

ABYSSAL AWAKENING

Chapter 2: Diving Into The Abyss

"Do you dream of the outside world?"

It was a sentence Alice never imagined herself to be hearing after all this time. Words of temptation that caused her to hope. Hope that would push her on only to despair at her captivity.

Clenching her fists, she wondered what the price of such a notion could be. The price of freedom she yearned for so long.

"So..." He asked. "Do you want to leave this hell, and trade it for another?"

She nodded. For what hell could be worse than what she had experienced within the last ten years?

Meanwhile, the raven clad man stared at her patiently. He could see the fire in her eyes, burning at the thought of escape. Yet, her face failed to reveal any emotions. For the girl in front of him, her eyes truly were the window to her soul.

"Or would you rather remain locked up in this room?" He added, seeking to edge her on.

There was something in her, something that reminded him of the past. The memory of a dauntless woman he once knew.

He could see the same determination in her as he did in the woman.

Realising her hope was on the verge of extinguishing, Alice reached out in a panic. Grabbing him by the sleeves, she bit her lip before opening her mouth.

"Don't want to stay... please." She uttered with difficulty. "But... I know...a price needs to be paid. "

She wanted to convey her thoughts better but there was a limit to what she could say. Alice was not allowed to interact with anyone except for those that tore away at her, thus she struggled to formulate the right words to properly express her thoughts.

Blinking his eyes in bewilderment, the man was at a loss of words. The young lady in front of him seems to be in her early adulthood. Yet her manner of speech was roughly patched together. A mismatch of tone.

He could tell how hard she was trying to convey her thoughts but lacked the words to do so. Her desperate gaze hoping that he understood what she was thinking inside.

Squatting down, the man sighed deeply before raising his hand.

Thinking that he was going to hit her since she had grabbed onto him, Alice jumped back. She didn't want to offend her would-be saviour if she could help it.

"???"

"I was just going to pat your head but I suppose it might not be the right move." The man raised an eyebrow.

"But, that's fine. There's an old promise I once made to someone. It's highly annoying, by the way. So, I'm hoping someone else can help me fulfill it. I want you to be the one. In return, I will give you a way out of here.

But it won't be easy."

Alice nodded without thinking twice. She held on only with the thought of revenge for 10 long years. She was not going to give up so easily.

The man smiled.

"Alright. My request is that I want you to survive in the Abyss. Travel further than anyone has travelled, uncover the truth through mire and blood. It is in

the Abyss that you will help me fulfill my promise. It is also in the Abyss where you will find what you seek. Be that vengeance or a new life." He said.

His words stopped her for but a second before she nodded again. She did not completely understand the ramifications of her agreement to this deal, but they did not matter to her.

She could almost taste it. Freedom.

"Now, to ensure you fulfill your end of the bargain, I need one more thing."

Alice stared at him, her eyes filled with confusion. Before she could ask what, the man moved.

"The final price, is that I require an eye." He smiled ominously.

From the darkness, a claw reached out before Alice could react and grabbed her right eye. In one swift motion, it pulled her eyeball out.

The pain was a surprise for her as she did not expect the sudden attack, causing her to flinch in panic. She did not scream, though. Claws gripped her ankles and started to drag her down as the man chuckled at the display.

"When you arrive in the Abyss, find a woman called Allura, she will be your guiding light. Knowing what she's like, she'll keep you safe."

And in that moment, the light disappeared from Alice's world. The shadows consumed her, leaving behind only a mangled collar that had stolen her freedom for all these years.

Standing alone in the room, the man tilted his head back and sighed. Bittersweet memories of an age long lost flooded his mind as he shook his head.

"I have given the girl the Eye, that will let Allura to find her." He smiled.

Upon exiting the room, the man found himself in a hallway littered with shredded clothes and blood. Blaring red lights flashed incessantly in the halls. All a result of his own doing.

"We'll meet again once you have made a home of the Abyss. I wonder how Allura will react upon seeing me." He muttered in a joyful tone before disappearing from where he stood.

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Falling through the darkness, Alice felt like she was sinking through the ocean.

Her limbs felt as if they were bound and impossible to move from the crushing pressure around her.

No sight, no sound, no feeling. She could feel nothing.

It was a strange feeling, drifting aimlessly amidst the darkness. But it was oddly calming for her. It gave her a moment to digest what had just happened.

She was unsure if she was still dreaming, that this was just a trick played by her mind in order to escape the cruel reality of her situation. A dive into insanity.

But if it wasn't a dream, her heart burned with the will to live. Her soul wanted to indulge in the all-consuming hatred hidden deep within Alice's heart for her family. Her freedom was a golden opportunity, one she wouldn't give up for the world.

With determination flowing through her mind, Alice snapped her eyes open within the darkness, gaze steadfast and focused.

Reaching her hand out, she clawed away at the sludge that was around her. The thick viscous darkness paved her way up toward the surface as a faint glimmer of light managed to break through the layers of shadow.

With the exit now in sight and her freedom at her fingertips, she climbed forth with reinvigorated passion. Her hand broke open the surface of the darkness

with a loud splash. Grabbing hold of the nearest object she could find, Alice heaved her body out of the viscous waters.

As her head broke the surface, she sucked in a mouthful of air, refilling her lungs while letting energy return to her body.

Nausea burned her mind, but she forced herself to reach safe land first. She would have plenty of time to succumb to fatigue once her life wasn't in the threat of drowning in deep water.

The strange liquid stuck to her like glue as it obscured her vision. All Alice could make out was a strange body of sand. It was illuminated with a dual tint of silver and purple, unlike the radiant gold sand usually takes.

Ignoring the abnormality, she made her way to the edge before collapsing on the sand. Facing up against the sky, she opened her eyes hoping to see the clear blue sky and passing clouds of her dreams, to reignite the final vestige of her sanity and celebrate a return to freedom. But all she could see was a strange purple moon surrounded by dark clouds.

Yet she was free from her prison. Basking in her newfound escape from captivity, the light of hope returned to her eyes yet her expression remained stone cold.

It was a habit that she had developed, one to make sure they couldn't enjoy themselves from watching her suffer. Even as they tore her chest apart, her expression would not change.

'Where am I?' She thought to herself.

The man she met at the Zenia prison said that he would send her to the Abyss. Was this it? It seemed strange to her. Alice didn't even know the man's name, yet she owed him a debt larger than life.

Wiping some of the strange liquid off her, a nagging feeling Alice couldn't quite put her finger on throbbed in her mind. Setting aside the thought, she looked at her reflection in the inky, yet reflective liquid.

Thanks to the moonlight, she could somewhat see her face. The liquid she was covered in was highly reflective on the surface, despite the impenetrable darkness of the waters close to her.

The first thing Alice saw were her eyes. They were now a vibrant purple and her supposedly missing right eye grew itself back. The right sclera was now coloured black with the pupil being purple. Her hair was messy and unkempt from the years of negligence. Their original colour was a dark brown like the rest of the her family.

But in the place of the dark brown was a split of white and dark purple, the snowy hair taking the right side above the darkened eyes while the violet took the left.

'Wasn't my eye gone? Why is it fine now? Alice thought to herself while observing her new right eye.

The observations were short-lived as she suddenly retched, throwing up the same black liquid that filled the lake.

Her eyes widened in panic as the liquid flowed from her orifices. It felt as though her insides were being cut apart with blades before transforming into this substance that forced itself out of her body.

Within this panic, she understood what she had been swimming in.

The waters of the Abyss.

With the appearance of the Abyss in their world, knowledge of its malevolent nature was shared and disseminated to most people, to the extent it became a part of curriculum in schools. Even children knew about the waters of the Abyss, the dark realm's black seas.

Much like the Abyss Blood, the waters were contaminated with the same malicious energy that tainted every being that resided within the hollowed chasms of the Abyss. A normal human coming in contact with this water would be required to be quarantined lest they mutate and infect the people around them.

Anyone unlucky enough to be doused, or worse, completely submerged in the waters of the Abyss would witness their entire being mutate and transform into a malformed beast overcome with bloodlust.

Even with her mutated resistance, Alice couldn't have this liquid within her body for a long period of time. Plus, she didn't have the healing blood injected by her collar to keep herself alive anymore.

Forcing herself to throw up as much of this liquid as possible, Alice felt blood dripping from her nose. Her vision blurred red around the edges.

'Sh*t...' She cursed in her mind. Her body lost strength, and Alice collapsed in the pile of black liquid she just regurgitated.

She knew that the Abyss was composed of several layers, each filled with its own dangers and reached far and wide like the surface.

With a feeling of nausea spreading through her mind and weakness taking over, Alice collapsed against the silver sand while a figure appeared, treading through the rolling mist covering the lands.

"Another one lost to the deep. Urg... Hm?" Noticing something off, he leaned down and saw that the girl was still alive, her body spasming from the effects of the Abyss waters, but not dead yet.

"Alive...? Oh, yes. Although it's a matter of time before she becomes part of the dark mother, she'll make a fine addition to the Slaughter Docks. Hehehe. You're in luck, young lass. You'll have a purpose instead of rotting out in the wild." He grinned, knowing that she'll fetch a few decent coins for his wallet.

Grabbing her by the collar of her dress, he threw the girl against the pile of corpses lined on his wagon.

Cracking his neck and stretching the rest of his body, the man grabbed the wagon and made his way through the thick mist that was rolling in. The echoing sounds of his whistle rang out amidst the fog while merging with the distant calls of Abyss Beasts.