

Abyssal A 241

Chapter 241 - 241: Observers

Even though the city looked as though it wasn't far from her, Alice understood that it was simply due to the sheer scale of the city.

A rough estimate told her she still required half a day to a day's journey if she wanted to reach the gates.

'I can probably make the journey faster if I get a carriage in one of those smaller villages. Though... I don't have any money.' Alice thought to herself with a slight frown. Not only that, but she wasn't sure if labour would make up for the cost of transport.

It depended on the residents of this village.

Standing on a small hill that overlooked the village, her gaze was fixed on the residents.

Each one had a deformity as a result of Abyss Blood. Some severe, some minor. But there was no one who didn't have a side effect of some form.

'Are they exiled from the city?'

If they were, Alice wouldn't be surprised considering the prejudice the current era holds towards people with visible deformities, especially ones that heavily affect their appearance.

Ironic considering everyone in the Abyss drinks Abyss Blood.

Thinking to herself, Alice assumed that it should be pretty easy to talk to them since she too had visible changes. Though hers were more aesthetic compared to having claws for hands, spiked fins on their back and so on.

Approaching the village, Alice furrowed her brows after realising they were practically unresponsive.

Each one had a vacant look in their eyes while they went through the motions of daily life.

Watching all of this happen, Alice felt a sense of eeriness from this village as she decided to get a closer look.

Her presence was invisible to these residents while they continued to 'work'.

'What's going on?'

Walking up to one of the villagers, she waved her hand back and forth in front of their faces, but they had no reaction.

Bumping into them didn't have any effect either. It merely stalled them for a moment before they returned to their duties.

Questions filled Alice's mind but before she could theorise about the answers, she felt several eyes lock onto her.

'Are they the guards of this village? But unlike the villagers... These guys don't have vacant stares. It's a bit risky but I can probably get information from them.'

Narrowing her gaze, Alice made her way out of the village. She needed a way to draw them out.

Tapping her bracelet, she allowed it to drink some of her blood before transforming into a single-edged blade just like the blood flame blade.

She couldn't hear it clearly before but now she could. The hunger within her mind crying out for slaughter.

The word, Kill, resounded constantly in her mind the moment she thought about the Abyss.

However, her goal was not to kill them. Merely to drag them out.

'A little killing intent should be fine, it's not aimed at them anyways and I don't plan on killing them.'
Alice thought to herself as the corners of her lips curled up into a menacing grin.

Flames began to flicker around her body as thick killing intent seeped out into the world. A deep seeded hatred for all things belonging to the Abyss and a desire to tear them apart.

Alice knew that this wasn't her own killing intent but rather one that belonged to the flames. But that was fine. The deeper the killing intent right now, the easier it became to draw out these people who were spying on her.

###

I got my first mission in a while today. Captain Allura had asked us to check out the site of a crash nearby.

The task was to simply see what it was and report back. Nothing unusual.

"It's probably just a 'Turned' who hit the barrier." Was what I said to my friend as we set off for the mission.

Things were the same as usual at first. A woman who still had leftover deformities started to investigate the village nearby. They always start like this, clueless before falling into a routine to live out their days.

But she was different. She noticed our gaze and immediately tried to find our location.

Thankfully, we weren't detected, and she began to make her way out of the village.

Just as we were about to report back to the Captain, a chilling wave of killing intent exploded out of the woman. It felt as though a malevolent beast had just appeared where she stood!

Flames danced wildly around her body.

Even in this barrier, she could still use her abilities. There was only one word for this woman. Abnormal!

I didn't even dare to take a single breath in fear of being discovered.

This anger, this blood lust was not normal. Every cell in my body screamed for me to run!

She hasn't found us yet, if we take this chance to run for it then we should be safe.

My friend had the same thought as we both prepared to run.

But that turned out to be a mistake.

The woman's gaze immediately snapped towards our location hidden by our Sigil abilities. She knew!

"Yo~ I'm just here to talk. Why so eager to run?" Her chilling voice called out to us.

Her tone and the way her killing intent felt, she was definitely not going to spare us!

If that's the case, we need to make an opportunity to run!

My friend had the same idea as we both activated our Sigil abilities.

###

"Yo~ I'm just here to talk. Why so eager to run?" Alice called out as she finally spotted the tags above their heads. She wasn't sure if it was due to her flames or something else but their stealth had become weaker.

'This should be enough to show I'm here with good will right?'

Just as Alice was about to turn off her killing intent, she felt hostility from the two as spikes erupted from her shadow, forcing her to twist her body and dodge at the last second.

"?!?!"

'What did I do!? I didn't threaten you or anything!' Alice cried out in her mind.

But before she could clarify things, one of the scouts jumped out from Alice's shadow with a dagger in hand.

With her main Sigils being out of commission for now, Alice gritted her teeth and drew her obsidian blade, parrying the dagger as her body was sent flying back.

Recovering herself, Alice noticed a wave of mist enveloping her.

'Poison!'

It was brief but she could feel her body weakening before her flames burnt away the effects.

Watching the violet flames flicker violently around her body, Alice forcefully suppressed the flames for now since she wasn't aiming to kill these people. She merely wanted to find out where she was and what time period this was!

Furrowing her brows, she understood that she had to disarm these two before they could talk!

'First I'll deal with the dagger girl with shadows!'

Taking a step forward, she ducked down just in time to avoid the dagger and punched up with her left hand.

Several spikes jumped out from her shadows once more but Alice was prepared. Using her right hand, she slashed towards the spikes, cleaving them in half horizontally with the help of her violet flames.

With the shadow girl widening her eyes in shock of Alice's offensive power, she left a slight gap for Alice to capitalize on. This small gap was all Alice needed as she slammed her elbow into the girl's chest.

'Tsk! I don't have enough physical power.'

Her attack was practically shrugged off as the girl's friend appeared above her. Spiked chains shot out from his arm, forcing Alice to retreat while slashing the chains using her blade.

"Fuuu..." Breathing out softly, Alice lost her smile as she narrowed her eyes.

With her Sigils being limited, this wasn't a time to hold back.

It was a bit dangerous but it'll buy her time to talk.

Dashing to the side, she reached into her pouch and opened the vial of blood beads.

Parrying several more attacks and another ambush from her shadows, she threw the beads into the air before jumping back.

"I'd suggest dodging this attack." Alice called out before snapping her finger.

Each of the beads erupted into flames as energy surged towards them.

'There's no way...' Widening her eyes in shock, the scout watched the way the flames were condensing into a single spark, how the space around it warped.

It was Allura's skill!

'How does she know this?!

Both of them were familiar with the destructive power hidden behind this technique and immediately sought out cover.

But Alice took this into account and detonated the beads early before rushing in. Since it was a premature detonation, the power held behind it was lacking and couldn't be focused properly. But it worked perfectly as a distraction.

Realizing their mistake, the scouts wanted to react but it was too late.

Alice had her blade pressed against the shadow girl's neck while aiming a blood bead at the second person.

"I believe we can have a little talk now." Alice smiled. Even if they were to stab her with the shadow spikes right now, the girl she had taken hostage would most certainly die. Or at least that's what she made them believe.

Unfortunately, Alice didn't account for a sudden variable that appeared.

"What the hell is going on." A familiar voice rang out behind her as Alice felt a chill down her spine. Her eyes widened as a bad feeling flooded her heart.

Even if she wanted to react, her body couldn't keep up with the speed and a hand grabbed her by the back of her collar before throwing her away.

*BANG!!!

"Are you two alright?" Allura asked while dusting her hands.

She was going to just watch but Alice's last skill forced her to intervene.

"Ah... Yes captain. But... I don't think she's okay." The shadow girl frowned, looking over at Alice who was now in the rubble of the broken tree.

"Oh she'll be fine. If she can use that copycat version of my skill, then she's not so weak to get injured by a throw." Allura shrugged.

"But Captain... She's not moving."

". . . I'm sure she's just waiting for an ambush." Allura coughed.

"Captain, she's bleeding a lot."

"Merely a trap." Allura explained but her explanation sounded less and less convincing.

"Captain I'm poking her and she's not moving at all."

". . .sh*t."

Chapter 242 - 242: Allura Of The Past

"Urg..." Groaning softly, Alice wanted to sit up but pain coursed through her entire body.

Flinching from the jolt of pain, she furrowed her brows while trying to remember what happened before she passed out.

The last thing she could recall was Allura's voice appearing behind her as it has done many times in the past. Her habit of showing up from behind without a single sound.

'Why did Allura show up of all people...' Alice sighed to herself as she looked down and around her.

She was currently sitting on a bed while her body was covered with bandages. Her belongings have been placed on the side along with her dress that was now torn from Allura's throw.

'Was she always this aggressive? Just one throw and it almost f*cking killed me.' Shaking her head, she looked for her pouch containing vials of blood.

Alice could tell that her body wasn't fully recovered and there were still underlying wounds on her body.

'I'm guessing they gave me the bare minimum to survive.'

However, after finding her pouch, she realised that all of her vials had been confiscated.

"Sh*t." Clicking her tongue, Alice frowned while forcing herself to get out of bed.

Looking at the countless bandages around her body, she couldn't help but sigh.

'Since Allura appeared at the end, she probably saw me using Void Flux.' Scratching her hair, she stumbled over to her obsidian blade and turned it back to a bracelet.

Thankfully, they were kind enough to prepare her with another set of clothing as her original ones were damaged.

The new outfit was rather simple. An off shoulder black dress with white ribbons, frills and two large sleeves.

Grabbing her broken blood flame blade, she tied it to her belt.

"You probably don't want to move so much. Your body is still injured."

"!!!"

Widening her eyes, Allura's voice shocked her as her instinct was to adopt a defensive stance. However, her injuries prevented this as her sudden movement caused her to flinch. Furrowing her brows, Alice looked at Allura who was leaning against the doorframe.

There was a smirk on her face while she scanned Alice up and down.

"Shall we have a little chat? I must say you're quite the strange visitor." Allura chuckled while pulling a chair towards her.

Sitting down, she crossed her legs while gesturing for Alice to sit down as well.

"Now first things first, how do you know my skill? I don't believe I taught anyone how to use it." Allura asked. She didn't beat around the bush and went straight for the main topic as this was her biggest concern.

Nova Core was a skill that she developed with Kaden's help and it wasn't something she wanted to teach others. Especially when it could be considered to be Kaden's gift.

"My... Mother/mentor taught it to me." Alice replied after thinking about it for a moment.

"Hou~ Then according to you I'm both your mother and mentor then." Allura scoffed while Alice choked on her saliva.

"But I suppose it's not impossible since the process is somewhat different to what I use. Plus, the source of the weird fire is not the same. Logic dictates that you shouldn't be able to use your abilities in this barrier unless you've been given permission. So that leads me to the next question, who are you?" Allura asked as a restrictive aura surrounded Alice.

Just being in the presence of Allura caused her body to break out in cold sweat.

'Holy crap... Allura has no chill compared to the future.' Alice shivered.

The Allura Alice knew was far more relaxed and laid back than what was before her.

Taking this into account, Alice figured she probably shouldn't say her surname is Agnelia.

"My name's Alice. I... Have an idea of how I got here but also not really. I don't know where this place is nor the time period though."

Tapping her fingers for a moment, Allura took a deep breath and sighed.

"So then... Alice. Can you explain why you can use flames in this barrier?"

"I don't know. My fire has always been weird and it was the only thing I could use to protect myself." Alice replied while being as truthful as she could.

"I see... Tsk, what a painnnnn." Allura complained while scratching her hair.

"Whatever. Koya, come in." She called out as a woman opened the door and stepped in.

"Was everything she said true?"

"Yes, Captain. Everything she said was the truth, there wasn't a single lie." Koya replied with a simple bow.

"That's all I need to know then. Thank you, you can leave us be." Allura smiled as Koya left the room.

"You really are a weird one. Not only did you drop out of the sky randomly, but Kaden couldn't even tell your outline. What even are you? You look... 'human' enough. Even with your weird fashion choice of the stones above your head, eye and hair." Allura sighed while the aura around Alice disappeared.

'Outline? From what she's saying... This seems to be a time when Kaden and Allura were still talking with each other. Did entering the Inverted World cause a reaction with the crown of Cayla?' Alice wondered to herself.

But no matter how she called out to Cayla, she seemed to still be asleep.

"So are you a Turned? No... You have memories so that doesn't make sense."

"What are Turned? Also, there was a village I visited before... the fight. They were spacing out while doing their routines. What's up with that?" Alice asked curiously.

Now that Allura didn't seem to be hostile against her for now, it was a good chance for Alice to figure out some answers to her questions.

"Hmm... How do I put it? Urg... Just follow me. I'm not good at explaining stuff." Allura sighed while standing up.

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to my Superior." Allura chuckled while leading Alice out of the room.

###

Sitting atop a ruined building, Kaden had a deep frown on his face while his shadow continuously flickered, sending Ravens out into the world.

Tapping his heel constantly, he waited patiently.

Within this silence, a single Raven landed in front of him.

"Let's cut the banter. What's going on Kaden? Why is the Abyss stirring? What are you and Allura planning on doing?" Nalem's voice echoed out from the Raven as Kaden simply sighed.

"We're not planning anything. At least not yet. This is too early for everything." Kaden shook his head.

"Did something happen on Alice's end then?"

"From what my Ravens are telling me, it seems like she entered the Inverted World. The Eye was a lot closer to waking up than we expected but that shouldn't have caused such a big reaction. Do you have an idea of what happened?" Kaden asked as Nalem was the best person to ask regarding these things.

The Raven was silent for a moment before opening its mouth.

"I have a few ideas but none of them are great. Which one do you want to hear first?"

"The most likely scenario."

"Alice has recovered more Artifacts related to her Majesty and the Abyss is adapting to the change within her body. The one that can cause the biggest reaction is either the Crown or the Heart." Nalem replied with a sigh.

"Alternatively, it could also be you and Allura. You know better than me that both of your Authorities are dropping with each passing year. The more you use it, the faster it disappears. And soon, you'll be no different from normal Abyss Lords. If the others find out... Well I'm sure you don't need me to explain that to you."

"Mnm. And the least likely scenario?" Kaden asked while clenching his hands.

". . ." Nalem hesitated.

"There is a slight chance that... Nyer has found more pieces."

Upon hearing the name, the shadows around Kaden twisted and warped with rage while a dark aura seeped from his body.

There were three guardians of Ayr.

Allura – The Executioner.

Kaden – The Shadow.

And finally...

Nyer – The Lord Commander.

"Alright... Let me know when you find out more." Kaden spoke after a long pause.

Tapping his finger, the Raven in front of him transformed into a puddle of darkness and flowed back to his shadow.

Taking a deep breath, Kaden calmed his mind.

Even if there was a chance that Nyer was on the move, it was unlikely with what had happened in the past. But even if the chance was small, he wasn't going to stay idle.

Standing up, Kaden massaged his neck as he planned his next move.

###

"For the Abyss to stir so much... How interesting." A weak voice muttered.

Bathed in the soft lights of medical equipment connected to his body through countless tubes and blood infusions, a man narrowed his eye.

Curling his lips into a smile, he recalled the halcyon days of his time in Ayr. The days where he would spend his time looking after Allura and Kaden.

Though he doubted the two wanted to have anything to do with him after all that he'd done. But no matter what, he will complete what he's sought out to do.

No matter the cost, he will bring forth a new God into this world.

###

Alice wasn't sure what she was looking at right now.

The sight before her was drastically different from what she had expected. Even after hearing from Allura's old master that Kaden was gentle in the past... it was still disorientating to see Kaden in this form.

"Is this the anomaly I sensed before?" Kaden asked with a small smile on his face.

"Yep. She's pretty clueless on what's happening but she's not a Turned. I figured you'd do a better job at explaining than me." Allura chuckled while kicking her shoes away.

Sitting down, she rubbed her hands in anticipation while looking at the cream cake in front of her with some strawberries on top.

"I see... That is rather strange. You must not be a resident of the Abyss then. Did you come from the surface?" Kaden asked but Alice was too shell shocked to reply.

After all...

Kaden was wearing a bright pink apron with the words 'Kiss the cook' printed on the surface along with a blue shirt with rolled up sleeves and some casual pants.

Compared to the Kaden she's interacted with, this was like night and day!

Chapter 243 - 243: Kaden

"Is the cake not to your taste? I don't blame you, Lua does like it to be sweeter than usual." Kaden asked with a smile while Alice simply shook her head and ate the cake.

"It's not even that sweet though." Allura furrowed her brows while biting her spoon since she had already finished her snack.

"That's debatable. But settle that aside, I believe Lua brought you here since she's bad at explaining right? I'm sure you have your own circumstances but I do hope you can cooperate." Kaden chuckled while putting his apron aside.

"Now then, you've mentioned you're from the surface but you don't know how you got here. What's the last thing you remember?" He asked while flicking his fingers.

A book jumped out from his shadow as he flipped through the pages.

"I was taking an exam before a blinding light covered me. Next thing I know I was falling from the sky."

"And your flames?"

"They've always been weird. I don't know why I can use them here but not my other Sigils." Alice shook her head.

Nodding his head, Kaden silently flipped through the book while Allura snuck off to get more cake.

"Alright, I think I got a gist of everything now. I can only assume you got transported here from the surface since your knowledge of the Abyss is severely lacking according to what Lua told me. You don't know about the Turned nor do you know about this city." Kaden concluded before throwing the book back into his shadow.

"I'm sure there are several things you want to know but let's take it one step at a time. I'm also quite interested in this mother/mentor of yours who taught you a technique similar to what Lua has made.

"First things first, Turned. It's easier for me to show you what they are rather than explaining it to you. That way, you can see for yourself the situation in the Abyss."

Snapping his fingers, Kaden's shadow stretched across the room while Allura panicked for a moment.

"W-wait! My cake! I haven't finished it yet!" She cried out, wanting to grab her plate but the shadow was faster.

All three of them disappeared into the shadows while Alice felt a familiar sense of weightlessness.

She couldn't help but panic internally, wondering if they were going to appear in the Abyss Waters but to her surprise, they were teleported to the mountain peaks instead.

Unlike the Abyss she was familiar with, there was no oppressive aura nor darkness.

The soft glow of the moon above felt gentle and even warm.

"Look down there." Kaden smiled while pointing towards a white serpentine beast bathing in the moonlight.

Countless red eyes and white wings covered its body while it lay silently.

"Are you familiar with how Abyss Beasts are made?" He asked.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice opened her mouth.

"They're made from the Abyss itself, right? Or people who drink too much Abyss Blood."

"Hm... Kind of but not quite." Kaden shook his head with a sad smile.

Allura was the same. There was a rare moment of silence and sadness around her.

"Keep an eye on the beast for now. You'll see what we mean by 'Turned'."

Nodding her head, Alice kept her eye on the beast. Time passed and she wasn't sure what was happening but soon, the beast began to change.

The feathers around the wings started to fall off while its body twitched and turned.

Under the moonlight, a soft glow wrapped around its outline as a silver cocoon was created from the feathers that surrounded its body.

Once the beast had transformed into an egg, a single crack appeared on the surface.

*Crack!

A single delicate hand could be seen, tearing apart the outer shell of the egg. From within, a pale girl appeared with white and red hair. The right side of her face was covered with three eyes while the left only had one. She looked like a normal human with the exception of this and a pair of wings behind her.

Without saying anything, Kaden gestured for Allura to take the girl back to the city.

"That's a 'Turned'. A beast who manages to regain parts of their humanity. Though... They lose all memories of what they were before. Those with strong impressions of their past or something they long

for will have habits they go through. The village you saw before was one filled with Turned." Kaden explained while Alice was silent.

In a way, it was similar to how she could come back from side effects but also rather different.

"Are you able to help them get their memories back? That and why do they have a vacant look in their eyes?"

Shaking his head, Kaden sighed while gesturing to sit down while more beasts arrived to bathe in the moonlight.

"We're unable to give them their memories back. And perhaps it's for the better."

"Hm? Why? Wouldn't it be better for them to see that they're no longer a beast anymore?" Alice tilted her head.

"Because their journeys will end soon once they become 'Turned'. Becoming a 'Turned' is the final step of a beast's journey. An act of mercy so they can die as humans.

"You're not wrong when you said that beasts come from the Abyss and people who drink too much of the blood. The reality is that everyone who comes from the Abyss, whether they are born here, their parents are born here or a mix blood from here and the surface, will all have the same fate.

"No matter how they try to run from it or avoid Abyss Blood, everyone who's been touched by the Abyss will, without doubt, become an Abyss Beast. The beasts you see, kill or tortured for their blood were all once humans born here. It's unavoidable. I'm not saying that to make you feel guilty but rather to let you understand reality." Kaden sighed while looking towards the new beasts who had arrived.

"I'm sure you don't need me to explain to you what happens when you become a beast. You've seen what beasts are like."

Nodding her head silently, Alice didn't know how to respond.

She knew that people could turn into Abyss Beasts, but she didn't know it was unavoidable.

Perhaps that's why Allura was angered when the pirates had forcefully turned her old friend into a beast. It sped up what little time they had left as humans.

"Wouldn't the numbers dwindle after a while?" Alice asked after a long pause.

"Mnm. It would. But the Abyss is resourceful. All things born into this realm belong to this realm. Your soul will be recycled and reused as more beasts to terrorise those who remain. Though if you are lucky, you might be reborn as a human, cursed with the fate of becoming a beast in the end.

"You could say it's a futile life but I think it's no different here than it is on the surface. Becoming a beast is simply 'Death' in the Abyss." Kaden chuckled.

"However, her majesty changed things. If you can hold out long enough as a beast, to avoid becoming a death and live out the period peacefully, you can become a Turned. Once you become a Turned, the chances of you being reborn as a 'human' rather than a beast increases.

"Now, does that answer some of your questions?" Kaden asked while glancing towards Alice who looked at the beasts with sympathy.

"Yes... But you mentioned that her Majesty changed things, right? Does that mean she has control over the Abyss? Can't she change the natural order of having people become beasts in the end? There are those who don't want power at all and would much rather live an ordinary life. But if they're destined to become a beast, isn't that too cruel?" Alice asked with a sigh.

"If she could, she would've done so already. But even with her identity, her powers are limited. Anyways, shall we change locations?" Kaden asked before snapping his finger.

Shadows enveloped the two of them and teleported them elsewhere.

Shielding her eyes for a moment, Alice found herself standing in a sea of white spider lily flowers.

"Since I've answered one of your questions, would you do me the favour of answering one of mine?" Kaden asked while putting on a pair of gloves.

"Go on." Alice nodded. A sense of foreboding filled her heart as she could feel a sense of dread in the air.

"With the authority I have been given, I can see the shape of someone's soul. How they've lived their life and the choices that shaped them. But for you... Why do you have no soul? You can think, talk and act like a normal human but your outline is muddled. Unclear.

"Not like that of the surface nor like that of the Abyss. However... If you can use Sigil powers, the Abyss would've modified your soul already. Yet it is still muddled so I must ask, what are you?" Kaden asked as killing intent seeped out of Kaden.

Alice found herself helpless before him. It felt as though the moment she made a move to defend herself, the shadows would consume her in an instant.

"I don't know." Was the only answer Alice could give.

She didn't know if she was human, beast or something else entirely. Two people have claimed that she was lacking a soul yet here she was. Her own research has shown that her body was completely strange when judged with common sense.

Even the beast she conjured when making a Ritual with her violet flames, she didn't know its origin.

Staying silent, Kaden sighed before flicking his finger. The killing intent disappeared as Alice could breathe again.

"Sorry about that. I wanted to verify a few things my own way. Are you okay?" He asked apologetically.

Since he could see the outline of someone's soul, he wanted to see if she'd lie in the face of death. But her confusion was real, she didn't know who she was herself.

But there was something strange during this test.

Within her muddled outline, there was a spark of something completely foreign. It felt familiar yet also different and Kaden couldn't quite put his finger on it.

"It's fine..." Alice replied while catching her breath.

Just as Kaden was going to help her back on her feet, he couldn't help but notice a lifeless feather in her possession.

Chapter 244 - 244: Alice Vs Kaden

He didn't notice it earlier but now that he was right next to her, it was undeniable.

The feather used to contain some of his power.

'It feels... A little different to my power. Not quite a carbon copy but the traces left behind can't be mistaken. That's definitely the authority I hold. So why does she have a feather with my authority? And why a feather at that...' Kaden thought to himself with a frown while helping Alice up.

He had a few theories in his mind but kept them to himself for now.

"Again, sorry about being so forceful. I hope you don't take offence to that." Kaden apologised once more while creating a small badge using his shadows.

"This should block you from the effects of the barrier, letting you use your abilities again."

Accepting the badge, Alice couldn't help but wonder why he was giving her something like this.

"Just think of it as compensation though it's not much." He scratched his head while taking a few steps away from Alice.

"Now that you've answered a question of mine, would you like to ask me another question?" Kaden offered while taking a sparring stance.

One hand was raised towards Alice while the other was in his pockets. Gesturing for her to attack, Kaden waited patiently.

"So you've told me how Abyss Beasts come to be and the fate of the people born in the Abyss. But the main question remains. What is the Abyss?" Alice asked as she took a deep breath.

Activating her first Sigil, she could feel a familiar surge of power within her body.

Stomping down, she dashed forward and slashed up with her blade only to see Kaden catch it between his fingers.

"Hmm... That's a good question. Do you know the relationship between the Abyss and the Surface?" He smiled while flicking away the blade.

Alice countered with a round house kick before flipping her body back and sent a metal spear towards his head.

"The surface is above the Abyss is below?"

"Somewhat but not quite. I'm not talking about the placement of these realms but rather the relationship they have with one another." Kaden shook his head while ducking under her spear.

Just as he ducked, another spear shot up from below, forcing him to tilt his head to the side.

Since there were no pillars of obstacles around her, Alice couldn't set up her usual hunting ground but she had another idea.

Countless strands of blood extended through the sea of white spider lilies as Alice flicked her finger up.

A cage of blood erupted from the ground while Kaden looked up with a small smile on his face.

"What kind of relationship do they even have other than being next to one another?" Alice asked while threads of blood shot out from every intersection of the cage.

Jumping up, she snapping her finger and fired off several waves of flaming orbs towards Kaden.

Twisting his body, the shadow around his foot expanded into a shield, brushing aside the flames rather than trying to take them on via brute force.

"You're half right. There wouldn't be a relationship between the two realms had it not been for the Gods of the Surface. The two realms were next to one another but there never was a passageway between the two.

"When the Gods of the Surface, the Moon the Sun and the Eclipse, discovered the Abyss, they established a passage. If they could convert the denizens of the Abyss into their followers, their power will no doubt grow, breaking the delicate balance they hold between the three." Kaden explained while serpents made from shadow jumped up, cutting the threads that Alice had set up.

"But they didn't realise that once a passage was created, it could not be closed anymore. The Abyss is hungry for expansion, it desires to drag more into this realm and taint them with its influence. The passage opened by the Gods is not a one-way passage.

"Just as how they can come down into the Abyss, the beasts that lurk here can go up as well. And the barrier between two realms disappeared."

Waving his hand, shadow thorns manifested around Alice, forcing her to dodge.

"Therefore, the relationship between these two realms can now be called two sides of the same coin. So intricately linked yet the opposite of one another. Now, you asked me what the Abyss was right? The Abyss is a realm and a sentient being. There exists a will that controls the Abyss and guides its path though its actions are purely based on a desire to grow.

"Does that answer your question?" Kaden smiled, giving Alice some space to breath.

"Kind of. But also not really." Alice shook her head.

There were still many secrets around the Abyss and her own body. Around Cayla, the Crown and why it chooses Abyss Lords.

"Then you need to learn how to phrase your questions better. Now I believe it's my turn to ask you a question now." Kaden chuckled.

Snapping his finger, shadow chains jumped up from the ground in an attempt to grab onto Alice but she coated herself with a layer of her violet flames.

A trick she learned from the Wyverns and the chains were brushed off.

"You mentioned how you learned the technique from your mother/mentor. Can you show it to me? I'll give you time to charge it up if needed. I want to see the full power."

Hearing this, Alice hesitated before nodding her head. It was no secret that her attack resembled Allura's but she has added her own flare to it. Plus, the more she hides the less benefit she'll get from meeting Allura and Kaden.

The best thing for her to do now was to try and get as much as she could from this meeting.

Taking a deep breath, Alice activated all three of her Sigils as flames roared around her. Her crown partially repaired itself causing Kaden to raise an eyebrow in surprise. He thought it was merely a left over from Abyss Blood side effect but that doesn't seem to be the case.

Now that the crown was no longer dormant, Kaden could tell that it was an extension of the Abyss. For one that was chosen to be granted dominion.

'But that's... Impossible...'

Watching Alice enter her Resonance form, countless questions swirled through Kaden's mind but he set aside those thoughts for now.

Once this sparring session was over, he'll go and ask her Majesty himself and see what was going on.

Right now, he had to focus on Alice's attack.

Closing her eyes, Alice could feel the essence of the Abyss. The energy that surrounded them funnelled into her, empowering her current state. She could feel the resonance growing stronger with each passing second.

Even when she drank the blood of the five Sigil Hunter, she didn't feel this strong. But now, she felt as though she could do anything.

Snapping her finger, several orbs appeared around Kaden as she immediately detonated them, forcing Kaden to take a defensive stance.

With each snap of her finger, more would appear, but Kaden understood this was just the preliminary attack. To test if a follow up was needed.

And as expected, he could see Alice focusing her mind and senses for that perfect strike.

Her sword roared with the violet flame as Alice took a step forward.

***BANG!!!!**

Scattering the white spider lilies around her, Alice appeared before Kaden. Her eyes focused on landing her strongest slash.

The space around her blade began to distort as Kaden manifested a cover of shadows to try and neutralize the attack.

But much to his shock, the space was torn apart and his shadows were shredded in the process.

He could sense the Abyss itself lending power to her which only solidified his theory.

Just before the slash could reach its apex, Kaden ducked to the side before narrowing his gaze. Aiming his hand towards the side of the blade, he released a single flick.

*KRRRRR!!!!

Forcing the strike to miss him entirely, the slash travelled through the field of white spider lilies, leaving behind what seemed to be an ordinary slash wound on the ground.

But Kaden knew it was far more than that. The entire space had been cleaved apart. Even the strongest defence would crumble before a strike that could destroy the space itself.

Kaden was no longer smiling as this was far too much of a coincidence.

It lacked the Authority and the main concepts but it no doubt held traces of the Executioner's Blade. A version that's been heavily modified to allow for those without the Authority to wield a similar power.

After unleashing that attack, Alice could feel the strength being sapped away from her body as her arms cried out in pain. Her veins burned as though someone was pouring molten metal through her body as she collapsed onto her knee and dropped her blade.

Cold sweat dripped from her head as her hand trembled, unable to gather strength.

She had unleashed far more power than expected. Perhaps it was due to the area she was in, but Alice now understood she had to take the location into consideration as well when using Void Flux – Cleave.

"That is quite the attack you got there. I don't suppose you learned that from your... Mother/mentor, did you?" Kaden asked, hesitating a little now that he had a slight theory on Alice's identity in his mind.

"Not this time. I actually learned it from my friend's Grandfather. Well... Learned is a strong word. I saw him use it once and tried to copy what he did but mixed it together with what my mentor taught me." Alice shook her head while Kaden felt his smile twitch.

'Did she reverse engineer Lua's Executioner Blade?'

But before he could dwell more on this, Alice opened her mouth.

"It's my time to ask a question, right? Is the city I saw earlier... Ayr?"

Chapter 245 - 245: Kaden's Tutoring

"Is the city I saw earlier... Ayr?"

Scratching his chin from Alice's question, Kaden verified parts of his own theory.

"Yes it is. The last bastion in the Abyss, the holy city Ayr." Kaden nodded with a smile.

Hearing this, Alice understood that she had been transported to a time in history when Ayr was still around.

Meaning, this was a time before their master's death, the death of the previous owner of Cayla and the one who left her the crown.

"Can you tell me more about Ayr?" Alcie asked but to her surprise, Kayden shook his head.

"Nope. Remember the rules of the game? You ask a question and I answer. I ask a question and you answer. If you want more out of a question you should phrase it better. You simply asked me if the city was Ayr or not and I answered truthfully." Kaden grinned while Alice clicked her tongue.

"Tsk, stingy."

"You should know how to ask better questions then." Kaden laughed, patting Alice's head.

A wave of energy entered Alice's body as she realised her wounds were healing and the fatigue brought forth by her attack disappeared.

Looking at her hands in surprise, she didn't think Kaden was able to do this.

"Anyways, I believe it is my turn to ask a question, right?"

Seeing his smile, Alice couldn't help but feel as though this had been planned by him. A way for him to get information from her and to find out about her origins. While she got some answers herself, she had told him a lot as well.

"If you have a mother who is your mentor and taught you a lot of the stuff you know now, you must have a father, right? What's he like?" Kaden asked with a grin.

The nature of his question caused Alice to pause in a mix of surprise and confusion.

While she may call Allura mother, it's more that she was her guardian and Ria kept saying Allura was like her mother. In terms of a father figure... it would probably be Kaden himself.

"Hmm... He's kind of avoiding my mother. Never around but does check up on me once in a while. His training is... well... Abusive is putting it lightly urg." Alice furrowed her brows since Kaden's training made Allura's look like child's play.

"And what does it look like?"

"Nope~ Remember the rules of the game? You ask a question and I answer. I ask a question and you answer. If you want more out of a question you should phrase it better. You never asked what he looked like." Alice stuck out her tongue before taking a few steps back and readying her weapon once more.

"Tsk, stingy brat." Kaden's smile twitched as she used his own words against him.

But that was that was fine, there was plenty of time to get more answers as they continued this game.

Taking a deep breath, Alice narrowed her eyes. As it stands currently, she has no way of reaching Kaden. She needed to capitalize more on her capabilities aside from the flame.

'He's on guard against my fire. The best chance I have against him is through my single Sigil resonances. The first Sigil resonance increases my physical power and hallucinations. I haven't tested out the resonance with my third Sigil yet. However...'

Last time she used the one Sigil resonance, she gained the crown above her head as a side effect. She wasn't sure what else would happen if she was to keep using it.

Which is why this was going to be her next question.

"Resonance activates with three Sigils. But I can do it with one. What are the potential side effects and dangers of doing so?" Alice asked before dashing forward.

Slashing down with her blade, Alice watched as Kaden simply flicked it aside once more before stepping into her range.

Two fingers jabbed against her sternum, forcing her to take several steps back as he followed up with a kick into her stomach.

"Resonance is a state where it draws out the power you gained from your Sigils. Through the balance of these three, it pushes you closer to becoming a beast while maintaining your humanity. You can think of Resonance being a foreshadowing of what kind of beast you could become if you were to succumb to the Abyss.

"Now, one Sigil resonance is very difficult for a human to activate. The reason is that it requires a singular Sigil to dominate your body. For beasts, this is a natural state. But for humans, this threatens

the balance between being a human and being a beast. It's hard for a human to render the other Sigils dormant to allow for this to happen.

"As for the side effects... It'll be no different from drinking excess Abyss Blood and receiving the properties of the beast. To put it in other words, imagine one Sigil resonance is akin to drinking your own Abyss Blood if you were to become a beast." Kaden explained as he eyed Alice's crown.

"I see..." Alice furrowed her brows.

She wasn't sure about the relationship between her constitution and the one Sigil resonance but it was probably best not to risk it. The crown staying above her head was a sign that things may not be as simple as she had hoped.

Snapping her finger, metal swords erupted around Kaden in an attempt to skewer him but he simply brushed them away.

"For my question, I think you already know. What does your father look like?"

"Long black hair tied into a ponytail like yours hmm... and his face is a little different. Your eyes are sharper and he doesn't have as defined of a jawline." Alice shrugged before listing out other details.

What she described was Kaden's disguise as Thane rather than what he looked like usually.

"What about your mother?"

"Remember the rules?" Alice rolled her eyes as Kaden sighed.

"Fine fine, ask away."

"Do you know the origin of this fire and what it is?" Alice asked as she covered her entire body in her violet fire.

Pulling her sword back, she shot towards Kaden and unleashed a flurry of slashes.

Blocking every slash using his finger and his shadows, Kaden was silent while analysing the properties of her fire.

"Why do you ask? Didn't you get this from a beast?"

"Because the beast I killed didn't have this fire. My second Sigil draws out the potential of my blood. Meaning this fire is something that originates from my blood. I established a ritual with the flame once before and it conjured a draconic beast that I didn't know the origin of.

"Not only that, a friend of mine called the Sigil [Foul Blood Manifestation]." Alice explained while snapping her finger.

Activating a Void Flux next to Kaden's head, she forced him to dodge to the side before releasing a horizontal slash that he flicked up.

"Hmm... That is quite strange. Can you tell me the properties of this fire? I might be able to match it with a few beasts that I know of but no guarantees." Kaden asked curiously.

If what Alice was saying is correct then this was something Nalem will definitely be interested in. A fire that did not originate from a beast and could emulate Allura's skill crafted from her understanding of her own Authority.

"I don't know much but it seems to hate Abyss powers and It has a mind of its own but it usually cooperates with me. When using it, I can cut apart Abyss powers. Even my mother was surprised by its effectiveness." Alice explained while releasing a wave of violet flames towards Kaden who took the chance to test its effectiveness.

Creating a wall of shadows, Kaden watched as the flames began to 'devour' his shadow and assimilate it into itself to act as fuel.

Narrowing his eyes, Kaden had a small frown on his face. Now that he was looking at it closer, it was nothing like anything he'd seen before.

"Would you like to postpone this for later? I know someone that might have an idea. But as it stands, I have no clue." Kaden shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"But I will say one thing. Why are you wasting the potential of your Sigils? When you fight, you should aim to use utilise everything with maximum efficiency. You're underusing the power of your Sigils and relying too much on your fire." He asked while taking out his hand from his pocket.

"Allow me to give you a quick demonstration. Your first Sigil gives you a physical boost, your second gives you the fire and blood control, your third reinforces your blood and gives you metal control. I won't go into depth with the first Sigil nor the second. Let me show you what you could be doing with your third Sigil."

Stomping his foot down, his shadow stretched across the field of flowers in a similar manner to Alice's web of blood.

During the fight, he had been analysing Alice's fighting style and habits while asking his questions. At this stage, he had learned everything he needed to know when it came to how she fights.

Dashing towards Alice, Kaden stomped his foot down and two spikes of shadow shot up next to Alice who managed to dodge at the last second.

Following up this attack, threads of shadow manifested around Alice's ankles, making it harder for her to move.

But Kaden wasn't done. Using these as a cover, he dashed around the side and entered her attack range before snapping his finger.

A pillar of shadow interrupted Alice before she could attack Kaden, hitting her precisely on her wrist. Even with Cayla's help, too many attacks were happening in her blind spots!

Alice wanted to brute force her way through the restraints but two more pillars slammed into the back of her knees, forcing her to kneel.

Holding a shadow blade against Alice's neck, Kaden kept the same smile on his face.

"See? Bit of a waste if you don't use your third Sigil in tandem with your movements. You have great eyesight, use it to your advantage. With enough understanding of your opponent, you can forcefully create a weakness." Kaden explained as Alice could only nod her head.

"Now then, it's time for my question. What does your mother look like?"

"What does whose mother look like hm?" A voice rang out behind Kaden as he felt a chill down his spine.

Allura's hand gripped his shoulders while she was forcing a smile on her face.

Chapter 246 - 246: Executioner Blade

"Ahaha, I was simply inquiring about Alice's family isn't that right? I asked about her father first then her mother." Kaden laughed nervously while giving Alice a few glances, signalling her to back him up.

Seeing this, Alice was laughing on the inside but kept her face neutral.

"He did. He was also teaching me how to better use my third Sigil in combat."

With Alice backing him up, Kaden sighed in relief as Allura let go of his shoulder.

"Is that so? Well alright. I've finished transporting the new Turned to the city, Maria and the others will be helping them get used to their new life." Allura reported as Kaden nodded his head.

"Can you take over helping Alice for a little bit? I need to ask Nalem some questions and have him check out Alice's condition."

"Sure. What do you need me to do? Standard training or show her around the place?" Allura replied while glancing over to Alice who paused after hearing a familiar name.

'Nalem? Isn't that the owner of the bookstore? If it's the same person then he knows Kaden and Allura... I suppose if he's also old like these two then it'll explain the knowledge he possesses.' Alice thought to herself.

"Do some standard training. She needs to improve the uses of her Sigils along with outside the box thinking. Ah, you can also help her with two techniques of hers." Kaden smiled before putting his hands back into his pockets.

"Don't hold anything back okay? You need to cooperate if you want to get the most out of Lua's training. She isn't great at explaining but her combat senses are top-notch. Just watching her will benefit you." He turned back to Alice who nodded in response.

Taking a step forward, shadows jumped up and teleported Kaden away and now it was just Allura and Alice.

"So... What do you want to do first? I dunno how to teach so don't expect much okay?" Allura raised her hands in surrender.

"Kaden was doing this thing where he would let me ask a question and he would answer. Then he would ask and I answer." Alice shrugged while watching Allura take out a blanket and several containers with cake inside.

"Ahh yeah, he does that pretty often. In that case, would you like to talk first? I'll try to answer anything I can. Of course, there are things I can't talk about but I won't be stingy. Want some cake?" Allura offered while sitting down.

Nodding her head, Alice joined Allura on the blanket and got a container for herself.

There were several things she wanted to Allura, especially about her old master, the Ruler of Ayr. The one who gave her the crown and the previous owner of Cayla.

What exactly did they expect from her and what Kaden wished to accomplish when he found her in the Zenia prison.

But she couldn't just ask that straight up.

"Well... What is Kaden like? You seem to be close to him and you both look to be important people in Ayr." Alice asked while taking a bite from her cake.

"Hmm... Do you mean what he's like as a person or what he's like as someone important in the city?"

"Both."

Leaning back, Allura thought to herself for a bit before opening his mouth.

"He takes his job seriously. He doesn't mind helping people out and even takes care of my workload too hehe~ Gives me more time to relax. He's very diligent and even when he looks like he's joking around, his mind is always working.

"Oh and his expectations for himself are higher than anyone can imagine. He always takes the most dangerous missions and makes sure others don't get injured." She explained with a smile.

Listening silently, Alice could see Allura's joy when talking about Kaden and a small smile crept onto her face.

"Even though he's serious at work, he's still very gentle. I mean, he even bakes me cake. When we first met, I thought he was the uptight type who doesn't know fun. And well... You saw him in his apron. He's wearing it because I bought it." Allura laughed.

The way her cheeks blushed while talking about their interactions, the way she smiled and her gaze. To Alice, Allura looked like the happiest woman in the world right now.

A stark contrast to the Allura she knows in the future.

The Allura she knows felt... exhausted.

Shaking her head, Alice thought about her next question before a grin appeared on her face.

"Say... Are you and Kaden together?" Alice smirked while biting her spoon.

"PFFTTTT!!!" Spitting out her cake, Allura started to cough while her eyes darted back and forth.

"Ahem! I mean... Well... It's kinda but... I guess..." Her words were all over the place as Alice simply stared at her with a smug smile.

"You're living together aren't you? He even wears a pink apron and bakes you cake. Don't tell me you're not together." Alice teased, finding enjoyment in Allura's reaction.

The future Allura wouldn't react like this and thus, this was her only chance to tease them.

'Allura and Kaden don't seem to have a bad relationship in the future either. They seem to be avoiding each other for unknown reasons. If I try hard enough, I can probably facilitate a meet up again.' She schemed in her mind as Allura huffed and stood up.

"Alright you brat! Enough talking about my love life hmph. I don't know much about your normal Sigils but show me what you can do with your techniques. Since I'm the original, I can give you some pointers.

"And before you say it was your mother who taught you it, it clearly contains similar concepts to my attacks." Allura crossed her arms as Alice finished her cake and stood up.

Letting Allura pack up the blanket and containers, Alice drew her blade and took a deep breath.

She'll manifest the lessons that Kaden had taught her just now in this next spar. She needed to use her own Sigils to create weak points in Allura's defence.

'First Sigil can let me make hallucinations before my attack lands so they're thrown off guard. Not sure how well this'll work on her but I don't have anything to lose. Kaden already showed me what I can do with my third Sigil through knocking my opponents off balance.' Alice thought to herself.

Closing her eyes, she tried her best to visualise the best possible attacks that she could create.

But no matter what, all she could see was Allura being able to counter them all through sheer brute force.

Alice couldn't visualise herself beating Allura.

"Don't think too hard about it. The higher your target, the harder it'll be to complete it in one go. Focus on what you can accomplish right now whether that be just one step or one slash. Little by little, these small accomplishments will build your path to your goal." Allura called out, noticing that Alice was struggling with how she should approach this fight.

Hearing this, Alice paused before smiling and nodded her head.

Narrowing her eyes, she allowed her inner hunger to seep out as a smile formed on her face.

Sensing danger, Allura couldn't help but raise her eyebrow in surprise. Last time she had launched a sneak attack against Alice to knock her out in one go. Now that they were face to face, she was surprised by the sheer thickness of the killing intent oozing from Alice's body.

It was a killing intent so thick with hatred it felt as though Alice was treating her like her mortal enemy. But Allura knew that wasn't the face.

'Her aura shifted a whole 180 just now. Is it a mental state she uses for fights?'

Snapping her finger to signify the beginning of this battle, Allura watched as Alice immediately activated Void Flux – Cleave, sending a slash towards her while countless strands of blood jumped out from the ground.

"So eager." Allura chuckled as she pivoted on her left foot and took a step forward.

Flames roared out around her as she stared at the slash and brought her fist back.

*BANG!!!

Shattering the space slashing cleave in one go, she twisted her body and kicked the strands of blood away with ease.

'I can see why Kaden wanted me to help her focus on the techniques. It's rough but that slash held similarities to my Authority. Where did this kid even pop out from.'

Before she could bring her foot down, a pillar of metal jumped up, locking her ankle in some cuffs.

At the same time, needles of blood stabbed towards Allura's face. Just as she was about to break them using her fists, they exploded into blood mist.

A second slash appeared above Allura.

"What's that mist supposed to do kid?" Allura taunted. Using the cuffs as a pivot point and threw a kick using her other leg towards the slash, shattering it once more.

Landing on one foot, Allura simply flexed her leg as flames erupted and melted the metal.

'Hallucinations aren't working on her. Tsk, but she's letting me do whatever I want with my blood.' Alice thought to herself as she made a cut on her arm and sent several strands of blood towards Allura.

These strands burst into violet flames while Allura kept a smile on her face.

"Your slash, do you know the true meaning behind it?"

"Hm?"

Making a cut in the space around her, Allura reached in and pulled out a single pristine blade.

"The Executioner Blade. A technique I made with Kaden to ignore all forms of defence in the world. The true meaning behind this slash is not to be the strongest attack in the world.

"The true meaning is to ignore all defence. This slash completely bypasses the 'space' used for defence and inflicts wounds directly onto the opponent. Of course, brute forcing it like the way you're doing is hard to defend against as well. But those who specialise in defence later on will shrug off your attack." Allura explained as she raised her hand and slashed downwards.

Executioner Blade!

At that moment, Alice felt something wrong with her body.

The connection between her, her Sigil, the Abyss and her blood was completely severed. Her attacks and flames disappeared.

"For those whose defence and even offence relies on their Sigil, this is the best attack, no? It's not the strongest but it's the most effective." Allura grinned.

Alice finally saw the true slash.

The Executioner Blade, an attack that ignores all forms of defence and even cuts the energy provided by the Abyss.

Chapter 247 - 247: Ruler Of Ayr

Even though Alice saw the slash, she couldn't comprehend the requirements to activate the attack.

When she copied Nova Core, it felt simple as it was a case of compressing flames to its absolute limit before detonating it.

But this slash held concepts she couldn't fully digest even though she saw it in full clarity.

Furrowing her brows, Alice frowned as she jumped back.

Remembering the flow of energy within Allura's slash, Alice tried her best to replicate it but all she achieved was the standard Void Flux – Cleave.

"Pft, seems like you realise I'm the real deal hehe~ My Executioner Blade isn't something you can copy easily." Allura rubbed her nose with a grin while watching Alice trying to replicate her attack.

"You said this attack isn't the strongest, is there one stronger than this?" Alice asked while continuing to swing her sword.

"Oh of course there are. I didn't focus on the power of this attack, it merely came as an added bonus. If you want to see the strongest attack in Ayr, you should see Commander when he's serious. Urg... his attacks even scare me sometimes." Allura shivered.

"Commander?"

Alice had never heard either of them mention a commander before. If he was as powerful as Allura was claiming him to be, then surely she would've mentioned him at one point. Yet that wasn't the case.

"Mnm, Lord Commander of Ayr. He who commands the army and protects her highness. He's got a bunch of nicknames you know? More than me and Kaden. I have my Title of Executioner, Kaden has his

Title of Shadow but the Commander is simply known as the Lord Commander." Allura shrugged while walking over to Alice.

"But setting aside the Commander, focus more on your form. Even though the power generated from the slash is impressive, you can draw out more power with the right form." She explained while standing behind Alice.

Grabbing her wrists, Allura began to control Alice's body, showing the right way she should follow up her slashes to generate the most power and speed.

"You're surprisingly gentle." Alice couldn't help but mutter, seeing how careful Allura was being and the care she was taking in teaching her the stances.

"What do you mean by that?! I'm always gentle." Allura clicked her tongue and hit Alice on the head with her chin.

"Ouch! You knocked me out on our first meeting, you call that gentle?"

"That's your fault. Who knew you were so weak even though you could use a space rupturing attack." Allura retorted while finishing the sequence of attacks.

"Memorise what I showed you and you should see improvements in your attacks. Of course, you need to figure out when to use the different stances but that comes with experience. Is there anything else you want to know?" She asked while taking a step back.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice decided to inquire about Ayr first. Once she learns more about Ayr, she could transition it into questions regarding the Lord Commander and finally, about Allura's old master.

"Can you tell me a bit about Ayr? It's history and how it was founded?"

"Hmm... Honestly, I'm not too familiar with the founding of Ayr. You'd better off asking Nalem since he has a record of everything that's happened since the founding. But I can tell you a little bit about why Master decided to make this city." Allura grinned as she gave her body a stretch.

"We're quite far from Ayr so grab on tight. I'll take us there in an instant."

Remembering how Allura travelled, Alice figured it wouldn't be too bad since he had experienced it before.

But the moment she grabbed onto Allura, a bad feeling manifested in her heart.

Flames erupted around Allura but unlike its usual colour, it began to flicker into a bright white.

Before Alice could even ask about the speed of transportation, Allura had already shot into the air with Alice hanging on for dear life.

Hugging Allura's leg like a sloth hugging a tree trunk, Alice refused to let go.

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"Allura and Kaden seem rather busy today. They're running back and forth with a guest in tow." A woman chuckled with softly while looking out of the window.

She had long white hair that seemed to float behind her, shifting with each subtle movement that she made. A pair of soft half-opened crimson eyes where the whites are pure black.

On her chest, a spiked necklace of sorts could be seen, printed onto her skin.

The woman wore an elegant white dress that reached to the floor while silver accessories decorated her wrists and ankles.

She was currently sitting in the highest room of the castle that overlooked the city. Countless strands of energy floated around her while her hands danced across the different strands.

"Should I let them know?" A man asked while standing beside her.

Shaking her head, the woman simply closed her eyes.

"Oh? Our guest is... Rather strange." She muttered upon scanning the person grabbing onto Allura.

"Should we be concerned? The meeting between Gods will be happening soon. She might be a variable sent by the trio."

"I doubt that. She doesn't have their brandings. If anything... She resembles the Abyss more. That's if you ignore her peculiarities." The woman chuckled before opening her eyes.

"Peculiarities?"

"She doesn't have a soul. But she's not like the artificial constructs that we've seen before. Perhaps you could consider her a strange mix in the middle?"

Hearing this, the man next to her simply shrugged.

"It would probably be better to ask Nalem. Unfortunately, my knowledge of these subjects is shallow." He let out a laugh.

"Don't worry, I'm not testing you. You can take some time off before the meeting begins, I need this time to focus on maintaining this realm."

Nodding his head, the man bowed towards the woman in front of him and made his way down the tower.

Once he had left the room, the woman simply turned towards the direction of Alice. A soft smile appeared on her face as her hand stroked the spiked marking around her neck.

"She possesses the Crown and Cayla... I suppose that confirms my passing." She muttered before standing up.

Walking to the edge, she looked at the magnificent city before her. The bastion of hope which she poured her heart and soul into so the citizens of the Abyss can find some closure before their fated end.

"How strange... I suppose even I can feel fear at the thought of losing everything."

Smiling bitterly, the woman gently tapped her finger in the air as strands of energy started to weave together into the form of a woman.

She had short silver hair with a pink hue, a pink headband and a pair of blue eyes. She wore a white shirt with a black collar, sleeves and skirt. A pair of semi-transparent black tights and a pair of black shoes with small heels and a ribbon on the shoe strap.

"Cayla, what do you think the future is like?"

"I'm unsure master. I can't imagine it to be better than what you've created." Cayla shook her head while hugging her knee. Her other foot was on the ground to stabilize herself so that she didn't fall.

"Perhaps but you never know. I'm rather curious about how the world will change after my death. How would Kaden and Allura react? Those two may look strong on the surface but they're sensitive children at heart." She smiled while looking at Cayla who was deep in thought.

"Maybe we can avoid the worst scenario master. What if we ask her what happens in the future? Maybe she knows what caused... Your passing." Cayla asked with a frown on her face.

But the woman simply shook her head.

"Cayla, you know as well as I do that we've been expecting this to happen. Why else do you think I've been making these preparations?"

". . ." Clenching her fist, Cayla simply looked down while the woman patted her head.

"At least before I go, I want to hear about the future."

"Alright. I'll look for her and bring her here." Cayla nodded.

Just as she was about to jump down, the woman grabbed her hand.

"No need to rush. Let her enjoy the city with Allura and Kaden first. If you want, you can take the time off to understand her too. She is your future master after all." She chuckled.

Nodding once more, Cayla leapt off the building and made her way down.

Now that she was alone, the woman sat back down on her chair and peered towards the countless strands of energy that surrounded her.

###

Sitting down by the gates of Ayr, Alice's hair was dishevelled from the flight. Her stomach churned while Allura simply ate cake while waiting for her to recover.

"I wasn't even flying that fast." She shrugged, feeling as though Alice was exaggerating but seeing her current state, she was probably weaker than what she expected.

Even though she was resting by the gate, Alice could still see the bustling nature of the city within. Countless civilians greeting one another with smiles on their faces regardless of the side effects that appear on their body.

Not only that, but the technology held within the city exceeded what she had seen before. It bore similarities to the gate she saw in the forest that connected to Terminus.

Ghost like beasts would float across the city, helping keep the order while receiving food from the citizens.

Scattered throughout the city were statues of a familiar woman that Alice had seen in her mental space before.

Allura's old master.

She could see people praying to the statues whenever they walked past, hoping for another happy day.

"She seems popular." Alice remarked, hoping Allura would expand more on the Ruler.

"Of course she is. She's the one who built this city and gave people a second chance. But there's another big reason why people revere my Master." Allura chuckled while looking towards the castle in the centre of the city.

"What reason?" Alice raised her eyebrow curiously.

"Because she's a Goddess."

Chapter 248 - 248: Goddess Of The Abyss

What is a God? To Alice, it was a symbol of absolute authority, a leader for mortals and a being outside of mortal comprehension.

The Sun God that is worshipped by the Church of the Sun.

The Moon Goddess revered by the Church of the Moon.

The Eclipse God praised by the Cult of the Abyss.

All three Gods of the surface are figures that Alice could only hear tales about. Their retainers, the Apostles and their followers being their only connection to this world.

But for the Abyss to have its own Goddess...

Allura's old Master at that.

Alice's mind spun.

If Allura's old Master was indeed the Goddess of the Abyss, then what kind of identity did Allura and Kaden hold? Two people who are close to said Goddess.

'Are they Apostles?' Alice questioned inwardly. It would explain the power behind Allura and how Kaden could send her into the Abyss with ease.

Allura had mentioned Apostles before, each one had their own Authority, a fragment of the God's power.

It allowed them to stand head and shoulders above the Abyss Lords as loyal retainers to the Divine.

"The ruler of Ayr... Is a Goddess?" Alice asked, wanting to confirm this information.

"Yep, she's a Goddess of the Abyss. Although you can think of it as sharing a Divinity. Compared to the Gods of the surface, Master is a little special in comparison." Allura nodded while eating the snacks she had bought.

"Special? How so? Aren't they all Gods?"

"I mean it's no secret but Master started out as a 'human'. The first Human to be born in the Abyss. As the first human in the Abyss, she was confused as to why there were only beasts while reflections of the surface showed her a world of 'humans'.

"With her unique connection to the Abyss, she bent the rules and allowed more 'humans' to be born. Of course, all will have to return to being a beast at one point, that is our ultimate fate. But Master's tampering gave us a chance to overcome this.

"To become an Abyss Lord, be recognised by the Abyss and its Goddess and you will shed your bestial blood and become fully Human." Allura explained while making small fire figures to help tell the story.

"You can even say she added the 'Rule' to how the Abyss functions."

Hearing this, Alice nodded her head silently while digesting the information she had just learned. If Allura's Master was the reason why Humans could be born in the Abyss, what other rules did she implement?

And even if she didn't, what were the other Rules of the Abyss?

With one question answered, more questions appeared in Alice's mind as she couldn't help but sigh out in frustration.

There was far too much she didn't know and now, even Allura and Kaden's true identity was unclear due to their connection to a Goddess. Alice could only assume that they're Apostles and if they were, what did they expect from her?

When Kaden found her, he wanted her to help him fulfil a promise. What promise?

Allura said she could be her own person and ignore the expectations. But if the Crown and Cayla used to belong to a Goddess, how could she simply ignore the weight of this responsibility?

Alice wanted Allura to be happy like she was now, in the past. She wanted to rebuild Ayr for her, make it so that people are no longer cursed to become beasts with no way out. But to do so would be to meet the expectations for a Goddess of the Abyss.

She had so much she wanted to do for Allura who had become her guardian, her mother figure and for Kaden who brought her out from her personal Hell. Yet when faced with these expectations, Alice found herself lacking.

Her thoughts spiralled as she wanted to visualise her being able to achieve such feats but all that came to mind was failure.

"!!!"

Widening her eyes, Alice snapped out of her thoughts and looked up.

Allura had given her a hug while patting her head and back.

"Are you okay? You looked like you needed a hug." Allura asked with a concerned expression as Alice was silent.

Returning the hug, Alice held on tight as she calmed her mind. It doesn't matter if the final goal is far away.

As Allura said, she needed to focus on the small steps. What she can achieve right now and eventually, she'll find herself at her goal.

"Thank you..." Alice muttered, enjoying this hug while Allura scratched her cheeks with an embarrassed blush but nodded her head.

Sharing this hug for a moment, Alice finally calmed her mind and looked far better than a moment ago.

"You were talking about how she added a Rule to the Abyss long ago right? One that allowed 'humans' to be born. What do you think is the Abyss's goal to let this happen?" Alice asked curiously.

"Hmm... Honestly, I'm not sure. Knowing Master, if she could stop people from becoming beasts, she would. But there are restrictions she has to work around. She doesn't 'rule' the Abyss after all. She simply shares a Divinity with the Will of the Abyss.

"It's probably better if you ask her when you meet her. Since your... situation is pretty weird and unique even by my standards." Allura shrugged.

Pausing mid-step, Alice turned to Allura and pointed at herself.

"Wait... Meet her? Isn't she a Goddess? I thought Gods and Goddesses don't interfere much with mortals."

"Like I said, Master is a unique case. Plus, you've already met two of her closest retainers so what's there to be surprised about? Meeting a Goddess is crazy for you but meeting her metaphorical left and right hand isn't? You got some weird standards."

While Alice and Allura were debating about their personal standards, someone was observing the situation without making them known.

Allura had naturally sensed that someone was observing but considering the 'mark' on her, Allura didn't say anything.

The longer Cayla stared at Alice, the clearer it became. The Eye and the floating Crown.

Both seem damaged to an extent which only made her more worried about the eventual downfall of her Master, but nothing could be done.

She knew it deep down as well. But she didn't want to sit around and simply accept that it'll happen.

Closing her eyes, Cayla tried to form a connection with 'herself' that was within Alice's body. But the connection couldn't be formed. Instead, a chilling pair of eyes stared back at her as cold sweat dripped down her back.

Staring at Alice with a mixture of fear and confusion, Cayla didn't know what to say.

Standing silently, she eventually bit her lip before sighing. Just observing wasn't going to work. She was going to find a chance to talk with Alice face to face. If Alice was indeed her future Master, then the talk should go rather smoothly.

###

"So, any thoughts?" Kaden asked as the Librarian was silent in front of him.

Nalem, the one who kept a record of everything that has happened in the city and the knowledge they've accumulated regarding the Abyss itself and the beasts within.

"Just from what you've told me, I have two candidates in mind. But they're not an exact match." He sighed and shook his head.

"Care to give me a percentage?"

"20% at most. If the fire is indeed as you have explained then I can only say I've never heard or even thought of such a possibility. It's simply absurd for something to be fuelled by the Abyss yet reject it so thoroughly. Not to mention, I can't wrap my mind around how that girl is even functioning if she has no soul. She's not a construct, is she?" Nalem frowned while placing his books down.

"She's not a construct." Kaden shook his head.

"Then is she something sent by the Gods of the Surface? The meeting is happening soon, you know what they're like towards her Majesty."

Falling into silent contemplation, Kaden played around with some shadows between his fingers as several thoughts passed his mind.

'She carries a feather with traces of my Authority on it. An Amulet too with Lua's aura. But it's weak... She definitely has a connection with me and Lua, but what kind? Alice clearly doesn't possess an Authority but she's displaying powers similar to Lua.'

For the first time since he first joined Ayr, he found himself unable to wrap his mind around the problem presented before him.

"If you had a sample of her blood, could you run some tests to determine the origin of her powers?" Kaden asked as Nalem nodded his head.

"With enough samples and tests, I should be able to give you some better results. But again, it's highly abnormal so don't expect much." He admitted.

'For even Nalem of all people to not guarantee results...'

"Alright. I'll see what I can do about the samples."

###

Alice didn't know this feeling she felt within her heart.

It was similar to fear yet also very different. It resonated with her on a deeper level, a level that caused her entire body to tremble and pale at the sight of this person.

This was her first meeting with the Lord Commander, but every cell in her body was screaming at her to run.

He has medium length wild brown hair, a pair of sharp black eyes and a messy stubble. His attire consisted of a simple black jacket with gold details, a black undershirt that highlighted the muscles on

his upper body and arms, a waist cloth that reached down to his knees and a pair of baggy pants and shoes.

Despite his relaxed and playful aura at this moment, Alice couldn't relax herself no matter what she tried.

Chapter 249 - 249: Lord Commander Nyer

"Are you showing your guest around?" Nyer smiled while sweeping his eyes across Allura and Alice.

Seeing Alice's reaction of hiding behind the tall woman, Nyer couldn't help but be confused by her reaction. Strangely enough, he could sense fear from her.

This should be their first meeting yet she was scared of him? Why?

"Mnm, Kaden told me to show her around. She's got some weird powers and quirks about her so he's talking with Nalem about it right now." Allura shrugged.

"I see... Anything I can do to help? Her Majesty has given me the day off so she can focus on the upcoming meeting. Personally, I'd want to handle any potential variables to make sure the meeting goes smoothly." He offered as Allura looked towards Alice who was hiding behind her.

"When did you become so shy? I know the commander looks a little scary but he's not that bad now, is he?"

Hesitating for a moment, Alice shook her head but didn't dare make eye contact.

Shaking his head helplessly, Nyer smiled towards Allura.

"As long as you're prepared for the meeting, I have no complaints. Just try not to bring out cake when the other Gods appear okay?"

"Blerg, do I look that stupid?" Allura rolled her eyes.

"The answer may surprise you."

Letting out a laugh, Nyer walked away before Allura could complain.

Seeing Nyer escape, Allura could only sigh.

"Are you alright?" She asked, looking at Alice who finally calmed down once Nyer had walked away.

"Yea... Sorry, I didn't know what came over me." Alice apologised while Allura simply patted her head.

"Don't worry about it too much. Let's go find Kaden and Nalem now, shall we?"

Nodding her head, Alice hesitated for a moment before grabbing Allura's hand.

As for Allura, she stayed silent while guiding Alice through the city.

###

Walking away from Allura and her strange guest, Nyer was silent. He kept a smile on his face but there was no joy to be found inside his heart.

Even though her Majesty didn't say anything, he had seen the signs. Her condition was deteriorating.

She is the Goddess of the Abyss but that title did not grant her full dominion over this realm. No, in fact, it could be said that she was its prisoner. Helpless at its whims and all she could do was grant the people of the Abyss a small semblance of peace through her rules and creations.

Had it not been for her, he would've been one of the lowly beasts fated to die without gaining full sentience.

He could still remember the meeting he had with a visitor. A God of the Surface.

"Lord Commander Nyer, have you ever doubted the Abyss? I'm not talking about your Goddess but rather, this dominion she 'rules' over."

"She is given divinity, sovereignty and yet all she can do is tamper with the rules and loopholes, praying that her changes are accepted all while the burden of her commands falls onto her."

"Your dear Goddess of the Abyss is no different than a prisoner in a cage."

Nyer knew that they were simply planting doubts in his mind in hopes that he would sabotage the meeting. The Gods of the Surface have always been greedy over the power granted by the Abyss.

For the Sun, Moon and Eclipse, their powers are directly derived from their followers. Their beliefs, rituals, sacrifices and worship are what empower their divinity.

But the same couldn't be said for the Abyss.

The Abyss is something else entirely, it's a being that will grow so long as people drink the holy blood that it provides. No matter what God you worship, so long as you accepted the power from the Abyss, you have become its follower.

In this sense, the Abyss is a parasite that the Gods cannot get rid of.

They were the ones who opened a passage to this realm that they could not close. They opened the Pandora's box and brought forth this calamity, this being, this abomination into their world.

They suffer yet they cannot help but be enamoured by its all mighty power of corruption. The Gods desire this power and they can only hope that he would serve as their proxy.

Just the mere thought made Nyer spit in disgust. There was only one Goddess he took command from, no other.

His loyalty is to her and her alone. She who brought him out from the depths of the Abyss and granted him life. He owes her everything.

'The Abyss is no doubt a problem. But the biggest threat to her Majesty right now are the other Gods and their Apostles. This guest of Allura... Her Majesty has said that she doesn't feel like she came from the Gods of the Surface but rather the Abyss.

'Was she sent to watch over what her Majesty chooses to do? Is the Abyss even capable of doing so?'

Narrowing his eyes, he glanced back at the castle located in the heart of the city. The symbol of her Majesty's presence.

No matter what, he will protect her till the end.

###

After walking around the city for a little while, Alice and Allura arrived in front of a grand building not far from the castle.

According to Allura, this is the main Library of Ayr, a building maintained solely by Nalem and people can borrow books here with his permission.

With all of the details that she had gathered, Alice was 90% sure that this Nalem was the same one she knew of. Which only begs the question, did Allura know that Nalem was in the city of Zdash?

'Allura gathers intel quickly and there's also the Underground. If she knew that Nalem was there... Why did she never mention him? Could it be the same reason why she doesn't talk to Kaden much?' Alice wondered to herself as the two entered the building.

Upon entering, Alice saw the library in its entirety. The interior was vast and expansive, countless floors filled to the brim with shelves upon shelves of books.

Towering pillars that connected the ground to the ceiling with some supporting each of the individual floors.

Floating around the interior of the building were strange constructs, tending to the shelves while organizing the vast collection of books. Some towered over the shelves, helping smaller constructs get to higher levels while others had a multitude of limbs.

Each had a different purpose, each working at full efficiency.

"Yahoo!~ Nalem we're here. Is Kaden up there with you?" Allura called out, surprising Alice by how loud she was being.

"Yes he is. Please don't be so loud while in the library, you can simply let one of the constructs know and I'll be notified." An annoyed voice rang out as a small construct floated over to the two of them.

Hearing the voice, Alice confirmed that it was indeed the Nalem she knew.

"If I do that you'll just let them deal with me automatically without actually talking to me." Allura shrugged.

"That's their whole point. To deal with the tedious situations so I don't have to manually do everything. Getting you to come to the third floor is an easy instruction that could've been given by the Construct. Instead, you decide to shout at the top of your lungs." Nalem complained.

Even though Alice couldn't see his face right now, she could already picture a frown.

"Alright alright, I'll try keep that in mind next time. Third floor right?"

"Yes. And before you ask, no, I do not have snacks here and more specifically cake. That is also not an invitation for you to bring your own food. I don't need your dirty fingers staining my books after you've just eaten." He instructed before the construct returned to work.

Making their way upstairs, they saw Nalem and Kaden sitting by the table with large stacks of books next to them.

A brief glance at the titles told Alice everything she needed to know as they were researching beasts with fire abilities.

"So any results?" Allura asked, making herself comfortable on a seat while gesturing for Alice to sit down next to her.

"A little. We managed to narrow down the key 'ability' of Alice's fire. Or rather, the classification of it." Kaden smiled while looking for a book from the pile.

"Classification?" Alice tilted her head.

"Mnm. Your fire can counter Sigil abilities but before we can determine its origin, we need to understand how it works on a fundamental level."

Looking over to Nalem, Kaden gestured for him to continue the explanation.

Scratching his hair, Nalem sighed before opening his mouth.

"There are three types of Cancellation type abilities from my knowledge. First, the Counter type. Like fire and water, the first Cancellation type aims to directly counter the nature of the ability.

"Second, the Sunder type. You can think of this one as Allura with how her attacks work. The Sunder type aims to cut the connection between the user and the Abyss to prevent the usage of abilities.

"Third, Restriction type. This type imposes rules and restrictions onto the enemy, preventing them from activating their Sigils. Certain Resonances have this power but they are few and far between." Nalem explained, holding up three fingers.

"From the initial explanations that Kaden has shown me, there's a high likelihood that your flames belong to a merge between the first and second types. Rather than an elemental countering, it seems to be something on a far more fundamental level. But here's the issue." Nalem turned towards Alice.

"Most Sunder types are temporary at most while Allura is a special case. Her power partially comes from her Authority hence why the severance is far more potent compared to others. But for you, you can achieve a similar result despite not having the Authority.

"Thus far, there have been no records on beasts that can emulate Authority to such a high degree. Your flames are completely foreign to us." Nalem admitted helplessly.

"However..." He hesitated before looking towards Kaden.

"If you want, Nalem can perform some experiments with a few friends on your blood samples. It should help him figure out the source of these flames. Of course, only if you wish to go ahead with this." Kaden suggested.

Hearing this, Alice clenched her fists.

Chapter 250 - 250: Apostles

Alice was put in a difficult position.

It was one case to perform the experiments herself but another for someone else to conduct it on her.

Could she trust her body over to someone else?

Could she go through what had haunted her throughout the 10 years?

Just the thought alone made Alice's heart pound against her chest in anxiousness. She trusts Allura and Kaden.

But that was also the case for her father and brothers. Yet in the end, she was chained up and collared against her will.

What if she were to lose consciousness halfway through the experiment just to find out that another collar has been placed against her neck?

Subconsciously, Alice raised her hand against her neck. She has grown accustomed to the lack of weight against her neck. But the phantom pain of the collar forever haunted her.

Even now, she could feel its sting, the biting cold metal pressing against her skin.

Biting her lips, Alice began to scratch away at her neck as her breathing began to speed up. Flashes of different experiments appeared in her mind, each one more gruesome than the last.

Tubes being inserted into her veins, her organs being replaced with bestial parts. Blood that would make her grow gills and suffocate from the air.

Overwhelmed by the sights before her, Alice shut her eyes but the sounds of the machinery continued to howl into her ears.

A sudden touch against her wrist caused Alice to jolt back in panic as her eyes betrayed the fear hidden within.

But this contact snapped her out of her stupor as she looked down and saw blood on her fingertips.

Allura had grabbed her wrist in an attempt to stop her.

Panting heavily, Alice could see the concern in Allura, Kaden and Nalem's eyes as all three had stood up and stopped her before she injured herself further.

None of them had expected such a reaction from Alice.

"Sorry can I have a moment to think about it?" Alice forced a smile while using her Sigil to stop the bleeding.

Without waiting for their reply, Alice stepped away while Allura wanted to stop her.

However, Kaden grabbed Allura and shook his head.

"Let me. I'm the one who proposed the question so it's only right for me to apologise to her."

Hesitating for a moment, Allura nodded her head as Kaden stepped away from the table.

Following the path that Alice took, Kaden realised that Alice had made her way to the highest floor of the library.

Seeing her stand silently by the window while hugging her own arms, Kaden couldn't help but feel sorry for the girl.

Everyone had a past they don't want to share. Whether it be Alice, Allura or himself, revisiting old memories are haunting at times.

"How are you feeling?" Kaden asked hesitantly as he stood next to her.

"Pretty sh*tty." Alice admitted bluntly. Even now, she couldn't quite shake off the fear of having other people experiment on her.

"Sorry about that. Seems like I got a little carried away with wanting to help you figure out the fire." He apologised while looking out at the city.

"It's fine. It's just me overreacting because of my own past. It's nothing to do with you guys. If it wasn't for my past, I wouldn't hesitate since I trust you and Allura."

"Hou~ For you to trust us so much despite this being our first day meeting is quite an honour." Kaden smiled, causing Alice to pause before sighing out in annoyance.

"Do we have to play mind games while I'm feeling sh*tty?"

"Sorry sorry. But alright, I'll do you a favour and stop playing around with you. I have a guess on where you came from. Well... Where is not quite the right word but rather when. Isn't that right?" Kaden held a finger to his lips as Alice raised her hand in surrender.

"When did you have this guess?"

"Quite a while ago. You own a feather with my power, don't you? It's 'dead' but it still has traces of power that can be linked back to me. Considering the fact that we've only met for a day, it was rather strange.

"Then you showed powers that mimicked Lua's Authority. Once you did that, obviously I had a few guesses of my own." Kaden shrugged.

Realising that the feather was what gave her away the most, Alice couldn't help but sigh.

'Sabotaged by Kaden in both worlds.'

"So what now? Are you going to tell the others?"

"Nope. It'll just be a secret between me and you. You're simply a strange gal who doesn't know how you got here." Kaden chuckled, causing Alice to smile.

"There you go. You're smiling again."

"Tsk. So any thoughts now that you've guessed 'when' I came from?" Alice clicked her tongue.

"A few but I'm guessing there are things you don't want to tell me."

'Yeah like how Ayr is no longer around.' Alice thought to herself but didn't dare to vocalize her thoughts.

"Well I figured a few things out already like how Lua is your esteemed mother. But knowing her, I'm surprised you don't know more about the world. Did she not take you travelling?" Kaden asked curiously as Allura wasn't one to sit around in one place unless it's Ayr.

And even then, she enjoyed the missions that has her venturing outside.

"I mean... I call her mother but she's not my biological mother. She simply picked me up and took me in after I was thrown into the Abyss." Alice shrugged.

"I see... What is Lua like in the future?"

"Not much different from now. Though I suppose she's a lot calmer. Not as loud nor enthusiastic I suppose. Surprisingly less violent and instead of cake, she seems to be addicted to smoking instead." Alice replied after taking a moment to think about the differences between the two Alluras.

"Smoking you say... Who would've thought? But I'm getting carried away." Kaden smiled.

He wanted to see what Allura was like in the future with how Alice was describing her but seeing as how Alice hasn't mentioned him yet, he figured he was probably not around.

'What a shame.' He thought with a bitter smile.

Looking at Kaden, Alice could practically read his thoughts as it was printed onto his expression. Debating for a moment, Alice opened her mouth.

"You were there too. You're a lot different as well. Honestly, Allura might have taken me in, but you were the one who freed me from my captivity." She admitted, surprising Kaden as a bright smile appeared on his face.

"You brat. Why didn't you say so earlier. And here I thought I died an early death." Kaden grinned, ruffling Alice's hair while she frowned in displeasure.

"Wait... If I'm still around, then... Actually, never mind. It'll be best that I don't know anything." He shook his head. He wanted to ask about Alice's 'father' but didn't want to know the answer.

As for Alice, she simply thought 'weirdo' before looking back at the city.

Even though they were joking around, Alice's mind was still on his question earlier. If she wanted Nalem to experiment on her to see if they could find out more about her fire.

"The experiment. What do you need from me? I just want to know how far you want to go." Alice asked while tightening her grip around her arm.

Seeing this, Kaden decided to be honest.

"If you wish to do it, it'll just be small samples of your blood. We don't need to do anything to your body. If Nalem still can't figure out the origin through your blood, there will be no need for further experimentation.

"You see, Nalem is a little special. Even though he doesn't possess an Authority like me and Lua, since Master can only designate two of us, his Sigils work in a way that helps him compile knowledge and cross reference everything he's seen. Even now, he has his own familiars across the entire Abyss, receiving information for him." Kaden smiled.

"So if he is unable to determine a source after experimenting with samples of your blood, it's probably best to request an audience with my Master."

Contemplating for a moment, Alice nodded her head.

"If it's just samples of my blood then it's fine. I just don't want anything to do with poking and prodding my body." She sighed while rubbing her neck. But this time, she didn't scratch.

"Do you want to spend a bit more time up here? It'll be harder to speak openly once we rejoin the others." Kaden asked, offering to answer any questions that may be on Alice's mind.

"Your Authority. What kind of Apostles are you and Allura? She's told me about the Apostles belonging to the surface Gods. War, Famine, Preservation, Protection, Immortality and Spirituality. What are the titles belonging to you and Allura?" Alice asked curiously.

This had been on her mind for a while now and she wanted to know what kind of powers they wielded. And more specifically in Allura's case, what kind of power she was trying to emulate.

"You have to think of it this way. Apostles are... Roles given to the chosen ones. Roles that embody a portion of the Divinity wielded by the Gods/Goddesses. Already, I can imagine that War and Famine belong to the Eclipse right? Preservation and Protection to the Sun and the last two are for the Moon.

"For the Abyss, and more specifically for Master, I suppose you have to think about what kind of powers she wields. Lua's Authority is that of Severance. Her power allows her to isolate a target and strike at their core or at least, that's what she uses it for. Meaning Sigil abilities and external assistance will be severed temporarily." Kaden chuckled.

"A more practical use of her power other than violence would be to isolate an entire space, making it almost impossible for people to interfere. She can also tamper with the different layers of the Abyss and travel between them rather easily.

"As for me... Well I'm the opposite. My Authority is that of... Corruption. In that sense, you can say mine is the power to connect the surface and Abyss. But that's simply practicality. In terms of combat... Let's just say it's a little unpleasant and I'd rather not use it if possible." He smiled bitterly while Alice was silent.

The Eclipse has War and Famine.

The Sun has Preservation and Protection.

The Moon has Immortality and Spirituality.

And the Abyss? Severance and Corruption.