

## **Abyssal A 181**

### Chapter 181 - 181: A Price For Knowledge And Power

After Thane left the room, Ria let Alice rest while thinking about what had just happened. Laying on the sofa, Alice looked at the ceiling in silence.

She had three questions she wanted to ask herself.

Why did she feel this hunger? Why she had lost control after so many years of it being dormant? And finally, what really happened at the birthday banquet?

She had her own hypothesis but it wasn't a pleasant one.

The screams in her mind resonated so vividly when she remembered back to that time. Alice understood that they must've been her victims. Even though she was resistant against the Abyss, that first contact had indeed transformed her.

'Now that I think about it... How did I even turn back to human after being a beast? Even when the scholars pushed my body to its limit, only parts of me were transformed from the side effects. Never fully. On that day I went past the line and fully became a beast...' Alice frowned as she looked at her hand.

Perhaps that side of her was simply the instincts left over from when she became a beast. Perhaps it was something more.

'Or was it a reaction based on my resistance to the Abyss?'

Alice knew that there was an invisible power 'operating' the Abyss itself. The contracts that it makes with people are what allows them Sigils and it slowly transforms them into a beast.

Pressing her hand against her chest, above her heart, Alice wondered once more about the connection of the heart to the Abyss.

'Actually, now that I think about it... Thane is Allura's old friend. Maybe he knows about the importance of the heart.'

Sitting up, Alice didn't hesitate to make her way out of the room as she noticed Thane leaning against the wall silently while slight traces of sadness could be seen in his eyes.

"Need something?" Thane asked as the sadness disappeared as though it was never there.

"I have a question. Since you're Allura's old friend, you should know a lot about the Abyss right?"

"Depends on what you want to know. And if you ask some boring sh\*t I'm just going to get you to go to the library instead." Thane shrugged.

"The heart. Why is it important?"

"Are you serious? Maybe because it keeps you alive?" Thane rolled his eyes but Alice shook her head.

"That's not what I meant. I... Learnt that the heart is important to the Abyss. Why? Why is the heart so important that the purest blood that you can get from a beast is from the heart? And... Do you know what kind of contract the realm gives in exchange for Sigils?"

Hearing this, Thane's expression faltered for a moment, expressing surprise upon Alice mentioning these questions before returning to normal.

'Seems like she's adapting well to the Eye if it told her this much. Hmm...'

Narrowing his eyes at Alice, he thought to himself for a moment before standing up properly.

"How much are you prepared to learn?" Thane asked seriously.

Tilting her head in confusion, Alice wasn't sure what he meant by that.

"Let me rephrase it. How much are you willing to sacrifice in order to learn the truth? Is the truth about the heart blood so important that you are willing to give up something important to you?"

Biting her lip, Alice hesitated for a moment before opening her mouth.

"What would I need to give up in order to learn about the Abyss?"

"You don't know until you accept the risks. Maybe it's something useless to you. Maybe it's the most important aspect of your life. It's up to you if you want to exchange something in pursuit of knowledge. However, I will tell you this." Thane held up one finger.

"One Sigil is all it takes for a Hunter to step onto the path of no return. This contract of the Abyss will only end in suffering unless you sacrifice a part of yourself at the end of all roads. There are no exceptions. Whether that is for me or Allura, no one is an exception." Thane warned.

'Especially not you, the holder of the Eye.'

"Knowledge and power come at a price. Should you ever gamble with the Abyss, know that you will always take the short end of the deal. But I can tell you one thing. When you accept the contract of the Abyss and receive your first Sigil, your heart is no longer yours.

"It becomes the Abyss's property. What you think and gather from this information is up to you. Maybe you might stumble on the right answer without giving up anything. Maybe you won't. Either way, it's none of my business now." Thane shrugged while opening the door back into the VIP room.

"But it seems like you have a guest so I'll take my leave." He pointed at the woman making her way towards them.

Glancing over at the new arrival, Alice was about to ask what she was here for when she silently handed Alice a rolled up sheet of parchment. The parchment was tied up with a ribbon embroidered with the symbol of the Underground.

Understanding that this was the information she had purchased earlier, Alice thanked the woman as she gave a bow and left.

Placing the parchment in her pocket, Alice looked over to Thane who was now sitting on the sofa, clearly bored out of his mind.

She thought back to his earlier words.

'Was my resistance to the Abyss something I traded for? He said one Sigil is all it takes for a Hunter to go on a path of no return... What does he mean by that? He also mentioned that Allura gave up something at the end of all roads.'

Sighing out heavily, Alice scratched her hair in confusion as there were simply too many unknowns right now.

She doubted Allura would be able to tell her much either at this point with the way Thane worded things. It seems like if she wanted to know more at this point in time, she'll have to give up something potentially important to her. And that was not a risk she wanted to take right now.

'Let's just get my third Sigil first. I can think about this later when Allura contacts me.'

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\*BANG!!!

A black of darkness cleaved through a beast as Gin landed heavily against the ground. His chest heaving from exhaustion while glancing back at Allura who had spaced out a few times during the battle.

"What's wrong with you? Getting distracted so much."

"Sorry... Just... Thinking of stuff." Allura scratched her hair while smiling bitterly. There was a sad glow in her eyes as she had clearly sensed what had happened near Alice.

The power of shadows that surrounded her for a moment.

A familiar feeling that tugged against her chest.

He was back in the Abyss and yet he didn't want to face her.

"Well you can think of stuff once we're out of this mess!" Gin shouted as he forcefully activated his resonance one more. An avatar of death cleaved the skies apart and descended upon the battlefield as a baleful aura exploded forth.

However, tentacles erupted from the ground, latching onto his avatar and tearing it apart, scattering its bones across the battlefield while Gin cried out in pain.

"Allura!" Gin shouted out in annoyance.

"Alright alright, I got it. Sorry, I'll focus up now." Allura sighed before disappearing from her location.

Appearing in front of the source of tentacles, she pulled back her arm as flames erupted around her.

The sparks and crackles of the air exploded around her arm as the flames started to expand before condensing into a blinding white flame.

In a single instance, her fist jolted forward and not even Gin could see the motion of her punch.

All he could see was the large body of the beast disappearing into the distance while the land was torn apart by the impact.

Seeing this, he couldn't help but smile bitterly as this was the gap between them. A beast that forced him to use his resonance was dealt with easily by Allura who simply used her third Sigil.

Even to this day, he hadn't seen Allura use more than 4 Sigils.

"Let's find a place to catch a break since you're in no shape to keep fighting for now." Allura suggested while pulling out a cigarette.

Lighting it on fire, she took a deep breath before sighing out a cloud of smoke. Surrounding them were the corpses of countless beasts that could be harvested for blood that would shock the market but she didn't care for their value.

"Alright. Now care to explain why you kept spacing out at the end?" Gin nodded, limping over to her while taking a drink of some healing blood.

"Alice disappeared for a moment. Seems to have been taken into a strange realm. But an... old friend bailed them out. They're under his care right now and surprisingly, he's taking responsibility for them." Allura smiled.

"Isn't that a good thing then? Why did you space out and look sad?"

"Because he said he wasn't going to return to the Abyss centuries ago." She shrugged, not wanting to expand on the topic.

Understanding this, Gin didn't ask for more details as Allura clearly had a lot going on her mind right now.

As the two were making their way back to their base, Allura couldn't help but look at the sunless sky above and sigh.

'If you're back... At least send a raven dumbass. You haven't even talked to me face to face in centuries now, always sending your familiars. Master would be upset if she saw you like this...' Allura thought to herself before shaking her head.

If he didn't want to speak to her face to face then there's nothing she could do. She needed to focus on her own task as being distracted, no matter how powerful she is, is dangerous on this battlefield.

#### Chapter 182 - 182: Blood Coil Amphiptere

"What did that woman give you? She seems to be working with the Underground." Thane asked curiously after seeing Alice sit down and place the now opened scroll on the table.

"Just some rumours and potential hints for beasts that I can hunt. If I were to go for beasts that have already been identified, there's a good chance that others will step in ahead of me and take the kill." Alice explained while looking through the notes.

As expected, there were indeed a handful of rumours pertaining beasts with connection to blood. However, a lot of these could just be victims that have been left out to dry.

She wanted to find some evidence that had close relations to the beast she wanted to hunt.

"Oh? Now you've got my attention brat. What kind of Sigil are you going for?" Thane sat up in mild amusement as he wanted to see what kind of Hunter Alice wanted to become.

"Another blood type. I want something that can heal me in battle and help me keep fighting. I don't really have an attack that can end a fight easily. Well... I do have one but it's hard to use if they're on guard." Alice sighed.

Raising an eyebrow, Thane couldn't help but wonder what kind of attack she was talking about.

"If I remember correctly, your first Sigil is hallucination plus strength augmentation. Your second Sigil is blood control and violet flames right? Where's this finishing attack coming from?"

Before Alice could answer, Ria cut in.

"It's the skill that Allura showed us before. She called it Nova core or something and gathered a bunch of flames into a single dot that destroys everything around it. Though Alice's is more like a giant cannon rather than what Allura did."

"!?!?" Widening his eyes, Thane was stunned in disbelief before looking back and forth from Alice to Ria.

"You. Learned Nova Core from Allura?" He asked, pointing at Alice.

"Well she didn't teach me. It just kind of happened." Alice shrugged but didn't deny it.

"There's no way... Prove it to me right now. I'll protect this room, I just want you to fire the skill." Thane furrowed his brows.

Flicking his finger, a darkness coated the room as once again Alice was surrounded by a familiar feeling but she couldn't quite pin down where it was coming from.

But seeing that he wasn't going to take no for an answer, Alice nodded her head while Ria took cover.

Taking a deep breath, she activated her Sigils as violet flames started to flicker around her body. Little by little, they engulfed the area Alice was standing in as Thane noticed another strange aspect about Alice.

'Are her flames... trying to eat my shadows?' He thought to himself as he couldn't bring himself to believe it yet the evidence was there. His shadows were being threatened by some two Sigil possessing brat whom he picked up from the Zenia prison.

But that wasn't the only surprise.

Converging towards Alice's finger, the flames started to condense into a bright flaming orb above her finger.

Seeing this, Thane understood that they weren't bluffing but at the same time, it wasn't the same skill that Allura was known for.

Her skill, Nova Core, was one that could destroy everything through raw power. It was a skill that condensed her flame to the maximum limit before releasing it in a controlled manner.

As for Alice, it's more like she's focusing on the direction of her flames rather than condensing and controlling. It lacked the delicate control and implication that Allura would demonstrate with her skill.

'But I suppose... It does look like the Nova Core skill. The method is similar but modified to suit her own body and powers.'

Watching the web of flames condense into one, Thane aimed his palm towards Alice.

"Shoot the skill towards me."

Nodding her head, Alice didn't hesitate to release the orb of fire.

Within this realm of darkness, a torrent of flames and light exploded forth with more intensity than the attack she had fired off against the strange man.

This time, she was allowed to focus her mind and attack without distraction!

As the light reached its brightest and the wave of heat exploded out, Thane closed his hand into a fist.

**\*BANG!!!!**

Shadows immediately collapsed around the attack and extinguished the flame without even giving it a chance to fight back.

Stumbling over out of exhaustion, Alice couldn't believe her strongest attack was extinguished with a single movement from Thane.

"Hmm... I'd give it a 3 out of 10 for a decent Hunter by my standards. A 1 out of 10 if you truly want to compare it against Allura's Nova Core skill. But it's as you said, it takes too long for you to focus to achieve decent results with this skill. Seems like you should be a more prolonged fighter since your tenacity and will to fight is strong." Thane nodded while shaking off the heat from his hand.

"So any targets in mind?" He smiled, curious as to who her ideal target was. Depending on what she wanted, he could do her a favour and bring it here. But if he was to do that, it would be no fun and she wouldn't get the full experience in hunting.

"Ideally I want the Scarlet Winged Monarch. But I haven't found any information on it yet." Alice shrugged while reading over the scroll once more to see if there was anything she missed.

"Scarlet Winged Monarch? You want... a five star beast as your third Sigil? Even if you were Allura that's rather, reckless." Thane frowned. As much as he would like to see the fight happen, Alice was not ready for a challenge of this magnitude.

Not only was it a five star beast, but it was also one of the strongest beasts within the difficulty and could even kill those in the six star category.

There was another nickname for the beast to those who live near it and have seen it in action.

The immortal berserker. A beast so ferocious and deadly that it felt nigh impossible to kill. If a Hunter dares to face him head on, it becomes a battle of who gives up first and in that scenario, the beast ALWAYS wins.

"Then do you have any suggestions?" Alice asked curiously.

Knowing that Thane is an old friend of Allura along with his power, there was a high chance that his knowledge of Abyss Beasts was extensive.

"Well that depends. But we're basically in the middle of nowhere right now. None of the good beasts are available to hunt. Show me that scroll, let me see if any of them are actually worth checking out." Thane suggested as Alice nodded her head.

Reading through the contents, Thane closed one of his eyes and didn't say a word. Neither Alice nor Ria wanted to disturb him as Alice understood he must've sent a familiar to verify these rumours.

With a rare moment of silence dawning on them, Alice observed Thane while the familiar feeling kept nagging away at her mind.

'Have I seen him before? He does use the power of shadows and can teleport people around with ease... But I've also seen others use similar powers before with the exception of teleporting. Hmm... But if he is Kaden, why would he hide his identity?' Alice wondered to herself.

In her brief contact with Kaden, someone who didn't hesitate to break into Zenia's strongest prison because a lot of guards were there and it seemed like it had something valuable, hiding his identity didn't seem possible.

'Unless there's a big reason why he doesn't want to be known. And even if he is Kaden... What then?'

If Thane turned out to be Kaden, Alice didn't know what she would say. The person that saved her from her torment, gave her a second chance at life and even implanted an eye into her, leading to her meeting a mother and mentor like figure in Allura.

Not only that, due to his actions, she was able to find a friend and enjoy exploring the world with. He had practically given her everything she had wished for during her time in the prison.

A swirl of emotions appeared in Alice's mind but she couldn't say anything just yet. She wasn't sure if this person was indeed Kaden or someone different entirely.

She could only keep these guesses to herself for now.

"There's one that seems pretty... interesting I would say. It's no Scarlet Winged Monarch but~ I think it would be perfect for you in terms of wanting something to prolong your fights." Thane smiled but paused noticing that Alice was staring at him as though trying to see behind his face.

"Now. I'm not against getting stared at but I'd rather it be from a woman than a brat. So do me a favour and stop staring at me so hard, it's gross." Thane rolled his eyes and flicked Alice on the forehead.

Despite her tolerance, a bolt of pain shot through her body as Alice jolted backwards and held her forehead in confusion.

"This rumour seems to hold some validity to it. Couldn't find the beast's main body but there were traces and I do have a candidate in mind. If it is what I'm thinking of then you might be in for a treat."

Hearing this, Alice looked over to the rumour that he pointed to.

[South of Ironforge, strange remains have been discovered. Beasts have been found, drained of blood with shards of metal burrowing into their flesh. The carcass has been left relatively untouched with other beasts scavenging it for food but the blood has been completely sucked away.]

"If my guess is correct, those wounds should be caused by a Blood Coil Amphiptere, a dragon-like beast of metal and blood. It shouldn't be that strong but it's been a while since I've last seen one so don't take my word on it. But if you were to kill it..." Thane trailed off with a smirk.

"You should be able to get an ability called Lifeblood Link."

Chapter 183 - 183: Information About The Amphiptere

"Lifeblood Link?" Alice blinked her eyes in confusion as Thane nodded his head.

"It's an annoying Sigil to fight against even by my standards. I don't quite remember how long ago it was but I was fighting against someone with the Sigil. It was also this fight that made an impression on me as he was able to last much longer than expected." Thane remarked while leaning back on his chair.

"Are you curious on what it does?" He grinned, seeing the interest in Alice's eyes.

"Mnm. I do." Nodding her head, Alice wanted to hear more about this as it was a Sigil that made an impression on an Abyss Lord. Surely it must be something good.

"Not telling you. I already done plenty by verifying this rumor and telling you about the beast. Everything else is now up to you." Thane laughed causing Alice to pout slightly in annoyance.

"You're a Hunter. You should be the one seeking out your prey, learning everything there is about them and then striking when they're at their weakest. You can't expect someone else to do the heavy lifting for you.

"All right then. Keep your secrets." Alice huffed as she asked Ria if she wanted to go down to the library with her.

However, much to her surprise, Ria shook her head as there was something else she needed to do in the meantime.

Shrugging her shoulders, Alice made her way to the train station. She needed to take a train up to the surface if she wanted to access the library in the Hunter's Guild.

Seeing Alice leaving, Thane tilted his head back and looked at Ria who was staring at him nonstop.

"Same as what I said to that brat, feel free to not stare at me so much." Thane sighed.

"Well you said you'll get me later to do some training. Now is later so what are we doing?"

". . . I mean you're not wrong but I also said I'LL get you later. Not the other way around. \*sigh\* Well may as well get the annoying part over and done with.

That brat will be busy researching about the Amphiptere." Thane scratched his hair in annoyance as they had many similarities to Allura in the way they act.

Their impatience was certainly one of them.

He could still remember when he and Allura were still working together in Ayr. How anxious and hasty she would be whenever he brought up a new beast suitable to act as her Sigil.

She would burst into his office with a bestiary in her hand, her eyes sparkled with excitement while shouting about how they should make a move quickly.

Just remembering the scene caused Thane to chuckle softly.

Standing up, he stretched his body before gesturing for Ria to follow him.

"First and foremost, do you understand why I'm asking you to try using ranged attacks rather than physical attacks?" He asked in a rare case of seriousness.

"Hm... Because my Sigils suit it? I think." Ria furrowed her brows, unsure as to what he wanted her to answer with.

"Not quite but yes, it's part of the reason. The main reason is because Lightning, while a great source of physical reinforcement, is even faster when used in a ranged attack. It's hard to miss something when it practically reaches its target instantly." Thane explained while mimicking a bolt of lightning with his shadows.

"By channeling it within your body however, you give up much of its speed. Whether that be subconsciously or consciously, you make sure your body is not broken by the burden of your power. What I'm suggesting is not for you to give up your physical fighting style but add the option of range into your arsenal." He explained as he flicked his finger.

The bolt of lightning shot past Ria's face before she could even react, causing her to widen her eyes in surprise by the speed.

"You can also say it's wasted potential for you to limit yourself to just physical combat when your powers can be so much more."

Ria was unable to respond as she hesitated for a moment before opening her mouth.

"Then will it help me fight against someone that harms the soul?"

"The soul?" Thane furrowed his brows.

"Yes. Earlier, me and Alice ran into someone strange. He brought us to a realm with just our souls apparently. The powers given to us by the Abyss didn't work well there and all I could do was watch." Ria sighed, looking down in disappointment.

Meanwhile, Thane was silent as this changes things if it was true.

'If that man was indeed messing with their souls then I shouldn't have let him leave so easily... People that tamper with souls or even know how to access it can be counted on one hand but he didn't match anyone I knew.' Thane thought to himself with a frown.

'But if he did indeed try to tamper with their soul, how did the brats escape before I arrived? Neither of them should have a defensive measure for their souls so it shouldn't be possible.'

Scratching his head in annoyance, Thane couldn't help but feel as though he's been scammed. There were so many issues cropping up that shouldn't happen so soon yet here they are.

'Sh\*t... What kind of brat did I even save from the Zenia's.'

Sighing out, he looked at Ria before considering how he should answer her.

"The soul... is something that you would usually interact with or rather come to a small understanding of once you reach six Sigils. But more accurately, once you reach your second Resonance. It's not something Hunter's can touch upon early so you don't have to worry about it.

Just know that it's something comes naturally and you and Alice simply met an anomaly." He explained as Ria reluctantly accepted his reply.

Even she knew what they met was an anomaly but the issue was the fact that Alice kept attracting these kinds of people!

If they don't become anomalies themselves, they'll never be able to survive against them.

'That guy said my soul was touched by the Cult. Even though the Ritual didn't finish, it still left a mark on me... Maybe I need to see if there are any information available on these rituals. If I know more, I might be able to find out how I could deal with the soul.' Ria thought to herself while Thane started his next lecture.

What he wanted to teach Ria was how overwhelm her opponents with the sheer speed of her lightning from afar. And once they approach her, she'll blitz them with her physical prowess.

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Taking the train up to the surface, Alice could feel the passengers staring at her in wariness.

Understanding that they must've seen how she was fighting in the arena, Alice pulled up her hood and stood by the doors, waiting for her stop.

In her mind, she recalled the sensation she felt in arena and how she used to control it before.

'I just need to designate the time for a 'Hunt' and the time outside of one. The main thing is being able to turn off this state otherwise I'll keep going until I brutalize their corpse like I did with the Demonette. If Ria didn't appear, I doubt I would've been able to stop.'

Just like her violet flames, she wanted to see what made the other side of her go out of control. If she could figure out this condition, she would be able to fully control one of her strongest weapons.

'In the Hunting state, I react to things more instinctively. I can dodge much easier and counter without thinking much but at the same time, I don't care about the damage done to my body. Even if I have healing blood, continuously taking damage like that is dangerous.' Alice sighed.

Granted, she was able to mitigate some of the damage she took by stopping her bleeding thanks to her second Sigil but that doesn't account for heavy damage.

There was still a limit to what she could do and from the sound of the Sigil name, Lifeblood Link might be able to help her solve this issue.

Arriving at the surface, Alice made her way to the Guild Library and sought out the books related to the Blood Coil Amphiptere.

After 30 minutes of looking around, Alice found three books that seemed to contain what she was looking for.

A bestiary for dragon like creatures including Drakes, Wyrms and so on.

A book on blood based beasts and the recorded Sigils that have obtained from them.

And finally, a book on how to counter blood type beast abilities using Abyss Blood or tools.

Pulling out her almost empty flask, Alice savored a sip of her mead before opening the first book.

Finding the right page, she skimmed over the information regarding the beast.

'The Blood Coil Amphiptere is a beast of mesmerizing motion. A swirl of blood and metal yet seemed to have no flesh beneath the armour. Its serpentine body is covered with razor sharp pieces of metal and along with its fearsome speed, possesses unrelenting tenacity.

'Two large wings that can block out the sky are not just there for flight. These wings are sharp and allows it to drill through the ground like it's nothing. Despite having wings, these beasts tend to hide beneath

ground, waiting for their prey to walk over them and lash out. The Blood Coil Amphiptere is primarily an ambush predator.'

Narrowing her eyes, Alice traced her finger across the image of the beast.

There was a single warning next to the image for Hunters who wish to kill this beast.

'Under no circumstances should you allow a piece of the metal to enter your body. If it happens, remove that section immediately if you wish to live!'

#### Chapter 184 - 184: Counters Against The Amphiptere

Reading this, Alice couldn't help but frown as this meant she had to take extra caution not to get hit during the fight.

And considering the beast was known for speed and ambushes, this may prove to be more difficult than expected.

'Hmm... Wait, if my flames can cancel out beast powers, does that mean it'll lose control of the metal in my body?' Alice thought to herself while making a small orb of violet flames above her finger.

"What even are you..." She muttered.

She had no idea what kind of flames this was and why it could counter the powers given by the Abyss. Was it a byproduct of the experiment done by the Zenia's? Was it something she was born with since the start? Or was it when she was injected with the concentrated Abyss Blood?

However, this would prove to be her strongest asset against the beasts and Hunters of the Abyss.

Setting the first book aside, Alice checked out the second book that documented the type of Sigil abilities you could get from the beast.

Unlike the other beasts, there were two main types she could pick from and a third that changed based on its environment.

The two main Sigils were the following:

[Blood Coil Manifestation]

A Sigil that allowed her to conjure the signature ability belonging to the beast. When activated, it coats her body with a swirl of blood and metal, granting her great defensive and offensive capabilities. The metal and blood can be controlled at will.

Not only that, but in this state, she'll gain a significant boost to her physical attributes.

As for the second Sigil, it was the Lifeblood Link that Thane mentioned earlier.

[Lifeblood Link]

With this Sigil, you tether yourself to your enemy and begin to share vitality. Any damage you do to them is reflected onto you. Any damage they do to you is reflected onto them. So long as this tether persists, you will continuously share damage with one another.

Healing done will also be shared.

The key to this Sigil is that after linking your lifeblood to one another, it will slowly equalize your vitality until they are evenly distributed as long as you can withstand the pain.

'If a Hunter was to be categorized as having 10 vitality and the beast having 100, the Life Blood link will slowly equalize until it is a 55 split between the two. The danger to this Sigil is that if your body cannot handle the equalization, it will forcefully cancel this tether and the rebound is not something many Hunters can withstand...' Reading this, Alice couldn't help but furrow her brows.

From the sound of it, this Lifeblood Link seems to be a double-edged sword that could harm her more than the beast in a prolonged battle.

"But Thane said it was annoying to fight against... Why? Is there something I'm not seeing?" She muttered while rereading the Sigil.

The key point to the Sigil was that she can now equalize her vitality with her opponent, very advantageous should they be stronger than her but with a risk of rebound. If used against someone weaker, she's practically stabbing herself to make it an even fight.

Next, any damage she does to them is reflected onto her and vice versa. Including the healing.

Narrowing her eyes at this part, Alice soon realized that even though she was taking damage, her vitality was still being equalized! Meaning she'll receive the pain that comes with the injuries but she's actually getting healed by the link.

Realizing this, Alice's smile couldn't help but twitch.

'What kind of masochistic ability is this???' She thought to herself while taking a sip from her flask.

However, despite the... Strangeness of this ability, Alice could see why Thane would say it was annoying to fight against.

If someone could withstand the link to an Abyss Lord then that means they practically become a fighting machine that can hold out until the target is equal to them.

Of course, the equalization doesn't include the difference in power but just being able to heal while fighting someone stronger was very beneficial and close to what she was needing right now.

The final book was on how to counter the beast.

'The beast relies on its senses aside from sight to locate the prey, primarily vibrations through the ground when it waits underground for an ambush. Hunters can get an early hit by baiting it using false vibrations in the rhythm of walking.

'Using blunt weapons can cause damage to the metal around it, making movement harder and reducing the beast's speed. Abyss Blood that can freeze liquid or Sigil abilities that let you halt the movement of blood will also restrict the beast's movements. The Blood Coil Amphiptere does not have a 'real' physical body aside from the swirl of blood and metal that coils around the core of its being.

Focus on restricting its movements and deal with the core.'

Furrowing her brows, Alice was silent. Her target this time was a beast with no 'body' and with her current Sigils, restraining the beast would prove to be a difficult task.

'I'm not sure what kind of effect my flames would have on the beast... I should prepare for the worst case scenario and have some Abyss Blood ready. Which means I'll need to earn some more coin so I can actually afford anything.' Alice lamented.

Once again, it came down to an issue regarding money. She doubted Thane would give her the money needed for the blood and with their reward of 250 gold still being held by the Guild for now, she'll have to go back to the arena.

Scratching her hair, Alice stood up and placed the books back where she got them. She needed to make her preparations as soon as possible and make her way to the beast before it got taken by someone else.

'First, I need to see how expensive the blood is. Second, I need a blunt weapon to deal with the beast. I have that covered with Obsidian Retort since it can take the shape of any weapon I want. Third, I need something to throw off its senses so I can get the first hit in.' Pausing at this step, Alice realized the book didn't say anything on how to counter the tethering ability.

\*sigh...

"Seems like I'll have to take it head on in that aspect." She groaned while making her way out of the library.

Thankfully, the Veridian Blossom Apothecaries was nearby so it was a simple walk over to check the prices of the blood she needed.

Upon arriving at the store's doorstep, Alice could once again smell the fragrance of herbs and flowers placed around the shop.

Stepping through the door, she saw the same man behind the counter.

"Ah... Back so soon. I presume you are preparing for a hunt yes?" He smiled as Alice nodded.

"I am, how did you know?"

"There are variations in the gazes of people who step into my store. New customers like yourself last time have a curious light. Their gaze will be all over the place, seeing what's available. Those who seek to find a specific type of blood will come straight to me. After working this job for many years, I've become accustomed to telling the difference in body language." He chuckled.

"So how may I help you today?"

"Do you have any Abyss Bloods that will help me freeze liquids? The beast I'm fighting constantly has blood swirling around it." Alice inquired as the man was silent for a moment before nodding his head.

Reaching behind the counter for a catalogue, he flipped through the pages before stopping roughly a quarter of the way in.

"I believe the blood of the Warden of Frost should suit your requirements. It temporarily grants you control over a frozen mist that circulates around your body. This will let you freeze most liquids rather quickly. Side effects include frostbite if you are not careful and something most would like to call Icebound Affliction for a few days."

"Icebound Affliction?"

"Indeed. It's similar to coming down with a sickness, your body will struggle to regulate your internal temperature and you'll feel quite sleepy along with a constant shiver. You become weak to ice attacks and during this period, it is advised not to drink any ice based Abyss Bloods. Including the vials you bought last time.

So if you are thinking of using both, I advise you to drink the healing blood first before drinking this." He warned while Alice looked over to the cost.

Immediately, she felt as though a dagger of ice pierced through her heart as the price was an astounding 35 gold per vial.

"We can make some arrangements if this price is above your currently available funds. Is this a commission from the Hunter's Guild?" He asked after seeing the bitter expression.

Shaking her head, Alice explained that this was for a Sigil hunt.

"That does make things a little more difficult. If this was a Guild Commission, I can put in a request and get some small compensation in the off chance that you fail and find yourself unable to pay off the debt. But since this is a personal Hunt, there's no guarantee." The man sighed.

"Actually... I still have the reward from a previous commission. But complications occurred and the money is being held by the Guild." Alice forced a smile. She didn't exactly want to say the reason out loud but if she could get her hands on this blood now, she could leave as soon as tonight.

"Give me a moment, I'll send a message to the Guild and see what they say about this." Excusing himself for a moment, the man left the counter while an assistant took over.

Left on her own, Alice browsed the catalogue to see if there were any Abyss Blood's that she's personally tested before.

Some had the symbol of the Zenia family printed next to them while others had symbols belonging to rival families.

Just seeing the symbol of her old family was enough to annoy her but it was something she couldn't avoid. They were the forerunners in Abyss Blood research after all, it would be stranger not to see their symbol next to these images.

Soon, the store owner returned and offered Alice a deal.

#### Chapter 185 - 185: Luminous Gryphon

"The Guild has offered to... pay for the cost of this blood now. Once the investigation is over and you receive your reward, they would take an extra fee on top of what you pay for the blood." The owner smiled awkwardly since the price they wanted to take from Alice was quite substantial.

"They wanted to take an extra 15 gold, meaning you'll have to pay 50 gold in total for the vial."

". . ." Alice was speechless. The Guild wanted to take 15 gold from her even though they were the ones holding the gold and stopping her from buying things.

Furrowing her brows, Alice massaged her eyes before nodding.

"Fine alright. Let them take the gold since I'm in need of this vial."

Hearing this, the owner apologized once more as he made his way to the back and prepared a vial containing Warden of Frost Blood.

After preparing a vial of blood, he handed her a Law of Agreement which she read carefully and agreed to.

With the documentation done, he handed her the vial and stored the contract away.

"If you don't mind me asking, can I know what kind of beast you're going after? While I may not be a Hunter, my knowledge regarding beasts should be rather sufficient. Since the Guild is taking extra gold from you, I hope I can compensate with a bit of information." He asked with an apologetic smile.

"Well... There's a high chance the target will be a Blood Coil Amphiptere. The traces left behind seem to mirror its tracks." Alice answered as any information is good information.

"A Blood Coil Amphiptere? Hmm... Can you remind me of its details?" He furrowed his brows and tried to recall if he heard about such a beast.

"Doesn't really have a body, swirling blood and metal, hides underground and has wings that can cut a bunch of stuff. Not sure what else there is to say about this beast." Alice shrugged.

"Underground? With wings?"

"Yep. It's a bit weird but it's what the book said so who am I to judge." Alice chuckled as the pairing was quite strange.

"Indeed. Though that has helped me remember what kind of beast you're trying to hunt. If I recall, its abilities should differ based on its environment. Considering that you don't seem to be travelling far from this city, I can assume the beast would've taken the properties of our surroundings." He muttered while making his way to the back of the store.

Alice could hear him muttering to himself while rummaging through the different containers before walking out with a small vial of blood.

"This should be helpful for you. It's a small sample vial but it belongs to a Luminous Gryphon, one of the Amphiptere's natural enemies. It's not a full vial so you can't drink to get the effects but if you are in danger, you can throw splash this onto the beast.

It should disorientate the beast into a panic and you can take that chance to either run or attack it." He smiled, handing the small vial of blood to Alice.

This was his way of compensating her for the loss of 15 gold. Plus, it was just a small sample, not big enough to sell in the first place.

Receiving the gold, Alice smiled and thanked the shop owner before making her way out.

"Ah! Before I forget, I never asked your name." Alice paused mid step while the store owner chuckled.

"Victor. Not many have asked for my name before." Victor raised an eyebrow in mild surprise.

"Well I might be revising this store for a while so I may as well get to know you. Thank you again for the blood." Alice grinned before leaving the store.

Looking into her pouch, she made a mental note of her supply of blood.

2x Frostshroud Willow Blood (Healing)

1x Warden of Frost Blood

1x Luminous Gryphon Blood (Sample)

She had given the other two vials of the willow blood to Ria since they couldn't drink more than 4 vials in their lifetime. In her case, there was no limit but the same couldn't be said for Ria.

'I have 4 vials of blood in this pouch that can hold 10. I can't siphon my own blood just yet since I don't have enough funds to buy low rank healing vials to replenish the lost blood.' Alice sighed inwardly.

However, with her recent purchases, she was pretty much ready to face the Amphiptere. Or so she thought. She had the weapon and the blood to deal with the beast, even a small vial to stun it if things go wrong.

All that was left now was to track down the beast and kill it for her bounty.

She needed to hire a carriage down to Ironforge as the rumours state that the corpses were found there.

But with Ria holding most of their funds, she'll need to find her first and plan their journey.

"Are they still by the Arena? Hmm... Maybe I should just wait in my room. She should be back soon enough right?" Alice muttered, making her way back to the Guild.

She was still feeling a little fatigued from her fight in the arena and wanted to rest up so she could be in peak condition when she set off to hunt.

###

Alice didn't know when she fell asleep but by the time she woke up, Ria had just returned to her room.

In the brief moment Alice saw Ria, she noticed the absolute exhaustion in her eyes as Ria didn't even notice her.

Seeing this, Alice couldn't help but wonder what she had been doing for so long and made her way downstairs.

She noticed Thane sitting by the bar, looking bored as usual.

Sitting down next to him, she ordered herself a tankard of mead.

"Why do you always look so bored?" Alice asked curiously. She wanted to know more about Thane as he's an old friend of Allura.

Plus, if her guesses are correct and Thane was actually Kaden, she would want to know more of her would be savior.

"When you're surrounded by boring things you are naturally bored." Thane shrugged.

"But if it's boring shouldn't you be doing something you enjoy?"

"I would be if I wasn't taking responsibility for the two of you. If it wasn't for the bet I made to you I wouldn't even care about what happens to the lightning brat. But here we are." Thane sighed while resting his chin on his palm.

His entire posture and aura screamed his desire to leave this place. How much he didn't want to be here right now but Alice didn't know why he wouldn't just leave then. As an Abyss Lord, he shouldn't be restricted by anything.

"Did you and Ria do some training together or something? She looked exhausted."

"Just a little. I showed her another way to use her Sigils but I won't spoil the fun. She was pretty proud of what she did. Anyway, stop beating around the bush and just ask me what you want to ask. You don't exactly do a good job of hiding your desires." Thane rolled his eyes.

"Ah was I that obvious?" Alice furrowed her brows as it almost seemed like everyone around her could read her mind. Ria could, Allura could and now even Thane.

"Yes you are. So what do you want? If it's a boring question I'm just going to leave to have some fun."

"I just wanted to know more about you and Allura. You said you are her old friend right? What was she like back then? And how different is she now?"

Hearing this, Thane was silent as he tapped his finger on the table. Opening his mouth, he hesitated for a little bit before taking a drink of alcohol and sighing out deeply.

"She was... quite a scaredy cat at first you know. Everything terrified her, she worried about things needlessly and kept thinking about the future. Even a small bug could've scared her." Thane chuckled softly as Alice noticed a strange light in his eyes. An emotion she had never seen before.

"But over time she mustered up some courage and became boisterous. She would practically be shouting every sentence she spoke and was always full of energy. Naturally, she was quite reckless once she got over her initial fear and picked some random Sigils she felt was 'cool' in her terms. You have no idea how long it took for me to help her figure out some uses for her first few Sigils.

"But after that, she was a little more careful and considered her choices slowly. It gave me less of a headache but I do miss the sight of her panicking once she realized she couldn't do what she originally wanted to do. Sigils are permanent after all, once you pick one you can't undo." Shaking his head with a nostalgic smile, he missed the old days in Ayr where they practically had no worries.

But things changed and Ayr was gone.

Their era will never come back, all that's left is to fulfil his task.

"Did she smoke a lot back then too? She seems to be smoking practically every hour."

"Did she smoke? No, never. I didn't even realize she was smoking until recently when I saw it through my familiar. But considering the contents... I suppose it's only natural." Thane paused briefly before pausing.

Tilting her head, Alice couldn't help but wonder why he paused.

However, she had one more question she wanted to ask him. With how he was speaking about Allura and the nostalgic look on his face, he must have a deeper connection to her. And the only person she had in mind that fit the bill was Kaden.

Hesitating for a moment, Alice took a deep breath and opened her mouth.

"Are you... Kaden?"

Chapter 186 - 186: Thane's Answer

"Are you... Kaden?" Alice asked hesitantly. The words left her mouth as silence dawned between the two.

Thane glanced down at Alice and squinted his eyes.

A menacing aura radiated from Thane's body as Alice felt as though she was being choked by the air itself.

"Hah???? What even made you think I was him?" Thane groaned out in disgust. The menacing aura disappeared as though it was just a figment of Alice's imagination, causing her to tilt her head in confusion.

"Why would you even think I'm Kaden? I look nothing like him." He furrowed his brow in clear annoyance as Alice panicked.

"Ah sorry, it's just... Well you know Allura. You spoke of her fondly and you used shadow powers like him. You even teleported Ria so I thought you were him." Alice waved her hand, trying to explain herself while Thane continued to stare at her in irritation.

"Was what everything? That was enough for you to think I was Kaden? You realise that the same power can be found in two people right? Sigils aren't exactly rare." Thane scratched his hair.

Alice couldn't find any excuse and simply apologized in the end.

'Did I really guess wrong? His annoyance and disgust doesn't seem fake... Maybe he was close to them and just didn't like Kaden?' Alice thought to herself as Thane calmed down after a brief moment.

"So you're looking for Kaden? How come?" Thane asked curiously once he stopped complaining.

"Well... He kind of saved my life. I wanted to thank him personally and I guess... get some answers like why he picked me." Alice smiled while thinking about how he broke into the prison looking for treasure only to find her.

Much like Thane, he expressed his annoyance but still helped her in the end.

Perhaps that was why she mistook him for Kaden.

"That so?"

"Mnm. It might not seem like a lot but I was stuck there for 10 whole years you know? It was a long... agonizing wait. Sometimes I thought of ending it, sometimes I pushed on. In the end, I held on for revenge, to see if there's a chance at changing things. And he gave me that option so I wanted to thank him for freeing me." Alice chuckled while drinking her mead.

"But that was simply me grasping at my last straws. The collar they put on me didn't let me die even if I tried my best." Alice smiled bitterly.

Unconsciously, Thane reached out and patted Alice on the head, surprising her as she glanced over at him and saw a brief moment of sadness in his eyes before it got replaced by confusion then the familiar boredom.

"Quite a sob story you got there. Though he's quite the insensitive b\*stard so I doubt he'll be able to appreciate your gratitude fully." Thane shrugged, removing his hand from her head before calling for more alcohol.

Holding her head, Alice couldn't help but wonder why Abyss Lords always liked to pat her head.

Did she have a magnet on it? Why did they keep going for it???

Furrowing her brows in confusion, Alice was left sitting in silence, still holding her head while trying to think of answers.

"Don't think too much about that gesture. Just a habit. So, did you do your research on the Amphiptere?" Thane rolled his eyes before focusing back on the main task.

"Oh right, yes I did. I made some preparations of my own and it should let me fight that beast to a high degree of success."

Putting her pouch onto the table, she showed Thane her selection of Abyss Blood that she bought for the hunt. Examining them, Thane nodded his head before placing them back.

"Pretty good selections. How confident are you at killing this beast?" He asked in seriousness.

Seeing this, Alice stopped playing around and became serious as well.

"I'm not sure since I haven't seen the beast in action before. The only doubt I have is getting the initial hit since it's an ambush predator. I should be able to deal with the other aspects of its power."

"A Hunter shouldn't go into a hunt with doubts in their mind. There are no guarantees so the fact that you think you should be able to deal with its other aspects is good enough as it is. However, you must control what you can. And the fact that there is still uncertainty means you have not prepared enough.

How do you think you should counter his ability to ambush from underground?" Thane shook his head.

Flicking his finger, shadows converged onto the desk and formed an scene. It depicted a small version of Alice taking a step and a large beast erupting from below, killing her in an instant.

"Well?" He gestured for her to answer.

"Hmm... The books said I could draw it away by using fake footprints. But my abilities don't exactly allow that so would using the surrounding wood work? I can wrap them with my blood and have them mimic my footsteps." Alice asked as Thane only shrugged.

"Why are you asking me? I'm not the one hunting it. It's you who's putting your life on the line. YOU need to think of a plan that's worth risking YOUR life for. If you are not satisfied with your own plan then keep revising it. Change it until you are confident enough to risk your life.

That is the basic all Hunter's should abide by."

He wanted her to be able to make her own judgement rather than seek his help. For a beast like this, Alice should be more than enough to kill it especially if she is able to make use of the Eye.

"Ah right... Hmm..." Going silent, Alice stared at the miniature scene and started to formulate some ideas in her mind while Thane watched silently.

'If you don't want to be put into a helpless spot then prepare as much as you can. Prepare for the information you have and have the confidence and adaptability for any uncertainties that may arise.' He thought to himself as he urged her to develop her capabilities as a Hunter.

He couldn't deny that she had fighting talent. But as he had witnessed before, she relies too much on her baser instincts when she fights, especially when she's in her enraged state. While there are different types of Hunters, being able to prepare for a fight and enter with a plan is a must.

Just because someone fought physically and worked on instinct doesn't mean they should neglect rational planning and preparation.

Neglecting this is practically asking for death to knock on your door.

"I think I have a plan. First, I know that the beast hides underground and ambushes those that walk above. I have two ways of approaching this. The normal way is to bait it using fake footsteps then fighting it out in the open." Alice explained as Thane could see the determination in her eyes.

It was a far better light than the uncertainty she had before.

"And the second?"

"Fight it in its home. Since it hides underground, it is stationary. It's waiting for a chance to attack not knowing its actually helping me out. I'll have my blood survey the ground beneath and find the tunnels its hiding in.

"Once I find that, I will prepare the strongest Nova Core I can and fire it into the tunnel, beginning the fight. Since I'm standing by the entrance, the flame will have no other choice than to rush towards the beast where it is waiting to ambush me.

It should deal a significant amount of damage before bursting out of the ground." She explained as the scene started to change according to her suggestion.

With the tunnels that the Amphiptere digs, it was practically a cannon waiting to blow once Alice fires the attack.

"Hou~ Even with that poor replica of Allura's skill, it should be sufficient like you said. However, can you physically contest with the beast focused on speed and tenacity?" Thane chuckled.

He was happy that she had figured out a second plan of attack but she was still not thinking far enough. The Blood Coil Amphiptere despite being a three star difficulty beast, was built like a glass cannon.

It had raw speed, power and tenacity with its Lifeblood Link making up for the weak durability.

Alice needed a way to deal with that raw physical power and he had a way to solve it.

"Your second Sigil belongs to a Maiden of the Blood Moon yes? An upgrade from a Blood Widow who focuses on attacking with speed and blood." Thane asked as Alice nodded her head.

"And I'm sure Allura had done some training so you could get acclimated to the speed."

Once again, Alice nodded her head.

"Now, what do you think the difference is between the two?"

Thinking for a moment, Alice opened her mouth.

"The Maiden stands still because her attacks are fast while the beast is moving itself?"

"Correct. The Maiden can attack fast but her own physical body is lacking. Hence her other support skills that can help her move around. However, the Amphiptere is different. It moves itself fast and uses its body as a weapon.

"Since you are primarily a melee fighter with a relatively short range with your flame, you need to be able to adjust and adapt to the way the beast charges. And naturally, the best way to do that would be some... light training. Most Hunters would do this through hunting weaker beasts before they go for their main hunt.

"For you, I will train you personally like I did for the Ria brat." Thane grinned as Alice suddenly felt a shiver down her spine.

This reaction was far stronger than what she had felt from Allura as after many nights, she finally understood that this was her survival instinct!

Something was telling her to run right now!

However, before she could, Thane grabbed her shoulder to stop her from escaping.

"It'll be a short session so you have nothing to worry about." Thane laughed ominously.

Little did Alice know, he was the one who trained Allura and the one who taught her the training methods!

## Chapter 187 - 187: Thane's Training

"Oi oi oi! What happened to your confidence earlier huh? Brat?! Why aren't you dodging? You would've died by now!" Thane shouted out in sadistic joy while Alice was running as fast as she could.

Sweat poured from her head as a shadowy beast lunged from behind her.

Rolling forward, Alice was barely able to dodge when it circled back and slammed into her from the ground.

"GAH!!!!"

"Your recovery is too slow! There's no way a beast will let you recover in time!" He berated while flicking his wrist.

The shadow mimic of the Amphiptere started to twist in the air as it launched an array of fake metal shards towards Alice who widened her eyes in a panic and slashed out with her blade.

She managed to parry two when a third slammed into her back, launching her towards an array of metal shards.

\*CRASH!!!!

Collapsing on the ground from the impact, Alice wanted to just hug her knees and cry.

'Demon!!!!' She shouted out in her mind while forcing herself to stand up.

She could feel the pain through her body as he clearly didn't hold back as much as Allura did.

While Allura's training was hard, she still adjusted it so it felt comfortable.

Thane on the other hand was completely merciless!

"Ohya? You can still stand? Let's continue then." He grinned. Snapping his fingers, the beast roared back to life once more as it slammed its wing into Alice's stomach and threw it into the air.

The world seemed to slow down as Alice had a single thought in her mind.

'Dearest Allura, my mentor and guardian. My one and only master, the star in my life. PLEASE TAKE ME BACK I DON'T WANT TO TRAIN WITH THANE ANYMOREEEEEEEE!'

Before she could even crash onto the ground, the beast grabbed her with its tail and slammed her against the walls of a nearby cliff, creating a hole in the rock.

Alice lay motionlessly as she wanted to throw up all the mead she had drank before this.

After grabbing her shoulder, Thane took her out of the city and into the mountain range before surrounding them with a barrier of shadow, preventing her from escaping.

This was the same place that he was training Ria earlier and Alice could see several cavities and damages caused to the surroundings.

"Is that it? What happened to your plans? Everyone's got a plan until a beast hits them in the face. Now stand the f\*ck back up and actually try!"

Gritting her teeth, Alice glared in anger as she felt wronged by what he said.

"F\*cking dammit! Fine! You want me to try?! Let's f\*cking go b\*tch!" Alice cursed as her Sigil burned across her eye.

Violet flames erupted from her body as her blade immediately reacted, becoming a catalyst for her flames to manifest in greater power.

Seeing this, Thane raised an eyebrow in surprise and curiosity as the feeling he got from the flames was like nothing he had felt before.

He felt a deep rejection towards this power from deep within, a feeling he couldn't get rid of no matter what.

Rushing out of the cavity in the wall, Alice lunged towards the beast and slashed her blade down, causing a flaming dragon to rush out.

\*BANG!!!!

Colliding with one another, the dragon bit down on the shadow beast's neck as the shadows started to flicker as though it was struggling to keep its shape.

'Hm? Are my powers... fading? What's going on...?' Thane frowned as he could feel a slight disturbance to his connection with his summon. However, the connection held on in the end as his power was not something that could be easily cut off.

But the fact that Alice was able to cause this kind of reaction was now piquing his interest as he didn't think such a feat was possible.

'Let me see what else she can do.' He thought with a smile as he injected more power into the beast.

\*ROAR!!!!

Overpowering the flames, the beast unfurled its wings as an array of metal shadows shot out, shredding the flames apart and flew into the air.

A storm of 'blood' detached from the beast as it swarmed towards Alice but she was prepared.

While the flaming dragon was keeping the beast busy, she had been charging a Nova Core shot!

'My last fight has already demonstrated that this is too slow in charging. I need to gather power faster. I don't need the full power of this attack, just enough to cancel out these flames.'

'I've been focusing too much on copying Allura I haven't made the most out of my own powers.' Alice thought to herself as she made a cut on her arm.

Blood surged above her fingertips and condensed into an orb as flames erupted around it. As though pulled in by an invisible force, all of the violet flames that she had unleashed converged towards the orb and condensed into a blinding orb of light.

But she wasn't done yet.

'I did this before, I still remember the steps.'

With her other hand, she stabbed her blade into the ground as blood formed a circle around her.

'Is she... Doing a ritual? But she doesn't know any of the required symbols. Unless she's wanting to make something of her own?' Thane wondered as he flicked his finger, allowing the beast to slow down a little bit just so Alice could have more time to try this ritual out.

Taking a deep breath, Alice remembered the steps of the Ritual she had done when fighting the Jester's Regret when the beasts attacked Zadash.

It was instinctual at the time but she was now doing it with a purpose.

'Establish the environment.'

The blood circle around her manifested fully as they burst into flames, feeding power towards the orb above her finger.

'Focus on intent.'

The ground around her started to crack as the power condensed into the orb was too much for the surroundings to handle.

'Offer a sacrifice.'

More blood flowed out of her body as it evaporated in an instant.

\*CRACK!!!

Widening her eyes in shock, Alice didn't expect to see a crack manifest on the orb in front of her as the Ritual had failed!

'Sh\*t!'

Without hesitation, she threw the orb towards the beast and jumped back to seek some cover.

Even though her ritual failed, she still created an orb of condensed power on the level of her Nova Core!

Gliding through the air, more cracks appeared on the orb as tendrils of flames clawed their way out of the condensed orb, shattering its outer shell. A surge of flames danced out in a display of destruction as countless arcs tore away at the shadow beast, shredding it into countless pieces.

The fire engulfed the entire area as Thane flickered next to Alice wrapping the two of them in a protective layer of shadow.

Unable to see anything, Alice could only wonder what was going on as they didn't even feel the impact.

However, there were more pressing matters at hand.

She could feel Thane's stare boring a hole into her as she meekly looked away as though she wasn't responsible.

"Did you seriously just try to invent your own ritual?"

"Ehehe~ Perhaps?"

Knocking her on the head, Thane sighed as he had allowed her to do what she wanted since it looked like she knew what she was doing. Looking back at it... She did not, in fact, know what she was doing.

Massaging his eyes for a moment, he took a deep breath.

"Do you even know the steps to a ritual? It seems like you had the initial parts completed but failed at the end."

"Erm... I succeeded once before so I thought I could do it again. I just need to establish an environment, lock in the intent and offer a sacrifice right? Isn't that how all rituals work?" Alice replied, recalling her fight against the Jester.

"Let me explain how stupid you are. What you did was essentially find a beast, prepare a trap, lure the beast then decide to dive head first into the trap yourself to test if it worked or not. The most important step in a Ritual is establishing a connection before giving a sacrifice. How do you plan on sacrificing something if there's nothing to sacrifice to?

And what power are you planning to even connect with?" Thane lectured as Alice could only sit there and listen with no retort.

But this served as a good lesson for her the next time she wanted to try such a thing.

Seeing that she wasn't reflecting upon herself but rather thinking of how to do it again but better, Thane had a headache as she was no different from Allura!

"Fine whatever. Just a heads up, be careful who you connect to for the Ritual. Depending on the target and the situation you are in, you may bite off more than you can chew. I've known a few who have established a ritual only for the God to ask for their life in return. Obviously, they were unable to reject since it was past the point of no return." Thane sighed deeply.

He could remember a priest belonging to the Church of the Moon asking for enlightenment so many years ago. In response, the Goddess of the Moon accepted his ritual. The only issue was the sacrifice she

demanded was for him to shed his mortal body and if his desire was pure, she would bless him with enlightenment.

However, his desire was not 'pure' enough for the Goddess and he died for nothing.

He didn't want the same situation to happen to Alice.

"Always remember, never establish a point of no return before the sacrifice. If you do, you give the target full control of what they want to do to you. That is an advantage you never want to give up." Thane warned as he flicked his finger.

The barrier of shadow around them started to disappear as they were greeted by the destruction caused by Alice's attack.

All of the obstacles around the location had been destroyed while the surface of the ground was melted into a bubbling obsidian.

But if it wasn't for him, Alice may have perished in her own attack just now.

Yet all he could see was curiosity in Alice's eyes as she was trying to think of ways to succeed in a ritual.

'Seems like Allura influenced her in all the bad ways.' Thane sighed, moving them to a new location so they could continue their training. He wasn't going to stop because of a small mishap.

#### Chapter 188 - 188: Results Of Thane's Training

Dusting his hands, Thane looked down at Alice now that their training session had finished. She lay on the floor hugging her knees as though she had just been traumatized.

"Stop being a kid, it wasn't even that difficult." Thane shrugged since he felt like Alice was overreacting a little.

Hearing this, Alice felt like a vein on her head was about to burst open.

What he classified as not difficult was having her run from the beast until her legs gave out, hit the beast until her arms became numb, get hit until she could no longer move and when all of that is done, be healed and repeat the process all over again.

Not only that, but he would also manually control the floating pieces of shadow metal to hit her mid dodge, ruining her balance and causing her to take another hit from the beast.

But that wasn't everything.

The cherry on top of everything was that every time she fought back, the beast would only get stronger and shrug off her attacks!

However, she wasn't even sure what the training did for her. All she did was get beat up for a few hours!

"Well it's about time we go back now. The city lord will already have a headache wondering why the landscape has changed so much." Thane massaged his neck while looking at the damage that his summon caused.

Flicking his finger, shadows wrapped around Alice's body and started to puppeteer her.

"Can't you just teleport me back? Why are you forcing me to walk like this." Alice groaned in annoyance while glaring at Thane.

"It's no fun then. Why would I go out of my way with that training if I'm just going to let you rest well later?"

". . . But you let Ria go back?!" Alice protested, causing Thane to laugh.

"Pft ahahaha! Bold of you to assume I teleported her back. Nope, I made her walk the entire way using the same method. If anything, it would be unfair of me not to make you walk." Snapping his fingers, the shadows started to pilot Alice's body while Thane looked at her from behind.

'Her body is a lot sturdier than I expected. Even after injecting that much power into the beast she was still able to protest. Not to mention that recovery of hers. I don't think that's a normal recovery.

The closer she is to passing out the fiercer she becomes and to accommodate this, her body patches itself up to allow her to keep fighting.' Thane frowned since he had learned a lot regarding Alice during this training session.

The way she fights, how she strategises and most importantly, the quirks surrounding her body.

On top of the clearly abnormal regeneration, she was actually able to cancel out the Sigil powers to a certain extent.

In order to maintain the manifestations of his power, he had to put in twice the amount of effort. Had it been a normal Hunter with 3 Sigils, the summon would've been dismissed.

'I don't think I've heard of a beast with the power to cancel out Sigil power. If people had known, the lengths they would've gone to obtain this information would have been unthinkable. All of the Anti Hunter users would become far more dangerous and this would be a mandatory Sigil for anyone wanting to become an assassin.

This abnormality... Does it come from her or does it come from the synergy between her two Sigils?'

Narrowing his eyes, he contemplated in silence before closing one of his eyes. He wanted to see what kind of information he could get regarding this regeneration of her's along with the strange flames.

There was one man that he knew of who might have the information he wanted. And if not, he would know where to look.

'I'll send a message to Nalem and see what he knows.' Thane smiled inwardly as Nalem of all people should know. After all, he is who people used to hail as the all knowing librarian, The Observer of Life.

But that was a time long ago and the only ones that know of him could be counted on one hand.

"So how confident do you feel about hunting this beast now?" Thane asked while speeding up a little so he was next to Alice.

"Maybe 70% if I can get the first hit in. less than 50% if it fails." Alice groaned while trying to suppress the pain she was feeling.

"Hou? And what makes you think that? With the way you were getting beat up by the copy, you made it look like you weren't going to kill this beast at all." Thane laughed causing Alice to pout in annoyance.

She wanted to hit him right now but two reasons held her back.

First he is an Abyss Lord. One flick and she may as well be a stain on the ground.

Second, she couldn't control her body right now.

"I'll figure it out once I get there. Honestly speaking I've already prepared as much as I can in the time I'm given. Take too long and someone else will take it." She sighed.

She had the blood, the weapon and now the strategy. All that's left was to actually hunt the beast.

"Oh right, speaking of that, I did see a group of people approaching the area. They seem pretty well geared so I can only assume they're there for the beast as well." Thane muttered as he had been monitoring the area using his ravens.

"You only tell me that now?!?!" Alice widened her eyes.

Gritting her teeth, she mustered as much power as she could and started to run back to the city.

She needed to get Ria and hire a carriage as soon as possible before they kill her target!

"Seem's like I didn't train you enough if you can still run." Thane chuckled, catching up easily.

"This is no time for a joke! My third Sigil is about to get stolen!" Alice shouted while holding back the pain.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?!"

"It wouldn't be fun otherwise." Thane shrugged. Whether or not she could get this Sigil didn't matter to him. He's already fulfilled his responsibilities and even more with the training he gave to Ria.

Running back to the city as fast as she could, Alice ignored the burning sensation coursing through her lungs. She could feel the pain in her muscles and each movement felt like it was tearing her flesh from bone.

However, she couldn't help but notice that by running in a way that reduces the pain, she was increasing her top speed while conserving more stamina.

All of the hits she took from Thane throwing metal was actually to correct her posture albeit in a roundabout and painful way.

Glancing over to Thane, she could see that he was playing dumb as though he was unaware of the affects of his training.

Gritting her teeth, Alice took a deep breath and adjusted her posture. It wasn't perfect but it was far better than what she was doing before.

Once they arrived at the city, Alice immediately made her way to the Guild and woke Ria up.

In her confusion, Ria wasn't even able to ask Alice what was going on.

To assist Alice some more, Thane flicked his finger and a tendril of shadow grabbed Ria by her waist and held her like a sack of potatoes.

". . ." Ria was unable to comprehend the situation and eventually came to one conclusion.

She was going to continue to sleep.

With Ria sleeping while being held by a tendril of shadow, Alice ran to the stables with Thane behind her.

\*BANG!!!

Bursting through the doors of the one handling the different carriages, Alice slammed her hand on the table while taking deep breaths to refill her lungs.

"How can I he-"

"Carriage! Ironforge! South side! Round trip! Right now! Fast as possible!" Alice listed between her breaths.

Seeing her bloodshot eyes, the man nodded his head and figured it must be an emergency.

"15 Gold for the fastest route and carriage carrying three people. Round trip, can depart immediately."

Hearing the price, Alice paused as she was still waiting on the payment from the Guild but Thane stepped in and placed 15 gold pieces on the table.

"You owe me twice." He grinned.

"Twice???"

"Training and gold. My time is important you know? Even just talking to you now is an honor for you. If anything, you should be paying me to be standing next to you." Thane smirked as Alice's smile twitched.

However, since he was the one covering for her fee's right now she couldn't say anything back.

"You can ask Allura for the repayment then. She's my guardian right now I'm sure she can pay you back while I work for the coins." Alice huffed.

Her reply caused Thane to wipe the smirk off his face as that was the last thing he wanted right now. Contacting Allura for something as meager as 15 gold was asking her to punch him in the face with all her might.

"I'm benevolent so I shall grant this 15 gold to you out of pity." He replied while waving his hand lazily.

Meanwhile, the man led them to a carriage being pulled by two horses. He explained the request to the driver while Alice sat down on the seat and immediately collapsed from exhaustion.

She could feel the sweat sticking to her skin as she made an expression of disgust.

The sooner she kills this beast the faster she can take a post training shower that she had to skip due to potentially losing her third Sigil to some random Hunters.

As for Ria... She was still sleeping and Thane sat down comfortably in his own seat.

Once the driver understood the assignment, he drove the carriage out of the city and made his way to Ironforge using the shortest route.

Their estimated time of arrival was 2 hours and Thane continued to keep an eye on the situation using his familiar.

Once they arrive at Ironforge, the hunt for the beast will begin.

## Chapter 189 - 189: Arriving At Ironforge

As the carriage made its way along the path leading towards Ironforge, Alice, despite her exhaustion, double checked her equipment and made sure everything was ready.

Even her gloves, which had to be fixed, might need to be used in this battle to ensure the best possible rewards.

Looking over the mechanism within the gloves, she made sure the threads could still be deployed and hooked it onto her bracelet.

Seeing Alice do some light checkups on her gloves, Thane couldn't help but observe her work curiously. Naturally, he recognized the bracelet on her arm but the gloves were something new entirely.

'Those threads... I doubt she'll be able to collect something that expensive easily. Maybe Allura gave it to her.' He mused before turning his attention back to their surroundings.

Once Alice finished checking through all of her equipment, she fastened the pouch and looked towards Thane.

"Have they found the beast yet? Or are they there for something else?" She asked, hoping that it was just a coincidence that another group was in the same area.

"They're still there and gathering some information from the locals right now. For your standards, I'd say they're pretty experienced Hunters considering the prep they've put into this." Thane replied with a nonchalant shrug.

Furrowing her brows, Alice nodded her head and closed her eyes.

She needed to rest her mind for now and focus up once they arrived.

If she could help it, she wanted to avoid conflict with the other party. Alice hoped that they were just there to take care of the beast and not there for a Sigil. If it was the former, there was a chance for negotiation.

However, if it was the latter, they might have to fight it out to see who can get the beast.

Just thinking about this, Alice could feel the slow rise of 'hunger' within her mind as she shook off the feeling and took deep breaths to calm herself.

She was here to hunt the beast, not the people. Unless they aimed for her life, there was no reason to kill them.

"Need some help with that killing intent of yours?" Thane asked with a light yawn. Even though it was brief, he could clearly sense the fluctuation of Alice's mental state.

"No it's fine. I just need to control myself a bit and things should be okay." Alice shook her head.

Since Alice said no, he wasn't going to continue asking.

As the carriage continued to drive towards their destination, the landscape changed from the city outskirts to open terrain and finally, a mountainous path.

Ironforge, much like its name suggests, is a forge rather than a city. The forge itself is located in the middle of the Iron Mountains while rivers of lava flow underneath.

Even from afar, they could see the billowing smoke pushing out of the mountain top while a rhythmic echo would pulse out, sounding like the clash of metal against metal.

Upon arriving at the south side of the forge, Alice didn't even bother to explore the city as she immediately jumped off the carriage.

"Where is the group right now?" Alice asked while trying to wake up Ria.

"Don't know." Thane smiled.

His reply caused Alice to pause in confusion.

"I've already done plenty. If I told you it'll be no fun for me. Just know the beast is still alive." Thane shrugged, showing that he wasn't interested in helping her anymore.

"Alright thank you."

Giving Ria a few more shakes, she groggily sat up and looked around her in confusion.

"Huh? Where are we?" She yawned, rubbing her eyes.

"Ironforge. We're going to hunt the Amphiptere right now since another group is also going after it. If they're friendly we might be able to negotiate but if they're not we'll have to fight.

Blinking her eyes, Ria had to take a moment to digest what she had just heard as the last thing she could remember was sleeping in her room.

But once she fully comprehended what they were about to do, her eyes turned serious as she jumped off the carriage and stretched her body.

"Alright, what do you need me to do? There's only so much I can help since this is a three star beast. I'm not sure what my assistance will do for the contributions."

"Are you able to help me hold the beast back if things go south? Either that or drag me away since it's known for its speed. If the plan falls through, I'll need to rethink my approach." Alice asked as she let the driver know where to wait.

Meanwhile, Thane simply followed behind without saying anything for now. He was simply here to observe after all.

"Alright. I'll do what I can." Ria nodded. This suited her just fine as she wanted to test out what she had learnt from Thane in a practical setting. Especially since the beast is known for its speed.

With the basic tasks now done, Alice didn't hesitate and immediately made her way out of the city and towards the lower mountains down south. That was where the beast was supposedly hunting so looking around there was a good start.

Plus, she'll be able to find the tracks of the hunting party as well.

"Ria can you see if you can spot a group of Hunters from above? If we can find them that way it'll save us the time of looking for their tracks." Alice asked as the faster she found them the better.

"Sure." Ria nodded before throwing a bolt of lightning into the air and teleporting away.

With Ria scouting the scene from above, Alice adjusted her posture and rushed through the mountain.

Unlike her previous hunts where they were mostly done in forests, there were no trees to obscure her sight. The only difficulty with this terrain that Alice could see was the cracks and crevices in the ground, leading to ravines.

She was unfamiliar with the type of beasts that roam these parts of the land as the Blood Coil Amphiptere is not alone.

There will be other beasts that might become an issue if she's not prepared.

'Damn... I should've read some books about the surroundings. Maybe this is what Thane means.' Alice sighed inwardly as making a note on as many variables as possible would've made this so much easier.

But there's no use crying over spilt milk, she'll just have to do better next time.

"I found them." Ria called out while Alice looked up.

Seeing that Ria was pointing towards the west, Alice adjusted her pathing.

Equipping her gloves, she activated her first Sigil and boosted her physical capabilities to its max so she didn't need to wait should a fight break out immediately.

Twisting her body, she adjusted the bracelet into a dagger and rapidly ascended one of the many peaks of the mountain range.

As she reached the top, she looked down and saw the group that Ria was talking about.

They were travelling in a group of four. A front liner wearing a full set of heavy metal armour with a cape. Judging by the shield on his back and the sword on his waist, Alice could assume that he was probably an Anti Beast user if he had a resonance.

'One sword and shield user, a swordswoman wearing clothes in the eastern style like what Ria wears, a fighter judging by his gauntlets and finally a girl without any weapons. Hmm... she probably focuses on using Sigil abilities rather than something that augments her body like the other three.'

"They're all three's. Let's just hope they can be negotiated with." Alice sighed.

"Shall I wait up here then? If it looks like a 4 vs 1, they'll be less on guard since you're alone."

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice nodded her head before sliding down the mountain face and running towards the group.

Naturally, her presence was soon discovered and the group went on guard immediately.

"Stop! Who are you and what do you want?" The frontliner shouted out as he grabbed his shield and entered a defensive stance, ready to charge her if she was hostile.

Raising her hands as a sign that she didn't come to fight, Alice opened her mouth.

"Alice Agnelia, just a Hunter looking to kill a beast. Not here for a fight. I just wanted to ask if we're here for the same thing."

Hearing this, the frontliner frowned slightly before glancing to the rest of his party.

"Rowan. We're here because we received a commission to investigate and take care of whatever is causing the troubles." Rowan replied while Alice sighed in relief.

"Would it be okay if you want the target over to me then? I believe it should be the beast I have as my bounty. If I can kill it, I get another Sigil."

"You know what the beast is?" The weaponless woman asked in surprise as Alice nodded her head.

"I have a good idea of what it is. It should be a Blood Coil Amphiptere based on the rumours I've heard. I think we can come to an agreement here. Let me kill the beast so I can finish my bounty while you can finish your commission without having to do anything. What do you say?" Alice smiled.

Looking at one another, they seemed to exchange silent words while Alice waited patiently.

"Are you here alone?"

"Yes I am."

She wasn't technically lying. She was alone while meeting them.

"And you have the confidence to hunt the beast solo?" The swordswoman raised an eyebrow.

"I'm pretty confident in my power. So can I have your answer?"

"What if the beast isn't the Amphiptere?" Rowan asked, wanting to discern Alice's intent. Even though her initial answer seemed truthful, you could never be too careful when dealing with other Hunters.

"Well if it isn't the beast I'm looking for then I can only leave. But I'm pretty confident in my sources." Alice smiled.

Seeing this, Rowan could only frown as things had become awkward for them.

After all, the commission was simply an excuse. They were also here for the Sigil!

Noticing the hesitation in his expression, Alice was confused. If they were here for the commission then surely there shouldn't be an issue. She'll get the kill for the Sigil and they get their reward.

"I'm sorry but I have to ask you to leave this beast to us. First come first serve." Rowan smiled apologetically as Alice furrowed her brows.

But considering that they were kind enough to warn her, she wasn't going to kill them.

Chapter 190 - 190: Alice Vs Hunting Party

"That does make things a little difficult you know?" Alice sighed deeply while scratching her hair.

"Is the commission really that important to you?"

"Unfortunately it is." Rowan reaffirmed as Alice put down her hands and sighed once more.

She had wanted to avoid this but there was no helping it. She'll make it quick.

Turning around, Alice looked as though she was about to leave when she exploded with blinding speed and shot towards Rowan, surprising the party.

"FIGHT BACK!" Rowan shouted, raising his shield at the last moment and barely being able to block Alice's sword strike.

"Ohya~ Old man that was quite the fast reaction speed." Alice chuckled as she expected him to be knocked out immediately from her surprise attack.

Of course, her turning around was simply to let Ria know not to kill them. She wanted to spare them if she could since it was simply a conflict of interest.

Jumping off of Rowan's shield, Alice backflipped over a sword slash from the swordswoman before grabbing her wrist.

"What the?!" Widening her eyes in shock, the swordswoman was unable to react as Alice used her arm as a handle.

Twisting her body, Alice kicked the woman in the face and made a small cut on her arm.

Tens of blood needles hovered around her as she sent them flying towards the weaponless girl, stopping her from using her Sigil abilities as she was forced to dodge.

'Rowan has recovered from the surprise, swordswoman should take a moment to attack again. Girl in the back should be able to follow up this next attack by the fighter.' Alice thought to herself, analyzing the state of the battle thanks to Cayla.

Landing on the ground, she stomped her heel against the fighter's foot before bending back to avoid his punch.

With him unable to adjust his footwork, Alice twisted her body and round house kicked him in the side of the head while keeping her heel on his foot.

Just as the fighter fell, Rowan's shield entered her vision and Alice was forced to raise her sword to block his charge.

\*BANG!!!

Widening her eyes at the weight behind his charge, she was forced to stumble back as he helped the fighter back on his feet before adjusting their formation.

Their eyes were now full of hostility which was to be expected.

Massaging her neck, Alice adjusted her grip on the Bloodflame blade while retrieving the needles and allowing it to close up the cut on her arm.

"Wanted to handle it quickly what a shame. Any second thoughts about giving the beast up to me? You're only here for the commission anyways while I'm here for the Sigil." Alice asked again. The chances of them accepting are rather low but she wanted to give them the option.

"Thanks but no thanks. The same could be said for you. We don't want to hurt you but you're forcing our hand." Rowan frowned while Alice shrugged.

"Sorry, but I'm not changing my target." Crouching down, Alice shot forward as flames erupted from her blade.

"Get ready!" Rowan shouted.

Activating his resonance, an emerald aura enveloped his body as a new set of armour manifested around him. His shield was now a towering wall of white and green metal while his sword had been transformed into a lance.

Slamming his shield down, the ground beneath Alice cracked apart as he charged forward like an unstoppable beast.

Widening her eyes in surprise at his speed, Alice didn't hesitate and activated her gloves.

Jumping to the side, she hooked her threads against his body, using his momentum to propel her towards the rest of his party!

"Not on my watch!" The fighter shouted, rushing towards Alice.

Activating his resonance, three Sigils manifested around his body as another set of metallic arms erupted from his back. His hair grew longer as it was dyed into a pure white with crackling red energy.

Appearing next to Alice, he clenched his fists and swung towards her.

"I'll deal with you first then." Alice grinned as she retrieved her threads.

Using her sword to stop her movement, she vaulted above him and grabbed his arm.

Twisting her body, she kicked him in the face, forcing him to stumble back and swing wildly at her.

Prying open his guard using her arm and leg, she hit him in the throat using the pommel of her blade before jumping off him.

Right as she jumped up, a surge of orange energy rushed towards her as she coated her blade in violet flames and cleaved down without hesitation, splitting the wave in half!

"The f\*ck?!?!?" The girl in the back shouted out in absolute bewilderment and confusion. She had never seen anyone or anything cut apart her attack like that before. It had always been either dodged or resisted! Never slashed apart!

"Focus!"

The swordswoman shouted, appearing beneath Alice.

Unlike the others, she didn't have a resonance but three Sigils glowed brightly across her body.

Her form blurred slightly as she lunged up at unparalleled speed. Her blade was enveloped in a blend of blue and white energy, crackling as though it was tearing apart the very space around Alice.

Even without getting hit by the attack, Alice could sense the force behind the strike and if she was to get hit, she would be out of commission! Not only that, this energy was surging from all sides, blocking her path of retreat.

'That's quite the interesting attack... I wonder if I can replicate it.' Alice thought with a smile as she snapped her finger.

An orb of blood converged in front of her before exploding into mist.

At that moment, the swordswoman's slash disappeared, leaving only the blade as Alice transformed her bracelet into a glove and caught the blade with ease.

"!!!" Widening her eyes, the swordswoman couldn't believe what she had just witnessed. It was as though all of her power had just disappeared the moment Alice caught her blade!

Her confusion was short as she immediately adjusted her posture and kicked towards Alice's stomach.

Blocking it with her arm, Alice was able to guard against the kick but she was still launched into the air where Rowan was waiting for her!

Behind her, he stabbed down with his lance as a surge of wind threatened to shred her to pieces.

'It looks like he's holding back. These are nice people.' Alice mused after noticing his restraint.

She understood that they just wanted to take her out of commission without killing her. She almost felt bad for taking this beast from them now.

Pointing her finger towards his stab, she converged a small amount of blood into a miniature Nova Core and detonated it at the tip of his lance, forcing his stab to go off course and miss her entirely!

Missing his target, Rowan landed heavily on the ground as he swung himself to face her once more.

Countless thoughts rushed through his mind but all he could settle on was how much of a monster Alice is!

Her reactions, her speed, her intuition. She was practically untouchable even though they have four people on their side!

'She's this strong yet she's looking for the Blood Coil for her Sigil? Don't tell me she's not even four star yet...' Rowan thought to himself as cold sweat covered his back.

However, it wasn't over yet. Mira was just about to finish the activation of her Sigil!

Compared to other Sigil users, Mira was a little different. She was a rare summoning type where her Sigil's would conjure an avatar to fight in her place! On top of that, the Sigils she gains further down the line will only augment this avatar. It was the reason why they were looking for the Sigil belonging to the Blood Coil.

By giving her avatar the Lifeblood Link Sigil, it could fight with increased vigour!

Behind Rowan, a pillar of crimson energy erupted out around Mira as a strange female humanoid materialized behind her.

Black and red energy converged towards her back and bloomed like flower petals while a black and red dress wrapped around her pristine white skin. Covering the top half of her face was a combination of flowers and horns.

Hovering next to Mira, the summoned beast aimed her hand towards Alice.

**\*BANG!!!**

From the ground, countless vines erupted out, lashing towards her as Alice narrowed her eyes.

'What is that? Is that a beast under her control?' She mused to herself before turning her attention to the vines.

Curling her lips into a menacing grin, Alice slashed towards the two closest to her before adjusting the grip of her sword. Twisting her body, she dealt with the other vines and pointed her blade towards the beast.

'I'll break their spirit one by one and make them surrender!'

Stomping her foot down, she rushed towards the beast as Rowan intercepted Alice's charge but this was fine. It didn't matter who Alice's target was as she wanted to test out the new technique she saw earlier!

Crouching down, she entered the same stance as the swordswoman and slashed up with her sword.

Purple and red flames weaved with one another as her flame looked as though it had transformed into the maw of a beast! Cutting off all paths of retreat and forcing Rowan to grit his teeth and pray he could withstand this attack!

Meanwhile, the swordswoman halted her movements in disbelief seeing Alice mimic her attack after having seen it once.

'Who the hell is she?!' She cried out inwardly. Her hesitation to help opened a gap in their formation as Rowan's guard was shattered in an instant by Alice's attack.

Forced to drop his shield, Rowan could only jump back and allow the fighter to face Alice but once again she was prepared!

Flicking her wrist, threads shot out and restrained his arms as Alice performed a high kick into his jaw!

Taking this chance to rush towards the swordswoman, Alice threw a splash of blood towards her, making her hallucinate. With her dropping her guard completely, Alice took advantage of this and slammed her elbow into her chest followed up by a pommel to her ribs.

There was only one target left and Alice moved swiftly.

Flicking her wrist, the threads wrapped around Mira's ankle.

"Eh?"

Before she could even react, she was dragged towards Alice as the Bloodflame Blade stabbed toward her head.

Closing her eyes out of fear, Mira could hear her heart pound once she realised the blade barely missed her face, stabbing into the ground beneath her.

"Would you surrender the beast to me now?"