

Abyssal A 191

Chapter 191 - 191: Thane's Advice

Looking at the blade next to her face, Mira felt a chill down her spine as she hurriedly nodded her head.

While the Sigil was important, it wasn't worth exchanging their lives for it. Plus, they were clearly outclassed and trying to fight would only bring more harm than good.

"I-I surrender! Please don't kill me!" Mira cried out as Alice pulled out her blade and sheathed it.

"If I wanted to harm any of you some might not be breathing right now." Alice shrugged while giving her body a stretch.

A warm-up fight after the training with Thane felt great as she could feel her reaction and decision making improve.

If it was her from before, she might've been too focused and get hit from behind.

With Mira surrendering to Mira, Rowan could only smile bitterly and deactivate his resonance and check up on how the fighter and swordswoman were doing since they were injured more than him.

"Thank you for going easy on us." Rowan sighed in relief seeing that the two were alive. It would've been easy for Alice to kill them with the prowess she demonstrated yet she chose not to and spared their lives instead.

"You're welcome. But can I ask why this commission is so important to you? It should've been fine right? Since I'm only here for the Sigil." Alice asked curiously since they were quite determined to stop her from getting this beast.

"Ah that was a lie. I... Was kinda going after that beast for my third Sigilahaha..." Mira smiled awkwardly.

Hearing this, Alice finally understood the conflict of interest.

'If they had told me sooner we could've talked about it.' She thought to herself.

Unlike conventional Hunters, she was not bound by their restrictions of choosing a target before a hunt. Whatever she saw and wanted to hunt, she could designate it as her target.

Depending on the information or other forms of compensation, giving up this beast wasn't an impossibility.

"Do you have any more leads on other Blood Coil Amphipteres?"

"Sadly no. We missed out on a hunt the first time Mira chose this as her bounty target since someone killed it before we could arrive. This was going to be our second attempt after quite a long time of looking for one close to us." Rowan shook his head while the other members recovered from their injuries.

The fighter was still glaring at Alice in annoyance and looked elsewhere while the swordswoman had countless questions swimming through her mind but decided not to say anything.

Thinking to herself in silence, Alice hesitated for a moment before shaking her head. A win is a win, she was simply stronger so the prey belonged to her.

They were kind to her and her kindness was not killing them in their conflict. She didn't owe them anything.

"Sorry. I can only wish you luck for your next hunt." Alice apologized before walking away.

Once they were alone, the group collectively sighed out in disappointment.

"What kind of monster was she??? How the hell do you even move like that???" Mira complained. A bitter feeling enveloped her heart as she missed out on her third Sigil for a second time.

At this rate, she might be stuck as a two star Hunter for years to come.

"Just be happy she didn't try to kill us. She had plenty of chances to end Celine and Alex's life." Rowan smiled as he remembered her gaze.

The way those eyes looked at them... There was no doubt, it belonged to a killer.

Even now, he could remember the sensation he felt all over his body when she stared at him. Her gaze felt like invisible daggers were stabbing into his skin, flaying him apart, toying with his life before ending it.

She owned such a gaze yet was capable of kindness and mercy.

'Truly a strange one.' Rowan thought to himself as he was prepared to sacrifice himself to hold her back if she tried to kill them.

"Old man, how many Sigils do you think she's got. That reaction speed and fighting instinct couldn't have come from a newbie." Alex grumbled as he was barely able to throw two punches during the entirety of that fight.

"She's probably three stars at most. Notice how she didn't use a resonance? I can only assume she either didn't find a need for it or doesn't have one." Rowan shrugged.

While they were discussing with one another, Celine stared at her blade in silent thought.

"Say... Are there any beasts that can cause your attack to just disappear?" Celine asked after a period of silence.

"I'm not sure. I've never heard of such a beast. Perhaps it was something to do with her gloves?" Rowan suggested but Celine was unsure.

Alice had demonstrated several abilities during their fight. First was her blood that could be controlled at will. It could be gathered up and exploded to divert Rowan's attack.

Along with that, it was this same move that caused her Sigil to deactivate.

'Was it her Sigil? Or was it something else...' Celine thought with a frown.

However, one thing was for sure.

"Do you think... She is a two star Hunter?" Celine spoke up as the others were silent.

Such a notion felt impossible for them.

"She could set her blood on fire and control her blood. Not only that, when she threw her blood at me, I fell into a hallucination. I'm guessing both of her abilities are based on augmenting her own blood which is why she's going after the Blood Coil." She explained herself but Alex and Rowan was still skeptical due to the power she demonstrated.

"Either way let's make our way back. No point hanging around if she's going after the Blood Coil. Sorry Mira, hopefully we can find another one soon." Rowan apologized as he stood up.

With them recovering their stamina, the group made their way out of the forest while Ria observed from the mountains silently.

She was prepared to step in but when Alice turned around, she had clearly signaled for her not to step in.

And seeing as how the group was leaving, they weren't going to cause Alice anymore trouble.

"Oi brat. If you were with that group fighting against Alice how would you approach it using the new stuff I taught you?"

"ARGH!!!!" Crying out in shock, Ria had a heart attack hearing Thane's voice so close to her ear as he had appeared behind her.

"Jeez! You're not different to Allura! Why do you two always just appear out of nowhere?!"

"Well of course. I'm the one who taught her this. But setting that side, how would you have approached that fight?" Thane smiled while glancing down at Ria.

Even for his standards, he had to admit that Alice's improvement was fast. It wasn't perfect but the skill and intuition she demonstrated in that fight was satisfactory. It was clear that she had taken the training to heart.

"Hmm... It's hard. If I'm going long ranged, it'll be difficult to catch Alice off guard since she was keeping herself close to the other members of the group. If I was to shoot my attack without much thought, there was a high chance I'll injure my allies. Rather than looking for the kill, the best I can do with range is probably to just hinder her movements." Ria replied after reflecting on the fight.

"Cut off her paths for movement and let the others handle it if they can. Unless I'm willing to risk friendly fire that's about as much as I can do." She shrugged.

"The standard response. Not bad but not great either. It's certainly one method you could use but there was a better option." Thane chuckled.

"First, you should spend the time observing your opponent's movements. Alice had taken this into account and made sure she was close to her enemy to avoid ranged attacks.

"But no one can keep their guard up 100% of the time. And that's when you should strike. The first hit should aim to kill. But if that's impossible, it should aim to disrupt her movement as much as possible, luring her into your next shot. Once this condition is fulfilled, you become the proactive party while she becomes the reactive party.

You can dictate how the fight will progress if you play your cards right." Thane explained as he flicked his finger.

In front of Ria, a replica of the fight began as there was now a mini her added into the mix. Following his advice, the first shot displaced Alice at the exact moment she was kicked into the air towards Rowan.

With both Rowan and the shot rushing towards her, shadow Alice was forced to move awkwardly as she shifted Rowan's stab before twisting her body to narrowly dodge Ria's shot.

Once she landed, a barrage of shots cut off her path of retreat while the party regroup.

Seeing this, Ria was surprised by how one sided the fight had become. It wasn't that Shadow Alice wasn't reacting as fast as the real Alice but rather all of the shots were placed in a way that it forced the most awkward dodging patterns from her.

It now required far more stamina to avoid these shots and the pressure was immense!

"I see... Alright, thank you." Ria smiled as she looked up towards Thane. Only to see that he had long disappeared, leaving her sitting by herself.

". . ."

'Appear fast, disappear just as fast. Why are these old people the same?' Ria thought to herself with a sigh before making her way to Alice. With the group now dealt with, it was finally time to track down the beast and slay it for Alice's third Sigil.

Chapter 192 - 192: Tracking The Amphiptere

Regrouping with Alice, the two made their way through the mountains as they finally found their first track.

There were pieces of metal left over in deep grooves as though something heavy had just passed by.

"Seems to have gone north, towards the top of the mountains." Ria muttered noticing the direction of these tracks.

"Mnm, we'll need to be careful from now. It could be waiting below ground."

"Guess I'll continue scouting from above, I'll let you know if I find any tracks." Ria stretched before teleporting away using her lightning while Alice made her way up the mountains. She was careful to examine her surroundings for any additional tracks.

Not only that, she kept her guard up at all times, ready to move should the ground break apart signaling an ambush.

As she climbed higher, her senses continued to sharpen as her mind attuned to even the slightest movement she could perceive.

Every now and then, she would stop and inspect the ground, sending blood needles down to see if there were any potential tunnels.

Just as she was about to leave, she felt her blood needles breach into the dirt into a tunnel and widened her eyes. Without hesitation, she gestured for Ria to come down and explained the situation to her.

If it turns out that this was indeed the tunnels that the beast had dug, she would engage the fight using her skill and force it to the surface.

"Take this. If things go south and I can't force the beast up, I'll detonate the blood orb." Alice said while handing Ria a small condensed blood orb the size of her pinky.

"Alright, I'll jump in if things don't look good."

Nodding her head with a smile, Alice dug a hole barely big enough to allow her through as she didn't want to make too much of a commotion. She still had the upper hand right now and it was a race of who could find the other first.

Not that the beast knew it was being hunted right now.

Taking a deep breath, Alice calmed her mind and made an orb of blood. Controlling it to take the left route, Alice made her way down the right side of the tunnel while making small blood trip wires behind her.

If they broke, that meant something was behind her and she'll be able to react accordingly.

Creating a small flame, Alice had it scout out ahead so she could get a clear view of the path while keeping herself out of the light.

'Even if the beast was to react against the light, I should be relatively safe if I'm this far back. It'll probably think something strange entered its tunnel and nothing else.' Alice thought to herself while noticing the traces of metal on the walls and floor.

However, on top of the metal that was present before, there seemed to be dried blood in the mix.

'Is it injured? Or did it leave behind parts of its blood mist?'

Furrowing her brows, Alice continued down the path.

Each footstep, no matter how careful she was, felt extremely loud in this darkness.

As she continued forward, Alice furrowed her brows as she felt her instincts warning her of danger. She couldn't see the danger nor did she know the direction but it was the same feeling as standing on the edge of a cliff.

Her body was rejecting whatever was about to arrive.

Unable to quell this feeling, Alice dug a hole to her right and hid in it while allowing her flame to continue down the path.

Peeking just a bit of her head out of the hole she dug, she kept her eye on the flame.

The feeling of danger grew stronger the further her flame travelled. And then, within the darkness where the flame couldn't reach, something stirred.

"!!!"

Before she could even read the tag floating in the darkness, a gust of wind exploded forth as Alice dove back into the hole, barely managing to stop herself from getting hit.

Her flame was snapped up in an instant!

Darkness returned to the tunnels as Alice held her breath. She could see and hear the metal scraping against the walls of this tunnel as it was inches away from her face.

Had she not decided to dig this hole, she would've been hit by that lunge!

However, she was now prepared.

'The Amphiptere hasn't noticed me yet.' She thought to herself as she waited for the beast to move back to its original spot.

Once the beast stopped blocking the exit, Alice poked her head out of the hole and looked at the tag floating above its head.

[Blood Coil Amphiptere - ♦♦♦♦]

Seeing that there were no strange addition to its name, Alice couldn't help but sigh out in relief as most of the beasts she had faced thus far had been abnormalities.

'Nothing out of the ordinary, the plan can continue as normal.' Alice thought to herself as she had a daring thought in her mind. It felt risky but the reward could be spectacular.

A brave smile appeared on her face as she was still following her original plan but with some... minor tweaks.

Exiting her hiding spot, Alice created several tripwires with her blood, enough to cover a decent length of the tunnel before creating one final net with the thread from her gloves.

As much as it hurt her to do this, Alice decided to separate the thread she was going to use from her glove as if it wasn't able to withstand the charge of the beast, it would definitely break the mechanism from the resulting pull.

The threads could be replaced, the mechanism however, could not.

With her preparations in place, Alice forced a brave smile and activated her second Sigil.

Immediately, flames burst out from her body as she condensed her blood into an orb above her finger.

A brilliant purple glow lit up the tunnels as Alice felt a chill down her spine. It felt as though two daggers had just stabbed into her skin as she dismissed the feeling and continued to charge her attack.

The convergence of fire dispelled the darkness while the ground started to rumble.

Despite not seeing the beast, Alice could tell it was now rushing towards her.

'Not yet...'

Narrowing her eyes, she continued to charge the orb as she needed to condense as much power as she could in the first hit. She needed to compress it to the point it felt similar to what Alura had demonstrated. A single spark of light that felt harmless until impact.

That was what she needed to achieve.

Taking a deep breath, Alice funneled as much power as she could into the orb as it exploded with violent vigor. Chaotic tendrils of violet energy whipped out, melting the tunnel walls before being absorbed into the orb.

This cycle continued as Alice could feel the strain on her body. All of the blood felt as though it was boiling from within as the flames continued to roar out uncontrollably.

But this was what she desired.

She needed to manifest the strongest flame she could before condensing in one go. That was how Allura achieved her spark.

'No... That's wrong... It didn't feel like this.' Alice frowned as this didn't feel quite like the process Allura had demonstrated.

This was far too chaotic and lacked the elegance of her technique.

The expansion of power and the compression was done in the blink of an eye. It did not require the same effort she was exerting right now in order to maximize the power it could generate.

'What should I do in order to bring out as much power as I can then compress it in an instant?' Alice thought to herself as she remembered the scene of Allura demonstrating the attack.

She remembered the flow of energy, how it exploded out before being crushed by an overwhelming force.

'I don't have the power required to bring out the maximum effect of my flames at once. But it's not impossible...' Alice thought to herself as she curled her lips into a dangerous smile.

Looking at the orb in front of her, Alice crushed it with her hand as she reabsorbed all of the flames.

Since she couldn't bring out the power of the flames in one go, she'll become the container to hold this flame then allow it to burst out in a single moment!

Activating her second Sigil once more, Alice could feel her blood boiling as violet flames enveloped her body. Her hair danced wildly behind her as she felt her first trip wire being broken followed by the second and the third.

The beast was here!

'There are three steps in Allura's skill. First, explode all of the power and gather it in one spot!

'Second, converge the power into a single spot!'

Gritting her teeth, Alice controlled her blood so that she had just enough not to pass out.

She was going to burn all of this in a single attack to replicate the power of the true Nova Core!

As she controlled her blood, the flames around her collapsed into a single radiant shard of blood that hovered above her finger. A shard that contained the full might of her violet flames.

Even now, she could feel the shard on the verge of breaking as she could not keep the flames contained in this state for long. But thankfully, she didn't have to.

As the beast broke the final trip wire made from blood, Alice snapped her finger and set them all on fire.

Violet flames danced around the beast, lighting it up as the effects of her blood activated.

She was going to negate its power momentarily to prevent it from defending itself!

***BANG!!!!**

Crashing into the final web of threads, Alice came face to face with the beast.

A body of blood mist covered by an armour of metal and a pair of eyes that looked as though it held the hatred of the entire world stared back at her.

Curling her lips into a smile, Alice aimed the shard towards the beast and let go of her control.

Chapter 193 - 193: Alice's Mastery Of Her Skill

"Hah~ So boring... She's been in there for, 30 minutes now?" Ria muttered, waiting by the mountain peak.

She was keeping her eye on the entrance that Alice made while also taking a note of the condition of the blood orb that was handed to her.

However, with nothing going on, Ria couldn't help but wonder if Alice had gone further than expected in the tunnels.

Thane didn't reappear either so she was left on her own to spend this time as she pleased.

Playing around with an orb of lightning, Ria's mind wandered to what Thane had shown earlier. How she should use her powers if the opponent is too annoying to hit.

'Cut off their path of retreat and fire my attack where it would cause them the most annoyance huh?' She thought to herself while pointing her finger out to the mountain range.

"Bang~" Ria muttered jokingly.

*Rumble

"Hm?" Furrowing her brows, she felt something was wrong as the ground shook for a split moment.

Just as she was about to investigate further, the entire mountain range started to shake uncontrollably as Ria jumped up into the sky to avoid the tremors.

Looking down from above, Ria could see the earth trembling and with a deafening crack, the ground was torn apart and a pillar of flames erupted into the sky!

The entire abyss was dyed in a violet glow as even from this distance, Ria could feel the power behind the blast. Just seeing this caused her to wonder what would've happened to her if it was directed at her.

There was only one answer and that was she'd die!

"Alice!" Ria shouted out once she got over her surprise.

From within the pillar, two figures rushed out as one was heavily wounded with the metal around its body glowing with a bright yellow glow.

Cracking its jaws open, the Blood Coil Amphiptere let out a malevolent roar now that its form was fully visible in the light of Alice's attack.

The beast was shrouded in a vortex of blood and metal. Its wings unfurled but what was once a formidable weapon now bore the scars of Alice's attack. Riddled with gaping holes that were still burning from the violet flames, the blood struggled to mend itself and could only burn away helplessly.

Its body is a grotesque fusion of blood and metal beneath the vortex, a blend of the organic and inorganic. Blood weaved into strands of muscle and skin that pulsed and writhed with each movement.

Through the gaps of its wounds, one could see the metal that acted as the skeletal structure while also serving as armour.

Soaring into the sky, the beast glared at Alice with raw anger as its eyes radiated a predatory hunger and malice.

On the other hand, Alice quickly drank a vial of Frostshroud Willow Blood, replenishing her blood along with the wounds she sustained within the blast.

Even though it was her own power and attack, she still received some of the feedback due to using her own body as the catalyst. The risk was great but the reward was greater!

Seeing the damage caused to the Amphiptere caused a flood of ecstasy through her body as she laughed out in satisfaction.

She hadn't designated the beast just yet in fear of it running away after taking the surprise attack. But considering it was showing the intent to fight, it was worthy of being her prey!

At that moment, a tether was formed between the two as the beast was now designated as her target.

Having drank the full vial of Willow's blood, Alice could already feel a coldness extinguishing the flames within her body as the side effects of the blood had already begun to manifest itself.

'I'll have to be careful. If I drink another vial in quick succession, I risk slowing my movements down and dulling my reactions.' Alice thought to herself before adjusting her grip on her sword.

While the flames were still cancelling out the beast's abilities to heal itself, she needed to act fast!

Ria was nearby if things were to go wrong so she didn't need to worry too much.

Taking a deep breath, Alice made a cut on her arm and exerted control over her blood. She needed a way to reach the beast that was flying in the air while she herself, could not fly.

There was only one way in her mind and that was to create platforms!

'My blood is brittle. It won't be able to sustain my full weight so in the moment I come into contact with the platform, I need to exert all of my strength in one moment to launch myself up.' Alice thought to herself. Should she hesitate and mistime her jump, it would only result in her falling.

Activating Cayla, Alice needed to time the application of her strength precisely!

However, the Blood Coil wasn't about to allow that to happen.

Just because its regeneration was being hindered by the strange flames doesn't mean it had nothing it could do.

Pushing out its chest, the beast let out a roar as shards of metal started to excavate themselves from its body, hovering in the air around him.

With a single flap of its wings, a storm of blood and metal rushed towards Alice!

Seeing this, Alice narrowed her eyes and prepared to swing at the attack.

***BANG!!!!**

A bolt of lightning interrupted her attack as it struck the large pieces of metal within the storm, causing the attack to go awry and allowing Alice an easy path towards the beast!

Turning her gaze towards the mountains, Alice could see Ria preparing a second bolt of lightning as though it was an arrow notched on an invisible bow.

The moment she released the lightning, it had already struck the next piece of metal in an instant!

Seeing this, Alice grinned as she created more platforms using her blood and rushed towards the beast while Ria sighed in relief seeing that she was accurate with her attacks.

As Thane had explained in her private training, she didn't need to worry about accuracy when her attacks and reach her target almost instantly. All she needed to do was aim and fire the compressed bolt of lightning!

Her attacks were lacking the power but that was fine, she was responsible for supporting Alice right now. She didn't need to deal damage to the beast.

Seeing that all of its attacks were being knocked aside, the beast howled in frustration and rushed towards Alice with blinding speed.

Widening her eyes, Alice jumped to the side, barely dodging the wing strike before attaching her threads to one of the metal pieces around its body!

Immediately getting dragged away by the beast, Alice could hear the mechanism crying out on the verge of breaking as she immediately created a blood needle and shot it towards the beast's head.

Detonating it into a surge of violet flames, she watched as the flame wrapped around the beast, burning away the blood that coated its body!

'Its speed is decreasing!' Narrowing her eyes, Alice wanted to finish this fight before the initial effects wore off.

Closing her eyes for a moment, Alice took a deep breath and ignited herself once more!

She knew the process needed for her new and improved Nova Core and this time she'll hold nothing back! Everything will be done for this one strike to finish off the beast.

Pulling two vials from her pouch, Alice threw the Luminous Gryphon Blood towards the beast before drinking the Warden of Frost Blood!

Cold mist radiated from Alice's body as she could feel her body temperature dropping further but this didn't bother her.

What she needed right now was to stun the beast and render its regeneration null!

As the Gryphon Blood spilled over the beast, its eyes constricted in primal fear. This was the chance that Alice was looking for. A moment when its guard was completely down.

Using her left hand to control the cold mist surrounding her body due to the Warden's blood, Alice enveloped the beast in a blizzard, freezing its blood and tearing its 'flesh' apart, revealing the metal underneath.

Gathering the flames using her right hand, it collapsed into a single spark of light!

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This speed, this technique!

Thane widened his eyes in shock as he didn't think she was able to improve her mimicry of Allura's technique to such an extent! Had it not been for the clear lack of power and control of the explosion at the end, it was practically indistinguishable from the original skill!

'She's using her entire body as the conduit for this power! Reckless girl!'

For a normal person, doing so was akin to turning yourself into a bomb! Yet not only has she succeeded in doing this once, she was about to do it again!

This was a feat that not even Allura would be able to accomplish if he took into account the power that Allura wielded.

However, when paired with her flames and strange regeneration, it was clear that this was a feat that only Alice could pull off successfully. A skill that only she could use!

This is no longer the skill that Allura had created but rather something that reached the same heights.

Watching Alice press the shard of light into the beast, he hesitated on whether or not he should drag her away but this was a choice that she had made. If things go bad, it's not too late for him to step in.

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Slamming the shard of light into the beast, Alice watched as a singularity manifest at the point of contact.

The air itself seemed to warp from the power as she immediately jumped away.

At that moment, the silent collapse of the spark began. Without a sound nor cry, a part of the beast disappeared into the spark while the surroundings realm looked as though it had been twisted, sucked into the singularity.

The spark flickered in desperation, seemingly trying to keep itself in existence when the last of its embers disappeared.

'Did it fai-'

Before Alice could even finish her thought, an expansion of power erupted out. A nexus of pure destruction manifested in the center of this phenomenon while a disk of violet flames lashed outwards, warding the core.

Each burst of fire would send out a shockwave while pieces of the Amphiptere was torn to oblivion upon contact with the core.

Not even Alice had anticipated this kind of reaction.

Had she not jumped away in time, she may have shared the same fate as the Amphiptere!

Chapter 194 - 194: Third Sigil

Looking at the phenomenon her attack caused, Alice couldn't comprehend how she was able to manage such a feat. Even if she was able to collapse her flames into an orb and release all of its power, it shouldn't have caused such destruction.

"We seriously need to talk about that flame of yours." Thane's voice rang out as he appeared beside Alice.

Reaching out with his hand, four Sigils manifested on his body as the Abyss itself seemed to bow down to his power.

The space surrounding Alice's attack started to fracture and crack as darkness spilt out, enveloping the expanding nexus of destruction in its shadow.

With a single flick of his wrist, the shadows crushed the attack, leaving not even a speck of the original attack.

Sighing out heavily, Thane scratched his hair while glancing down at Alice with uncertainty. That attack, that flame she manifested.

'That flame tried to breach the fabrics of this realm. The connection between the Abyss and the Surface. In some aspects... It mirrors my authority to some degree. If she could control it further, perhaps she may even be able to tear open a bridge between this realm and the Surface.'

"So how would you rate that Nova Core?" Alice asked with a slight chuckle despite the fatigue and coldness she could feel within her body.

Part of her motivation to experiment with this attack was to prove herself to some capacity. She wanted to show that she was more than just a 3 out of 10 when compared to a decent Hunter.

And to meet the expectations of her guardian, Allura, she wanted to show Thane that she was more than just a 1 out of 10 copy of her.

Raising an eyebrow, Thane couldn't believe that Alice was asking him to rate her attack after it had just tried to tear a hole through this realm.

Shaking his head, he massaged his eyes for a moment before opening his mouth.

"A slight improvement. 5- no. 6 out of 10 when compared to a decent Hunter. As for Allura... Well, it stopped being the same skill once you started to use your body as the conduit. But if Allura was able to replicate what you did at her level, I'd say it's a 4 out of 10. Not bad but still lacking since you can injure yourself." Thane smiled helplessly and reached for Alice's head.

Alice definitely reminded him of Allura based on her sense of recklessness and eagerness to experiment with her attacks. In that aspect, the two were practically indistinguishable. Of course, Allura had mellowed out quite a bit in the recent years but the Allura before was just as, if not more reckless than Alice.

Hearing this, Alice smiled happily as strength left her body. Her vision blurred as a stinging sensation could be felt on her back.

The rewards of her hunt was being engraved upon her body as darkness took her mind.

Not letting her fall, Thane lifted her up into a princess carry rather than grabbing her like a sack of potatoes.

"Oi brat. Come down, we're going to make our way back. I don't know if you want to be around this place when the lord of the Ironforge comes to check out that situation personally. Especially with the damage that Alice had caused to his foundry." Thane called out while glancing back at the destruction brought forth by two casts of Alice's skill.

'I'll give them an extra push before I leave. Seems like I was worrying a bit too much.' He thought to himself as Ria teleported next to him.

His next steps were to take these two back to the city, sort out the issue with the Lord so they could travel without worry and give them some final tips. Once that was done, he can return to the surface.

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Once again, Alice found herself floating in her own mental space. In this void, three paths presented themselves each with a different aura and Sigil.

As expected, the first two Sigils that were presented to her were the main ones that people could choose upon slaying this beast as a bounty.

Blood Coil Manifestation and Lifeblood Link.

Since she was able to surpass the beast using her flames, she had negated its ability to use the Lifeblood Link. If the beast had used said skill, the battle would've been dragged on for much longer.

As for the third Sigil, it was something that changed based on its environment.

[Nightstalker]

When in darkness, gain a huge increase in physical powers. Attacks will have reduced effectiveness against you under the protection of the darkness. Activating this Sigil manifests a set of armour around you, granting you a secondary boost to physical powers along with the ability to sense others in contact with the ground you are standing on.

Gain night vision.

'Since the Abyss is in perpetual darkness, does that mean this Sigil is always on? But it doesn't really suit me. I'd rather avoid taking a hit if I could help it.' Alice sighed inwardly as this third Sigil didn't suit her fighting style.

With eh third option rejected, there was only one choice for Alice.

Lifeblood Link.

The Sigil that Thane had suggested and the one that would grant her increased tenacity and the ability to equalize her health with her opponents.

However, there was only one issue with this Sigil.

It was not an Anti Hunter type!

Meaning, if she were to choose this, she wouldn't be able to unlock her first Resonance.

Moreover, it locks out the option of choosing 9 Anti Hunter Sigils. Allura had mentioned that there were a few who had attempted to get 9 Sigils that belonged to the same classification but most would be unsuccessful in their attempts.

"Sh*t... Why didn't I think about this? Stupid stupid stupid!" Alice stomped in frustration as this was now a dilemma.

"Allura mentioned that 9 Sigil resonance was something she never achieved and that its power was something not even she knew of. But the only Anti Hunter Sigil here is the first and third one..." She muttered while biting her nails.

The third option was completely off the table which meant it was a choice between Blood Coil Manifestation and Lifeblood Link.

Scratching her hair in frustration, Alice took a deep breath and calmed her mind.

She needed to think of it objectively and the potential it held.

"Blood Coil Manifestation. It allows me to conjure a storm of blood and metal around me, giving me great defensive and offensive capabilities... But it doesn't really offer me anything else." Alice furrowed her brows.

Stepping up to the path, she had a look at the demonstration of said skill.

As expected, nothing special happened and it simply acted as a defensive layer that warded off the incoming attacks.

Shaking her head, Alice stepped away and prepared to choose the Anti Beast Sigil when she had a realization.

Widening her eyes, she ran back to the demonstration of the Blood Coil Manifestation and watched carefully, scrutinizing every detail that was shown.

After watching the demonstration for a third time did Alice finally confirm her thoughts.

"The Blood Coil Manifestation doesn't take blood from within my body. It conjures fresh blood or steals from my surroundings and turns it into 'my' blood." She muttered with a smile as this had three implications.

First, this blood could be used to activate her violet flames. Second, this blood can be used to replenish her own lost blood and seal her wounds.

And third, this meant that any Sigil she gets in the future that improves her control or the versatility of her blood would benefit from this Sigil.

While Lifeblood Link granted her the survivability she so desperately needed right now, Blood Coil Manifestation and construct the foundation of her future Sigils while giving her a band-aid solution to her problem.

Through using the conjured blood to patch herself up, she can extend the time she spends fighting while also using it as fuel for her violet flames.

'It'll also give me my first Resonance... This will work.' Alice nodded as she accepted the Sigil.

It was against what she had originally desired due to her own mistake but that was fine. This served as a lesson for the future.

Gritting her teeth, Alice could feel a dagger carving into her back as a Sigil was being grafted onto her body. Now that her connection with the Abyss had improved thanks to Cayla and the strange crown she retrieved, she could feel the abyssal energy flooding in from outside of this realm and weaving itself with her being.

Foreign strands of energy tore apart her muscles before repairing them while her blood was flushed out before being replaced.

While her entire body was being reshaped by the Sigil, Alice could see briar vines extending from her first Sigil, connecting to her second before forming a link with the third on her back.

A resonance of her three Sigils!

Power pulsed within her as she could feel each of her Sigil harmonizing with one another. She felt a primal connection with the essence of her power and the Abyss that granted it but that wasn't the end.

From her chest, the broken obsidian crown burst forth, radiating an ominous energy that enveloped Alice's body like a cocoon.

Standing in this darkness, surrounded by the power flooding out from her Sigils, Alice knew that this was the manifestation of her Resonance. It was tapping into the very core of her being, granting her the culmination of her efforts.

With a sense of determination burning in her heart, Alice reached out with her hand and tore through this shell that had surrounded her. She could feel the roar of excitement originating from the hunger deep within as power flooded through her body.

This strength, this control.

She could clearly feel the growth of power within her body.

As information regarding her Resonance flooded her mind, a smile appeared on Alice's face.

While it was a shame she had lost Lifeblood Link, this resonance had more than made up for it.

Chapter 195 - 195: Demonstration Of The Third Sigil

Opening her eyes, Alice noticed that she had been taken back to her room at the Hunter's Guild.

During the time she was unconscious, Thane must've taken them back.

Sitting up, Alice massaged her neck before walking to the mirror.

She was still wearing the same thing she had worn while fighting the Amphiptere.

Forcing a smile, Alice changed her outfit for another set of clothes that she had bought earlier when shopping with Ria.

'I'll have to throw this one out. Dried blood, burns and rips. I doubt anyone could fix it.' Alice sighed as she was rather attached to the outfit. But she couldn't live wearing the same thing every day.

Before changing into her new outfit, Alice wanted to see what her third Sigil looked like. Turning her back to the mirror, she activated the Sigil as crimson marks manifested from her spine.

The Sigil depicted four wings, each tattered and worn yet radiating a menacing aura despite its damage.

Looking at the Sigil, Alice couldn't help but be reminded of the wings she had seen upon the back of her violet flames.

When she launched her flames as a large attack, often it would manifest itself as a dragon with four wings.

In that sense, the Sigil on her back looked exactly the same.

'I suppose the flames manifested from my strange body in the first place.' Alice shrugged.

While the Blood Coil Amphiptere didn't have four wings, the ability she chose was technically one that further augmented her blood. By activating the Sigil, she was able to conjure more of 'her' blood that rejected the Abyss.

Flicking her wrist, blood and metal swarmed around her in an instant as she examined the metal.

Noticing that they didn't take any shape but instead stayed as lumps of metal, Alice couldn't help but wonder if they could be transformed into handier alternatives such as daggers or swords.

Following her will, the metal started to reshape itself as six daggers now hovered around her.

"Hou~ This... Might be more helpful than I expected." Alice couldn't help but mutter.

Narrowing her eyes, a daring idea appeared in her mind but she dismissed her blades.

Now was not the time to try it, she had to get changed and see where Ria and Thane were.

Browsing her wardrobe, Alice settled on an outfit she deemed to be cute while also practical to some extent. It consisted of a white turtle neck jacket with oversized sleeves, a comfy pair of black shorts that allowed her freedom of movement when traversing the terrain, black tights and finally, knee-high boots.

Giving herself a light spin in front of the mirror, Alice smiled in satisfaction.

Looking around the room for gloves and Bloodflame Blade, she strapped the sheath on her waist and equipped the gloves before leaving her room and locking the door.

'Now... Where would Ria and Thane be? Ria doesn't seem to be in her room.' Alice thought to herself, making her way down to the main hall of the Guild.

Pausing in surprise, Alice noticed that Ria and Thane were currently having some food by the bar.

"Seems like you've woken up brat. How do you feel?" Thane asked with a smile as Alice couldn't help but notice that he seemed very refreshed for some reason.

Ria on the other hand, looked absolutely drained as though her soul had just been sucked out.

"I feel pretty good. Hungry though." Alice complained, ordering her own meal while sitting down next to them.

"That's obvious since you've been asleep for an entire day. Must've gotten quite the boost if your body took this long to acclimate to the power." Thane remarked while taking a drink of his alcohol.

"Speaking of which, I didn't pick Lifeblood Link."

Hearing this, Thane paused in surprise, as did Ria.

"Wait... You didn't get it? I thought the entire goal was to get this Sigil?" Ria asked curiously.

"Well, there was a slight... issue in picking that Sigil." Alice scratched her cheek with an awkward smile.

She wasn't sure how she was supposed to tell them that due to her negligence, she didn't check what kind of Sigil the Lifeblood Link was and by picking it, she would forfeit her chance of getting a 9 Sigil resonance in the future.

"Did the beast not have it? That shouldn't be the case." Thane furrowed his brows as beasts usually gave the same options unless something major had changed.

"Nono, it had the Sigil. Just... It turns out it was an Anti Beast Sigil." Alice sighed. There was no avoiding the topic so she may as well admit to it.

"Ah, you were going for Anti Hunter Resonance right?" Ria muttered in realization while Alice nodded her head.

"So... You gave up the Sigil you needed right now for a Resonance?" Thane questioned with a raised eyebrow.

He didn't think Alice would give up something she was actively searching for because of a slight oversight.

"Well Allura mentioned that 9 Sigil Resonance was really good so I figured I should aim for it. If the Anti Hunter Sigils were bad, I would've still gone for the Lifeblood Link. However, turns out it was better than expected if I read between the lines a little." Alice chuckled, feeling proud of her choice.

She was happy that she had double triple and quadruple checked this option to see if there was anything she had missed.

"Plus, the Resonance I got for it made up for what I lost so I'm not too bothered by it." Alice shrugged.

Seeing her response, Thane couldn't help but be curious about her choice and what kind of Resonance she gained as a result.

"Alright. Finish your food and let's take the new Sigil for a test." Thane grinned.

'If the brat is this happy she must've gotten something good.' He thought to himself. He could practically see the enthusiasm in her eyes, all she was looking for was a target to test herself again so he may as well play that role.

He wanted to see if she could satiate his boredom.

###

After the previous incident with the huge bet he placed on the fight, Thane was a treasured VIP in the underground fighting arena. Reserving one of the arenas with no one to spectate was simple as all he needed to do was throw some spare change at them.

Of course, for Alice and Ria, seeing Thane throw this 'spare change' at them only caused their hearts to bleed.

'So much money! We could've just gone to the wild and you give me the funds rather than rent a place like this!' Alice cried out in her mind as their money struggles seemed like nothing compared to what he was spending.

Standing in the empty arena devoid of spectators, Thane massaged his shoulders before flicking his finger.

His shadow started to twist and elongate as three dark tendrils manifested from his shadow.

"I'll limit myself to... Hmm. Let's go with decent Hunters with three Sigils. Of course, this is my standard so let's see how you compare to them." Thane chuckled.

Even though he called it 'decent' Hunters, the people he judged as decent were the geniuses or treasured successors that people could only look up to but never reach.

Of course, while Alice didn't know this, she knew it was going to be difficult.

Even though she's just gained a huge boost in power, she wasn't going to drop her guard.

"Do you want the first attack or shall I take the first attack?" He asked as Alice stretched her body. Feeling the power coursing through her body, she curled her lips into a smile.

"I'll let you take the first attack."

Activating all three of her Sigils in tandem, a maelstrom of blood erupted around her as four metal blades hovered behind her. Each crafted from a mixture of hardened blood and metal.

Seeing this, Thane raised an eyebrow and understood that Alice must've chosen the Blood Coil Manifestation Sigil.

'Let's see what she meant by reading between the lines then.'

Flicking his wrist, the tendrils lashed out towards Alice as they each transformed into a different kind of Hunter.

One had a greatsword, another had a spear while the last had a bow.

But despite this change, Alice wasn't worried as she slammed her hand down.

Shards of metal appeared around the arena as blood formed threads between them. In an instant, an territory of threads was created as Alice jumped back and used the thread to propel herself towards the shadow Hunters!

Twisting her body, she controlled two of the blades to lock down the greatsword before kicking the Hunter in the head.

Seeing that her kick was blocked by his arm, Alice couldn't help but chuckle since it wasn't going to be that easy.

'Thane said they were decent. Something like this won't be able to scratch them.'

Flipping back, she dodged two arrows in quick succession. The first was aimed at her while the second was aimed towards her landing spot.

She created a thread of blood and pushed herself away from the arrow.

Taking advantage of this sudden change in movement, the spear Hunter stabbed towards Alice's torso but it was blocked easily by one of the hovering blades while another pierced towards its neck.

*CLANG!!!

Parrying the blade with the shaft, the shadow watched as the blade was shattered into countless pieces that swarmed around him before stabbing down!

Twirling the blade in his hand, a swirl of shadows manifested around the Hunter, blocking the shards of metal as the blade reformed itself and floated next to Alice.

Jumping back, the three Hunters looked towards Alice who was now sitting on one of her threads and glanced down at them with a smile.

Seeing how quickly she was able to adapt to her new Sigil and utilize it in a fight, Thane couldn't help but be impressed.

'Not many can adjust this quickly and this is her first fight too. Not bad.'

Narrowing his eyes, Thane sent the Hunters towards Alice once more. It was simply a taster earlier, now they were going to take it more seriously!

Chapter 196 - 196: Alice's Resonance

Seeing the three Hunters charge towards her, Alice swung her legs back and forth on the thread of blood.

'What should I do... Hmm... They don't seem to be showcasing that many Sigil based abilities. Perhaps Thane is saving it for later or are they physical based Hunters? Either way, let's see how they react to this.' She thought with a light chuckle.

Flicking her finger, a blood needle shot out from below as the first Hunter managed to bend his body back and avoid the attack.

As the needle collided against a blood thread, Alice flicked her finger once more and it reappeared from a different thread.

It was a diversion and a tactic to make them misjudge her attack.

'When I was fighting the Maiden, I had the ability to teleport by using the blood as portals. Even attacks worked. If I were to 'replicate' the attack using these needles through a set pattern, they'd begin to predict the next movement thinking they've got a grasp on the pattern. And when they do...'

Narrowing her eyes, Alice sent several more blood needles as she kept track of where they were entering and exiting from.

While establishing the pattern, the shadow using a bow shot three arrows at Alice but she simply leaned back and fell off from her thread to dodge.

Jumping on another thread, she repositioned herself and moved freely within her territory of threads.

It was an arena that allowed her to use her instincts to its full extent.

Alice had to admit that it was hard to control herself when the inner hunger decided to make itself known. To combat this, she simply had to make an environment that was beneficial to her!

That way she would instinctively use these threads and metal sheets as cover against her opponents.

Not only that but should they try to cut the threads, Alice could simply have it reform itself since they were all created from her blood.

'And if anyone was to be unlucky enough to have the blood come into contact with their body, they'll start burning with no other choice but to remove that part of their flesh.' She mused to herself as she flicked her finger and blood shot out from the ground.

Surprised by this sudden attack, the Hunters jumped to the side but Alice was waiting for them.

Slashing towards them with the Bloodflame blade, the four other blades worked in tandem to cut off their paths of escape!

With no other choice, the Hunter with the greatsword raised his sword and used it as a shield while charging towards Alice. With him taking the vanguard position, the others followed suit.

This time, they seemed as though they were no longer holding back. Each had their figures adjusted as though they activated their resonance.

The spear Hunter transformed its weapon into a scythe as they slashed towards Alice. Behind the slash, a wave of chaotic energy trailed, shredding anything in its path.

Seeing this, Alice knew she had to dodge this slash or else she may be in serious danger.

But the bow Hunter didn't let her escape easily.

Pulling back her bow, she released seven arrows towards Alice as they were locked onto her. No matter how she moved, they seemed to track her without issue.

'Interesting.'

Grabbing a thread and swinging her body up, Alice watched as the arrows did a 90 degree turn up and continued to track her.

With no other choice, she coated her blade with violet flames and slashed towards the arrows.

Just as she slashed, the scythe Hunter manifested behind her and slashed towards Alice's neck.

*CLANG!!!

Blocking her attack using the four floating blades, Alice couldn't help but furrow her brows.

From below, the greatsword Hunter aimed his palm towards Alice as chains shot out around her, latching onto her wrist.

"Tch!"

Using the chains to her advantage, Alice swung herself to the side and avoided the pincer attack.

Landing on one of the strands, she was preparing to counterattack when an arrow appeared in her vision.

Widening her eyes, Alice swung backwards and dodged the arrow while the scythe swung towards her neck.

Understanding that Thane stopped holding back, Alice curled her lips into a grin as she activated her second Sigil.

The instant she activated her second Sigil, a storm of fire erupted out around the Arena, causing Thane to pause in surprise.

He finally understood what she meant when she said it was better than expected.

All of the blood that was conjured by her Sigil contained her weird power!

With the sudden appearance of the violet flames, the shadows faltered for a moment as they struggled to hold their shape.

Meanwhile, Alice had four flaming swords float behind her while standing in this maelstrom unfazed.

Seeing the shadows struggle, Alice decided to mess with Thane as payback for all the 'kind training' he has given her.

"Don't tell me your summons can't stand a little bit of heat? I'm just a weak three star Hunter, surely they can handle this much right?" Alice asked with a smug grin.

Seeing this, Thane's smile twitched as he squinted his eyes at her.

"Cheeky brat. Fine, let's see how you handle this then."

Snapping his finger, a surge of shadows erupted out from beneath them, engulfing their figures and reinforcing them with more power.

The spear wielder was now transformed into a humanoid beast with six arms and six swords, the greatsword user's body shrivelled down until it was nothing but skin and bones. As for the bow user, a pair of wings unfurled from their back as their bow merged with their arm.

Seeing this, Alice understood that all of them have had their 'Resonances' upgraded to increase the difficulty level.

Even in this storm of flames, they were holding their own.

But that's only while Alice was in her base form.

Standing up on her thread, Alice snapped her finger as a storm of blades barred the shadow Hunters from approaching her.

"Thane. You wanted to see what my Resonance is right? Why I said it was worth losing out on the Lifeblood Link." Alice called out with a smile.

Playing along, Thane nodded his head.

Taking a deep breath, Alice closed her eyes and gathered the power within her body.

She could feel the dormant abyssal energy stirring in her chest, spreading out to the rest of her body.

As Alice opened her eyes, Thane noticed that both of her eyes were now red and black rather than the half and half state it was usually.

A surge of power erupted from Alice's body as black lights pulsed out from her chest.

Little by little, an obsidian crown manifested itself above Alice's head while the flames transformed into a new dress that wrapped around Alice's body.

Her once split hair was dyed in a majestic violet while a dress of darkness and flames fluttered behind her.

The underside of the dress glowed a bright violet as within this glow, a hellscape of flames could be seen with what felt like eyes staring back at you. Yet one blink and the eyes disappeared from your sight.

From the tips of her fingers and toes, a darkness seemed to creep up her body but faded back into her normal skin tone while markings from her Sigil was clearly visible, wrapped in a layer of briar thorns.

The swords that floated around her burst into flames and positioned themselves behind her, looking as though they were her wings of fire.

Seeing the crown along with the eyes, Thane froze up in shock as the visage of his old master overlapped Alice. The way she grinned, her mannerisms and the confidence in her gaze. It was exactly like her.

Snapping her finger, motes of fire flickered to life around the shadow Hunters as thread extended from each mote, preventing them from moving.

"I have two abilities in this state. The first, so long as I have blood to burn for these flames, they will keep me alive. Even if my arm is to be torn off, my head cut off. If I bleed, my flames will mend me." Alice declared with a grin as she aimed two fingers at the group.

"As for the second ability... I can draw upon the abyssal energy used by my opponents to help fuel my attack. So long as I have my resonance activated, they will exhaust more strength than usual when fighting me. Of course, that's just the surface level. With this extra power, I can do this." Narrowing her eyes, Alice tapped her finger against the empty air.

At the moment, Thane felt a chill down his back as the entire Abyss seemed to react to her command.

Widening his eyes, Thane could feel the flow of energy gathering around the Hunters as every single mote she had conjured simultaneously collapsed into sparks of light.

Each mote had become a cast of her newly adjusted Nova Core!

Without giving them a chance to fight back, Alice raised her hand above her head and clenched it into a fist.

At that moment, Thane immediately slammed down his hand as a wave of shadows burst out from the arena itself and swarmed around the cluster of Nova Cores that had just been created.

Refusing to let it explode, he extinguished the attack, causing Alice to pout in annoyance and stomp her foot against the thread.

"Hey! That's not fair! You said you were only going to use decent Hunters against me. That was more than the power of even the four star Hunter's I've seen!" Alice called out as the flames crackled around her.

Even just activating her resonance briefly felt as though she had just been fighting nonstop for 24 hours. On top of feeling suddenly drained of stamina and energy, her lungs struggled to pull in air. While she was in this state, she was kept alive by her flames but it doesn't change the fact that she struggled to breath due to the lack of oxygen!

"Weren't you the one taunting me earlier? Such a sour loser tsk tsk." Thane laughed while shrugging his shoulders.

However, deep down, he knew that last attack would've annihilated the shadow mimics he had created. The moment the motes collapsed into sparks, the surrounding energy was cut off completely and no abilities could be used from within.

It was practically a deathtrap for those that relied on their Sigils extensively.

'What kind of monster did I release from the Zenia's.' Thane mused to himself.

After seeing this, his dream, his goal and his purpose was no longer just a fantasy.

Chapter 197 - 197: Distant Dream

Seeing Thane's response, Alice could only huff in annoyance as she deactivated her Resonance. The storm of violet flames disappeared in a single instant as Alice landed on the arena floor.

Just as she was able to stabilise herself, she felt her legs give up under her. Falling back, Alice blinked her eyes in confusion feeling the fatigue that washed over her body.

"Huh?" She muttered, looking down at her hand that barely at the strength to carry her sword.

"It's normal. Resonance is usually limited to one per day. But it's better to think of it as once per rest." Thane chuckled seeing Alice unable to move.

Crouching down in front of her, he curled his lips up into a grin and poked her nose while dodging her retaliation.

"I'm not sure if Allura explained it well but the phenomenon of activating a Resonance is essentially going into debt with the Abyss. In exchange for a big burst of power, you tap into the power you would've had for the rest of the day and use it in that moment.

"That's why the briar thorns manifest around you Sigils and link them to one another. Extra power is siphoned and it's only natural that the backlash of doing such a thing is pure exhaustion. With enough training, you can avoid this exhaustion and continue to fight." Thane explained while flicking Alice on the head.

Standing up, Thane reached towards Alice's head before closing his eyes.

Just as she was about to say something, Alice could feel a foreign power entering her body and washing away the fatigue that had accumulated within her body.

"This'll do for now. The best remedy is still for you to rest but this should let you move to a certain extent. Just keep in mind that you shouldn't fight anymore until you've rested." Thane smiled as Alice nodded her head.

"What was that? Was it a Sigil power?"

"Nope. It's just a simple parlour trick that I picked up. Doesn't help you with fighting but just helps with those who aren't used to using Resonances." Thane shook his head while walking away from the arena.

'I made it for Allura since she was always terrible at recovering from her Resonance use. To think I'll use it again after so many years.'

Massaging her neck, Alice noticed Ria jumping over to her.

"Alice! What was that attack at the end? It was like Allura's Nova Core but there were so many of them! And the way it started to eat away at everything. Is it something I can do as well?" Ria asked as there was a light of excitement in her eyes.

She knew that the skill Alice used was not tied to Sigils so if she was able to learn what she did then it would be another boost to her skill set.

"Erm... I'm not sure to be honest. It's inspired by Allura's Nova Core but I can't replicate it properly. I kind of improvised but if you want, I can try and explain how I did it." Alice chuckled as Ria nodded her head.

The basic premise of her skill was simple but hard to execute.

"Step one is to gather as much power as you can and release it all at once. Once that's done, you want to compress it into a single spark. The key is how fast you can accomplish this stage. If you take too long, it loses a lot of power and makes you vulnerable to attacks. The faster you are, the better.

"Once it collapses into a single spark, you just need to guide it towards your opponent and then run since you'll get hurt in the explosion as well." Alice explained.

"Hmm... I can give it a try." Ria muttered.

But before she could say anything else, Thane interrupted.

"Don't. I don't know why Allura decided to teach Alice that skill but you shouldn't try it. After training with you, I'm very familiar with how your body works. It will not be able to support the activation of this skill." He shrugged while gesturing for them to hurry up.

"Ehhh but Alice could do it. I'm sure if I try hard enough I'll be able to accomplish it." Ria frowned.

"I don't doubt that. But you want to know how many Sigils it took for Allura to use this skill without blowing herself up in the process?"

"How many?"

"It took her seventh Sigil for her to be able to utilize this skill. In that sense, Alice here is a freak of nature of can use a Lord Level skill no matter how abridged she made it. The control and power needed along with physical toughness is not something you can handle." Thane explained as he knew the secret behind how Alice was able to accomplish such a task.

He noticed it several times now but now he confirmed his theory.

That regeneration of hers was actively repairing her body while she flooded herself with power.

Had it not been for this regeneration, he had no doubt that her limbs would be torn apart before she could even compress the spark!

"Ehhh..."

Seeing this, he knew that Ria was disappointed but there was nothing he could do about it.

Not even he knew why Alice had that insane regeneration but it was the foundation that allowed her usage of this skill.

"Don't be too disappointed. I've already shown you the way you can unleash your power. I'm sure you just need a chance to display that skill properly." Thane reassured as Ria nodded her head.

He wasn't wrong, the 'skill' that he showed her was something that would allow her to hold her own. Both of them now received help from Abyss Lords, she shouldn't be too greedy for more.

"Anyways, let's go somewhere nice to eat. It'll be my treat since my job here is done." Thane smiled as both Alice and Ria paused in surprise.

It had only been a short period of time yet he was already leaving.

"What? Missing my abuse already? You two really love to get kicked by me huh? Ew." Thane raised an eyebrow as the two were instantly angered.

"Hah? What the hell do you mean missing your abuse?!" Alice shouted out as she could still remember the pain she felt.

"We're just surprised you're leaving already. Who the hell wants to get beaten for fun? Alice let's eat his wallet dry today!" Ria huffed.

Hearing this, Alice blinked her eyes and looked at Ria with doubt.

This was a man who could throw hundreds of platina out without care. No matter how much they ate, she doubted that they could eat enough to empty his wallet. And even if they were to try, they'd die trying!

"I'd like to see you try. To make it easier on your pitiful appetite, I'll even have mercy on you and take you two to the most expensive restaurant. Surely you can make me spend more than a bit of pocket change right?" Thane taunted with a smug grin as Ria stomped past him with Alice in tow.

"You better not take that back!"

Seeing the two make their way out, Thane chuckled to himself. He had to admit that seeing their reactions never bored him. In the short time he had known them, the last fight especially, he had forgotten about the boredom that plagued his mind.

'Perhaps this is why Allura is so attached to them. Not just because I gave Alice the Eye.' He smiled, following behind the two.

###

Renting a private room for the two to enjoy the food as much as they wanted, Thane stood by the balcony and looked over the city.

The sights of the Abyss changed every time he visited and just seeing this sight, reminded him that Ayr was truly gone.

Ayr was nothing but a distant echo in the timeline of the Abyss. A relic of the past that no one could remember. It was a place of boundless joy and memories.

Its skyline was dominated by towering spires that reached the skies above.

Each spire had its own story while the guardians of the city patrolled, ensuring the safety of all those who sought refuge.

His master, in her boundless love, accepted all who sought help from Ayr yet her reward for all of this was death.

After all these years, his memories were now tinged with sorrow. Every time he came back to the Abyss he felt as though a knife had plunged into his heart. The devastation brought forth by the calamity was still fresh in his mind.

How the citizens screamed, how he tried his best yet for all his power, he was useless in diverting the tragedy.

Taking a deep breath, Thane sighed as a bitter smile hung on his face.

Despite the passage of time, he longed to go back to the good old days. But those days will forever be out of his reach.

'Perhaps at the end, when everything is done and my role has ended... I can finally rest and eternally dream of the life I once had...' He thought to himself.

"Thane?"

Alice's voice rang out, surprising Thane as he was lost in thought. He had expected her to still be eating right now.

"Hm? What is it?" He forced a smile.

However, Alice didn't say anything but only pointed to his eye.

Furrowing his brows, he felt the corner of his eyes and realised that a stray tear had formed.

Widening his eyes in surprise, he wiped away the tears and took a deep breath to calm himself.

"Are you alright?" Alice asked with a slight frown.

"Yeah don't worry about it. I was just thinking about how I'll miss hitting- I mean training the both of you." Thane dismissed with a laugh but Alice could see the pain he tried to hide.

Even though it was only there for a moment, she recognised his expression as Allura had the same expression before when talking about Ayr and her old master.

Biting her lip for a moment, Alice stepped forward and hugged him, surprising Thane.

"I promised Allura this before so I'll say it to you too. I'll try my best to rebuild Ayr in the future so you can have a home to go back to."

Hearing this, Thane's eyes softened as his façade disappeared.

He wasn't sure what he should say but in the end, he settled on two words.

"Thank you."

Chapter 198 - 198: Thane's Farewell

After finishing their meal, the three made their way back to the Hunter's Guild as Thane was going to help them one last time. He was going to help them resolve the current investigation regarding the death of the Lord so they could travel freely.

While Alice and Ria wanted to see how he would resolve this, Thane simply shook his head and had a 'private' conversation with the Branch Leader.

"What do you think he's gonna do to him?" Ria asked as a bad feeling surfaced in her heart.

The way Thane smiled while reassuring them sent a chill down her spine.

"Erm... Probably going to reveal a bit of his power right? Maybe a bit of coercion." Alice tilted her head as her question was answered rather quickly.

Opening the doors, Thane left the room with a satisfied smile while the branch leader looked pale in his seat. The fear in his eyes was prevalent as Thane threw a card at Alice.

"I had him update your Hunter's licence while I was at it. I pretty much verified your strength as a three star Hunter after all. You two can leave this city whenever you want and the reward for your commission has been handed to you. The full reward without any subtractions as the branch leader was kind enough to pay off what you owe.

Isn't that right?" Thane chuckled as he glanced back at the branch leader who hurriedly nodded his head.

Seeing this, Alice's smile twitched as he was able to resolve their issues with a simple 'talk'.

"I guess that's what you can do when you're powerful." Alice muttered as Thane smiled.

"It can't resolve everything but it's definitely handy. Without power, no one would give a crap about what you say." He shrugged before yawning loudly.

"I'm pretty exhausted now after babysitting the two of you these days. Don't cause too much trouble if you can help it, especially when you can't resolve it. Avoid weird cults, if anyone comes up and talks to you, be wary of their intentions.

"Don't take candy from a stranger, don't trust free hospitality and what else? Hmm... Right, train as hard as you can but remember to take breaks. Your body is important after all. Do as much research as you can in libraries. If your research is sufficient you can usually kill a beast before it uses its skills.

If they're fighting back then you're doing something wrong." Thane paused for a moment before shaking his head.

"Well I'm sure you have it handled. Just try to stay out of trouble." He chuckled, patting both of them on the head while making his way out of the guild.

"Will we see you again in the future?" Alice called out.

Pausing in his step, Thane turned around and smiled.

Without saying anything, a swarm of shadows swirled around him as his disguise was dismissed. The shadows bowed down in reverence as he revealed his full figure.

A familiar face greeted Alice as his cold eyes stared back, this time with a trace of warmth compared to their first meeting.

His long black hair swayed behind him as a raven feathered jacket appeared around his shoulders.

"You will definitely see me again in the future. Live well kid, you're doing good so far." Kaden chuckled as he raised his hand and snapped his fingers. Before Alice could even call out to him, a flock of ravens appeared around them and both Alice and Ria had to shield their eyes.

By the time they were able to see again, Kaden had disappeared leaving the two behind while the staff around the Guild looked in confusion.

Biting her lip, Alice sighed before smiling.

It was Kaden all along. Which meant he heard her gratitude towards him.

"Was that..."

"It was Kaden. The one who saved me and started my journey." Alice chuckled.

Looking down at her hand, a single raven feather was left behind as she stored it inside her jacket.

Knowing that both Allura and Kaden were looking after her, protecting her, Alice felt a warmth in her heart that she hadn't felt in so many years.

It felt just like the warmth she received before her birthday, the warmth of family.

"That was Kaden? So he wasn't Thane? Or did Thane never exist?" Ria asked in confusion as she was trying to work out what exactly happened.

"Seems like it was just an alias he was using to approach us."

'Though... that hate he showed. It was real. I wonder what happened in the past for him to hate himself so much.' Alice thought with an inward sigh.

"He's kinda hot though."

"?????????" Widening her eyes, Alice snapped her head towards Ria and saw her staring at where Kaden had just been standing.

"Huh?"

"What? You have to admit that he's kinda hot." Ria shrugged nonchalantly while Alice couldn't wrap her head around it.

"Oh well. Anyways, what are we doing now? Since he's resolved the issues holding us in this city I'm pretty sure we have enough travel funds now so we can leave whenever."

"You can't just change the subject after that?! What do you mean he's kinda hot???" Alice retorted in disbelief.

"Of course I can. It was just a thought anyways don't think too much about itahaha. Let's go." Ria grinned as she made her way downstairs while Alice was left speechless.

Sighing out, she facepalmed and followed behind Ria.

Arriving downstairs, Ria made her way to the receptionist and inquired about the trip to find her friend Luke.

Keeping silent, Alice listened by the side since Ria hadn't mentioned the city he was in.

Silverwind Valley.

It wasn't a traditional city like Alice had expected but rather a city suspended in a fracture of space in the middle of the Silverwind Valley.

She wasn't quite sure what it entailed but from the receptionist's reaction, the trip was going to be a long one as they required several changes and even the addition of airships.

In the end, it seemed like they would need more than 200 gold in just travel fees alone and that wasn't including things like lodging or food.

Hearing the price, Ria felt like coughing up blood but since they now had the reward from their commission, they were able to afford the price.

"200 Gold for travel and we'll need to figure out our own lodging. *sigh...* Money comes in slowly yet leaves so fast. How do old people like Allura and Kaden even accumulate so much coin to begin with." Ria lamented as their wallet had finally gained weight only for it to disappear for travel fees.

"I mean... Kaden probably robbed it from families if I'm being honest." Alice chuckled since she still remembered their first meeting.

He had broken into the most heavily guarded prison owned by the Zenia family out of boredom and curiosity. To him, it looked like they were guarding some precious treasure yet all he found was her.

In that aspect, he wasn't wrong. She was indeed the treasure of the Zenia family as she was the reason why they were able to produce so much usable Abyss Blood for public use.

Without her sacrifice, the people wouldn't have gotten so much.

"Well we're not strong enough yet to do what he does so we'll probably have to gamble a bit as we travel. Either that or do it the hard way and take some commissions on our way there. Which ever fits your fancy but personally, I would prefer the gambling route." Ria shrugged.

"Let's... Just take some commissions on the way there. On the other hand, I'm more interested about Silverwind Valley. You said it was suspended in a fracture of space. What do you mean by that?"

"Ah that. Well... I'm not versed in the history of that city. You can probably ask Luke when we see him. But grandfather did explain why the city is like that. Apparently, one of the Ancient Abyss Lords wouldn't take his punishment without fighting back and his response is to try blow himself up along with a piece of the Abyss.

"However, the Hunters at the time were able to seal the attack and now it's frozen in place as a fracture. The side effect is the area got distorted and those that enter could feel the influence of the Abyss directly. It's great for learning how to manipulate the power within your body and so they made an Academy there." Ria explained as Alice raised her eyebrow.

"Hou? So the reason why they build a city there is because they could sense the Abyss better?"

"Yep. It's quite a popular place you know? Just going to the city is enough to enhance your mastery over Sigils while those who study there often become famous Hunters. I never bothered with enrolling at the Academy since I was travelling around with grandfather and Allura.

"But Luke managed to enter without any Sigils at the time. It was a special case you know? First in the history of the Academy." Ria chuckled, feeling proud of her friends achievement while Alice wondered what kind of test they would have for him to be the first in history to enrol without a Sigil.

"Ah I need to send a letter to him so he knows were visiting. If we just show up without warning he might be out on a study trip." Ria remembered as she quickly jogged over to the bar and commissioned a letter delivery.

Seeing this, Alice wondered what kind of person Luke was.

From all the information she's obtained about him, it seemed like he was extremely knowledgeable regarding Abyss Engineering.

'Seems like he's someone who values knowledge...' Alice narrowed her eyes.

Just thinking about it was enough to cause a reaction within her as she squeezed her arm. Those that follow the pursuit of knowledge will no doubt want to find the truth behind her body. Perhaps Luke was no different.

However, there was also a chance that he was different to the others. He was someone that gave Allura and Gin a good impression.

Taking a deep breath to calm her mind, Alice wanted to see him in person before judging what he was like. All she could hope for was that he was different to the Scholars that tore her apart.

Chapter 199 - 199: Departing For Silverwind Valley

Once Ria finished sending her letter, they made their way to the stables as the Guild had already arranged the necessary transport vehicles.

The entire trip was going to take them roughly 2 weeks with the second half being done on an airship.

"For the first week, we'll take journeying with these caravans. They aren't taking any detours, and their route is predetermined. We'll just be joining different caravans at different points of the journey until we reach the airship docks. I believe it should be 3 changes." Ria explained as she recalled what the receptionist had told her.

Of course, she had the note given by the Guild so the other caravans knew that they were there for a ride.

"Let's just hope nothing like last time happens again. I don't think I can deal with more interactions with the low depths." Alice lamented, remembering the incident where they briefly opened a gateway to the deepest parts of the Abyss.

One where several people were killed in the process.

"Let's hope not. Thankfully the main routes used by the Guild caravans are secured by several Hunters who've been tasked to guard the path. Should anything strange appear, they would immediately report it to the Guild and resolve the issue as soon as possible." Ria reassured.

However, Alice only stared at her with doubt as their supposedly 'safe' journey had been filled with abnormalities and strange people. People who could make a clone who can commune with the Abyss, someone who could tamper with their souls, strange beasts that have been tampered by the Cult of the Eclipse and so on.

Their path thus far was anything but normal or safe.

"W-What? I know it's been a bit... Strange so far. But it'll return back to normal. I promise!" Ria coughed awkwardly after feeling Alice's doubtful gaze.

*Sigh...

"If you say so. I'll prepare myself just in case." Alice shook her head as she made her way back to her room.

Packing up everything into a suitcase, Alice carried it down while Ria did the same.

The next caravan that was leaving the city was going to depart in an hour and while they were waiting, they decided to make themselves comfortable in their own carriage.

Thankfully, they didn't need to share this carriage with anyone else as not many were going in the same direction as them.

"Do you think Allura noticed that Kaden was here then?" Ria asked curiously while making herself comfortable on the seat.

"Probably. I mean Allura likely has her own way of keeping an eye on us. Maybe it's the amulet maybe it's something else. Though I can sense a bit of Kaden's power on this feather that he left behind. So maybe that's his way of looking out for us too." Alice shrugged while pulling out the raven feather that she had picked up.

She noticed that after gaining her third Sigil, her senses towards the flow of abyssal energy had improved. While it was faint, she could sense a strand of energy within this feather.

It was similar to what was in the amulet and bracelet that Allura and Gin had given them. Thus, she guessed that Kaden probably left them the same thing.

Messing around with the feather between her fingers, Alice placed it back into her jacket.

"So can you tell me a bit about the academy? I remember that there was one back in Zdash but we only had a spar with them. What do they study there? Or is it a wide variety?" Alice asked curiously as Ria furrowed her brows before holding her chin.

"Erm... I think it's mostly practical studies. So stuff like how to be a Hunter, Abyss Engineering, Blood Alchemy, beast tracking and hunting. There are probably more but this is just what I remember from the top of my head. Why do you ask?"

"Nothing much. Just curious about what it's like to be in an Academy." Alice shrugged.

Since she was locked away after her birthday, she never got to properly experience school/academy life. She couldn't deny that her curiosity for such a life burned bright but there was no reason for her to enrol.

Her experiences as a Hunter could be gained out in the field, it's what Allura suggested as well. Not only that, but she also had no interest in Abyss Engineering and she had heard her fair share of Blood Alchemy over the decade.

The only reason why she was even remotely interested was due to the fact that it was something new to her.

"I mean... If you're curious we can enrol there. The process is pretty simple and granted, most are either enrolling when they're young or they're invited by the academy itself. Without connections or an invite, you'll need to take a rigorous enrolment procedure. Honestly... you'll take care of the combat aspect rather easily." Ria chuckled.

She had never seen a three star Hunter as strong as Alice before. Especially that resonance. With what she knew of Alice's flame, not even her in her Resonance form could deal with that flame.

'If she was an enemy that I ran into while I'm out on a hunt, I'll probably die before I figured out why my powers aren't working.' Ria thought to herself as Alice's flames were truly the bane of the Abyss.

The fact that something rejects the blessings of the Abyss to this degree where even an Abyss Lord needed to exert some strength to maintain their connection was crazy to her.

Alice, a three star Hunter, was able to force an Abyss Lord to exert themselves more than normal.

If anyone else heard such a claim they would dismiss her as delusional, yet it was the truth.

"I'll pass. Didn't Allura task us with going to the mainland? I doubt we should spend too much time in Silverwind Valley." Alice dismissed with a wave of her hand but Ria noticed the curiosity in Alice's eyes.

"It'll be fine~ Allura wanted us to enjoy ourselves anyway. Honestly going to the Academy is pretty good too ya know? You get to fight some of the students that main look up to as talented. Not only that, they come from pretty big families too so you know their Sigils will be good.

Don't you think it's going to be a fun challenge?" Ria persuaded with an excited smile as she too was curious about how she fared against these talents.

Would she be able to compare to them? Would she defeat them easily? She wanted to know her standing against these people and going to the Academy was the first step in doing so.

"I mean... It might be fun. But you realise I can't exactly expose my power against a bunch of students, right? Plus, I'm pretty sure there will be powerful teachers there. If they decide to go against me, I'm not sure how I would be able to react to that." Alice sighed as they would most definitely ask her about her fire if it was to be exposed.

"Just don't use it then. You can practice using four of your swords at once. Well... five if you include your Bloodflame Blade. Six if you include the obsidian one." Ria pointed out.

Contemplating for a moment, Alice had to admit that her words made sense.

She had been relying on her fire for a lot of her fights. It was a powerful tool to fight against those stronger than her but it was also her biggest weakness. Once news of her fire gets out and they become curious about her secrets, she wouldn't be able to handle the aftermath of such an event.

If she was able to improve her swordsmanship, she would be able to better utilize the power granted by her third Sigil.

'Even during the fight with Kaden's summons, I was pretty awkward with the blades. It's hard to focus on their movement while I'm busy dodging attacks. Perhaps it's better to use one blade to attack while the rest for defence and go on from there...' She mused to herself while activating her third Sigil partially.

Gathering metal above her hand and transforming it into four small floating blades, each the size of a finger, Alice tried to replicate a sword fight yet the movements were awkward and static.

It lacked the fluidity needed to take advantage within close-quarters combat and certainly lacked the swiftness needed for her to catch her opponents off guard.

After all, if she focused on the movement of the blades, her own movements would be jeopardised and vice versa.

Dismissing her blades, Alice glanced over at Ria's expectant gaze and sighed.

"Well I suppose it wouldn't hurt to check out what it's like. Your friend is studying there too so I'm pretty sure we can spare a week or so."

"No taking that back! Let's get you enrolled once we're there." Ria grinned while cracking her knuckles.

There was another reason why she wanted to go but she wasn't going to tell Alice. At least not yet.

Since a lot of the students there were sons and daughters of Nobles, their wallets would be rather fat and heavy.

As the merciful and kind-hearted girl she is, she was going to help them lighten their burdens and keep the coin safe from anyone that may have nefarious thoughts about their wealth.

Of course, that was her motivation but seeing as how Alice was just following along since she might as well, Ria knew she needed a motivator for Alice too.

And with Alice's biggest hobby being drinking mead, she formulated a plan in her mind.

"Say, Alice."

"Hm?"

"Do you think you'll be able to swindle... no that's the wrong word. Win some expensive mead from the rich folks there? I'm sure if they sign a Law of Agreement with you before a fight, you can get some good mead that only Nobles can drink." Ria grinned as her smile reached from one ear to the other.

"!!!"

Widening her eyes, Alice sat up as she hadn't even thought of this possibility. The Law of Agreement imposes a restriction they couldn't go back on. Meaning if she was to coerce- nono, persuade them in Kaden's terms, they had to follow through if they lost. Even if the mead was extremely expensive.

With a fire lit in her eyes, Alice had a goal at the Academy. In the short time she was going to be there, she will rob them of all the mead she could get her hands on.

Wiping the drool from her mouth, Alice was now looking forward to meeting the noble successors.

Chapter 200 - 200: A Name For Her Skill

As the caravan started to depart from the city of Eldoria, Alice swung herself onto the roof of her carriage and looked back.

The time they spent here was short but it was enjoyable. She was able to get her third Sigil, her resonance and even say her thanks to Kaden who freed her from the Zenia prison.

Not only that, she was made aware of this hunger that was dormant within her mind. A side effect of the brief moment she spent as a beast during her birthday perhaps.

Whatever it was, she had to find out the cause.

'Since we're going to the Academy anyways, I may as well do some study on myself. Surely one of the teachers or scholars there will know about this other side of me. A split personality maybe...' Alice mused to herself as she was warned not to sit on the roof.

Unable to enjoy the cool air, Alice could only go back inside as Ria laughed in response.

"This isn't a caravan we hired. It's technically sponsored by the Guild despite the price we paid so we have to follow their rules." Ria grinned as Alice grumbled and sat down.

"You could've at least told me."

As she wasn't allowed on the roof, Alice could only lay down on the seat and rest for now.

Seeing this, Ria chuckled at her disgruntled expression.

"Well it'll be fine. I'm sure you can catch plenty of cold air once we get on the airships. Not only that, unlike the last caravan, the Guild has actually provided meals with this trip. We can just take this time to rest up and relax. Just think of it as a vacation." Ria smiled while Alice only raised her eyebrow.

"I suppose you're right. But I wouldn't mind hunting for some food too. Stretch the body, test out more ideas with the new Sigil." Alice shrugged.

"Speaking of that, have you decided to change the name of your skill yet? Tha-no, Kaden mentioned that it was completely different to Allura's Nova Core right? If it's different you may as well give it a new name."

Hearing this, Alice thought for a moment before nodding her head.

She wasn't wrong as this skill was no longer Nova Core. It was something unique to her that could be done due to her flames.

"Hmm... What do you think is a good name for it then?" Alice asked as she closed her eyes, remembering what the skill looked like.

The way it collapsed in on itself and dragged the surroundings with it before exploding.

"Well it makes a singularity and looks like it's eating away at the world. Hmm... Void Surge? Stellar Flux? Discharge?" Ria furrowed her brows as she wanted to think of a cool name for Alice. Her skill needed a powerful name to match the destruction.

It wouldn't do if the skill was called big boom. Granted, it was accurate but it just sounds... dull for Ria.

"Not sure why it's important but just wake me up when you think of one." Alice waved her hand dismissively but Ria grabbed her by the arm.

"No! This matter is important Alice! Think about it. What if you're in the hardest fight of your life and the finishing attack was something you call... Boombies!" Ria shouted out but paused once she realised what that sounded like.

". . . Boombies?" Alice blinked her eyes as she had to make sure she wasn't hallucinating.

"Yes."

"Really? Of all the throw away names you could've chosen, you chose... Boombies?" Alice asked in bewilderment.

Blushing from shame, Ria could only nod her head as she doubled down!

"Yes! Imagine if you had to explain that your attack is called Boombies to a whole crowd of people. Imagine the shame you would feel at that moment." Ria persuaded as Alice had to push Ria back slightly as she was getting rather eager.

"Alright alright! I guess you have a point. But I'm feeling more shame from you having thought of such a name. What's even going on in your head?" Alice pushed Ria back as she sighed and sat up.

"I don't want a long name since it'll be too much of a mouthful. Can't we just call it Rupture? I mean it's not incorrect. I basically collapse the flames into an orb and explode it. In other words, Rupture." She suggested, wanting to get this over with so she could rest but Ria shook her head.

As they continued back and forth with their discussion of names for her skill, they reached their first destination and camped for the night.

However, their discussion still wasn't finished and neither of them could get any sleep with Ria continuing to suggest names.

Come dawn, both Alice and Ria stared at each other with dark rings under their eyes.

"Is it decided then?" Ria asked, her voice weak with exhaustion.

"It seems to be so. Unless you have a last minute change in mind."

"Stop, please don't tempt me. Otherwise I might actually try to think of something else." Ria quickly shook her head as she was reaching her limit. She needed her sleep and fast.

Taking a deep breath, Alice nodded her head as she opened her mouth.

"Void Flux. No take backs ok?"

"Mnm... This is good. Goodnight. Or is it good morning? I don't care, I'm passing out. Wake me up when it's time for food." Ria yawned as she stood up and walked to their carriage.

Following behind, Alice wanted to sleep as well. However, the moment she stepped onto the carriage, she saw Ria had fallen asleep on the floor of the carriage without even reaching the seats.

Chuckling softly, Alice reached down and picked her up before placing her on the seat.

Sitting on her own side, she slowly closed her eyes.

Her own skill, Void Flux. A skill that consumes all of her energy and compresses it into a spark before detonating.

There were two variants of this skill. The first acted as a bomb in an arena around the detonation point. The second was a beam where she would try her best to direct the blast for maximum damage.

In her Resonance state, she was able to conjure a field of version one Void Flux due to the power that Kaden wielded.

However, should she try the same with other people, she doubted she could pull off anything close to it. After all, they didn't have the spare energy like an Abyss Lord would.

'If I apply the power of a Ritual to the Void Flux... How powerful can it get at this stage?' Alice asked herself as sleep slowly took over her mind.

She had already glimpsed at the potential when she tried before. Should she successfully establish a ritual with the Abyss with a sacrifice she could afford, perhaps her Void Flux could reach even the high ranked six star Hunters.

But of course that was just wishful thinking. What kind of six star Hunter would allow her to charge up such an attack not to mention get hit by it.

Falling into a slumber with the gentle rocking of her carriage, the journey continued on without any issues.

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Much to their surprise, and boredom, they journeyed for an entire week without any mishaps or fights. With their last change of caravans, they arrived at Ashen Port where they would take an airship to their final destination, Silverwind Valley.

Stepping off the carriage, both Alice and Ria thanked the driver as they stretched their bodies.

"Hng!!! Ahh~ I don't mind a period of peace but f*ckkkkk I want to move my body a bit." Ria sighed out as she felt weird not fighting for a week straight.

"Same here. I feel like I'm about to go insane if I don't get myself some mead right now. My flask ran out a while ago." Alice lamented. The only reason she didn't mind a long journey was because of her mead

but after getting carried away since she had nothing else to do, she had ran out of all of the mead she had bought.

"Shall we indulge ourselves a little before we get to the airship then? According to the schedule, we have another 2 hours before we have to check in on the airship."

"Ohya? What do you have in mind?" Alice glanced over in curiosity as she wondered what Ria had planned.

"What else? Gambling and buying alcohol." She gave Alice the thumbs up and a wide grin.

"Pft alright. I'll go buy the alcohol and you can enjoy your gambling. Take this with you so I can find you in case you get lost." Alice chuckled with a smug smile while handing Ria a blood bead.

The blood bead was one of Alice's new inventions and had three uses. First was to track someone or something. Second was to poison liquids as she could break it down into a powder and mix it into the drink.

And lastly, it could be used as a miniature bomb that can dispel Sigil attacks to a certain extent.

With all of this in mind, Alice made sure she had a constant supply of blood beads on hand if she ever needed to use them. In her pouch of Abyss Blood, one of the vials were filled with these beads.

"Hey! My directional sense has improved a lot ya know!? I'm not so helpless to get lost in a city tsk." Ria huffed as Alice shrugged.

"Then I guess you don't need the blood bead."

"Now hold on ass hat, I never said that." Ria snatched the blood bead back, causing Alice to laugh.

While Ria ran away to look for the gambling arena, Alice looked around for a bar where she could buy some mead for the journey ahead.

