies thanks to it. But that doesn't mean that they are masters of aura control. It merely means that they utilize it constantly and in some cases, unconsciously," he explains while taking a step back, "but you probably still don't understand, so I will show you what aura is."

Franky looks at Hawk confused, the man just staring at him with a smile.

And then it hits. Fear, pressure. His mind feels foggy. He gets up and looks around, panicked, feeling as though a predator is near.

And then it stops and the feeling goes away. Franky blinks, his heart is still beating fast. It had felt like death was watching.

He takes a deep breath slowly and looks around. Sarena is still sitting though like him, she is also breathing hard. And then he looks to Hawk who is looking very smug.

"Was that aura?"

Hawk nods.

Franky swallows, thinking about the implications. The man did not move or say anything. His mere presence had made Franky panic. Using that against anyone, especially during a fight could mess up even the strongest of combatants. Franky sits back down.

"What I made you feel was what many people would call bloodthirst. I poured my emotion of killing into my aura and sent it to you. It quickly affected your mind, sending the wrong signals. You reacted to them as though they were real. When you have time, I can teach you about using and defending against aura."

Franky licks his lips, the feeling and memory fading quickly, but the impact is still fresh in his mind. He had panicked...

"What about domain?" he asks.

Hawk scratches his short silk hair as he looks to Serana, "Well, domains are different. A domain is an equivalent of not only affecting the minds of others but of everything else. For example, Silva is able to make plants grow exceptionally fast while my wife can freeze anything she wishes.

Sarena jumps out of her seat with wide eyes, "Mom has a domain!" she yells more than asks in surprise.

Hawk just gives his daughter a cheeky smile, "Oh, did I forget to mention that? She developed it a couple mon- and she's off."

Franky watches as his guide abandons him without a word. She runs towards a direction with impressive speed.

Franky sighs and looks to Hawk, "thanks for the talk. I learned a lot." and then he turns away and runs after Sarena.

By the time Franky is able to catch up to Sarena, he is heaving and puffing much to the annoyance of Sarena.

Apparently she had even allowed herself to slow down for him to catch up. He can only mentally accept that elves have impressive natural speed and stamina when compared to humans.

Practically an unfair amount actually.

"So that's your home?" Franky avoids her gaze and points towards a frozen tree. Literally frozen from the bottom up to even its leaves.

Sarena nods and starts heading towards it at a pace that Franky can actually follow.

"So... is it usually frozen? The tree I mean."

Sarena shakes her head, "no. This is clearly my mothers doing."

"Soooo you haven't seen your mother since my kidnapping? I would think that would take priority."

Sarena looks at Franky with a very cold expression.

“Right. Sorry.”

You are under the effect of **[Frozen Fortress]**

All forms of heat produced is 24% less effective.

Franky looks at the message before feeling the effects. The air is cooler and he is already feeling slightly colder. The effect seems like it is the opposite of Calidi.

“Um, should we be going closer?” he asks Sarena who ignores him and walks up to the door which refuses to open on its own.

She frowns and smacks which causes some ice to fall but not much.

Franky walks to the door.

All forms of heat produced is 42% less effective.

“It's getting colder the close we get. Are you sure we should be trying to get deeper in?”

Sarena gives him a look before smacking the door again.

Franky shakes his head.

“Here, move away. Let me try.”

She takes a step back.

Franky's hand moves to the door. Cold and icy.

“[Flash Fire]”

His skill goes off and a burst of flame is released from his palm. And to his surprise, it is noticeably weaker than what he is used to.

Some of the ice starts to melt, but not much.

“[Flash Fire], [Flash Fire], [Flash Fire]”

After the fourth cast and more than half his mana, the door very slowly moves out of the way. A path is open and Sarena is the first to rush in and down the stairs.

Franky follows right after.

All forms of heat produced is 48% less effective.

All forms of heat produced is 52% less effective.

All forms of heat produced is 56% less effective.

It gets colder as he goes down the stairs. Eventually he reaches a room deep into the tree underground. A room frozen except for a taller, older, elf that looks very similar to Sarena.

She is sitting upon a stand of ice, her legs folded as she looks icily to her daughter.

“Why have you returned?” the words come out of her mouth as Sarena looks back to her mother with the same impassive face.

“Father said you developed a domain. I came to see.”

Sarena exclaims after a long pause.

Franky is just watching the impassive women look at each other coldly.

“Ahhhhh, c-could you lower the temperature please? Its freezing in here,” Franky says with his hand up.

The duo turn from looking at each other and now both impassive gazes are gazing at him.

Siberia is the first to speak.

“A human? Why is a human in my room daughter. I hope you understand that the laws forbid mating between our kinds.”

Sarena's glare becomes even more frosty as she looks to her mother, "He is a true [Hero] that grandmother has brought for training."

Siberia gaze changes. Only slightly as her left brow raises by a centimeter.

"I see. So you expect him to obtain great power in the near future," she says as she gazes strongly at Franky, looking him up and down."

"Fine then daughter. If he grows into such a powerful being, then I will petition to allow you to mate with him."

Sarena's gaze widen and her cheeks become a rosy red as she opens her mouth, "No I did-"

"FRANKY!" a loud voice is yelled interrupting the whole room as Sylva just appears in the middle of the room.

She takes a moment and looks around her before her eyes fall on Siberia.

"Sibby, keep practicing on your domain. It's looking pretty strong so far but nowhere near where you really need it."

She then turns and her gaze falls on Franky.

She disappears and appears right next to him.

All forms of heat produced are 1% less effective.

Her presence alone seems to drive away the chill.

Her hand landed on his shoulder and not a second passes as the ice covered room disappears to be replaced with a cave.

"I actually found a dungeon already. A low level one, but it should be adequate and a good challenge."

It takes a moment for Franky's mind to catch up with the changes. One moment he was freezing in a home, the next he is in the middle of a jungle and staring at a cave entrance.

"What?"

She points at a corner near the entrance where a bag, sword, and shield are lying against the stone.

“Everything you need is there. Good luck Franky,” she exclaims before moving her hand away and disappearing... leaving him alone in the wilderness.