

Abyssal A 101

Chapter 101: Nova Core

Watching the flames dance from one corpse to another, Alice knew she had to stop this and soon. She could not let the flames grow any bigger or else she would not be able to control it anymore until it has destroyed everything around it.

Gritting her teeth, she exerted her control over the flames as an imaginary shackle locked around its neck, forcing it to halt in place.

Alice could feel a hateful glare directed towards her but she already knew her flame had its own temper.

Ignoring its glare, Alice started to gather the flames back towards herself. Lashing out wildly, the flames cried out in rebellion, seeking to fuel itself so that it could break out of Alice's control.

It felt as though she was wrangling a large untamed dragon with a simple rope and her tiny body was dragged away by its strength.

Gritting her teeth, Alice glared back at the flames before remembering what Allura had done during their training.

She recalled the way she controlled the flames and how she felt when her objective synced up with what the flame desired.

"Fine, if you want to show your power then so be it." Alice scoffed as released her control.

Seeing this, the flame was confused momentarily before happiness overtook it. Wanting to destroy the closest thing to it, it charged towards the fleeing figure of a beast.

However, its happiness was short as it could feel the direction of the charge being changed.

'!!!'

Behind it, Alice was channelling all of the flames towards the space between her hands.

She wasn't dragging the fire against its will. Instead, she allowed it to burn freely. All she did was turn the direction of its charge ever so slightly and worked with the flow.

'Envision the control that Allura demonstrated. How she gathered all the power into a single focused point.' Alice recited to herself as violet flames seemed to be sucked away by an invisible hole in the space between her palms.

In the distance, Allura stood up in a panic while Gin was shocked by her sudden movements.

"What the hell!? Did a rock get in your boots? What's going on?" Gin asked as she had almost pushed him off the roof.

"Alice is trying something stupid." Allura frowned.

"So just like you most of the time? Didn't you see what she was like during the fight with the Maiden? Like Master like student." Gin shrugged.

Smacking Gin on the head out of annoyance, Allura could see the movement of the flames.

The method was different but she understood what Alice was doing.

She was trying to replicate the skill she had developed after obtaining mastery over her own Sigils.

"So what's going on?" Gin asked, understanding that Allura was worried.

"She's trying to replicate my skill, Nova Core-"

"PFFF!!! WHAT ARE YOU STILL STANDING AROUND HERE FOR YOU MAD WOMAN!? GO STOP HER!!" Gin shouted in a panic after spitting out his drink.

The skill Nova Core was one that gathered all of the power from the user's surroundings, whether that be flames or something else, and condensed it into a single point. Without precise control, the process will collapse in on itself and despite looking correct, it will explode at the last moment, harming the user.

Usually, the user would not be harmed by their Sigil power but this was different. This was one that gathered power from all around them, including foreign powers.

When he was young and had reached the threshold of Abyss Lord, Gin had felt overconfident about his control and tried to replicate the Nova Core using his Death Mist. The result of which left him on the verge of death and changing the map of the Abyss. In the aftermath, a giant crater was created where almost no beast could survive.

Those that did mutated into something much stronger than their usual counterpart thus named the Hell's Basin.

"..." Staying silent, Allura didn't reply to Gin and only observed the situation.

"Talk to me dammit! We have to stop her unless you want her to blow herself up!" Gin shouted in frustration.

Even though he was used to Allura's antics, it had only gotten worse after they met Alice. The amount of danger he had seen them get into while Allura only watched was far too many!

"I... I think she's actually doing it." Allura muttered, blinking her eyes in disbelief.

"Huh?????" Questioning what he had just heard, Gin blinked his eyes before looking towards Alice's direction. He could see the flow of power gathering between her hands and despite the potency of the flames that surrounded her along with numerous powers belonging to the beasts, she was not struggling.

'Is it because the flames cancel out the powers of the Abyss? The two sources of power are neutralising each other right now in a delicate balance.' Allura thought with a frown.

While the end result will be the same, Alice had essentially created a new process to invoke the skill Nova Core.

'Sh*t! She can't handle anymore!' Widening her eyes, Allura could see the struggle appearing on Alice's face.

Even if the powers are balancing each other out, it didn't mean her body could withstand such pressure!

Rushing out, Allura transformed into a burst of flames and appeared by Alice's side.

"That's enough. Focus your aim, fire the Nova Core and funnel the rest of the power into propelling the blast." Allura instructed, wanting Alice to use this chance to improve her control.

Surprised by Allura's sudden appearance, Alice focused her mind and nodded her head.

Her target was going to be the sky above them!

Gritting her teeth, she leaned back slightly and aimed the unstable orb of fluctuating light above her and relinquished her control, firing the spark that was propelled by a trail of violet flames.

The spark dyed the entire battlefield in a white radiance as every Hunter and beast halted their movements momentarily, distracted by the appearance of the spark.

Within that silence, the spark detonated 300 meters above the ground.

***BANG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

A stellar flare containing a myriad of colours burst forth as sparks of light scattered around the battlefield as though it was tiny stars in the sky. A swirl of vibrant purple and bright crimson webbed out before collapsing in on itself once more, sending out waves upon waves of violet shockwaves that knocked man and beast alike off their feet.

Staring at this phenomenon, Allura could already tell that it was no longer the same skill as her Nova Core.

Turning her attention away from the explosion, Allura looked at Alice and sighed in relief seeing that she didn't harm herself with that attack.

"You're gonna feel a little sore tomorrow since your body can't handle this much power. It seems like you somewhat understand how you should control these flames but remember to be careful." Allura warned as Alice nodded her head.

"But overall, it wasn't bad kid. I'm surprised you actually managed to recreate my skill." Allura chuckled while patting Alice on the head.

"It was the only way I could've stopped the fire from spreading. But I found out that if I use small amounts and target it at beasts, it's more likely to listen to my commands." Alice smiled, feeling happy about the praise she got from Allura.

"Try to limit it and see what it can do with your first Sigil. And remember, think outside the box. If nothing happens don't worry since you're still making plenty of progress." Allura smiled as she gave Alice one last pat on the head before disappearing.

Taking a deep breath, Alice looked up at the lingering effects of the skill before retrieving the remnants of the violet flame.

Tiny sparks of purple danced into her palms as she could tell the flame had been weakened. Unless she activates her skill, it will fizzle out and disappear.

'Without beasts or humans with Sigils to fuel itself, the fire disappears. But if it can latch onto a source of power, it'll produce a power far greater than what I can accomplish.' Alice thought to herself, remembering the power brought forth by the Nova Core.

She glanced at the army of beasts still advancing towards the city.

Despite the large number, a large portion of the beasts had been dispatched already as Neal had his Hunters fire off a barrage of long-range skills.

In such a large battle, individual prowess no longer mattered unless you had the power to change the flow of battle in one fell swoop.

Everyone was fodder that could be killed by a stray blast.

Shaking her head, Alice activated her first Sigil. There was one last skill she wanted to test out. If this succeeds, it'll confirm her thoughts regarding the nature of her second Sigil.

Reopening her wounds, she scattered her blood into the air before using the power of the Maiden to spread the blood as far as she could.

Ignoring the headache, Alice knew that she couldn't keep burning her blood with her violet flames. If she did, she'd run low and suffer the consequences of blood loss.

Watching the fumes spread out, she could sense a faint connection that allowed her to spread the fumes out.

Snapping her finger, small sparks could be seen in the air but after doing so, the effects of her blood disappeared.

'I can set the fumes on fire but if I do, the effects disappear. I don't know how much damage I can actually do with them but I doubt this is how I want to use my power...' Alice frowned.

However, just as she was about to dismiss the synergy between her first and second Sigil, a thought appeared in her mind.

'If I can set my blood on fire whenever I want to cancel Abyss powers, does that mean my blood can passively reduce the influence of the Abyss?'

Similar to her first Sigil, she imagined it as a passive and active effect. The active would be to burn away power while the passive may be reducing the effectiveness.

With this thought in mind, she narrowed her eyes towards one of the beasts that was approaching her.

"A perfect target." Alice smiled as her first Sigil manifested on her arm.

Chapter 102 Knight of Thorns

Her target was a figure who was covered from head to toe in silver armour and wielded a large greatsword but that wasn't the main defining trait. Through the gaps of the armour and around them, a myriad of black and red spikes continuously stabbed out without care for its surroundings.

[Knight of Thorns - ♦♦♦♦]

'Seems like it's able to mark anything it touches and have the thorns home in onto the target. Not only that, it's able to manipulate the thorns to act as a shield. Only two of its abilities are known to me while a third is still unknown.' Alice thought to herself but that didn't matter since the nature of this experiment, if successful, will allow her to render the beast powerless.

Reaching into her pouch, Alice pulled out a vial of healing blood while keeping her eye on the Knight.

The Knight was doing the same as it had been looking for the source of the purple flames. Allowing Alice to drink the contents of her vial, it entered a combat stance and waited for her to do the same.

"For a beast aren't you honourable." Alice couldn't help but remark as her wounds closed up one after another.

With her blood now replenished, she made several cuts on her left arm before sealing the wounds so that she didn't die of blood loss.

Taking a deep breath, Alice calmed her mind and raised her dagger to guard against the Knight.

Silence dawned between the two as the roars of war screamed out around them.

They were waiting for the perfect chance to begin this fight as the explosion of a cannonball nearby served as their starting sign.

***BANG!!!**

Both fighters charged toward one another as Alice activated the abilities of her first Sigil, boosting her physical power to its max.

***CLANG!!!**

Parrying the first cleave down using her dagger, Alice could feel the weight behind the slash as it had almost caused her to fall to her knees, but she wouldn't be defeated so easily.

Not only was this a battle for her to experiment with her idea, but it was also a battle to test her close quarters combat!

Stepping to the side, Alice adjusted her grip on her dagger into a reverse grip and stabbed it into the gaps of the Knight's armour but a bundle of thorns shot out, forcing her to pull her arm back before splashing some blood towards the Knight.

Her second Sigil manifested on her eye as the thorns seemed to shrink momentarily.

Slashing up with its sword, the Knight released a trail of thorns from the ground, threatening to pierce Alice as she transformed her dagger into a shield, protecting her as she landed on the ground.

'The fumes didn't seem to do much other than reduce the size of the thorns momentarily. Hmm... Perhaps I'm doing it wrong.' Alice frowned as she had another idea in mind.

Transforming the shield back into a dagger, she threw it towards the Knight while it was attached with her threads.

Purposely missing the Knight, Alice pulled back on the threads while charging towards the beast. Three needles of blood hovered above her arm while the Knight parried the dagger behind it.

Twisting its body, it followed up the parry with a horizontal swing but Alice had long seen it coming thanks to the powers of Cayla.

Sliding across the ground to dodge the blade, Alice launched a kick towards the Knight's head but a wall of thorns blocked her path.

Flicking her finger, one of the blood needles shot out, bursting into flames and burning the wall of thorns away before extinguishing.

There was not enough fuel for it to sustain itself but just enough to burn away at the defence!

With the amount of blood needed for this needle memorised in her mind for future fights, Alice managed to kick the Knight's helmet, forcing it to stumble back while Alice swung the dagger behind its knees and pulled the threads, causing it to fall onto its back.

Taking the two needles, Alice stabbed it into the eyehole and controlled the blood to invade its body.

At that moment, Alice gained a brief view of the Knight's body and jumped back, allowing the knight to stand back up.

'That wasn't enough blood to burn it from the inside out since the most I can do is activate a small spark. However, if my theories are correct, I should be seeing the effects soon.' Alice narrowed her eyes as she prepared to defend.

Growling in anger, the Knight slammed its hand down, expecting a field of thorns to burst forth yet nothing happened, causing it to look down in confusion as a wide grin formed on Alice's face.

With her blood circulating within the Knight's body, so long as she retains control and it doesn't get consumed by the target's blood, she can stop their abilities from activating!

While her flames may have reduced the potency of her poison, it has traded it with something much better. The ability to cancel out beast and Sigil powers!

However, this was not permanent as the Knight was able to conjure more thorns after his first attempt failed.

'Seems like it'll only work for a short period. If I turn my blood into a dry powder of a different form, I'll be able to create a poison type ability that shuts out Sigil power. I can also try the same with my dagger and have it inject my blood every time I land a hit.' Alice chuckled as ideas continuously flooded her mind.

Unable to contain herself, Alice felt euphoric. She wanted to find more, experience more, know more. All of these are tools for her vengeance. The day where she kills her father after he is unable to fight back with his powers sent shivers of joy down her back.

"Ah~ Ahahahaha! I have to thank you Mr Knight. Allow me to finish you off without pain." Alice smiled as her cheeks were flushed with excitement.

Flicking her hand, her dagger was changed into a sword as she ran the blade along her arm.

Blood was siphoned from her body as a crimson edge appeared on the blade.

Adjusting her grip, she dashed towards the Knight as her Sigil manifested on her eye.

The edge of her blade lit up with a violet flame as she twisted her body and dodged a wave of thorns.

Cleaving her blade horizontally, the thorns burst forth with the same violet flame and was reduced to nothingness.

*BANG!!!

Stomping down, she charged forward once more like a speeding train.

Panicking from the sudden burst of power, the Knight jumped back and sent a wave of thorns towards Alice to halt her advance.

However, Alice was prepared.

Snapping her finger, she siphoned more blood from her body before launching forward in an arc. The arc of blood burst into flames just before hitting the thorns and erased them with ease.

But the flames didn't stop there. After piercing through the wall of thorns, it rushed towards the Knight, wanting to reduce it to ashes.

Letting out a roar of defiance, the Knight twisted its body and cleaved down with his blade, wanting to split the flames in half but it disappeared before the sword could come into contact.

Alice had cancelled her second Sigil in order to stun the Knight momentarily. This gap in reaction was all she needed as she was already in front of the beast, her sword pulled back for a large swing.

Gathering as much power as she could from her small body, Alice cleaved her with the flaming sword.

Wanting to parry the blade, the Knight watched as the fire ate away at his sword without any resistance and carved deep into its body.

*BANG!!!!

A wall of purple fire erupted from the slash, burning the Knight to oblivion as Alice had an idea on how to control these flames.

After all, they were created from her blood and used her blood as a source of fuel.

Thus, all she needed to do was to have her blade consume the blood, erasing the fuel needed for the flames.

Adjusting her grip on the blade, she watched as the blood was absorbed and the fire slowly disappeared.

'I can kill three star beasts with relative ease now. But I need to be careful since some beasts are stronger than the others. This Knight was a good matchup for me since it seemed like it can only use thorns.' Alice thought to herself, understanding that anomalies can always happen. Just because she can kill one three star beast doesn't mean she could kill others.

Shaking her head, Alice could already feel dizziness from having used so much blood. Even with her resistance to Abyss Blood, she didn't want to keep drinking healing vials if she could help it.

Looking towards the other side of the battlefield, she could see countless bolts of lightning striking down from above and understood that Ria was also experimenting with her powers. In a battle like this where anything can happen, it was the best place to train.

The threat of death that invokes their will to live, the situations that forces their mind to find a way out. It was a perfect training environment.

'Seems like I'll have to ask Allura to give us more training like this one. I also need to improve on my close quarters combat since I didn't choose the ranged option with my second Sigil.' Alice thought to herself before making her way back to the city.

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"And so the long forgotten Abyss Lord of Death has revealed himself once more. I had expected the old goat to have died by now but he still lives even after the wounds we gave him." A shadowed figure narrowed his gaze at the pool of water that reflected the battle between the White Death and Gin.

"So be it, we will finish him off in due time. The loss of the White Death is unfortunate but it's nothing we can't recreate. But the essence of war we have collected this time is delectable indeed." He smiled as he conjured a bird made from ice.

"Sent a message to Mahri, have her make plans for two of the Lords that reside nearby. First, the Lord sealed under the domain of the Crimson Princess. The second, the Lord under the Slaughter Docks." The man ordered as the ice bird melted into a pool of water and disappeared.

Chapter 103 - Allura's New Assignment

With the battle nearing its end, Alice made her way back to Allura while Ria continued to go wild as she had more stamina and control over her powers. Compared to Alice, she was better at a battle of attrition.

The only thing holding her back was how much stress her body could withstand by constantly charging herself with lightning.

Sitting up on the clock tower again, Alice could see Gin keeping his eye on Ria while Allura scanned the battlefield for anything that interested her.

"Now, let's talk about your fights and what you learned. First of all, I'll need to scold you a little because of two points." Allura sighed as she flicked Alice on the head, almost causing her to fall off but managed to stabilise herself.

"I do believe my words were for you to experiment with the first Sigil because we don't know the synergy and the second Sigil was dangerous. The reason why I didn't step in earlier is because I can't always be there to cover for you. So you need to sort your own stuff out without me interfering.

I'm glad you managed to find a way to control the flames but either way, it was still very dangerous for you." Allura said as she held up one finger.

"The second point is for copying my skill. You don't know what kind of power it was capable of and yet you still tried it. Reckless as hell and you could've blown yourself up due to the backlash of not controlling the skill properly.

Thankfully, you succeeded so I didn't need to find a healer for you but be careful when you try to copy techniques you have no idea about." Allura shook her head as Alice nodded, knowing that she was a little too reckless this time.

It was good that things turned out well but she had ignored the warnings and she could tell that Allura was both upset and relieved that nothing dangerous happened.

"A bit ironic coming from you but I suppose even you understand the dangers." Gin shrugged as Allura replied by kicking him off the clocktower.

"M*therf*cker!!!" Gin shouted as he didn't expect her to kick him like this.

"As I was saying, I'm glad things turned out well but be careful about copying techniques without understanding them properly, okay?" Allura sighed as she scratched her hair. She couldn't say much since she was just as if not more reckless than Alice.

'I suppose this is what my old teacher and her highness thought when I was growing up.' Allura thought to herself fondly before shaking her head.

"So, would you like to share what you've learned thus far?" Allura asked, knowing that Alice was probably feeling excited about her discoveries.

And just as expected, she could see Alice's eyes light up at that moment and started to explain everything she knew about her power. How the fire worked and how it changed the effects of her first Sigil.

As she was listening, Allura couldn't help but think about the deadly potential her flames held. The fact that she could momentarily cut off the Sigil's power means that those who are able to survive due to this power will lose that benefit.

'Seems like Alice might be developing towards having Anti Hunter type Sigils. If she unlocks a resonance, I wonder what kind of abilities it'll give her by then. Even with just these two Sigils, she could probably fight the ice girl she fought against at the training hall and win pretty easily...' Allura thought to herself as she might have to adjust their schedule a little.

Her original idea was for them to leave this city once the battle cleared up. But now that Alice had explained what she had learned, it might be a good chance for her to see her own improvements.

'I wonder... Perhaps I can bribe the academy and have them fight a spar with Alice. I'll let Alice figure out how she wants to do it since I can't keep holding her hand.'

Thinking up to this point, Allura nodded her head as the next destination was clear. It was the academy tower of Zadash.

She hasn't made it a secret that she's not fond of their methods but as it stands, they are some of the best people to teach Alice what she needs to know.

And that is experience in fighting other Hunters.

"Alice!" Allura called out as Alice turned her head.

"Hm? What is it?"

"I have a new assignment for you." Allura grinned, knowing that Alice would struggle. Not with the fighting but rather communication between people.

"Once Ria comes back and the fighting finishes up, I want you to schedule a duel with some of the best students within the Academy. Have Neal vouch for you. I want you to be able to defeat students with three Sigils and a resonance like the ones we saw the other day. However, this time me and Gin won't be around so it's all up to you and Ria.

We can't keep holding your hand after all, you must learn the ways of the people yourself." Allura chuckled as Gin paused.

"Huh? Why wouldn't I be around?" Gin pointed at himself in confusion.

"Because you and I will be busy dealing with the aftermath of this fight. Surely you felt it too, right? Or are you getting old?" Allura raised an eyebrow.

"You mean the guy peeping on the fight? Yeah, I felt it." Gin nodded. Not only that, it was a familiar gaze, one that sent a chill down his back. There are only a handful of people who could cause him to sweat and they were all Abyss Lord level Hunters.

One man comes to mind but if it was indeed him, then Allura was correct. They'll need to leave this city for a while and distance themselves from Ria and Alice so the stronger Hunters won't target the two girls.

'Ria isn't known to many people, especially not those that are higher up. There have been many to impersonate as my family to gain fame and fortune so I doubt the Eclipse b*stards will give a sh*t. But it's better to be safe than sorry.'

"Well then there you go. The two of us will be sorting some loose ends up and having some fake trails set up around the Abyss. With you showing yourself in Zadash, there will be some level of interest generated but if you show up elsewhere, it'll hopefully balance out the interest in this area." Allura explained as Gin nodded.

"Alright. I'm assuming we're going to be hiring the services of the main branch of the Underground?"

"Bingo." Allura smiled, snapping her finger and pointing at Gin.

"They're a little expensive but nothing we can't deal with."

"Urg... Fine. I'll set off once I say goodbye to Ria. It's going to be a while before we can show up again then if we have to set up fake trails." Gin scratched his hair in annoyance as he didn't want to be away from his granddaughter if possible.

"Oh it'll be fine. It's not like we'll be completely blind on what they're going through. Plus, can't you always send letters?" Allura waved her hand dismissively, but Gin only rolled his eyes.

Talking between themselves for a little while, they spotted Ria making her way back from the battlefield.

Compared to how she was when she left, she seemed considerably gloomier and more annoyed by her current state of attire. After the battle, her clothes were barely intact as countless rips and tears could be seen across the skirt.

"***** More durable they said, made from great materials they claimed, what bullsh*t. Couldn't even handle me fighting 3 of the damn beasts at once. After it got scratched my own damn lightning started to fry the f*cking thing." Ria's curses could be heard as Gin snapped his finger, tearing the space apart and bringing out another set of clothes for Ria.

Looking at one another, Alice and Allura couldn't help but laugh with the mighty Abyss Lord of Death being a portable wardrobe for his granddaughter.

Once Ria got changed, they noticed that the final clean up for the battle was beginning as most of the dangers had been cleared up.

Despite the main danger, the White Death, being taken care of by Gin, fighting the army of beasts still caused deaths on the Hutner's side. Mixed with the corpses of beasts were the cold lifeless bodies of brave Hunters who did not flee and fought for their city.

Looking at all of the deaths across the battlefield, Alice couldn't help but be confused by their sentiment.

She wasn't sure why they would risk themselves for the city. To her, there was no need to die this kind of death. To put it bluntly, it seemed a little wasteful.

"You seem confused. Care to share a nugget of your thoughts?" Allura asked, noticing Alice's eyes linger on the corpses.

"Why do they sacrifice themselves like this? A city can always be rebuilt. Most of the people have left already. Now their family will come back to the city and be greeted by their corpses." Alice asked with a slight frown on her face.

"Hmm... You could say it's because they want to protect the place they lived in and belonged to. They want to make sure it doesn't reach their friends and family. To you, this city is just the first stop of your journey. For some of them, this city may mean more. It might mean everything they lived for. We can't say.

But what we can do is respect their choice in risking their life for what they believe in. One day, when you have a place or people you wish to protect, you'll understand their feelings." Allura smiled, patting Alice's head.

With so much of her childhood being isolated in a prison by the Zenia's, Allura wants to make sure Alice understands the nuances of human emotion and why people do what they do.

Hearing her response, Alice could only nod despite still not understanding why they would throw their lives away like this. Perhaps in the future she would, but right now she didn't see the goal behind such actions.

Chapter 104 - Beyond The 9th Sigil

After Ria had changed, both Gin and Allura decided to let the two of them figure out how to deal with Allura's latest assignment.

One that'll have them request duels with the Academy's best students and see how they fare.

Their mindset was one where if the two girls performed well, they could rest easy and have them continue their journey. If not, they'll continue to watch over them and delay some plans.

"So we're meant to ask Neal to give us a recommendation right?" Ria asked while juggling some gold coins in her hand. Since Allura and Gin didn't want the two to bribe their way in, they had confiscated most of their money except a handful of gold.

"Mnm. Allura said we should have Neal vouch for us so we can actually challenge them. I suppose if we didn't, they wouldn't give us the time of day." Alice nodded her head as Ria sighed.

"Alright. I think it should be fine since we just have to find the people we fought last time since they can attest to our strength. It might give us an upper hand." Ria shrugged.

Right now, she was wearing a white and red oriental shirt with rope bows on the shoulders and sleeves. A pair of black shorts and black tights with a pair of boots.

Compared to her previous outfit, there were fewer fancy attachments but proved to be easier to move in.

"I think Neal might be a little busy right now though since the fight had just finished and he needs to tally up how many people died and what they can retrieve from the corpses of the beasts right?"

"Meh it'll be fine. It was him who asked us to send a message to Allura and grandfather. Grandfather dealt with the biggest threat so we'll be fine asking him for a favour." Ria shrugged, understanding that if it wasn't for her grandfather or Allura, this city would be wiped off the map by now.

It was also the first time she had seen her grandfather use that much power. Seeing the space shatter and the strange figure from beyond the void staring down at the world, it sent chills down her spine.

She couldn't help but wonder if she'll achieve the same kind of power when she reached the level of an Abyss Lord.

'I wonder if that thing is a resonance or is it some being I need to commune with.' Ria thought to herself but turned her mind to other matters.

Right now, she only had three Sigils. Far too early to be thinking on the level of Abyss Lords, a status that many have spent their entire life trying to achieve only to fall short. The gulf between six Sigils and seven was a gap that only a handful of beings had crossed. And even then, few have achieved 8 or even the fabled 9th Sigil.

"Alice." Ria called out.

"Hm? What is it?"

"What do you think it takes for a person to become a god?" Ria asked, causing Alice to raise an eyebrow.

"Do you mean like... God-like power or 'God' God?"

"Both. Godlike power and a being like the Moon Goddess, Sun God and Eclipse God." Ria explained as Alice fell silent.

With her having spent most of her life in the Zenia prison, she wasn't too sure regarding the status of 'God'. She had heard the term, understood their revered 'omnipotence' to some degree, and knew that they kept each other in check or else one of the Gods would force everyone under their rule.

But to achieve godlike power and status, Alice had no clue.

"Don't know. Never studied up on religion."

"I think the secret lies in what goes beyond the 9th Sigil. You see, we have all of these stories on the 9th Sigil, how it can shatter the land and change the world. But we never hear of the 10th Sigil? Is there nothing beyond the 9th? I doubt it. Because beyond the power of the 9th we hear about Apostles and the Gods themselves." Ria smiled, clearly excited by the prospect of maybe becoming a God.

"So... You think Gods are just very powerful Hunters?"

"No no, they have something that Hunters don't. A divinity that allows them to bless and appoint apostles. But imagine if we could become Gods." Ria laughed as Alice tapped her chin but shook her head.

"I have no use of becoming a God. I think... I'll be satisfied once I deal with my old family."

"That's fair. Honestly, I only have a gripe with the Eclipse cult. If I can weed them out and wipe them from existence, I'll be happy. And if being a God means I can do just that then I'll try and achieve that level of power. Plus, I think it'll be rather cool if I can say to my grandfather that I became a God." Ria grinned, imagining the shock on her grandfather's face.

Hearing this, Alice couldn't help but wonder what Allura would look like if she did the same.

'She said I'm part of her family now... As Alice Agnelia. If I became a God, would she be happy? Then again, I need to sort out the task with Cayla. Kaden planted the eye into me and even though Allura said I didn't need to do it, I want to repay her kindness.'

Allura didn't seem to want Cayla to wake up so soon as it may put into motion events beyond her control, leaving Alice unsure as the stronger she gets, the more active Cayla becomes. It wouldn't be long until she is always awake.

"We're here. Let's hope instructor Neal isn't busy right now." Ria stretched as she pushed open the doors and made her way up to Neal's office after letting the receptionist know.

Knocking on Neal's door, Ria waited for him to call the two of them inside before opening the door.

Sitting behind his desk, Neal looked exhausted as he had just finished fighting but now had to deal with all of the reports and documents he needed to do after the battle.

A brief glance of the document told Alice everything she needed to know as it was profiles on the deceased and extended family.

"How may I help the two of you today?" Neal asked with a small smile. Despite his fatigue, he was patient with the two as it was thanks to them that Gin and Allura actually made a move.

He could remember the power demonstrated by the White Death. Had it not been for Gin, this city would've become history.

"We're here on a small assignment by Allura. She said she wanted us to fight some talented students at the Academy and to have you vouch for us and our capabilities." Alice explained as Neal tapped his fingers for a moment before nodding.

"I see. It's not difficult to do usually. However, thanks to the battle that had just taken place, it's a little hard to schedule anything with the Academy. I know you had some interactions with the special students last time but it's still a gamble on whether or not their professors would allow this. If you want, I can take you to a meeting with them and see if we can do anything.

If not, you'll have to wait until everything is sorted out." Neal smiled bitterly, feeling bad that he couldn't guarantee anything.

Looking at one another, Ria gestured for Alice to do the talking while she stood back since it was Allura's request.

Ria guessed that Allura wanted Alice to become more proactive rather than passive hence it wouldn't be good for her to do all the talking.

Seeing that Ria wasn't planning on giving her input, Alice could only sigh and look at Neal.

Thinking to herself momentarily, she opened her mouth.

"If you can get us a meeting with them it'll be appreciated. I'm sure we'll find a way to request a proper duel with them. I doubt they'll do it for free so I have some rewards if they need. Some Scarlet Powder bombs and one vial of Luna Siren Blood." Alice offered as they were left over from her hunt.

She doubted that she'd need them any time soon so if it can help complete Allura's task then so be it.

"Scarlet Powder Bomb? I'm not sure if the Luna Siren Blood will be helpful as it's a very situational Abyss Blood but I'm surprised you got enough Scarlet Powder for a Scarlet Powder Bomb. Keep that a secret for now and see if you can get a duel without cost. If things start to look bad we can use that for negotiations if you desire." Neal suggested as Alice nodded her head.

"Alright. Then give me a little bit of time since I need to deal with this paperwork. It shouldn't be too long though so you can either use the training rooms or stay at the lobby and wait for me to finish."

Leaving Neal to his paperwork, Alice and Ria made their way down to the lobby.

"Seems like step one is done for now. If the negotiations succeed, who do you want to fight?" Ria asked, curious as to who Alice will choose.

"I think I want a rematch with Chloe. I was arrogant last time and lost because of it. I want to see how much I've improved since then. Though if Chloe refuses then I think I'll be interested in fighting Wess Froid. He seemed to be the leader so I want to know what he's capable of.

Last time Allura mentioned that they were Grade A students from the academy so I want to see how well I hold up against him." Alice replied honestly as Ria couldn't help but whistle at her choice.

"Going straight for the leader I see. I like it. If you didn't say Wess then I was going to say I wanted to try my hand at fighting himahaha. Fighting beasts is nice and all but nothing beats winning battle against another Hunter. The moment of understanding and the mind games that come with Hunter battles are something else." Ria chuckled, clearly excited about this rematch.

Seeing this, Alice chuckled softly at her enthusiasm. In a sense, she too was excited about this rematch.

Chapter 105 - Nixia

As they were waiting in the lobby, it didn't take long for an exhausted Neal to approach the two.

"Well, are you two ready? We'll be taking a trip to the Academy tower that's nearby since most of them have returned to the Academy once the fighting had stopped." Neal scratched his hair as he had finally done enough work to warrant a small break.

Nodding her head, Alice and Ria started to follow Neal as he took them up the tower and made his way to the bridge connecting to the other tower.

"I believe the S grade and A grade students are at the Academy right now with their professors. I've already notified them that I'm wanting a quick meeting with them so it's all up to chance now. I can help to some extent but as I said, I can't guarantee that they'll listen to your request."

"That's fine." Alice nodded, understanding that it was difficult for Neal as well despite his status.

As they reached the Academy tower, Alice glanced at the outer appearance and shrugged. It was no different to the other towers but the inside was probably different compared to the Hunters Guild.

With Neal taking the lead for now, they simply stayed silent while he talked to the receptionists and arranged a meeting with the professors, stating that he wished to arrange a quick sparring session for two people he vouched for.

Thanks to Neal's status and his recent efforts in helping with the city's defence, they accepted his request for a meeting to discuss the details regarding the spar.

"Phew... Seems like things are going smoothly. However getting to actually spar with the A grade or S grade students will not be easy since you have to prove you are worth their attention. Ria should be fine since she beat Freida last time but you might have to go out of your way to prove your power Alice." Neal reminded.

"I'm sure Alice will be fine. She was limited by one Sigil last time after all. But now that she's gotten her second Sigil her adaptability and power has improved dramatically." Ria reassured as Neal raised an eyebrow in surprise.

"You got a second Sigil? Congratulations. Can you tell me which beast you got it from? I can update it from my end so you don't have to worry about updating it yourself." Neal asked as Ria immediately understood her mistake and cursed inwardly.

Meanwhile, Alice was unsure of how to explain her Sigil.

After all, the violet flames weren't something that should be disclosed lightly.

'I can probably try to hide by violet flames by having it activate through my first Sigil in combat.' Alice thought to herself as she opened her mouth.

"I got the Sigil from a Blood Widow. Wasn't exactly what I wanted since it only lets me control a tiny bit of blood from my body." Alice smiled and shrugged while Ria couldn't help but give a small thumbs up.

A reply of half-truths and lies.

"A Blood Widow? I can see why you would need the Scarlet Powder and Lunar Siren Blood. Alright, I'll mark it down when I get back then. But I'm surprised you actually hunted a Blood Widow. That's a beast that even Hunters with three Sigils would struggle at." Neal praised as he guessed that it was Allura's arrangement to have Alice fight a Blood Widow.

'I didn't think she would have Alice fight a Blood Widow at this stage... I suppose that's what makes her powerful compared to the other Hunters. Even when Alice was just at one Sigil, that killing intent and lust for battle was not something even average Hunters could compare to.' Neal thought to himself.

'Like master like student.'

As they were being led to the waiting rooms, Alice could see the difference between the Hunter's Guild and the Academy tower.

Even while they were simply walking through the corridors, Alice could see small statues of what seemed to be important figures to the history of the Academy. Graduates who have achieved great feats throughout the world, people who have changed the Academy for the better and so on.

"Is this Academy unique to Zadash? Or is it part of a larger organization like the Guild?" Alice asked curiously.

"This Academy is merely a branch of a larger system. Each city has its own Academy branch, some bigger than others. The Academy tower in Zadash is considered a medium branch while the main branches have entire compounds that can fit several of these towers within the location." Neal explained.

"Are you interested in enrolling by any chance?"

Hearing this, Alice paused for a moment before shaking her head.

She was indeed curious about academy life because she was deprived of the opportunities. However, with what she needs to do right now, going to the academy may delay Allura's plans further.

'We're already delaying things because she wants me to properly understand what I have discovered about my power.' Alice thought to herself.

But if she was to answer truthfully, then yes, she was curious about school. She had a small desire to find out the things she has missed out in life while imprisoned away from sight. The Academy life being one of them.

Noticing the slight interest that Alice was showing towards the Academy, Ria couldn't help but smile understanding that Alice must've been deprived of such opportunities.

But to her, the Academy life was nothing interesting. Most would go to make friends and get to know people but she could never get along with those in her class.

Her own history and interactions of the Cult made it difficult as every time she saw one of the students, she couldn't help but picture what they would look like if they were bathed in a pool of blood and left for her to kill.

Alice was no exception, and she knew this was a side effect of her participation in the ritual.

However, she was able to control these thoughts to some degree, so it didn't bother her.

After making their way to the waiting room, it didn't take long for one of the professors to arrive as Alice was surprised by their appearance.

She was a tall woman, not as tall as Allura but still far taller than even Neal. Long black hair with a bright blue under colour, heterochronic eyes with the left being blue and the right being yellow.

Her outfit was a rather simple professor suit consisting of a white shirt, tie, black vest and a pair of pants. On top of the suit, she wore a jacket.

"May I assume that these two are the ones that want to spar with our students?" The woman asked as Neal nodded his head.

"Professor Nixia, it's a pleasure to meet you again. And yes, these two are the ones who want to spar with your students. I can personally vouch for their capabilities as they have sparred with some of your students before with one being able to achieve victory." Neal smiled as Nixia squinted her eyes at Alice before turning her gaze to Ria.

"I heard of them. I must say I'm surprised that you had offered such a high price for a simple spar. The amount of trouble that could've come our way if word got out was especially interesting to put it lightly. Regardless, I'm not one to judge what you wish to spend." Nixia shrugged as she massaged her neck.

"It'll be up to the students if they want to spar again. I won't stop you from trying to convince them if you wish."

Hearing this, Neal sighed in relief as Nixia wasn't against them sparring.

Meanwhile, Alice couldn't help but glance above Nixia's head and noticed that she had 6 Sigils available for use.

'I can only see up to 6 Sigils. Considering how Allura has been describing Abyss Lords, I doubt she's reached that level. She's probably someone that's been stuck at this level for a while.' Alice thought to herself as she doubted that they'll see so many Abyss Lord level Hunters in a city like Zadash.

"Follow me." Nixia stated calmly as she didn't wait to see their response and turned around to leave the room.

Looking at one another, Ria and Alice quickly followed behind her as she took them to one of the elevators up into a training facility.

Compared to the Hunter's Guild, there were more training equipment ready for use.

The layout of the tower was similar and they soon, they arrived at the training room with Nixia clapping her hands once.

The moment she did, every student within the room stopped what they were doing and gathered up.

"We have two guests today. They've come with hopes of having a sparring session. Whether you accept or deny is up to you, I will have no input in this. They have been personally vouched by Instructor Neal and one of them managed to achieve a victory against one of our students last time. This should serve as a good opportunity for you to gain some experience.

As there are many of you and only two of them, they will issue the challenge. Do not take it as then thinking you are weak as they are also here to gain experience. It merely means you are worthy to challenge. Do you understand?!" Nixia shouted as all of the students responded in sync.

Seeing this, both Ria and Alice were surprised by their discipline as Nixia turned towards them.

"Please, feel free to challenge at your leisure." Nixia invited as she stepped aside, allowing the two to see all of the choices.

Without hesitation, Alice stepped forward.

Her eyes were locked on Chloe and Chloe understood what was going to happen.

"I wish for a rematch with Chloe." Alice challenged.

"I accept." Chloe bowed slightly. She could still remember the fear she felt during their last battle but this time, she will go all out immediately to ensure a swift victory.

Chapter 106 - Rematch Against Chloe

With Alice challenging Chloe, Ria wanted to wait until their match has finished before she chooses her opponent.

'I have already beaten Freida so I can choose someone else. If Alice doesn't go for Wess, I might go for him. If not, I'll choose one of the S grade students.' Ria thought to herself as she took a seat and watched as Alice prepared herself in the centre of the training room.

"Do you still need a vial of your blood?" Chloe asked, understanding that Alice's weapon required blood to be effective.

"No, it's fine." Alice shook her head with a small smile on her face.

Taking a deep breath, she locked her eyes on Chloe.

She understood the state she needed to be in when she fights. Her lust for battle, killing intent and eagerness were good weapons but had drawbacks of their own. She needed to go for the kill without showing intent, be eager with caution and observe carefully for a gap in Chloe's defence before striking.

She needed to force Chloe to show all of her cards! That's the essence of a fight between Hunters.

Making a cut on her forearm, Alice attached some of her blood to the ends of her threads before sealing up her wound.

"I'm ready whenever."

"Same here." Chloe nodded her head as she took a breath and cold mist started to form around her.

Seeing that the two were ready, Nixia raised her hand.

"Begin!" She shouted, dropping her hand as three Sigils immediately flared across Chloe's body.

Ice manifested around her body, covering her in a set of crystalline robes while her skin changed into a pale blue. Without hesitating, she slammed her hand down, covering the entire arena with frost.

Letting out a breath of cold mist, Chloe furrowed her brows noticing that Alice was gone.

"Huh?!" Widening her eyes, she scanned the battlefield but couldn't find Alice.

'Above!'

Snapping her gaze upwards, she could see Alice charging down with a blade in hand.

Gritting her teeth, Chloe created a shield from ice, parrying Alice's attack before trying to counter with spears.

However, without waiting for the counter, Alice activated her first Sigil and dashed at full speed.

With the sudden increase in speed, Chloe lost track of Alice momentarily as she became flustered, trying to track her opponent.

Since the floor was covered with ice, Alice created spikes with her blood and attached it to the soles of her boots, giving her traction and allowing her to sprint at full speed while circling Chloe, looking for a chance to attack.

'She has already activated her resonance. I know that she is able to release a burst of cold energy that can freeze me, and her control becomes stronger the closer the ice is to her.'

Keeping distance is honestly the best shout right now since I can't fully react to some of the ice just yet.'

Alice thought to herself as she created a dagger with her bracelet and sent it flying towards Chloe who blocked with ease as she expected.

But compared to last time, Alice has a trump card up her sleeve.

Activating her second Sigil, markings appeared on her eye, surprising Chloe and the others who had seen Alice fight before.

Flicking her wrist, several strands of her thread broke out of the ice as Alice had allowed them to be frozen. Commanding the blood using the Maiden's power was simple and didn't require her to manifest her Sigil as it was similar to her passive poison ability.

However, using the abilities of the flames and having it burn through the ice required the activation.

She had lined her threads with a minimal amount of blood so that the flames only appeared momentarily and very difficult to see unless you were looking closely at the threads.

To the ordinary Hunter, it would look as though her threads were slashing through the ice with ease but in reality, they were cancelling out the Abyss's power making the ice disappear.

At the start of this fight, she had already started to set down her traps! She was merely waiting to see if Chloe had any more cards to play before activating this trap.

Watching the threads slash through her ice with ease, Chloe's eyes widened in shock as it was almost as though the ice wasn't even there.

Unable to defend herself even with the ice, she could only watch as the threads wrapped around her, restricting her movements as Alice pulled her off her feet, falling to the ground.

Biting her lip, Chloe refused to admit her loss and activated her Sigil.

However, there was no reaction on the threads as her ice was unable to form on the surface.

Confusion filled her mind but she was unable to react as Alice threw her dagger next to Chloe's head, piercing the ice and missing Chloe entirely.

". . . *sigh* It's my loss this time." Chloe shook her head, understanding that she had been surpassed. Even without a resonance, Alice had nullified her abilities, restricting her and even dealing the 'killing blow'.

With her victory declared, Alice flicked her wrist, retrieving the dagger and threads before adjusting her glove.

Taking a deep breath, she calmed her mind and deactivated her Sigils before drinking a small vial of healing blood. With the activation of her flames, she had burned away some of her blood and it couldn't be retrieved.

She wanted to challenge another student, but it was Ria's time to shine.

Bowing slightly to Chloe, Alice thanked her for the spar and made her way to Ria who raised her hand, waiting for a response.

However, Alice merely stared at her in confusion.

"Ever heard of a high five?" Ria asked but Alice shook her head.

"I don't believe I have."

"It's very simple. Here, just raise your hand like me." Ria chuckled while Alice followed her instructions.

Jogging forward, Ria completed the high five before laughing.

"Now sit back and relax. It's mine turn to shine. You don't mind if I challenge Wess right?" Ria asked.

"I don't mind. Go ahead."

Receiving Alice's confirmation, Ria could feel her excitement bursting through her chest as she jumped to the centre of the room. The ice had already been melted by Chloe and the room was returned to normal.

Wess had already heard Ria's challenge and made his way to the centre while massaging his neck.

"I have four Sigils, would you rather me use three just like you or all four?" Wess asked as Ria held up four fingers without hesitation.

"Very well. I shall respect your choice." Wess nodded as he activated all four of his Sigils immediately. All of them synergised well with one another as his outfit was changed. Instead of the standard school uniform, a set of silver armour adorned his body with a set of white robes with a broken crown floating above his head.

In his right hand, a long silver spear manifested itself while in his left, a golden sword could be seen. Behind him, three swords appeared and hovered in the air.

The moment all four Sigils activated, their air changed as Ria understood that Wess was much stronger compared Freida.

"Would you like any prep time?" Wess asked but Ria shook her head.

"I doubt beasts would give me time to prepare myself so this is fine." Ria smiled, activated her Sigils as lightning started to course through her body.

Nodding at Nixia, Ria took a deep breath and stared at Wess while Nixia signalled the start of this spar.

The moment Nixia's hand dropped, Wess shot forth like a bullet as his spear launched towards Ria, surprising her with the speed momentarily before ducking down to avoid the stab.

'This guy's speed is no joke!' Ria thought to herself in shock.

Going into a handstand, she kicked towards Wess' head as one of the blades protected him while he cleaved down with his sword.

Two of the blades behind him followed suit, cutting off Ria's escape.

Curling her lips into a smile, Ria narrowed her eyes as lightning struck all around her, forcing Wess to jumped back to avoid getting hit.

Getting back on her feet, Ria stretched her body before opening her mouth.

"You know, when the fighting broke out and my teacher threw me into a pit of tens of Abyss Beasts, I had to figure something out with my Sigils. So far, I've only been a close quarters fighter while firing off a few bolts as ranged support.

I've learnt how to gather my power and fire it off in one blast but that's not how I want to fight." She chuckled as Wess was confused by this sudden declaration.

Just as he was about to approach, lightning struck near his feet, stopping his advance.

"Allow me to finish first, thank you. You see, there is only so much lightning my own body can handle before I overwork it and collapse. Same goes for the orbs that I can create which houses my lightning charges that you've seen before. But I discovered something during my fight, a more efficient way of using my lightning." Ria smiled as 3 orbs appeared around her.

Absorbing them into her body, a violent storm of lightning erupted around her as she shot towards Wess, throwing a punch towards his chest as he hastily parried with his spear.

***BANG!!!!**

Slamming into the walls of the arena, Wess kneeled down in pain as he could feel the force behind Ria's vibrating through his body while also leaving traces of lightning that paralysed him to a certain degree.

"Let's just say I can fight at 100% without wasting anything." Ria grinned as this state allowed her to overcharge her body without any drawbacks. She used one orb to propel herself forward at maximum possible speed, one to launch the strongest punch she could and one to blast Wess at the point of impact.

It was not the same as overburdening her body but rather keeping her body perfectly at 100% strength during the whole motion. Too much power at one point and she'll feel the backlash while too little would result in a decrease in power.

Her old control was akin to a tap that kept turning on and off while in this state, the tap was always on at full blast.

"Well then, I hope you'll at least show your resonance unless you want to receive a loss without gaining anything."

Hearing this, Wess couldn't help but chuckle as he stood up and adjusted his stance.

"Very well. . . Then I will fight as though my life is on the line."

Chapter 107 - Jinya

Activating his resonance, a new set of armour covered him from head to toe while his spear and sword combined into a greatsword that flashed with a mixture of blue and purple.

"Unlike my friends, my resonance is Anti Hunter. Despite the appearance, this is not for fighting beasts." Wess warned as he entered a greatsword stance.

Stomping down, he dashed towards Ria as chains burst out of the ground, locking Ria's leg in place as she widened her eyes.

Gritting her teeth, she snapped her fingers and absorbed three orbs before coating her fist in lightning energy.

Twisting her body, she slammed her fist into the face of the greatsword before it could reach her body.

However, that was a feint as Wess used the force of the punch to propel himself into a swing, cutting towards Ria from the right.

"Damn!!" Bending her body back with the help of the chains, Ria was able to dodge the blade. Funneling her lightning charge through her legs, she broke the chains apart before jumping back and taking several deep breaths to calm herself.

Narrowing her eyes at Wess, she noticed that he didn't charge at her.

'What is he up to?' She thought to herself as he broke his greatsword into a pair of longswords and unleashed a flurry of slashes that sent what seemed to be flaming arcs towards her.

Widening her eyes, Ria charged both her fists with lightning and parried every single slash that was sent towards her. Even when Wess appeared in front of her with a cleave, she managed to catch the blades with a grin on her face.

"Anti Hunter? I think it's lacking a bit of power to be classified as Anti Hunter no?" Ria asked but Wess shook his head.

"I never said this was all of my abilities."

At that moment, it seemed as though time was stored in a single moment as every single slash that he had unleashed appeared around the two of them. Kicking off Ria's arm, Wess jumped back before stabbing his swords into the ground.

With his left hand, spectral chains appeared around Ria's body, locking her in place while he targeted her using his right hand.

Clenching his right hand into a fist, all of the slashes charged towards Ria.

Taking a deep breath, Ria gritted her teeth and absorbed five orbs of lightning as power coursed through her body, breaking the chains in half.

With five times her usual max charge flooding her body, Ria created two lightning dragons around her, protecting her body while also parrying every single slash that was 'recorded' by Wess and fired off in an instant.

Watching Ria dismantle his net of slashes, Wess couldn't help but applaud her power.

His Anti Hunter resonance allowed him to 'record' all of the slashes he had unleashed since the start of the activation. Once he has selected a target, the slashes will never miss and will all be unleashed at once.

But despite that, he was witnessing Ria punching all of his slashes away like they were nothing.

Slamming the final slash into the ground, Ria had a grin on her face but her mind was racing.

'Damn... I didn't think Allura asking me to train with Alice would be this helpful.' Ria thought to herself in disbelief as Allura's attacks while mimicking the Blood Maiden was much faster than what Wess demonstrated.

All she had to do was to create a safe spot for herself while dodging most of the slashes and hit them on the way back. It was simply a process of creating gaps if there were none. A brute force method yet proved to be very effective.

With the slashes now dealt with, Ria cracked her knuckles and charged towards Wess.

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While Ria and Alice were occupied at the Academy, both Allura and Gin had made their way down to the Underground.

Approaching Joseph's chamber, they could see the man kneeling in front of the altar once more.

"To think I would have the pleasure of meeting two VIP's entering together, how can I help you two esteemed guests today?" Joseph asked with a smile.

"Information like usual. Though it's not you I want to ask these questions. I'm sure you know what I mean." Allura smiled as she threw an object towards Joseph.

Catching the flying object, Joseph saw what it was and frowned.

A crimson key crafted from what seemed to be red briar and metal. A symbol for the Underground and one that's only given out by the owner.

The people that hold this item in the Abyss could be counted on one hand and Allura happened to be one of them.

". . . Very well. But please understand miss Allura, that we don't like to do this often." Joseph smiled bitterly as a marking appeared on his palm.

Hovering it over the key, one of the briars started to disintegrate as he threw the key back to Allura.

"There are two more uses left. Please allow me a moment while I conduct the ritual."

Nodding her head, Allura waited by the side while storing her key away.

"I should get one myself. But I rarely see the boss I don't believe I'll get the chance." Gin shrugged as he was envious of how useful the key was. It was an item that allowed them to break Underground rules. The most basic key that hand handed out rarely was only allowed to be used once.

Yet the one that Allura has in her possession gave her the same authority as the leader for a total of 5 times, this being the third time she's using it.

"Meh. It was given to me as a trade for a favour in the first place. If you really need it I can give one of the uses left to you if you want." Allura shrugged as such an item didn't hold much value to her. If she

really wanted to or desperately needed the information, she could simply raid the vaults herself for their records.

Watching Joseph draw out the ritual circle while covering parts of his body with the same paint, Allura thought about the questions she wanted answers to and the best way she could get them answered is by asking the leader of the Underground himself.

Activating the ritual, a burst of energy enveloped Joseph's body as his aura started to change. A spectral figure overlapped his own as he opened his eyes and stared at Allura.

"Ah... If it isn't Allura. To what do I owe this pleasure of seeing you again my lady?" 'Joseph' bowed elegantly.

"Jinya, you should know what I want to ask. First of all, how come the Eclipse Cult has found a way to harvest the bodies of the sealed Abyss Lords? Second of all, why do some of the people belonging to the new faction popping up around the place have the aura of a dead god?" Allura asked as Jinya paused and nodded his head.

"I believe the reason as to why the Eclipse Cult has found a way to harvest the bodies of the Abyss Lords is due to their newest Cardinal that has made his existence known to the world. Cardinal Andmos is his name and he wields some interesting powers. At this moment, we do not know his full capabilities nor do we know about his whereabouts. He comes and goes as he pleases." Jinya shrugged.

"As for your second inquiry, my information is limited but their knowledge of blood rituals and pacts far exceed what is known by any of the three religions. Some of the people with information on them have begun to call them the Blood Cult. As for their legitimacy and whom they worship, that is still up for debate but they are making moves across the world.

For the matter of the aura of dead gods... I'm afraid I have no answers."

Hearing this, Allura sighed as she had expected as much.

"Is there anything else you require of me? If not, I would have to say it's quite a terrible use of the Key I have given you. If you wanted answers like these you could've just visited." Jinya chuckled.

"Then help me revoke a few memberships of the Eclipse Cult who are involved in the matter of the White Death. Secondly, I want you to revoke every single membership belonging to the Zenia family and refuse to give them any support of any kind."

Hearing this, Jinya paused as the Zenia family was the leading family in terms of Abyss Blood research and supply. Cutting them off immediately would cause drastic damages.

"The first I can do easily as desecrating the bodies of the old Abyss Lords are looked down upon by both the Sun and Moon. However... The Zenia's are deeply ingrained into our society along with the three Churches. Not to mention their influence on the surface. Cutting them off so suddenly on a whim is... Difficult. Even if it's you who's requesting this." Jinya smiled bitterly.

"If it was anyone else I would've said it's either the Zenia's or me. You know that right? But since it's you, I'll spare you the trouble. Just hinder everything they do from now on. Hinder their businesses, hinder their attempts to collect blood and make sure to expose whatever secrets you can dig up from their house.

Just as a hint, they may struggle to produce more usable Abyss Blood for the world unless they start kidnapping a large number of people for experiments. Use that against them. I want their reputation and trust from the world ruined. You don't have to cut them off if you can't, just make sure they suffer." Allura demanded as Jinya couldn't help but sweat.

Allura had always kept herself a bystander and a neutral party to most things yet for them to receive such a reaction from Allura, he couldn't help but wonder what crimes they committed to deserve this.

"Very well. I would say this request would've been worth two uses but seeing as though I have declined your first request and made you change it due to difficulties on our end, this one will only cost the one use that you have already paid. I believe that is everything you require of me, yes?" Jinya asked as Allura nodded.

"Then I shall bid you farewell and hope to see you soon." Jinya bowed, watching Allura and Gin leave the room.

"Oh boy... The Zenia's are going to suffer for annoying Allura." He shook his head with a sigh.

Chapter 108 Ria's Next Target

Panting heavily, Ria was no longer smiling as she and Wess have been at a standstill. No matter how she approached him, he would always have attacks ready to ward her off.

On the other hand, Wess couldn't end the fight either as Ria was able to parry everything he threw at her.

They were in a stalemate with no cards left to play.

'I've already used up every trick I have up my sleeve. I don't know if he has any more tricks but I have to end it now.' Ria thought to herself as she was already running out of stamina. The fatigue of having lightning constantly surging through her body was now piling up and even if her new technique allowed her to fight without issue, her own stamina was a limiting factor.

Taking a deep breath, Ria charged forth once more but this time she reduced the orbs she absorbed. Instead, planting them across the arena while parrying Wess's blade attacks.

"I can see what you're planning!" Wess shouted out while sending slashes to where she had planted the orbs, exploding them in the process.

"Tsk!" Clicking her tongue, Ria jumped back and gathered 3 orbs and aimed her finger towards Wess.

This was the same skill she had used against the Maiden of the Blood Moon when she was helping Alice.

Only this time, the power she was infusing into this shot was far weaker as she didn't have enough time to charge it as much as she wanted.

Narrowing her eyes, she fired a bolt of lightning towards Wess who managed to guard against it using his sword and parry it off to the side.

But Ria had planned for this.

With the shot having less power than intended, it made it easier for her to control the trajectory! Flicking her finger, the lightning arched up and crashed down on Wess who let out a cry of pain.

Feeling the lightning strip away his armour little by little, he understood that the durability of his resonance was running out and if he didn't do anything it was going to be his loss!

Twisting his body, he gritted his teeth and threw his sword towards Ria as the last of his resonance broke apart.

*BANG!!!

"Oh sh*!!!"

Unable to dodge the blade due to exhaustion and with her attention focused on the lightning, the blade slammed into her chest as blood was drawn.

Her body rolled across the ground as Alice jumped up in shock and ran into the arena with healing blood in hand.

Nivia was doing the same with Wess as both of them were out of commission from that last attack.

"I declare this spar is a tie!" Nivia shouted out while Alice was focused on feeding Ria the healing blood.

*COUGH!!

Choking on the blood momentarily, Ria's wounds started to heal up as she looked up and saw Alice's worried expression.

"Ah thank you. I'm guessing I lost then." Ria sighed but Alice shook her head.

"It was a draw. Wess is out of commission as well. If he didn't throw the sword at the last moment, you would've won this spar."

"The moment I let my guard down at the end means it's my loss. A win should be something I can walk away from." Ria smiled bitterly as she sat up.

"I don't think I can challenge anyone elseahaha. My own skills are lacking. Are you thinking of challenging some others?" Ria asked curiously since she knows that Alice didn't go all out.

However, to her surprise, Alice shook her head.

"I've learned plenty this time round. And even if I was to fight some others, I'm not sure if I can win without relying on the violet flames."

Hearing this, Ria understood that Alice wanted to keep her flames a secret if she could and doing more spars would only bring her trouble down the line.

"Alright. I'm pretty sure we finished Allura's assignment anyways. Well... You did. I got a loss." Ria laughed.

"I mean... It makes it one for one. Last time you won and I lost." Alice smiled, helping Ria to her feet while Ria agreed with her thoughts.

"Yeah, it makes us one for one now."

Explaining the situation to Neal, the three of them excused themselves from the training room as their goal for this visit had been achieved.

"I suppose you're satisfied now." Neal asked as Alice nodded her head.

"I'm sure you're disappointed with your tie but I would like to inform you that Wess was actually supposed to be an S grade student rather than an A grade. The only reason why he remains an A grade yet commands respect from the S grades is the fact that he remained behind to stay with his friends.

In terms of power, he is within the top 5 of the class." Neal explained, wanting to comfort Ria as he could tell that she was disappointed.

"I believe you are registered as a three Sigil user right?" Neal asked as Ria nodded her head.

"The power you showed already surpasses most three star Hunters. I'm not sure how Allura and Gin judges when you should get your fourth Sigil but personally, I think you should be ready for that step forward. That's just my thoughts though." Neal shrugged.

Compared to Allura and Gin, he was nothing but an ant in terms of power. But even he knows that Ria was touching the boundary between three and four Sigils.

If she had gotten a fourth and activated a resonance, that fight would've been over.

"Thank you. I'm waiting for Allura to give me the green light since she's been saying I'm not ready yet." Ria chuckled.

"Well from what I'm hearing seems like you did pretty well. I remember that Wess kid, he's pretty talented for his age." Allura's voice cut in as she appeared behind Neal with Gin in tow.

"GAH!!! What the f*ck!?" Ria shouted out as she jumped up in shock, not expecting Allura to appear the moment they mention her name.

"Seems like Alice won her fight and you drew with yours. If your opponent was Wess then Neal's right. You can start looking for your fourth Sigil now." Allura smiled while lighting up her cigarette.

"Alice, I'm assuming you went for a rematch with Chloe. How was it?" Allura asked, turning her gaze to Alice.

"It was... Well. I wouldn't say it was easy but I see what you mean now. I was too hasty before. If I stayed back and observed I would've seen the gaps in her defences."

"Good. Then you've learned from this fight. Let's go celebrate a little while I tell you about our next plans." Allura smiled, patting Alice's head while Gin did a second check up on Ria to make sure there weren't any injuries left over.

With Allura taking over and escorting the two away with Gin, Neal was left alone and feeling awkward as he shed an invisible tear.

'I'm still here.'

Shaking his head, he made his way back to his office to deal with the rest of his work.

###

While they were having food, Allura discussed the possibility of Ria's next Sigil.

"Have you reconsidered your choices for the fourth Sigil? Or are you going with your old choice?" Allura asked, curious as to what Ria wanted to choose.

Thinking to herself, Ria tapped her finger before opening her mouth.

"How possible. . . Would it be for me to challenge a 5 star hunt for my fourth Sigil?" Ria asked, surprising Gin as he dropped his fork out of shock.

"You realise what you are asking right?" Allura raised an eyebrow as Ria nodded her head.

"I do. I saw how Alice challenged the Maiden of the Blood Moon. I know it may be related to her. . . unusual abilities but I want to know if its possible for me to bridge the gap of two Sigils." Ria asked with determination in her eyes.

Staying silent for a moment, Allura tapped her finger against the table as the seconds flew by.

After what seemed like a century of silence, Allura opened her mouth.

"It's possible. But I don't think you understand. Difficulty does not mean better rewards. Some four star hunts will give you better Sigils than five star hunts. Your rewards for the struggles will not outweigh the risks, I promise you this.

I know that you can clear a five star hunt if the conditions line up which is why I'm recommending you carefully consider your options for four star hunts and go from there." Allura replied as Ria sighed softly before nodding her head.

"But if you really want to prove yourself, I have a hunt that I think will be suitable for you. It's classified as a four star beast but when a lightning user fights it, the difficulty spikes up to 5 stars and possibly more. As for the rewards... It's one of the best lightning based Sigils you can get within the second set of Sigils."

Hearing this, Ria's eyes lit up with an excited glint as she eagerly waited for the name of this beast.

"The beast I want you to Hunt down is one called the Storm Leviathan. A four star beast that can jump through lightning similar to what Alice demonstrated when she jumped through blood like it is a portal. Once you kill the Storm Leviathan, I want you to get the Sigil ability known as Lightning Ascent. With this, you'll be able to manifest yourself through your lightning and swap places.

You can turn parts of your body into lightning to dodge." Allura smiled as Alice couldn't hold back her curiosity and entered the realm of her mind.

Borrowing Cayla's power, she filtered through the beasts until the Storm Leviathan appeared before her.

A gargantuan beast towered over her with four metallic claws protruding from its body. Countless spikes that flickered with lightning decorated its back while several tentacles covered its lower half. Each with spikes and scales that pulsed with electricity.

Looking towards its head, six beady eyes glared down at Alice as she could feel a chill down her spine.

This behemoth of lightning, scales and pure wrath was Ria's target for her fourth Sigil.

A beast of terror.

Chapter 109 - Gin's Concerns

"Storm Leviathan?! Allura surely you know how resistant that beast is to lightning?! Even if it is a fantastic beast to act as Ria's fourth Sigil, it has a reputation for being incredibly hard to kill for pure lightning users!" Gin furrowed his brows as choosing this was essentially asking Ria to cut her journey short.

"I know your concerns. However, we're not going to try kill an ordinary Storm Leviathan. Rumour has it that one is close to becoming a Storm Sovereign and in the period where it's about to transform, it is weakest because it has to reshape its body with its own lightning.

Meaning that during this time, it's going to be extremely weak to the element." Allura explained as Gin sat down and sighed heavily.

"And what if we aren't able to kill it before it becomes a Storm Sovereign? That's a six star beast we're talking about. And if we were to kill it, how is Ria supposed to kill another Storm Leviathan?"

"Which is why I want to see what Ria thinks. It's not like the Storm Leviathan is the only option. There are a few others but if you want a challenge this has good rewards to match the risks. Plus, if you fail this hunt then it's not like we don't have ways for you to kill the beast even with its resistance to lightning powers." Allura shrugged.

If it was truly impossible to kill this beast while you only had a handful of Sigils then it wouldn't be known as one of the best lightning Sigils available.

"It's up to you Ria, you make the call." Allura smiled while looking over to Ria.

This was her own choice, her own path that she decided to take. If she truly wanted a challenge, then there was no better challenge than the Storm Leviathan.

With the options now presented to her, Ria was silent before taking a deep breath.

"I'll fight it."

"Ria!" Gin frowned.

"Grandfather, it's okay. I know the risks involved and how difficult things will become if I fail. However, I want to take on this challenge. I want to set down a strong foundation so I can continue to rise through the ranks of power until I can call myself an Abyss Lord." Ria replied as Gin could see the fires of determination in her eyes.

Her fighting spirit and her will to stand up to the challenge.

Massaging his eyes, Gin sighed and nodded.

"Alright."

Baby birds must leave the nest and if this is Ria's choice then so be it. Gin accepted that there was a limit to how much he could protect Ria. If she is able to succeed in this hunt then there's no worry about her not being able to escape a dangerous situation.

Plus, he knows deep down that if Allura suggested this as an option then it's definitely possible. She wouldn't suggest something impossible to the two of them.

"There will be some preparation for you to do but the first thing is letting the Abyss know your intent. If we go to a Shaman, there's a chance that they won't be able to assign you the right bounty. So instead, we'll be going to a different area where you can commune with the Abyss directly and receive the right bounty." Allura chuckled as she pulled out a map.

"This is where we are, Zadash. Our destination for this communal spot will be in the next layer of the Abyss, the Howling Depths. And it is there where you'll commune with the Abyss and get your bounty. Ordinarily, I would say we'll be going back to Slaughter Docks to get a ship so we can travel to the location of the Hunt.

However, due to a few complications, we'll refrain from going back for now until Alice is ready. Instead, we'll be going to a small fishing hamlet called Anivari. I know a friend there who owns a pretty big boat we can borrow while we find this Storm Leviathan." Allura explained while pointing out where the key locations are on the map.

Meanwhile, Alice was silent after being reminded about what happened back in the Slaughter Docks. The next time she goes back, it's when she'll be ready to get revenge for what Bella did to Lilia.

The way Lilia was tortured, her pained look after her body was torn apart and toyed with.

She'll make sure Bella suffers.

"Alice~ Ya hoo~ Your killing intent is leaking out a bit. Too many eyes our way." Allura called out as Alice snapped out of her stupor and apologised, controlling herself while Allura continued to explain.

"Since the fight will be taking place in the Abyss Waters, we'll need some equipment to protect you and help you reach the beast with ease. Your Sigil can protect you to a certain extent but protecting you while also helping you fight the beast will be extremely exhausting.

Which is why we'll be waiting roughly a week once more for Gin to collect more stuff." Allura grinned as Gin already knew what was coming.

"I know what you need. Thankfully, none of it is annoying to get so it wouldn't actually take a week. I'd say about 4 days are most." Gin shook his head as he stood up and prepared to leave.

"I trust that you'll be taking them to the communal point before I come back."

"Yep, leave it to me. We'll be leaving for the location tomorrow and should be back on the same day. We'll rest a day while waiting for you to come back then we'll leave this city. Because once the hunt is finished, we'll be clearing up the issues on our end while Ria and Alice will make their way to the mainland." Allura nodded as Gin gave Ria a hug before leaving the restaurant.

"Is there any specific path we need to take to the mainland?" Alice asked while observing the map that Allura had placed on the table.

"Nope. The journey will be completely up to you. I don't know when we'll be finished with our task so it's very difficult to plan a route for you. Just know that we'll be able to find you when the time comes. Think of it as an assignment. One where you get used to life and see where it takes you." Allura shook her head.

"If you think you are ready for another Sigil while me and Gin are away, you can reply using letters I send to you. Of course, I'll trust your judgement if a good opportunity arises for a good Sigil." Allura winked, knowing that Alice can choose a bounty whenever she wanted thanks to Cayla's powers.

"And remember to keep my words regarding her in mind." She pointed at her eye as Alice understood that Allura was referring to how she shouldn't wake up Cayla too much.

"Well, that's enough serious talk. You two can spend the rest of the day however you want since I'm assuming you'll be exhausted after your fights."

Finishing the rest of the meal, Allura looked through the window as Ria took Alice out to do some shopping.

Pulling out a cigarette, Allura lit it up with a small fire before looking at the guest who had just sat down at the same table. She had noticed him giving her looks while she was talking with Alice and the others.

"So, what do you want? It better be worth my time since you clearly know who I am." Allura narrowed her eyes while leaning back against her chair lazily.

"I've come to bring word from the Underground." A young man wearing a simple suit replied as he placed a letter on the table.

Giving Allura a bow, he left her to read alone.

Raising an eyebrow, Allura opened the letter and scanned through the contents.

'Seems like Jinya has revoked the memberships of Mahri and a few others. The higher ups in the Eclipse cult doesn't seem to care that much while the Sun and Moon are rather unhappy and confused as to how they even managed to kill a sealed Abyss Lord. They're pressuring the Eclipse on both sides to get a response from them. . . Not bad.

He works fast as expected. It hasn't even been a day yet and he's already bringing back results.' Allura smiled, understanding that Jinya must've put her request as a priority.

But the letter didn't end there. As she read the next part, a frown slowly formed on her face.

It wasn't that Jinya was incapable of hindering the Zenia's, in fact he completed that task with ease due to the fact that there are several noble houses that are jealous of their success. He is even urging them on from the sidelines.

What was concerning for her was the fact that they had already sent a representative who was on their way to Zadash as they heard news of the White Death and are exceedingly curious regarding the effects of its blood.

Provided that it has any blood to be retrieved.

'Judging by their speed of travel and when I receive the news, I believe the representative of the Zenia family should be arriving today to talk with the Hunters Guild regarding the blood belonging to the White Death... Sh*t...' Allura frowned as she understood what this meant.

There was a high chance of Alice seeing them and being reminded of her captivity. Knowing what she had gone through, Allura didn't want Alice to be exposed to the Zenia's again so soon.

###

While Allura was reading through the letter, Ria had taken Alice down to the shopping district that was located not far from the Hunter's Guild as most of the wares available here was discounted for Hunters.

With Allura confiscating most of their money aside from a handful of gold, they had to be prudent with what they bought.

"Alice, what do you think of this bag? Seems like it'll hold more vials than your current one though I'm not too sure about the durability." Ria asked, showing Alice a bag that could hold up to 14 vials of blood compared to her current one.

But before Alice could respond, she noticed a group of finely dressed Hunters on their way to Hunters Guild. It wasn't their fine outfit that caught her eye but rather what was on it. A sight that sent a chill down her spine as her body froze up in fear.

The crest of the Zenia family.

Chapter 110 - Pain And Nostalgia

All the sounds in the world seemed to be drowned out as Alice could hear her own heartbeat. The heat rushed to her head as her mind turned into a mix of confusion, panic and anger.

Her vision shook as she stared at the crest.

Memories flooded into her mind. Her once proud and happy outlook on her family turned into terror.

Taking rapid breaths, Alice couldn't help but take a step back as her limbs were shaking.

"Alice? Something wrong?" Ria called out in confusion, but Alice didn't react.

'Why are the Zenia's here? Have they found me? Is father here as well?' Alice thought to herself as she took another step back but a numbness spread through her limbs, forcing her to stand still.

A wave of dizziness washed over her mind as she started to hyperventilate, the tips of her fingers shaking and her limbs losing their strength.

Gritting her teeth, anger overcame her fear as she glared at the group. All of her pent up anger, hatred and malice that had been stored over 10 years burst forth as her second Sigil flared up around her eye. Purple flames threatening to manifest as Alice was about to rush towards the group.

Before she could, Allura appeared in front of her, hugging her while covering her eyes.

"Shh... It's fine. They're not here for you, they're here for the White Death. They don't know that you're here." Allura whispered into her ear as she jumped away, taking both Ria and Alice with her.

With no outlet for her anger, all Alice could do was scream into Allura's jacket as Ria never heard such a bloodthirsty cry before.

It was an uncontrolled cry, one that broke Alice's voice as she unleashed everything she was feeling inside.

Meanwhile, the crowd and the group of people sent by the Zenia's looked around in confusion with the sudden scream that came out of nowhere.

Taking Alice and Ria to the city walls, Allura placed Alice with her back against the wall and kneeled down in front of her.

"Take a deep breath. Easy now." Allura comforted as Alice nodded her head.

Following Allura's instructions, she slowly calmed her mind but the shaking didn't stop.

A phantom pain surfaced in her mind as she could feel cold iron against her neck, the stabbing of needles.

Unable to hold herself back, she started to scratch away at her neck while trying to calm her mind.

Furrowing her brows, Allura grabbed Alice's wrist as her nails were digging into her flesh, tearing away at her skin.

Looking into Alice's eyes, she could see the deeply rooted fear that had been cultivated over the years.

Hugging Alice tightly, Allura continued to whisper words of comfort as she could feel Alice hugging back, afraid of what might have happened if Kaden and Allura didn't save her.

It took a while before Alice was calm enough for Allura to let go of her.

"Feeling better now?" She asked with a soft smile as Alice nodded her head.

"Don't worry. As I said, they're not here for you. I just got the news that they're here because of the interest the Zenia's are showing towards the White Death." Allura reassured.

Alice knew that this was the truth but there was always the creeping shadow of doubt and fear lingering in her mind. What if they were here for her? What if they recognised her at a glance?

Her hair and eyes may have changed, but her face was still the same. If her Father was here, he would've recognised her immediately.

And that's what scared her. What if one of her brothers were here? What if the scholar that carved open her body was here? What if those that will recognise her at a glance were here today?

The chances are low but they are never zero.

Cold fangs of paranoia chewed away at her mind but with Allura here, she felt safe.

"What was that?" Ria asked as all she saw was Alice about to attack a random group of people before Allura cut in.

Glancing over at Ria, Allura was silent as it was not her place to say, it was Alice's choice if she wanted to be open about what had happened.

Hesitating for a moment, Alice opened her mouth.

"They're... part of my old family." She replied, her voice hoarse from all of the screaming she had done.

"Wait... The ones that tortured you?! Damn! Why didn't you say so!" Ria widened her eyes in anger as she jumped up and prepared to attack the group.

The time she had been with Alice was short but she knew what kind of person Alice was. She couldn't forgive such people who are content with torturing their own family like this.

Before she could run, Allura grabbed Ria's ankle, causing her to fall over and smack her face against the wall.

"Don't be hasty. There's a reason why I took Alice away from the area. Alice doesn't want to be found by them, at least not yet. Not while she's still weak. Randomly attacking them now will only cause them to investigate the situation which is not what we want." Allura explained while Ria rubbed her nose in pain.

"Do you want to leave for the Howling Depths today or wait for tomorrow? I assume they won't be around for long since Gin reduced the White Death to ashes. Not even its blood is left for them to collect unless they're fine with ashes." Allura asked as Alice was silent.

"Can... Can we leave now? I don't want to be near them." Alice replied quietly as a pang of sadness struck Allura's heart.

Compared to the usual Alice they see and the one who laughs and craves violence in hunts, she was now like a small child, scared of the world and wanting to hide herself in a dark corner, hoping to not be noticed.

"Of course. We can leave right now. By the time we're back, the Zenia's won be here." Allura nodded as she glanced over to Ria.

Giving her the task of getting them a carriage to the closest entrance leading down to the Howling Depths, Allura sat down next to Alice and gave her a shoulder to lean on which Alice accepted.

As she leaned on Allura, Alice could feel her fear disappearing as things started to go back to normal.

"Just take as long as you need. Ria is getting the carriage ready and she'll let us know when it's time to go."

Hearing this, Alice nodded her head as she enjoyed this moment of safety.

"Have... have you ever been afraid of something?" Alice asked quietly.

"Of course. I've been scared plenty of times. I wasn't always like this you know? When I was growing up I was quite the scaredy cat." Allura chuckled, reminiscing on old times.

"Back then, it was Kaden who stood up for me and stopped others from making fun of me. Though he's quite the b*stard now he wasn't always like that."

"Oh? What was he like?" Alice asked, curious as to what Kaden was like back then. The Kaden she knew briefly was one that stormed into the pits of the Zenia prison and broke her out. Someone that seemed to do whatever interested them at the moment with no goal in mind.

"Hmm... He was a very responsible man. What you would call a perfect knight. He was... very uptight and stuck to the rules. Terrible at socialising and rather stoic in all aspects." Allura smiled fondly at her memories.

"He believed in fairness a lot. Once I started to work with him, he became the lawful stoic one while I was the chaotic emotional type. He covered my back while I covered his and we helped keep the peace." Allura sighed while taking out a cigarette.

As she closed her eyes, she could almost see the peaceful days of old. Kaden sitting behind his desk while looking over the documents. How she would bust through his door with a wide smile, laughing and joking with him while he listened.

When she was hasty, he would be there to pull her back. When he's unable to express himself, she would be there to be angry for him.

"What changed?" Alice couldn't help but ask.

"What changed? Well... A lot changed. We lost our home, our master, our friends and everything we had treasured. We lost it all. And then he changed... After that, we went our separate ways. You had asked if I was ever scared earlier right?

That day was the day I felt true fear. All my nightmares come true and no one even remembers that era anymore." Allura shook her head.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. Time numbs all kinds of pain. What used to hurt doesn't anymore. The only thing on my mind now is to make sure you have a good life okay? I'm an old woman. I've seen eras fly by and witnessed the lives of people that many would call legends.

My hobbies are essentially just being nosy and watching other people's lives like they're drama and occasionally interfere with one or two." Allura shrugged while patting Alice's head.

"Now enough about me. Ria's on her way back now with the carriage prepared." Allura smiled while standing up.

Helping Alice up, she glanced back and as expected, Ria was running back to them.

"That was quite quick. I'm surprised you didn't get lost or get scammed." Allura called out with a smile.

"What do you take me for?! Of course, I wasn't scammed and it's only a short walk! My sense of direction isn't THAT bad. Anyways, with the restrictions on travel finally being lifted after the battle was over, there are plenty of drivers looking for work. When I made my request known quite a few flocked to me ya know? Finding a carriage for us was easy." Ria crossed her arms in annoyance.

"Alright alright. Let's not keep them waiting then." Allura chuckled.

Making sure that Alice was following them, the trio made their way to the carriages while Alice couldn't help but imagine a composed Kaden who struggled with expressing his emotions.

It seemed like a complete flip in personality as he sounded nothing like the Kaden she had seen.

'I wonder if this forgotten time has something to do with the Cayla. Kaden and Allura placed quite a lot of importance to it.' Alice mused to herself as they arrived at the carriages and started to make their way out of the city.

Their next stop, the Howling Depths.