

ABYSSAL AWAKENING

Chapter 12: Harvesting Material

As the beast carried them to their next destination, each of its footsteps caused the ground to shake from its weight.

Holding tightly onto the side of the beast, Alice couldn't help but notice something on the skin of the slaves that carried different parts of the titan. Each of them had a brand that was seared into their skin. Within the brand, a dark purple glow was present at all times, stretching out like roots.

"It's the slave brand. They're usually one time uses to make the slave obedient but that strips them of their free will. Makes it so that they can only follow orders and can't do things on their own." Lilia whispered over.

"It does cause the body to deteriorate though so it's more a last resort."

Hearing this, Alice couldn't help but feel shock and be grateful that the Zenia family never resorted to such a method.

'Though I suppose they didn't brand me because they wanted to get as much out of me as they could.' Alice thought to herself.

"It's a last resort because the brand is created by mixing two types of A.B. The first is belongs to a hive mind type beast while the second is a parasitic type. It eats away at the host while making sure they're obedient since it injects a venom that affects the mind.

Once it finishes eating away at the host, the host dies and the slave is lost." Lilia explained while thinking back to the time before she turned up at this place.

"My old owner explained this to scare me and my sister and it worked to an extent."

Seeing the forced smile on Lilia's face, Alice felt pity for the girl since she had her own story. One that caused her grief.

Turning her attention back to the slaves, Alice could see that they carried a variety of parts freshly extracted from the body of the titan. From skeletal plating to lumps of flesh, blood would drip against their skin, burning the surface as their own flesh would bubble and boil. Yet all of the slaves did not react and continued to work as if nothing was wrong.

She could see just how oppressive this brand was with this demonstration.

Their journey was short since the beast they were holding onto took large steps at a time, covering a surprising amount of distance. The place they arrived was directly next to the beast and had a large bridge created from metal hammered into the shell of the titan.

From afar, the shell looked smooth but now that they were within touching distance, Alice could see countless jagged layers overlapping each other on the surface.

It created a decent foothold for them to stand on while more metal spikes and chains were inserted into the shell, creating a pathway onto the titan's back.

"Wait here. I'm going to get some equipment." The man ordered as he jumped off the back of the beast and made his way to a nearby building situated next to the bridge.

Jumping off the back of the beast as well, the two of them watched as it dug a hole nearby and sat down. Sitting there unmoving, the beast became no different to a pile of rocks.

Coming out with a pair of pickaxes and boots, he threw them towards the two girls.

"Your job will be to harvest bone plates from the back of this beast. There's a supervisor above and he'll assign you an area. You're responsible for yourself if you fall you fall. We're not going to break our backs saving some slaves. Now hurry up and get up there so I can take my break." The man complained.

Nodding their heads, the two quickly put on the boots and made their way up the bridge. The steps were carved out of metal with the edges being worn down from repeated use.

Some of the steps were completely unusable as Lilia had to help Alice to avoid her stumbling down.

Seeing that both of them were making their way up, the man went back into the building.

"Phew... Goodness, I didn't think a monster like this would exist." Lilia sighed out in relief seeing that they were no longer being monitored by that man. Peering over the edge of the bridge, she held on tight against the chains to stop herself from falling.

At first, she thought the monster was being chained from below but after peering over the edge, she saw the truth. It was missing its lower half and being suspended by metal chains and stakes. Blood continuously dripped down to the crimson depths while strands of organs hung loose.

"Ignoring the fact that a monster like this even exists, what the hell do you think can even harm it?" Lilia asked as she continued up the steps.

"No clue. Maybe someone with lots of Sigils." Alice replied while pulling herself up with the held of the chains.

She had to admit that wearing boots felt weird as she had spent most of her life without shoes. Since she was trapped in the room with nothing that could harm her, they saw no reason to give her footwear.

Now that she was wearing a set of boots, it felt uncomfortable and hard to walk in. Hence her trouble climbing up the steps.

Seeing Alice's eyebrows furrowing at the sight of steps, Lilia couldn't help but laugh. While they haven't known each other for long, Lilia enjoyed Alice's company. She understood that Alice rarely showed emotion on her face even if she's happy. Most of her emotions would be seen in Alice's eyes with the exception of frustration and annoyance.

"Struggling with the steps?" Lilia asked while reaching out to help Alice.

"No, just shoes annoying." Alice complained. Grabbing onto Lilia's hand, she skipped a few steps as the two of them continued to the top of the titan.

As they approached the top, they could hear the sounds of pickaxes clashing against the hard skeletal plating growing louder with each step followed by frustrated shouts of the supervisor.

"Are you actually trying to get the plate or are you trying to destroy it!? Cut around the damn thing you useless sack of sh*t! Stop hitting the centre!" The supervisor shouted out in anger.

He was a short and stout old man with long frizzled grey hair. Soot covered parts of his face along with a large unkempt beard. He wore a sleeveless shirt with a leather chest piece adorned with silver buckles. A pair of thick boots stomped against the ground as Alice could see the vein on his forehead bulging from his anger.

"The f*ck? Two newbies? Perfect! YOU TWO! Get over there and take his place! The dumb motherf*cker can't even harvest plates properly!

And you! Get your daft ass over there and harvest the flesh instead!" The supervisor shouted out as he pointed at Alice and Lilia before gesturing

towards the set of skeletal plates that was being harvested by one of the slaves.

Looking at one another, the two nodded their heads and made their way over since it was better than getting shouted at by the supervisor.

Taking the spot of the other slave, Alice glanced around her and observed how the other slaves hacked away at the plates. They would space out their targets, creating a line of evenly spaced out holes.

Once that was done, they jammed the sharp end of the pickaxe into the centre hole and through the use of leverage, create a split that stretched across the entire plate, connecting the holes to one another.

All of the slaves hacked at the same pace, creating a rhythmic beat to help them work through the hours. It was a way for them to use muscle memory in order to make work easier.

Taking a deep breath, Alice grabbed the handle of the pickaxe and tried her best to keep up with the beat.

Bringing her arms back, she pushed strength through her body and took a wide stance before letting out a hard swing against the plating.

*CLANG!!!!

A harsh sound resounded through the area as the vibration travelled up the pickaxe and into Alice's arm, forcing her to drop the equipment.

"What the hell are you doing! Are you struggling with just swinging a damn pickaxe?! Pick it up and do it properly!" The supervisor shouted out as the harsh sound had disrupted the rhythm.

Picking up the pickaxe, Alice furrowed her brows and aimed again.

"Don't use your full strength. Just use enough to chip away at the plate. Aim for the same spot so a hole can be made." The slave next to her whispered over quietly while keeping his gaze focused on his own task.

Hearing this, Alice nodded her head while Lilia whispered a quiet thank you to the man.

With new advice, they were able to make more progress without disrupting the rhythm. Naturally, Alice and Lilia were still struggling but they were able to hold on. The vibrations that coursed through the pickaxe left Alice's hands numb, yet this was nothing she couldn't handle.