

Abyssal A 271

Chapter 271 - 271: Nyer's Suggestion

Under Velouria's threat, Enris found herself unable to reply as the pressure of the entire world seemed to crash down on her.

As for Lumiria and Solaris, they knew that if they were to make a move, it would mean war against the Abyss.

"Ahaha why so serious? I'm just asking if you have the power of a Goddess. We haven't seen you fight often and with you sharing your authority with the Abyss, it's only natural to be worried right?" Enris shrugged and raised her hand in surrender.

All three of them knew that Velouria's condition was deteriorating. Yet for her to be able to show this much power when she's essentially on her last leg was... Incredible!

For one person to have all this power was simply unfair. Compared to the surface, where the three of them share the space, Velouria had access to the Abyss all by herself.

'I want it.' Was all Enris could think of at this moment.

But fighting right now would yield no benefits for her. In fact, it could even cause her own death.

"*Sigh~ If you joke like that even I'll get offended okay?" Velouria pouted while snapping her finger.

In an instant, the realm returned back to normal as though nothing happened and the chains disappeared.

Sitting back on her seat, she had a smile on her face along with a silent warning in her eyes to the other two who simply watched.

Meanwhile, Alice felt speechless.

'I don't think that was a joke...'

If Velouria couldn't prove she had the power befitting that of a Goddess, the other three would no doubt jump her like ravenous beasts, hungry for food.

Sitting back in her seat, Enris glanced at Solaris and Lumiria since it was their turn now. She's done her job, it was up to them now.

"Sorry about that. Enris took that a bit far but we were worried about how the Abyss was affecting you. Since you share its Authority, you should know that it's been expanding faster than ever. At this rate, your body won't be able to hold up since you don't have a physique like us." Lumiria explained with a small smile.

Hearing that they already knew about her deteriorating condition, Velouria contemplated silently for a moment before opening her mouth.

"I have some other methods to keep my body intact while the Abyss does its own thing. But I must say, the three of you seem rather curious about this expansion. Do you perhaps want to suggest a method to stop this expansion?" Velouria replied while waving her hand dismissively.

"We have a few ideas but even to this day, the Will of the Abyss is something we don't understand. As the closest being to the Will, we'll need to ask for your opinion." Solaris replied.

"How do you feel about trying to track down this Will? We know it has its own plans but none of us know what it is. Perhaps it's time to see who's pulling the strings behind the Abyss." Lumiria offered.

Raising her eyebrow, Velouria was silent.

There has always been a silent acknowledgement from the Abyss towards her.

A mutual respect and understanding.

In the past, it had never done something that would cause her too much burden yet recently, it has been expanding aggressively. Not only that, but she had also received a premonition of her own death and now a successor.

While she may be a memory, she too wanted to know how she died. To have some answers before her final moments. In front of Alice, she may seem knowledgeable. But she too was in the dark right now.

'I guess I should play my role and go along with this farce. I'm simply an actor on this stage that the Abyss has prepared for dear Alice.' She thought inwardly with a smile.

"I can't say I'm not interested. But you realise the risks that this carries right?" Velouria rested her chin on her hand.

"To go against the Will of the Abyss is akin to waging war in its home. Even if I am the Goddess that shares its authority to some extent, this is crossing the line."

"We're not suggesting that you fight the Abyss nor are we suggesting for you to betray it. But rather, to get an audience with this Will and find out its goal. No one moves without a goal. Even those who claim to be moving on a whim will have a goal of some kind. An outcome they wish to see." Lumiria shook her head.

"We want to see what this Will of the Abyss seeks through expansion." Solaris clarified.

'You also want to see if you can claim some of its power for yourselves. But I suppose speaking that out loud is shameful even for you.' Velouria thought with a smirk before opening her mouth.

"I suppose in this regard, we're not so different from humans then. A fear of the unknown. So how do you propose we meet the Will of the Abyss then? As you know, Terminus is the deepest pit of this realm. And it's a layer the Will has repurposed as a prison. Unless you mean to say there are layers we haven't seen yet."

"We'll need to conduct some research in the Abyss if you'll permit this. We need to track down where this Will is residing through interacting with the edge of expansion." Lumiria explained.

"But wouldn't that leave your domains empty?" Velouria paused in surprise, not realising that the three of them were planning on standing in the Abyss.

"We've already made preparations for that if you agree to have us here." Solaris smiled.

Seeing no reason to reject, Velouria was about to reply when Nyer approached and whispered something into her ear.

Nodding her head, she glanced at Alice before turning to the other Gods.

"I don't see why not. But I have a favour to ask of you if you're wanting to stay here." Velouria grinned.

"Oh? What kind of favour?"

"I need some help in training young Alice over here. So since you're staying here, why don't you have your Apostles help out with the training?" Velouria suggested while Alice froze up in shock.

She was already receiving training from Allura and Kaden. And now Velouria wants her to get training from the other Apostles?!

'Would the other Gods even agree to this?' Alice thought to herself.

After Alice's name was brought up, Allura understood what Nyer and Velouria wanted to do and gently pushed Alice forward to the meeting table.

At that moment, Alice felt the pressure of having three divine beings scanning her from head to toe.

"I suppose I get why you want to train her. She seems rather weak to be part of your family." Enris scratched her chin after understanding Alice's level of power.

Three Sigils.

Everyone in this room was above the level of Abyss Lord yet this little three Sigil gal was here with them.

Feeling their gaze, Alice broke out in a cold sweat while cursing Allura in her mind.

"As you can see, she's not exactly strong right now. Since my time will be devoted to helping you locate the Will, I'll be too busy. Which is why I need some help in training her." Velouria smiled while Solaris examined Alice and nodded.

"I can have my Apostles help then. Since she's rather weak, I'm not sure how much she can take away from the training so it depends on her." Solaris offered.

He won't train Alice personally since that felt insulting as a God. But having his Apostles help is a good middle ground.

"What kind of fighter is she? My Apostles are more the casting type." Lumiria asked while Velouria glanced over to Kaden.

"Alice is a hybrid fighter right now. She focuses on blade work while using her Sigils to help assist her movements. However, her main finishing attacks are casting based." Kaden explained.

"Hou~ Pretty greedy for someone so weak, aren't ya? I like it. Alright! My Apostles can teach her how to use a weapon properly." Enris grinned. Out of all the Apostles, War and Famine have the most practical blade work that was forged in battle.

Clapping her hands with a smile, Velouria nodded her head.

"Then I welcome you to stay in the Abyss for as long as you need. In the time that we're trying to locate the Will of the Abyss, Preservation and Protection will teach Alice defensive manoeuvres. Spirituality and Immortality will teach her how to cast. War and Famine will teach her how to use her blade. I trust that there are no issues with this arrangement?"

""None.""

Seeing that all three were in agreement, Velouria gave Alice a secret thumbs up.

"I will have accommodations arranged for your stay and plan out a schedule for Alice. That way it's easier for us to organise when Alice will get her training. But for now, I believe there is nothing else for us to discuss. Let us rest and speak about investigating the Will tomorrow." Velouria concluded the meeting as the other Gods agreed.

Opening their own portals, they left the room.

"What the f*ck." Was all Alice could say while Allura laughed.

"This is a perfect opportunity is it not? They want to come stay in the Abyss for a while so we may as well get some benefit out of them." Velouria chuckled while Alice simply felt a headache.

Training from all of the Apostles!

As great as this sounded, it may cause her more trouble than what it was worth!

"Plus, it was Nyer who suggested this so don't look at me." Velouria glanced up at Nyer who simply shrugged his shoulders.

"Kaden and Lua are working hard to train young Alice under your orders Master. I simply thought that if it is your wish to help young Alice become strong then using this chance to learn from others will be the next step." Nyer smiled.

"They'll be underestimating you since you are weak. But use that to your advantage and take as much as you can from them. This is an opportunity to learn from the strongest beings in the realms aside from the Gods. Treasure it." He reminded as Alice could only nod her head.

Indeed, being trained by all of the Apostles is an opportunity that should normally be impossible, especially with their difference. But thanks to Nyer's suggestion, the impossible has become possible!

After the training, she'll become the only person in the world who's received guidance from every Apostle.

Chapter 272 - 272: Hell Gate

After the meeting was over, the group returned to Velouria's castle and sat down to relax.

"Master, are you sure it's okay to let them do as they wish in the Abyss for now though? The Eclipse God didn't seem to be joking when she was asking you to prove yourself." Allura asked while eating some cake.

"It's better to play along for now. And they're not wrong in the fact that we don't know what the Will actually wants. So far, it simply seems to be acting on a whim. Even the act of making me the Goddess." Velouria shrugged helplessly.

"Do you think it's planning on opening new paths to other realms? Aside from the Surface and the Abyss, we know that there are realms where the Outer Gods reside." Nyer asked curiously. He was currently sitting on the balcony away from Alice since she was uncomfortable with his presence. Even though he didn't know why, he'd respect her choice.

"Possibly. And to be fair, in the beginning, it had a hand in opening the pathway between the Abyss and the Surface. The pathway couldn't be opened from just one side, both sides were needed for it to happen." Velouria nodded.

"So it must've wanted something with the Surface."

"It's a good chance to figure out the motives behind this realm. Though I think the biggest winner out of all of this is Alice." Kaden chuckled while turning to Alice who was hugging a large bottle of mead with her entire body.

There was a goofy grin on her face while she drank from another bottle.

To compensate Alice for suddenly pushing her into the spotlight, Kaden brought her several bottles of Ayrian Mead since she didn't get to drink it last time.

But seeing her reaction towards the drink, it seems like she was happier with the mead than she was with getting training from the Apostles.

"True. How often do you even see a person get trained by 1 Apostle never mind all eight of us." Allura nodded her head while Alice zoned back in after realising they were talking about her.

"Do you think they'll even try hard enough in the training? I think they'll probably dismiss me with some random information." Alice asked.

After all, for all they know, she was part of Velouria's family. Trying their best to train her would be akin to shooting themselves in the foot after their show of hostility from earlier. But as Nyer mentioned, they could be looking down on her since she's weak and choose a hard to understand subject.

"They won't show you the best but rather some foundational knowledge. Probably something hard to comprehend but could still be considered to be easy." Nyer added.

"The Commander is right. Each of the Apostles have their own specialisation. Honestly, me and Kaden are considered to be jack of all trades kind of fighters. I'm a hybrid while he's able to mimic casters." Allura said while pointing her fork at Kaden.

Alice had noticed this as well. Using his power of Shadows, Kaden could easily copy and recreate any casts done by the opponent and even add more onto it.

"Preservation and Protection are annoying to fight against since they have very good control of the space around them. I've fought them here and there, but it's never been a serious fight. However, even then, I would rarely get a hit in." Allura groaned.

Her attack is not a sure hit type of attack. While it was good against raw defences, there was still a chance that her attack would miss if they dodged at the right time.

For the Apostles belonging to the Sun God, they were surprisingly, her worst match-up.

"Spirituality and Immortality have a wide variety of combinations for their casts. They're sneaky with laying traps too. Though if I'm being honest, I didn't have much trouble against them, unlike Lua who can't fight neither Protection nor Preservation." Kaden chuckled while poking Allura on the nose causing her to stick her tongue out at him in annoyance.

"I haven't seen you fight yet so I can't say much. But if I take what Lua and Kaden have said at face value, War and Famine may be your best teachers." Nyer smiled.

"Oh? Why's that?" Alice glanced over curiously.

"Because they're instinctual fighters. They use everything and anything at their disposal, making the most out of the battlefield. Whether that be using their opponent's weapons against them or the environment. They're extremely perceptive of any signs of weakness you show and they'll bite down without release.

"Fighting them is absolutely brutal if you're not prepared." Nyer laughed as he unbuckled some of his armour and revealed his chest.

Several deep ghastly cuts could be seen clawing down from the right shoulder.

"Famine's authority is annoying to deal with. Any wounds dealt by them become extremely hard to heal. This was the best we could do for me. One moment of weakness was all it needed for them to end the fight between us. Of course, I managed to get a hit back but unlike their hits, mine could be healed." Nyer explained while putting his armour back on.

"So if you can only learn one thing from these three, I'd say War and Famine suit your style the most."

Nodding her head, Alice couldn't help but feel as though she had the wrong idea about Nyer this whole time. Not even she knew why she was scared of him but she couldn't deny that he's helped.

Hesitating for a moment, Alice turned to him once more.

"I... Haven't gotten training from you yet. Allura showed me how to attack, Kaden showed me how to optimise my usage. Are... You able to train me as well?" Alice asked as Nyer paused in surprise, pointing at himself.

As for Allura, she wanted to shed a tear and say look at how Alice had grown. From being scared to death of Nyer to asking him for training.

Looking over to Velouria for permission and seeing her nod his head, he smiled and turned back to Alice.

"Sure, I can teach you. I'll teach you how to stand your ground in this world of talented monsters like Lua and Kaden." He grinned while giving her a thumbs up.

"Master, you don't mind if I monopolise her schedule for a while right?"

"Go ahead. I'll let you know when the other Apostles are ready for their training sessions." Velouria nodded with a smile.

"Wait we're going now?" Alice blinked her eyes as Nyer flashed next to her and grabbed her shoulder.

"Of course, no time to waste." Nyer laughed deviously while Allura and Kaden made a praying motion.

"Wait, why are you praying." Alice shivered.

"The Commander trained me and Lua, that's all you need to know." Kaden smiled.

At that moment, Alice paled, realising that it was very possible for Kaden and Allura to get their violent training tendencies from Nyer.

"Is it too late to say no?" Alice forced a smile while Nyer didn't say anything.

"Kaden, send us to the Hell Gate."

Nodding his head, Kaden snapped his finger as shadows wrapped around Nyer and Alice, sending them away.

"How well do you think Alice will do?" Allura asked curiously while Kaden thought for a moment before shrugging his shoulders.

"She'll probably hate us for letting her train with the Commander. At least we're gentle with our training." He shivered.

While he and Allura hold back and let the other adapt to the training, Nyer goes all in. To Nyer, the best way to teach how to fight is to get beaten up until you're about to die. Literally.

It is on the edge of life and death will your body and mind try its best to find a way out. A path to victory. By constantly honing into this state, you learn skills and movements unique to your physique for the highest chance of survival.

Before they became Apostles, both Kaden and Allura received brutal beatdowns to the point they couldn't move for days had it not been for Healing Blood.

Watching Kaden and Allura dread about their training days with Nyer, Velouria chuckled while closing her eyes.

'Cayla, can you go help Alice out? Since you're connected to her in the future, she needs to get used to using you more often.'

[Are you sure Master? I don't want to leave your side when the other Gods are here.]

'Don't worry, they won't pull anything until we find the Will. This is the perfect time for you to help Alice.'

[. . .Alright.]

Watching the wisp of energy travel towards Hell Gate, Velouria smiled while looking over to Allura and Kaden.

"I have something I need the two of you to do for me."

This was going to be her last and final gift to Alice.

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Falling through the sky once more, Alice had expected herself to be in free fall yet surprisingly, Nyer carried her in his arms and made a gentle descent.

Without the threat of falling to her death, she took this time to look at the location known as Hell Gate.

A landscape of black and red, clashed violently across a border while flashes of lightning decorated the sky.

Across the land, countless scars were left by the previous battles while Nyer looked at this with a tinge of nostalgia.

"This used to be a farmland but then I fought Famine here. Never recovered since and now it's called Hell Gate." He explained while Alice froze up.

"Wait... A farmland?"

"Mnm. Those scars in the ground are left by my attacks while the sky and the clashing of energy were left by Famine. This will be the perfect place to train since no matter how much damage we do to the surroundings, this place is already f*cked up so no one will care." Nyer reassured with a grin.

But these words send warning bells off in Alice's mind.

'What kind of training requires us to reshape the surroundings?!?!'

Chapter 273 - 273: Training With Nyer

"As fighters who lack the benefit of blessings from Divinity, we work strictly with the tools we have and our Sigils. However, you need to remember that it is very hard and I mean VERY hard to overpower blessings given to Apostles.

No matter how favourable it may seem to you, know that you can have the advantage flipped in an instant." Nyer began the lesson as he took a step forward and appeared in front of Alice.

"So what do you think we need to do to create our own advantages?" He grinned and launched an attack!

In an instant, both of his hands entered Alice's vision as they were mere inches away from hitting her.

But Alice was able to tilt her head to the side, thanks to Cayla, and counter with a kick while flipping backwards.

"Hou~ So you can deal with this speed huh? Not bad. Now, once again, what do you think we need to do in order to create our own advantages?" Nyer asked once more, rushing towards Alice.

Just as she was able to take a step back, Nyer stomped down on her foot and crashed his shoulder into her chest.

*BANG!!!

Feeling the shock reverberate through her body, Alice gritted her teeth and wanted to counter but Nyer was ready. Despite his size, he managed to duck under her swing and grab her arm.

Throwing her over his shoulder, he slammed her against the ground.

"No answer?" He taunted, causing Alice to frown and get back up.

"I'll give you a chance to think this time."

Narrowing her eyes, Alice thought about the possible answers.

When fighting someone stronger than her, she wants to avoid their attacks by any means necessary. That means she needs a good understanding of how they move and habits.

In the situation where she doesn't know their habits, she'll need to scout out their movements and test the waters.

"Is it to observe their habits?" Alice answered as Nyer nodded his head.

"The most important thing to remember when fighting someone stronger than you is to understand their goals in the fight. The weaker you can make yourself seem, the better since they're more prone to underestimating you.

"Of course, this can't be said for every fight since even those stronger than you will be looking for chances to understand your movements. You simply need to read their habits faster. But this is just the basics.

"Later, they may add feints and mix-ups in their techniques to throw you off once they make you think you have them read." Nyer grinned as he rushed towards Alice once more.

Noticing that he was going to aim for her foot again, Alice pre-emptively took a step back earlier than usual.

However, this left her open above as Nyer jabbed his finger against her throat, causing her to stumble back before following up with a hook on her rib into a roundhouse kick.

Crashing across the ground, Alice held her body in pain.

"As you can see, I made you think that I was aiming for the foot again since it worked the first time. But once you stepped into my trap, I followed up with fast attacks that disorientate you to decrease the chances of you recovering. This is what you need to learn."

Taking deep breaths, Alice nodded her head and cleared her mind. She needed to be in a blank state if she wanted to understand the goal of the opponent.

'Right now, Nyer wants to teach me so he'll add one or two moves at most to his string of attacks. I need to understand the goal of these moves and what he wants to teach.'

'The first move was to test my reaction speed. The second move was to test how I reacted to having my movements restricted. The third was to test how well I could adapt to feints. What goal does he want to achieve for the fourth move?'

Narrowing her eyes towards Nyer, Alice decided the best way to understand what he wanted to achieve was to mimic his movements and understand the moves fundamentally.

Meaning, she had to go on the offensive!

Activating her first Sigil, Alice rushed forward.

Seeing this, Nyer was surprised that she decided to take the initiative but still reacted in time by stepping to the side.

Twisting her body, Alice followed up the charge with a roundhouse kick that was blocked by his arm. Spinning twice in the air, she kicked towards his chest which was blocked with his other hand.

Without giving him time to rest, she dashed forward once more and stomped against his foot.

Knowing that she didn't have the strength to push him back like he did with his shoulder charge, Alice adapted and activated her third Sigil.

Fastest cast time and efficiency!

*BANG!!!

A pillar of metal shot out from the ground, slamming against Nyer's guard while Alice swung herself to the side and threw another kick towards his head.

Realizing that his movements were overlapping Alice's, Nyer had a smile on his face since she was trying to understand the meaning behind each movement.

For fighters, there comes a stage where they transition from throwing out an attack since it worked before, to throwing out attacks because you understand them and know that they're the perfect fit for the situation.

For Alice, she's experiencing this stage.

"Copying me to try and understand my movement is good. But don't bite off more than you can chew. You don't know the goal behind your own movements never mind mine. Comprehending mine may cause your proficiency with your own attacks to fall if you're not careful." Nyer warned since his movements were made with his own habits in mind.

Stomping his foot down, the ground cracked apart, causing Alice to stumble as her foothold became unstable.

Using this chance, Nyer threw a straight jab at Alice, forcing her to block with her arms.

*BANG!!!

This proved to me a mistake as Alice widened her eyes in shock. She could feel her body giving out under the punch as a crack could be heard before she was sent crashing back.

"ARGG!!" Crashing against some boulders, Alice found herself barely hanging on to consciousness as a burning sensation could be felt on her arms.

Even without looking under her sleeves, Alice could tell her arms weren't doing great. Fighting in this state was going to be hard.

But hard doesn't mean impossible.

Taking a deep breath, Alice closed her eyes and visualised her arm. She could feel the impact point, where her blood was rushing and the fractures and breakage on her arm. Controlling her blood, she temporarily halted the bleeding while creating metal frames around the bones to support them for now.

"You shouldn't do that since we're in training. Have some healing blood instead, the purity is high so there will be no side effects." Nyer shook his head while placing a vial in front of her.

"But it's a good move to do if you're in combat. Not bad."

Nodding her head, Alice took a drink of the healing vial and watched her wounds disappear.

"Now, shall we go again? This time try to think about the meaning behind your own moves rather than mine. In order words, give me everything you've got, go for the kill. This'll give me a better understanding of where you're currently at." Nyer suggested as Alice nodded her head.

Positioning themselves away from each other, Alice flicked her wrist and transformed her bracelet into a blade.

Focusing her mind on Nyer's stance, Alice thought about the meaning behind her own moves. Void Flux, while powerful, was aimed at redirecting attacks or cutting off escape routes. Void Flux – Cleave was her finishing move.

Partial Bloodline Release was to help her keep up with strong opponents since her physique was lacking.

First Sigil augments this.

Her second is used to counter Sigil abilities which wouldn't be helpful against Nyer right now. And her third Sigil was to give her adaptability in a fight through movement.

'Resonance will let me unleash everything at its max potential and gives me increased healing. If I'm going for the kill knowing that my opponent is stronger, I have to go bait them into thinking I've given everything I've got.'

Nyer already knew most of what Alice could do but he was in the dark regarding Bloodline Release. That was going to be her chance to turn the tides of this battle!

Adjusting her stance, Alice took a deep breath and activated her first Sigil.

Boosting her physical traits, she pulled her arm back and...

Threw her sword!

***BANG!!!!**

Parrying the blade in surprise, Nyer didn't think Alice would give up her weapon immediately.

However, there was a strand of blood connecting the pommel of the blade to Alice's hand.

Pulling back the blade, Alice appeared in front of Nyer and cleaved down.

Just as Nyer was about to block, sparks erupted from the blade edge.

Void Flux – Cleave!

Seeing this, Nyer smirked and prepared to take a step back when a bar of metal appeared behind him, interrupting his movements.

Kaden's lesson of using her Sigil to interrupt!

Unable to dodge, Nyer threw his palm against Alice's wrist in an attempt to knock the blade out of her hand.

Without any casting movements, a spark appeared in front of Nyer's shoulder, detonating into a small Void Flux to halt his movements at the last moment!

Nyer found himself in a spot where he could only take this move head on!

'Not bad.' He thought to himself.

*BANG!!!

Seeing her attack land, Alice felt a tinge of excitement when cold water was poured over her joy.

"I've seen Lua use her attack many times. While yours is similar, it lacks the penetration given to the true Executioner Blade."

Her blade was held behind Nyer's fingers!

"Let's turn things up a notch."

With Alice proving that she could force him in the state where he couldn't dodge, Nyer decided that it was time to use some of his Sigils.

Chapter 274 - 274: Nyer's Lesson

With Alice's sword held between Nyer's fingers, Alice didn't hesitate to change her sword's form and retreat.

Seeing the blade change forms, Nyer couldn't help but be surprised by its properties but this was no time to be impressed.

Taking a step forward, Nyer's cloak billowed behind him as Sigils appeared across his body. Holding his hand in front of him, a greatsword manifested itself as he entered a standard stance.

"If Lua can ignore all forms of defence and Kaden can mimic all forms of casting, what do you think I can do?" Nyer asked with a grin.

Furrowing her brows, Alice considered the options for a moment.

'He doesn't seem to be the defensive type... Is he a caster? Doesn't seem like it either.'

"Think carefully. The three of us are chosen as the last line of defence for her Majesty." Nyer grinned as the aura around him continued to increase.

Closing her eyes, Alice thought of one possibility and cold sweat dripped down her back.

"Do you ensure no one can run away?" Alice asked with a twitching smile.

"Shall we put that to the test?"

***BANG!!!!**

At that moment, Nyer disappeared from his spot and his blade was inches away from Alice's body.

The space around her seemed to have transformed into a thick sludge, making it almost impossible to move her body. The harder she tried, the harder the resistance.

Even though she could see the blade approach her body, she couldn't do anything about it.

Gritting her teeth, it was now or never! If Nyer's power was indeed to stop others from escaping his attack, then all she could do was to face it head on!

*BANG!!!

Activating her resonance, violet flames erupted from her body as a new dress manifested on her body. Stars gathered above her head and formed a crown, similar to Velouria.

Seeing this, Nyer widened his eyes in shock as he clearly recognised the crown!

His moment of hesitation made it impossible for him to adjust the blade's edge as it was now up to Alice to fight back.

Even though Resonance had increased her physical strength, it was still lacking.

But this wasn't everything she had.

The violet flames that coated her body began to rage as it expanded around her. The spectral image of a beast tore through the flames and revealed itself to Nyer.

*CLANG!!!!

Temporarily boosting her physical power to the utmost limit thanks to Bloodline Release, Alice could feel her entire body screaming out in pain. But she had to counter immediately!

Allowing Nyer's sword to carry on its momentum and use it to her advantage, Alice twisted her body in the air and slammed her heel down against Nyer's head.

Not giving him time to recover, she grabbed his head and swung herself onto his back.

Leaning back, she flipped down and tensed her legs, lifting Nyer and slamming him into the ground. Reaching for her blade, she slashed down towards him.

*CLANG!!!!

Blocking her attack with a spare blade he carried on him, Nyer watched as the metal was cut apart with ease.

But this bought him enough time to push himself away.

Just as he was about to praise Alice for her power, he realised she wasn't done.

In the time it took for him to push himself away, Alice had aimed her finger towards his direction.

The world seemed to lose its colour as flames converged towards a single spark, absorbing the colour and life within Hell Gate.

Void Flux!

Feeling a brief chill, Nyer instinctively raised his guard but his action simply caused Alice to grin.

Realising the truth behind this smile, Nyer glanced back and saw a barrage of Void Fluxes mid-detonation.

Understanding that guarding is no use right now, Nyer created another greatsword in hand and twisted his body, releasing a horizontal slash.

*CRACK!!!

Similar to when Allura would release her Executioner's blade, the space around Nyer began to distort.

However, unlike Allura, Nyer did not destroy the attacks. Instead, the space was completely frozen as he dismissed the blade.

"Phew, you made me work harder than I thought I would. Honestly speaking, you could probably work as a Captain in an army. Roughly as strong as standard 5 Sigil bearers." Nyer smiled while rubbing his chin.

With the power that Alice has shown, she should comfortably be able to defeat 5 Sigil bearers so long as she's wary of their power or take them by surprise. 4 Sigil bearers will pose no issue to her.

Taking a step to the side, he snapped his fingers and the space unfroze itself. The Void Fluxes frozen in the air began to move once more as it collided with where Nyer was standing a moment ago.

Seeing that she failed to succeed in her sneak attack, Alice could only sigh and raise her hands in surrender. The Partial Bloodline Release dispelled itself as exhaustion washed over Alice.

"Don't look so down. You forced me to freeze the space, that's quite the feat. But I've gotten a general idea of where you're at in terms of power. Don't tell Lua or Kaden but compared to them back when they had three Sigils and the blessing of her Majesty, you're much stronger. Both in instincts and creativity." Nyer reassured with a grin.

Hearing this, Alice couldn't help but smile feeling a little proud but quickly shook her head.

She wasn't satisfied with just this, she wanted to achieve more.

To go above and beyond.

"It seems you'll have no issue with combat. You simply need to know a method to surprise your opponent. First of all, what do you think is the most important factor when it comes to fighting someone stronger?" Nyer asked while crossing his arms.

"Information."

"Correct. Information is the line between life and death. With information, you can plan accordingly and react. Without information, your reaction will always be delayed and trying to guess what they have may cause you to hesitate and miss a perfect opportunity to counter. Now, what are the methods to collect information?" Nyer nodded his head.

"To observe?" Alice replied after a pause.

"Half correct. The best way to obtain information is through mind games. You don't necessarily need to outsmart your opponent but rather force them into a mindset where they think they have full control of the battle. Let them realise it's an easy fight and that they don't need to think too hard.

"Once they enter this mindset, it's time for you to strike and gather as much information as you can. With their guard down, they'll reveal habits or clues to their fighting style. How much information you can obtain is based on how long you can defend against their attacks without being suspicious." Nyer explained as Alice nodded her head and made a mental note.

"Even masters will show a moment of blunder if they're not careful. The hardest part is to make them enter this mindset. Struggle too hard and they'll think you're tenacious and try their best to kill you. Don't try hard enough and they'll kill you since you're not defending properly. It's key to strike a balance between two and once you master this, you'll be able far more fights."

It was through this method that he could fight on even footing with the Apostles. Thus far, none of the Apostles has forced him to use his full power so they're cautious. He has never focused on making himself overpower his opponent but rather let them fumble and capitalise on that chance! He knew what they could do but they didn't know what he was capable of.

Once the opportunity reveals itself, he'll latch on and kill them before they realise what has happened.

Hearing this, Alice paused in realisation.

"Wait, did you do this on me?"

During the fight, he had always shown just enough to keep her on her guard yet made her believe there was one chance for her to fight back. Subconsciously, she had put all her chips into that one gamble.

If she hadn't and stayed patient, there might've been a better chance and a moment for her to gather information.

"I tried but it ended in failure. It's far easier to do this with people who believe they're stronger than you than it is with someone weaker. I knew you were planning something, but I didn't think you'd overpower spatial distortion. And that moment forced me to stop my attack." Nyer admitted with a shrug.

Had it been anyone else, it would've been checkmate the moment he discovered that they had one last gamble.

"Finding your opponent's hidden cards is the final win condition in a fight. Once you find out their hidden cards, you can lure them into a trap to reveal it or force the fight to end before they can play the card. A lot of this comes with experience but during the time I'll be training you, I'll try and teach you how to act weak." Nyer chuckled.

Of course, acting weak wasn't the be all end all strategy. There are benefits that come with applying pressure to your opponents and forcing them to fumble due to nervousness. However, for Alice, her firepower is far superior compared to the other three Sigil bearers.

It was to the point even he was shocked by her potential.

No one would expect her level of power, not even the Gods.

"When the Apostles come to train you, you'll need to act weak enough so they don't raise their guard against you but also not too weak where they don't take you seriously. If you can find the right balance, the rewards you can reap from this exchange will be unthinkable."

Nodding her head, there was a fire of determination in Alice's eyes. She didn't know how long she had in the Inverted World but she was determined to learn as much as possible.

Perhaps she could even shock Kaden in the real world with her improvements.

Chapter 275 - 275: Mimicry

In the pits of Hell Gate, the constant sound of weapons clashing and abilities firing could be heard as two figures continuously charged towards one another.

"Wrong! Observe the body! Don't make hazard guesses!" Nyer shouted, parrying Alice's slash. Leaning down, he punched against her elbow, almost breaking it but Alice managed to twist her arm just in time to avoid this.

But he didn't stop there as he followed up with a throw over his shoulders into a stomp that Alice managed to roll away from.

"Making a guess like that I'll leave you open! If you want to die then feel free to make those guesses!" Nyer lectured as he adjusted his grip on his blade and charged forth once more.

Gritting her teeth, Alice was forced to defend against his onslaught.

As she was being pushed back with no more room for defence, she was forced to activate her partial Bloodline Release just for a chance to extend this fight.

"Weak! It's clear you've been waiting for something through your body language! Anyone with half a brain will realise!" Nyer reprimanded as he twisted his body and slammed his heel against Alice's head.

***BANG!!!!**

Crashing through a boulder, blood poured from her wounds as she found herself lacking the strength to get up.

"You have to be mindful of your own actions and not just your opponent's. The way you shift your centre of gravity to look for a counter, your own habits and even eye contact can tell a lot about a person.

"Here's what I've noticed so far just to name a few things. First, you always take a step back when you're preparing a kick. You have an unconscious action of holding your breath in order to activate your abilities and furrow your brows when you're trying to focus on aiming the ability.

"Not only that, but your eyes betray your thoughts rather easily. I can tell when you're simulating a counterattack in your mind as your eyes would wander across my body, thinking if it's possible to attack from there." Nyer explained while pouring some healing blood into her mouth.

"With this information, it's easy to position myself to make you think it's possible for you to create some breathing space."

Nodding her head with a sigh, Alice reached out with her hand as Nyer helped her up from the rubble.

"I don't know how to change the part with my eyes though." Alice sighed.

Even Allura had mentioned this to her in the future as her eyes expressed everything about her. A habit that's become permanent due to her experiences with the Zenia's.

Thinking about this for a moment, Nyer opened his mouth and offered a suggestion.

"I want you to imagine this. Visualise something that annoys you, disinterests you or something you hate. Visualise that over your opponent. Do not let external factors affect your thoughts and block it out. Use that to your advantage."

Taking a deep breath, Alice closed her eyes and thought about someone who matched those criterias.

What annoys her?

The people who forcefully make others drink Abyss Blood. The people who discriminate against those who show clear signs of side effects and treat them less than human.

What disinterests her?

Not much. There was little she knew about the world but if she had to pick one, it would be the noble families aside from the Zenia's.

Something she hated? Too many.

After she gained her freedom, she hated a lot of things. However, what she hated from the bottom of her heart with no equal was her father, brothers and the head scholar who experimented on her.

These four were the target of her revenge.

'If I had one path to my revenge and all others serve as distractions... I should kick them aside. They're nothing in the face of my ultimate goal.'

Opening her eyes, Alice stared at Nyer with an aura of disinterest and disdain. As though she was looking at a piece of trash on the side of the road. Something that should not even get her attention as she walked the path of vengeance.

Feeling a chill down his back, Nyer forced a smile as Alice was far more talented than his original expectation. For her to reveal this kind of expression that he would rarely see even in soldiers was remarkable.

"Let's begin another spar-"

Just as he was about to finish the sentence, Alice's blade brushed against his face as he had managed to tilt his head to the side in time.

Realising that she was in a state of trance right now, Nyer decided to see what she was capable of.

Taking a step back, he wanted to give her some space but she rejected!

Widening his eyes, Nyer watched as Alice jumped forward, coming face to face with him.

"!!!"

Snapping her fingers, a Void Flux could be seen manifesting in front of his eyes. But as his attention was taken by the attack, Alice twisted her body and roundhouse kicked Nyer in the ribs. Without hesitation, blood and metal manifested around them as a blade slashed down from above while blood stabbed up from below.

Just as Nyer was about to block this using spacial distortion, violet flames erupted from the blood as Alice activated partial Bloodline Release!

The illusion of the beast behind her cried out in jubilation as a sea of flames was manifested thanks to the blood.

Noticing that his connection with the Abyss has waned thanks to these flames, his Sigil power was too slow in its activation and he had to tank these attacks head on.

Stumbling back and out of the flames, Nyer immediately looked around for Alice but couldn't see her.

'Above!'

Glancing up, he could see Alice already mid swing and ready to release Void Flux – Cleave!

*BANG!!!!

Jumping to the side at the last moment, a deep crevice was created from the impact as Alice pushed against her hands and sent a kick towards Nyer's chest, forcing him back.

Feeling a blood thread behind him, he realised he had stepped into a tripwire and two instances of Void Fluxes detonated around him.

As the smoke cleared, he could see an array of threads, traps and pillars around him while Alice couldn't be seen.

'What a troublesome brat.' He thought with a smile.

He noticed that Alice had two sides in battle. First, the mindset of a berserker. Someone who can fight without regard for any injuries they sustained so long as their enemies took damage.

Second, the mindset of a puppeteer, setting traps and forcing her opponents to walk into disadvantageous positions.

'Though on second thought... Seems like she'll always be the berserker even when acting like a puppeteer.' Nyer thought as he turned around and parried Alice's attack.

Without hesitation, she created a metal dagger thanks to her third Sigil and activated Void Flux – Cleave!

The power of which shattered the dagger apart but the slash was still released without issues.

Tilting his head back, part of his hair was cut by her attack as Nyer let out a laugh.

"Perhaps you should take up a job as a hairdresser. What do you think?" He asked but noticed that she wasn't taking any of this in.

Her eyes were fully focused on taking his life as though he was simply an annoyance on the side of the road. An obstacle to her goal.

Shaking his head with a smile, he pulled his hand back and slashed down towards her.

The space around her began to freeze.

While this was happening, Cayla was watching from a cliff not far from the battle. Even though Velouria had sent her here to help Alice, she didn't get a chance to show up yet.

She wasn't sure how she should even help Alice in this situation. The most she could do for immediate benefit would be to enhance her vision but she already had that covered.

Just as she thought of this, Cayla couldn't help but pause noticing something changing inside Alice.

She felt a resonance to something foreign yet similar. The other Cayla!

'Is she waking up?'

Furrowing her brows, Cayla observed the situation quietly.

###

Watching the blade descend upon her, Alice could only think of one thing in her mind.

'Slow.'

She could see the twisting of energy, how Nyer swung the blade and how the space around her would lock into place.

For Allura's Nova Core which she then later repurposed into Void Flux, it was a matter of condensing and detonating.

But Nyer was the opposite. Instead of condensing the energy, he releases it to form a structure, preventing the movement of space and instead locking it in place.

Alice didn't know what was going on but it felt as though a door in her mind had just opened up. Information flowed into her mind, theories and simulations manifested as she instinctively made a cut on her arm.

If Nyer's ability was to lock the space by outputting energy then if she was to counteract by using Void Flux...

***BANG!!!!**

Watching his blade collide with Alice's Void Flux, Nyer stumbled back in surprise.

'She managed to regain movement? No... She countered it by collapsing the space.'

Looking at Alice who was standing in a trance-like state, he couldn't help but wonder if she had gained an enlightenment of some kind.

Once she opened her eyes, there was a new light inside her gaze.

Adjusting the size of her obsidian blade, Alice transformed it into a greatsword and mimicked Nyer's movements.

"Oi oi oi, this isn't a joke. Are you trying to copy my movements now? I'm flattered but it might be beyond you." Nyer laughed while brushing his hair back using his hand. To his surprise and confusion, Alice was doing the same.

It felt as though he was looking into a mirror that was reflecting his every move but at a slight delay.

"Hou~ Let's see where you can take this mimicry then." Nyer narrowed his eyes. There was a bad feeling in his heart but he dismissed it for now.

Right now, he had to see how far she could go by copying his movements.

Chapter 276 - 276: Velouria's Successor

*BANG!!!!

As their blades clashed, Nyer watched in fascination as the space began to lock and crack!

'She's mimicking me!'

Twisting his body, he prepared to unleash a diagonal slash when Alice did the same albeit a little slower.

Clashing blades once more, the two were pushed back with Alice taking more steps than Nyer.

Yet despite this gap, she didn't dash towards him.

'Right now, she's a mirror. Recording everything I do. If I don't attack, she won't either.' Nyer narrowed his eyes.

She was a canvas that was slowly dyeing itself in his colours. And soon, it'll be a perfect reflection.

'Perhaps that's how she was able to copy Lua's attack and Kaden's casting... Is it Cayla? She has the crown... Has her majesty passed everything to her? Is that why she's been getting Lua and Kaden to train her?' He thought to himself.

He knew that Velouria's body was deteriorating but he didn't think she would've picked a successor already. Alice, a girl who came out of nowhere and possesses both the crown and Cayla.

Even though he should feel happy, a bitter feeling emerged in his chest.

His Master has resolved herself for death and aims to make the most of her life.

Taking a deep breath and sighing out, he glanced up at the sky and let out a bitter smile.

Painful.

His chest tightened up and he felt as though his heart was about to break apart. Therefore, as her loyal retainer, he shall do his best to fulfil his Master's final wish. He will train Alice as she expects him to, even if Alice is walking proof that Velouria has resolved herself to die.

Determination filled his mind as he turned back to Alice and entered an offensive stance.

He will imprint everything he knew, his combat experience and his techniques into her consciousness.

She will become the Sword, Cane and Shield of the Ayrian empire.

###

"So what do you think?" Enris asked as the three Surface Gods held another meeting.

They were currently sitting in Solaris' home while planning their next moves.

"Hard to say. 50% of me believes she's bluffing but you can never tell. Velouria is a monstrous b*tch after all." Solaris frowned.

Just that brief showcase of her power was enough to make them reconsider their plans.

"How's the recruitment of Nyer?" Enris asked curiously as Lunaria simply shook her head.

Even with the news that Velouria was going to die eventually due to the nature of the Abyss, Nyer refused to leave her side.

"Then I guess we're going with the backup plan. We'll help the Abyss expand and speed up her death." Enris laughed.

They knew the risks but Velouria simply held too much power. Even now, parts of their own believers are leaving and joining the Abyss instead. That wasn't something they could tolerate, especially if it's someone who's already one foot in the grave.

"You do realise that there's a chance that we need to deal with the Outer Gods if we go through with this right?" Lunaria sighed.

If she was honest, she would rather sit on the side and watch Velouria die instead of partaking like this. But it was a situation where either all of them agreed or none of them did. If it was just Enris and Solaris taking care of this then Lumiria risked getting targeted by them once they kill Velouria.

"To what extent? If we let her wither and die naturally, we'll lose most of our followers by then. Once that happens, what kind of state do you think we'll be left in?" Solaris shook his head.

"Who told her to lure our followers? If she simply behaved and hid herself in the Abyss then no one would care. Don't invade Ayr and I won't attack? Hah, what a load of sh*t." Enris laughed sarcastically.

'She can't exactly help if your religion is sh*t...' Lumiria couldn't help but think to herself seeing Enris mock Velouria.

With how the Eclipse Cult operates, it was no surprise that people would defect to the Abyss. Who would want to live every day doing rituals, sacrifices and fighting? Not her that's for sure and not the believers that defected either.

As for her, she doesn't know why people reject immortality. It should be the perfect paradise for those frail humans with short life spans. She had to give them credit though, for such a short lived species they achieve remarkable feats.

'If only they were immortal then they could keep innovating.' To Lumiria, it was truly a shame.

"So what are we doing about Alice then?" She asked.

Out of all the people in the meeting, Alice was the one who made the biggest impression on her. It wasn't that she was strong nor the fact that she was absurdly weak.

Instead, it was her 'spirit' that interested her.

As the Goddess of the Moon, her authority was one that governed the spirit and soul. Yet hers was peculiar. Despite her appearance, her sound was remarkably young, far from the 20 years she claimed it to be.

But that wasn't the only thing. The outline of her soul, so blurred yet so dense at the same time. It's as though she was looking at a black canvas. A complete and utterly silent void yet so full.

It entranced her.

She wanted to know the secret behind such a soul.

"Are you talking about the sparring? We'll just have our Apostles teach her some random theories. It's not like it'll do her any good since she's just a three Sigil bearer." Solaris shrugged.

"So petty. I'm planning on having my Apostles teach her as much as they can in the time they're given." Enris grinned. Even though she disliked Velouria, she loved the chaos her very existence brought to the world.

It made this monotone life far more entertaining.

Heck, if Alice could learn from the Apostles then she wanted to see what Alice could do on a battlefield where there were no rules to protect her.

"What a waste of effort." Solaris frowned.

"Don't tell me you're afraid of a tiny three Sigil human? Aww does the big buff Sun God want a kiss on the cheek to make you feel better?" Enris mocked while blowing him a kiss.

"Tch!" Clicking his tongue out of frustration, Solaris felt as though a vein was about to pop.

"There's no need to try so hard in the first place since she's just a weak human. I'd rather spare my Apostles the effort." He scoffed.

"What a boring man. Isn't that right Lumi?" Enris laughed.

"No comment. But I do believe it is in our best interest to show a bit of effort. Or would you rather get on Velouria's bad side early?" Lumiria shook her head.

"Fine. I'll leave it up to my Apostles what they want to teach her then. Tch, what a waste of time. I'd still prefer to just kill Velouria here and now."

"Then you can go at it alone if you have the balls. I have to admit I'm rather interested in what the Abyss is planning now. If it establishes a connection with another realm then there may be more lands for us to rule." Enris laughed.

Seeing that these two were simply chatting away, Lumiris zoned out from the conversation as she recalled the sight of Alice's spirit. There weren't many things that were a secret to her in this life. As an immortal being, she has seen practically everything.

But Alice's spirit? That was a first. She looked forward to their next meeting.

Unbeknownst to these Gods, the human they marked as a weak being was now holding her own against Nyer!

Even if he was taking it easy for her to learn, she was still keeping up.

As the mirror reflection of Nyer's movements, she began to catch up. She understood the intent behind his moves, why he uses them when he does and what signs he looks for in order to use certain moves.

*CLANG!!!

Launching a stab, their blade tips collided as their timing has matched!

With their timing now matched, violet flames burned across Alice's body as she snapped her finger. Void Fluxes manifested around Nyer as he glanced around and twisted his body.

But before he could launch the slash, Alice jumped into his range and parried his attack before it could be launched.

Widening his eyes, Nyer was worried that Alice would get caught in her own attack.

Yet...

The attacks didn't detonate!

Her goal was to bait him into using this move. And once he did, he had already fallen into her trap. Ramming her shoulder into his chest, Alice activated partial Bloodline Release at the same moment to boost her physical power and caused him to stumble back.

A metal bar appeared behind his ankle, forcing him to adjust his stance.

Taking this chance, Alice entered a low posture and cleaved up with Void Flux – Cleave!

*BANG!!!

Parrying the attack with the face of his greatsword, Nyer managed to redirect the slash elsewhere before launching a punch towards Alice that was dodged.

Just as Alice was about to slash towards Nyer's head once more, a blade appeared next to her neck.

Pausing in a mixture of confusion and shock, Alice glanced back and saw Nyer standing there with a smirk.

"You simply copied what I let you copy. Did you forget about acting weak and surprising them with your trump card?" Nyer laughed as Alice snapped out of her trance-like state and sighed in annoyance.

"Yeah well, some people have one trump card maybe two. You have like five hundred, tch." Alice clicked her tongue. It felt like every time she had Nyer on the ropes, he would reveal that she's been dancing on his palm this entire time.

"That's what allows me to survive against these abnormal geniuses. Now let's take a break and reflect on what you've learned." Nyer laughed as he patted her head. Looking for a suitable boulder nearby, he slashed his sword a few times and turned it into a set of tables and chairs.

A skill he mastered for Velouria when they were travelling through the Abyss.

Perhaps it was fate for him to use the same skill for Velouria's successor.

Chapter 277 - 277: Nyer's Evaluation And Next Lesson

As the two of them sat down, Nyer glanced towards the cliff.

"Cayla, are you not joining us?" He chuckled, offering Cayla a seat.

Hearing this, Alice was surprised as she thought Cayla would be with Velouria but clearly that wasn't the case.

Without saying anything, Cayla simply sat down next to them.

"Now that we're all here, let's talk. The only thing I can really say about your fighting is that you tend to get a little carried away once you get into the groove of things. Your vision becomes narrow and you forget that they may have more trump cards.

"Your instincts when it comes to using your abilities are top notch, nothing to complain about there. Flames are also surprisingly effective. I will say you're missing out on the potential of your third Sigil though." Nyer shook his head.

"What do you suggest then?" Alice asked curiously while pulling out her flask and filled it up with Ayrian Mead.

This talk was going to last a while so she may as well get something to drink while she listened.

"Making annoyances is all well and good but it lacks a certain... kill potential. Naturally, it's impossible for you to manifest the metal inside their body but think about it like this."

Reaching into his pouch, Nyer brought out a spare sword and shredded it into tiny splinters.

"First of all, if you were to create tiny needles even smaller than this, you should be able to control it without any issues right?" He asked.

Flicking her finger, Alice did just that and created a handle of metal needles.

"Now, how fast are you able to expand the material? I don't have Kaden's power so I can mimic it but I'm sure you should know what I'm getting at." Nyer smiled.

Furrowing her brows, Alice closed her eyes and visualised the pathways within her body.

If she wanted to expand the metal as fast as possible, she'd need to increase the output and speed while efficiency would plummet.

Watching the needle expand, Nyer scratched his chin.

"Hmm... It's a little slower than I had hoped. But it's not like this isn't impossible to work with.

"Have you ever tried to throw a little splinter at them and then expanding it?" He asked but Alice shook her head.

It wasn't as though she had never thought of it but simply put, the expansion was too slow and making the splinters took too long.

Rather than using her energy for an attack that takes too much effort with a low return, she'd rather use it to disorientate her enemies with pillars.

"Then what about interrupting their breathing?" Nyer smirked.

"What?" Blinking her eyes in confusion, Alice tilted her head, unsure as to what he meant by this.

"If you can't expand it then there's no need to. What if you make a handful of these splinters near them? For example, if I had your third Sigil against an opponent that takes deep breaths to calm themselves...

"What do you think will happen if they began to breathe in countless splinters of sharp metal either through their mouth or nose?"

Imagining this situation, Alice shivered as the damage done inside their body could be dangerous. She couldn't materialise metal inside their body but letting them breathe it in was 100% possible.

"What if their body is stronger than the splinters? And the splinters have no effect." Alice asked but Nyer shook his head.

"There are two options for you if this happens. First option is to merge it with your flames. I've seen you coat your flames on things. While I'm not sure the exact conditions required, I'm guessing one of the requirements is your blood.

"Your flames have always appeared on your body or through the blood that you generate. If you coat these splinters with your blood and then let them breathe it in then you can ignite it just as it enters their orifice.

"The second option is for you to expand the splinters as fast as you can. It won't do much damage since it's slow but it'll be a pretty good distraction. Imagine you're about to fight someone then you find out that a piece of metal was expanding in your mouth or nose. You'll be in a hurry to get it out and in that time, your guard will be down." Nyer explained.

Hearing his ideas, Alice's smile twitched as Nyer was cruel but effective!

His ideas are aimed at making the most troublesome scenarios for his opponent to deal with and not only that, but he was also able to pinpoint the requirement for her flames to appear.

'What a terrifying opponent.' Alice shivered.

"And speaking of which, I believe Master sent you here to help Alice right? Are you helping her awaken her Eye?" Nyer smiled, causing Cayla to pause in shock.

"It's not surprising really. It's pretty obvious that her Eye is special and the only other one I recall being similar is you. Considering that she has the crown, it's only natural for me to assume that you're helping her too. What I don't understand is how she possesses the crown and the Eye even though you're still linked to Master." He sighed while leaning back.

"Regardless, I'm sure Master has her plans. My job right now is to simply teach and nothing more."

"Master sent me here to see if I can help Alice awaken the Eye and learn more about it. You can think of it as having a dormant piece of me. It showed signs of waking up during the fight but failed to cross the threshold." Cayla explained while looking at Alice who seemed a little lost.

"When did it show signs of waking up?"

"When you began to copy my movements. Master should've told you what the Eyes do right? It grants information." Nyer chuckled.

Even though there were signs that Alice was great at mimicking and learning, that last demonstration was no doubt a product of the Eye. The way she mimicked his movements until they were fully synced up. Even down to how he froze space.

"Cayla, you should help her learn how to control that last power. If she can master it then she'll be able to pinpoint her opponent's weaknesses much faster." He suggested as Cayla agreed.

Walking over to Alice, Cayla had a suggestion.

"Can you let me borrow your left eye for a while?" She asked while Alice paused.

Recalling what it was like the first time Kaden dug out her eye to implant Cayla, Alice couldn't help but wonder if it was going to be the same.

"Are you going to gouge my eye out?" Alice asked with a twitching smile.

"What? No. I'm just going to house myself in it for a while since it's not a permanent connection." Cayla shook her head.

Feeling a little sceptical, Alice eventually relented and let Cayla do whatever she needed to do.

Pressing her palm against Alice's left eye, Cayla transformed into countless strands of energy that embedded itself into her eye. A cool sensation washed over Alice and surprisingly, it was painless.

In fact, Alice could even call it soothing.

[You can open your eyes now. It should feel a little annoying to get used to.] Cayla's voice rang out in her mind as Alice nodded her head.

Opening her eyes, the familiar sight of Hell Gate was untouched but Nyer looked far different than what he looked like before.

Dull patterns could be seen around his body, signifying the Sigils marked onto him.

[This is what you should be seeing when... 'I' awaken. It'll grant you full access to the knowledge of contracts created by the Abyss, meaning you can see how many Sigils they possess or how strong a beast is.]

'No kidding.' Alice swallowed her saliva nervously.

Now that she has temporarily gained full access to Cayla, she could see the aura around Nyer. A peak into the power he holds. Just the sight of his aura sent her body into a fight of flight response as she struggled to sit still.

Seeing the forced smile on her face, Nyer understood that she must be seeing what Velouria was used to seeing.

Letting out a soft chuckle, his aura began to shrink until it was bearable for Alice.

"Not many people would do this since it's a very niche skill to have but you should never take things at face value. Some random old man could be a grizzled veteran like me. So just because you can see things with Cayla, don't go around picking fights okay?" Nyer laughed as Alice nodded her head.

"If I remember correctly, Cayla should help you see the energy pathways within your body as well. You can use that to determine what your opponent is trying to do along with refining your own attacks. Since your instincts are top notch, we'll be focusing on refining your other skillsets during the time we have."

His next goal was to teach her how to be annoying with her skills. The more annoying she is to fight, the faster her opponent's focus will break. And once that happens, they're more prone to dropping their guard.

It was how he taught Allura to fight which is why she talks a lot during a fight now. Through taunting and mockery, she was able to force others to make mistakes out of anger. As for Kaden, he simply found flaws in their casting, there was no need for words.

"Prepare yourself. Since this'll be the last break we'll be taking." Nyer grinned.

Hearing this, Alice froze up.

"I will teach you how to become an absolute menace to fight. To the point that people will avoid fighting you even if they're stronger."

Seeing Nyer crack his knuckles, Alice felt her senses ringing out in danger as a cold chill went down her spine. But she could not run as Nyer already had her in his grip.

Without giving her a chance to complain, he threw her towards the training ground and chased after her.

Only the echoes of Alice's scream could be heard in Hell Gate followed by the clashing of blades.

Chapter 278 - 278: Nyer's Suggestion And Cayla's Answer

Looking at the destruction caused by their training, Nyer couldn't help but rub his chin with a small smile on his face.

They had been training for around two days now and in that time, Alice had made considerable progress when it came to reaction and optimization. She's tried to use the ideas they talked about before but it was still too difficult to implement during a practical fight.

Which is why he focused on her hand to hand since trying to learn too much was also bad. It was good to refine what she knew thus far.

Alice's greatest achievement during the two days of training was succeeding in landing a single slash on his body. It was shallow and he was holding back. However, she had still succeeded in breaching the defences of an Abyss Lord.

That in itself was far more impressive than what people could accomplish throughout their entire lives.

"Still alive?" Nyer called out with a laugh as all he heard back was groans.

Currently, Alice was buried under countless rubble with only her hand being visible.

Seeing her give him a lacklustre wave, Nyer nodded his head.

"Master has let me know that your other teachers have arrived. You'll be given a day with them to learn as much as you can. The first day will be with Preservation and Protection, second will be with Spirituality and Immortality. And the last day will be with War and Famine.

"Remember, act weak but not too weak. Let them underestimate you while you take as much as you can." He reminded as Alice clawed herself out of the rubble.

"Urg... Any hints on what they're going to teach me?"

"I have some ideas but nothing concrete. I doubt they'll teach you their trademarks. However, foundational knowledge is more important than fancy skills." Nyer shrugged as he handed her a healing vial while Cayla appeared next to her.

During these two days, she's been trying to help Alice awaken her other self but it was futile. No matter what she tried to do, the other Cayla was unresponsive.

Cayla wasn't sure what happened but the damage her future self sustained was far bigger than her original expectations. The only reason why Alice could tap into the power was having all the conditions be perfect. A split moment of synchronisation where her mind linked up with her power.

Without this split moment, Alice was limited in what she could do.

Waiting for Alice to finish the healing vial, Nyer reached into his bag and broke a stick in half. Before Alice could even react, shadows manifested around her and teleported her away, leaving Cayla and Nyer together in Hell Gate.

"So what do you think of her?" Nyer asked suddenly.

Turning around in confusion, Cayla simply tilted her head.

"What do you think of young Alice as Master's successor?" He corrected himself.

"She's... Adequate I guess." Cayla replied after a brief pause.

"Young Alice is talented. There's no denying that. But to fill the role of our Master... She's sorely lacking. I've tried my best to overlook it these past few days, trying to find a reason to believe in Master's choice but I find myself unable to accept it. Are you not the same?" Nyer sighed as he leaned back in his seat.

When presented with this question, Cayla didn't know how she should respond. She knew that she should respect Velouria's choice of the matter but a bitterness still lingered in her heart.

"We're just a- Actually never mind." Cayla cut herself at the last moment. She didn't want to expose the fact that they were simply memories and that the past had already been set in stone.

"A memory right? It's not hard to figure out once you begin looking at the gaps." Nyer chuckled.

"She possesses the Eyes, no, the Eye of the Abyss and the Crown. She contains splinters of Master's power deep inside, similar yet so very different to the current her. Not only that, Master's connection to the Abyss has been wavering. A tether is still there but compared to before, it's lacking.

"Like a candle fire when compared to the sun. Master is no longer the chosen of the Abyss. A mere husk of before. Even the power she showed in the meeting was a fraction of what she should be capable of, even if the Abyss had been expanding. Which can only mean one thing.

"We're echoes of the past. We know that time travel is impossible thanks to the experiments that Master has done before. But viewing memories? That is possible." Nyer explained with a bitter smile.

In the past, Velouria had tried to turn back time in order to fix the connection between the Abyss and the Surface. However, all her attempts ended in failure. She couldn't even turn back time for a minute never mind to the point where the two realms were joined together.

But the Abyss is like a giant library, housing the memories of every being and everything that's happened within its confines. Meaning their current time can be viewed in the future.

With that in mind, Nyer could only conclude that Alice is a foreign visitor witnessing the passing of history.

As for what she was here to witness, Nyer had a guess but he dare not say it.

"So you figured it out. But what then? What can we do as memories? Master has chosen to continue forward, doing her best to prepare Alice for when she goes back. And once she does, we'll cease to exist." Cayla let out a hollow laugh as she slumped back down on her seat.

"I have a plan. But I need your help. Cayla, why do you think I chose Hell Gate? If I needed an empty place to train young Alice, any layer within the Abyss would do. But why Hell Gate?" Nyer asked as Cayla frowned.

Thinking about it for a moment, she paused in realisation.

"The fight you had with Famine."

"Mnm. During the fight I had with Famine, the barrier in this realm was weakened by Famine's attack, unable to recover. Compared to the other layers, this one will always be the most delicate. For those chosen by the Abyss, especially the Crown, there will be a connection to the Heart.

"The heart is no longer with Master. It is the most unique possession of the Chosen after all as it symbolises the Abyss itself. It's the final clue I needed to realise that Master was no longer the chosen and that we're memories. But funnily enough, young Alice has a connection to the heart. Faint yet undeniable." Nyer narrowed his eyes.

"Isn't that weird? That in this realm of memories, there is still a passageway leading to the real Heart. So why don't we open it up?"

Furrowing her brows, Cayla frowned.

"Don't look at me like that, allow me to explain my thoughts. Because for this operation, I need your help." Nyer chuckled seeing Cayla's doubts.

"Originally, I was planning on betraying Master. Well... Betraying is a strong term but for what I planned to do, it was accurate.

"Right now, Master is at her weakest. If this was reality, she'd be in a constant state of conflict with the Abyss. Her desire to hold it back and its desire to continue expanding.

"What do you think would happen if someone were to intervene during that fight? A third party was to appear and steal away half of the power possessed by both sides?" Nyer asked.

Cayla had her guard up but she couldn't deny the fact that she was curious.

"The third party would gain the largest portion of power during this fight."

"Indeed. Meaning, the burden placed upon Master will be transferred to me. At the same time, the Abyss would lose part of its influence. With this in mind, if things go right, I would become a second God

of the Abyss with the same power as Master in her prime. This act will no doubt steal away Master's authority but she'll be alive." Nyer glanced down while tapping his finger on the table.

"However... Since we're memories, this will no longer work."

"Because she no longer has the authority right? She's simply being dragged along until her death." Cayla interrupted as Nyer nodded his head.

"Yes. She's a puppet on a string, performing her final act until the string breaks and she is discarded. So even if I wrestle the authority from the 'Abyss' and Master, I'll gain nothing. If anything, it'll only serve to decrease the time she has remaining."

Clenching his fists, Nyer closed his eyes. A burning rage could be felt inside, a hate for the Abyss. How it expands without care of what it does to his Master and the harm it causes to the world.

He will defy the script it has prepared for them. This time, the puppets will become the director.

"That's why I need your help, Cayla. During the time we spend here with Young Alice, I've tracked down a rough passageway that we can try and use to establish a connection. Through this, I'll try and forcefully awaken the Heart in the future.

"Once the true Heart beats, we'll redirect it to Master instead of Alice. She'll go from being just a memory to gaining true life. This way, she can escape the confines of this memory and her own death."

"But Master would never agree to this." Cayla shook her head with a frown.

"I know. That's why I said it's no different to betraying Master. But for her survival, I'll go against her wishes. Which brings me to the next question, are you willing to betray Master with me? The success rate increases once I have you on my side." Nyer asked as Cayla was hesitant.

The Heart of the Abyss can only be linked to one person.

What he was asking her to do was to pick her true Master.

Velouria, or Alice who possesses her in the future.

Biting her lip, Cayla dwelled on her choices while Nyer was silent, allowing her to come to her own conclusion.

Seconds turn to minutes and the silence continued to drag on. Until finally, Cayla let out a defeated sigh.

"Fine. What do you need me to do."

She never chose Alice as her Master. To her, Velouria was her only Master.

Chapter 279 - 279: Defensive Stances

"Arggg!!!" Surprised by the sudden use of teleportation, Alice found herself falling on top of a table.

*BANG!!!

Cracking the table apart, she laid on the ground while holding her back in pain.

"Stupid Nyer... At least warn me before teleporting." Alice groaned while sitting up and looking around.

"Ah..."

"Er..."

Looking to her right, she noticed two familiar figures in the kitchen. Allura was sitting by the kitchen table with some cake on her plate.

Kaden was behind her giving her a shoulder massage.

Both were flushed in the face as Alice stared at the two of them unblinkingly.

". . ."

Closing her eyes for a moment, Alice adjusted her sitting posture.

"Please, don't mind me and continue."

"The f*ck do you mean continue! You got the wrong idea!" Allura shouted out while throwing her cake towards Alice with an embarrassed expression.

Quickly dodging the cake, Alice prepared to run away while Kaden could only let out a disappointed sigh.

"Let's not make the house more of a mess than it already is. Is Nyer not with you?" Kaden asked while bringing out a new table, replacing the one that Alice broke.

"No, he just sent me away with the teleport stick thing. He didn't follow me." Alice shook her head, dodging a grab from Allura.

"He's probably dealing with something on his end of things then. No matter, I believe he should've told you that the other Apostles are here right?" He asked while cleaning up the splattered remains of the cake that Allura threw.

"Mnm, should I go find Velouria first?"

Currently, Alice was being held by the back of her jacket like a cat while Allura was suppressing the embarrassment she was feeling. Even Kaden annoyed her since he didn't have a reaction to what Alice had said.

"Yes, Master's creating specialised training rooms for each of the Apostles that you'll be training with. Need me to teleport you there or are you going to walk?" Kaden offered as Alice immediately shook her head.

"I've had enough of teleporting around. I'll walk." She forced a smile.

All of the experiences she's had with teleporting resulted in falling.

"Suit yourself."

Convincing Allura to let Alice go, the two watched as Alice jumped onto the rooftop of their building and parkour towards the castle.

Seeing her speed and efficiency when it came to deploying footholds, Kaden couldn't help but whistle at her progress.

"I guess the commander hasn't lost his touch ay?" Kaden laughed while Allura agreed.

During the short moment when she tried to grab Alice, Alice managed to dodge her hand.

It wasn't a fluke either. Alice's eyes scanned her entire body to figure out the path of attack and check if it was a feint or not. Thinking about this, a smile appeared on Allura's face.

Perhaps if they sparred now, Allura might be forced to use her fourth and fifth Sigil to keep up with Alice.

###

Dashing across Ayr while creating footholds for herself, Alice managed to climb onto the side of the castle rather quickly. Following that, it was a simple climb up to the top.

Just as she vaulted over the balcony railings, Alice spotted Velouria with a smile on her face and a new mannequin next to her.

"You must be sweaty after running here. Why don't you take a shower and change into something more comfortable?" Velouria narrowed her eyes as Alice didn't hesitate to pivot on her foot and turn 180 degrees.

But before she could run, golden chains had already manifested in the air around her and locked her in place.

"You'll hurt my feelings if you continue running away like that." Velouria sighed while tracing her finger along Alice's chin.

"Didn't you make me a new dress last time? This one doesn't break easily, isn't that enough?" Alice forced a smile.

"Oh definitely not. You can't just wear one thing constantly. This may be your hunting attire but you'll need casual wear too."

"If I keep focusing on what I should wear, I'll lose time training with the Apostles." Alice reasoned as Velouria thought about it for a moment before relenting.

"Fine, I'll let you off. It's not as durable as your current outfit anyways." She sighed.

Flicking her finger, the mannequin and dress disappeared into the shadows while the chains disappeared around Alice.

"I've made three separate spaces for you to train. Each one will last for 24 hours once you enter and the Apostles have agreed to use that time to help you. They will only grant you a full day's of attention so use it wisely okay?" Velouria chuckled, handing Alice three keys.

Each one had a different carving on the surface representing the three Gods.

"Just stick the key into the air in front of you and a door will be created. But once you go in, you won't be able to come out until the time is up." She explained while Alice examined the keys.

"Shouldn't I take my time between the training then? So I can digest what I've learned." Alice raised an eyebrow but Velouria shook her head.

"With four Gods focusing on the expansion of the Abyss and tracking down where the Will is, it shouldn't take too long. I'd suggest you do them back to back so you can ensure you've seen what they can offer. Once you open the door, they receive a summon into the same training room and training will begin."

It was unsure how long Alice could stay in this memory which is why Velouria's been planning things in advance. That way, they can make the most out of the time they have right now.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice nodded her head.

"Alright, I'll get going now then." Looking for the key that represents the Sun God, Alice stabbed the key in the air and gave a twist.

As Velouria had explained, a door opened before her.

"Don't injure yourself okay? You got 72 hours of training to go through." Velouria smiled while watching Alice give her a wave and stepped the door.

Once the door closed behind Alice, Velouria lost her smile and stumbled back to her throne.

Looking down at her hand, a creeping darkness was slowly spreading from her fingertips.

"Just a little longer. Keep hiding, at least until Alice has seen everything she needs to see. Then you can take my life however you see fit." Velouria groaned as an Eye appeared on her palm.

Staring back at her, the Eye seemed to be communicating silently before slowing closing.

Sighing in relief, the pain faded away as Velouria let out a hollow laugh.

The Gods may think they're cornering the Will of the Abyss by tracking down its location. But they know nothing. Everything that happens and everything that's happening right now, the Will sees it all. It knows and it's letting the rats scuttle around as they wish.

###

Stepping through the door, Alice was greeted by a large arena with two people standing in the centre.

They were the same people who Alice saw at the meeting yet this time, they didn't wear the armour they wore at the meeting. Instead, they wore casual attire.

"She's here Arax." The woman glanced over.

"Let's not waste any time then." The man named Arax nodded his head.

Before Alice could even greet them, he appeared in front of her with his fist about to hit Alice's face!

Widening her eyes, Alice could barely catch sight of that fist and could only react to it instinctively.

Rolling back, she managed to avoid a head on collision but her cheek was still torn from the wind generated by that punch.

"Shabby footwork. No guard, no defensive stance and no zone. The only thing I see is a good reaction speed. Shiera, what do you think?" Arax asked as Shiera uncrossed her arms.

"Depends. Prepare yourself." Shiera warned as she aimed her hand and blade at Alice.

Sensing a chill down her spine, Alice immediately activated her obsidian blade and entered a defensive stance.

*CLANG!!!

Shiera's blade appeared in front of Alice as it was barely warded off.

But the assault didn't end there. Adjusting her wrist, Shiera released a wave of slashes as Alice tried her best to block them but to no avail. Even though she could see them and react to some extent, they still left shallow cuts across the exposed parts of her body.

Alice knew that if this was a serious fight, she would've lost all of her limbs already! Unlike Nyer, she wasn't holding back and keeping herself to her level.

"You're lacking a lot." Shiera sighed as she twisted her body, tripping Alice with a leg sweep and aimed her sword at Alice's throat.

"The two of us will teach you the basic defensive footwork and preparation. Though I don't think you're suited to be a defensive fighter from what I've seen."

Even while she was protecting herself, Alice was still looking for a chance to counter. Just from this, Shiera understood that Alice was the type who preferred to be on the offensive.

"What do you want to learn?" She asked, giving Alice the choice.

They only had 24 hours and Solaris had instructed the two of them to just teach Alice whatever she wanted. Of course, if she's a prodigy then it's better to hold back.

"What are the options?" Alice asked while pushing the blade aside with her finger and sitting up.

"All Guard Stance, Evasion Stance and Zone Stance. All Guard Stance lets you parry and block most attacks if your body can keep up. Evasion Stance helps you retreat and dodge attacks as the name

suggests. Zone Stance will be a boundary that you set around yourself. A 'Zone' of control that lets you intercept attacks that cross the edge. Similar to the All Guard but more restrictive.

Pick one."

Furrowing her brows, Alice contemplated her options.

She knew that she wasn't a defensive fighter. Meaning she had to learn something that'll also be effective in offensive and in this scenario, she could only think of one option that suited her skill set.

"Can you show me Zone Stance?"

Chapter 280 - 280: Offensive, Passive and Absolute Zone

"Sure, out of the three Zone Stance can be considered a hybrid stance since it can be used on the offensive as well. It's easier to show you rather than tell, just try to attack me." Shiera nodded as she took a few steps back and entered a relaxed stance.

Her sword hung next to her yet Alice already felt a chill down her spine.

Focusing her mind, she had some theories of her own.

This chill that she had always felt was a signal of danger. Her instincts warning her to dodge. Meaning right now, she was already in Shiera's Zone.

Slowly backing off while this feeling continued to persist, Alice wanted to find out the edge of this Zone.

"Are you not attacking?" Shiera frowned seeing Alice back away.

"Just trying to figure something out. I thought you said the Zone was a boundary you place around yourself, this range is quite ridiculous is it not?" Alice forced a smile as she continued to back away.

She was more than 100 meters away from her yet this chill continued to persist!

Meaning, if she were to make the slightest move, Shiera would be able to counter and attack with ease. Like a rope around her neck, Alice could feel herself getting suffocated by the pressure within this Zone.

It wasn't the same pressure as the layers of the Abyss but rather an invisible dread knowing your every move is being observed and scrutinised.

While she was trying to find the boundary, Alice didn't realise that what she had said surprised Shiera just as much.

'This should be the first time she's hearing about the defensive stances and Zone Stance. How did she figure out she was already in range?' She's seen people who are more sensitive to danger before but most would equate that danger to her.

Not once have they realised it was part of her Zone.

Letting out a small smile, Shiera relaxed her posture as the range of her Zone began to shrink.

Alice could feel this as the pressure disappeared.

"You can control the radius of your Zone?"

"Naturally. Zone Stance is a boundary you set for yourself. A range of absolute control that you're confident with. Within this range, it should be everything you can react to, no matter how fast. Anyways, just throw some attacks at me while I explain." Shiera nodded as she gestured for Alice to begin.

Following Shiera's instructions, Alice deliberately used her previous version of casting. One that requires multiple actions and low efficiency so they don't know her progress. As the strands of blood and metal shot towards Shiera, Alice watched as her hand flickered for a moment before all of the attacks were slashed apart.

"As you can see, the Zone Stance lets you counter any attacks that enter your Boundary. The key is observation. The greater your observation skills, the stronger this Boundary becomes. Once your Boundary reaches a certain threshold, you'll be able to expand the range without losing efficiency." She explained as she began taking steps towards Alice.

Since she didn't tell her to stop firing attacks, Alice narrowed her eyes and shot metal blades towards Shiera.

Naturally, all of them were destroyed without exception.

'Nyer told me to act weak but not too weak to the point they lose interest. I shouldn't show Void Flux – Cleave since that's too similar to Allura's Executioner's Blade. But the standard Void Flux should be okay.' She was also curious as to how Shiera would react to an attack that suddenly appeared in front of her.

Pivoting on her foot, Alice snapped her finger before aiming it towards Shiera. Blood manifested and gathered above her finger into a single spark.

Void Flux!

*BANG!!!

Firing the attack towards Shiera, Alice then followed up with blood mist that invaded the Zone. Her goal was to have Shiera's attention drawn towards the first attack while the mist would act as a catalyst for her to create more inside her zone.

But to Alice's surprise, Shiera simply smiled and concentrated her zone to a 20 meter radius around her.

The moment Void Flux came into contact with the edge, it began to disintegrate until nothing was left. The Blood mist was no exception either as it was warded off with ease.

"There are three types of Zone Stance and I've displayed them all. First, Offensive Zone. That's the first one I showed, its range is large and great for pressuring opponents while attacking. But the defensive capabilities are lacking.

"Second is Passive Zone. It's a blend between the Offensive Zone and the third one that I'll tell you about in a moment. It's a mix of both offensive and defensive but not excelling in either.

"And the last one is Absolute Zone. This is where you condense your focus around your optimal range and bring out as much power as you can. In the Absolute Zone, you bring out 100% of your power to destroy anything that enters the range." Shiera explained as she glanced over to Arax who seemed to be napping away.

Seeing that he wasn't bothering on helping since Alice didn't use a shield, Shiera could only sigh as this'll be a one to one lesson between her and Alice.

Tapping her foot on the arena, grooves began to appear around the arena with Shiera in the centre.

"This is the boundary for the three Zones that I've shown you. Since we only have 24 hours, well... less than that now, you should only focus on the Passive Zone. Once you learn Passive Zone, you can expand it into either Offensive Zone or Absolute Zone." She shrugged as Alice nodded her head.

"First you need to get used to a boundary and refine your senses. I'll send attacks towards you from all directions, get used to sensing them out and countering them. Once you get used to that, you should get a rough feel for the edge of your detection range, reaction range and counter range. Combine them and you should obtain the Passive Zone."

Gesturing for Alice to stand in the centre of the arena, Shiera watched as Alice entered a drawing stance with her blade.

Shrugging her shoulders, she flicked her finger and a slash rushed towards Alice from behind.

*CLANG!!!

Blocking it with her blade, Alice flinched from the collision. Even though she had blocked it, the impact still sent shockwaves through her body.

'Heavy.' Alice thought with a frown.

But the onslaught wasn't over.

From her left and right, slashes rushed towards her once more.

Stomping her foot down, two pillars of metal intercepted the slashes only to be broken apart with ease.

'Seems like I can't stop them unless I focus on the toughness. It'll take too long though... Guess I'm counting on the Obsidian Blade.' Twisting her body, she parried the two slashes before adjusting her posture.

Right now, Shiera was testing her detection range while Alice was faking her performance. For some of these attacks, Alice had already detected them the moment they appeared thanks to Cayla but acted ignorant.

It was only once they reached the 20 meter mark did she react.

As she continued to counter and parry attacks, Alice began to draw her own conclusion of her own radius.

'The optimal range for my casting is around 30 to 20 meters. In this range, I can create Void Fluxes without any issues. Optimal Melee range if I include Void Flux – Cleave is around 10 meters around me max. Comfort would be 5 meters.' Alice thought to herself.

Of course, this was just her internal calculations. For her performance, she made sure to weaken herself in order to fool Shiera since they weren't taking things seriously.

To Shiera, Alice's optimal range for casting was only 15 meters max and comfort was around 10 meters. Her melee range was 2 to 3 meters around her.

'She's already establishing a Boundary of comfort. It's not quite a Passive Zone yet since it's messy... Perhaps I should increase the intensity in order to bring out more?' Shiera mused to herself.

Flicking her finger, a barrage of attacks manifested all at once.

Naturally, Alice detected all of this and cursed inwardly. She wanted to keep going in order to get a better feel for her abilities but any further would raise suspicions.

Parrying the first few strikes, Alice got slashed on purpose before stumbling to the side and trying to ward off the other attacks.

Pivoting on her foot, Alice surrounded herself with a swirl of blood and metal, redirecting the weaker slashes while her blade would counter the stronger ones.

"I think that's enough, I got a general idea of your range and capabilities." Shiera called out.

Dismissing the slashes with a flick of a finger, she couldn't help but feel a little disappointed by Alice's demonstration. Sure, she had talent. But compared to the monsters known as Allura and Kaden, it was lacking.

She could still recall the threat she felt from Nyer and Allura when they went all out. Just their fighting spirit and killing intent was enough to make her doubt her defensive capabilities. In comparison, Alice was... sorely lacking. Even if she considered the fact that she only had three Sigils.

'I'll just help her establish a Passive Zone. My job will be considered to be complete after that.'

Wiping the sweat away, Alice grabbed a healing vial from her pouch and watched as Shiera clear the field while drawing new circles.

These represented Alice's range.

"You'll practice in this circle. Don't move out of it, don't dodge. Focus on either defending with your sword or defending with your Sigils. Focus and refine your senses within this area." Shiera instructed.

Nodding her head, Alice took a deep breath and focused her mind.

Taking the first step into establishing a Boundary felt simple for Alice. But controlling the range like what Shiera demonstrated was going to be tough, especially when she's trying to play off the fact that she's weak.

A tightrope act to not raise any suspicion.

Alice had to admit that it was a little nerve-wracking but the challenge brought a smile to her face. Her personal goal for her time with Shiera was to master Passive Zone without letting them know!