

Abyssal A 371

Chapter 371 - 371: Choosing Artifacts

Narrowing her eyes at the multitude of treasures Alice shook her head for now. As much as she wanted to teleport stuff away, the Zenias probably have trackers placed in their vaults. Making it so that even if she kills Erick, she couldn't claim this vault for herself.

If she still had Cayla unsealed, she could probably see the flow of energy but regardless, the reality of the situation is that she sealed Cayla and there was nothing she could do about it.

The vault itself was split into five sections with the Artifact section located on the right-hand side.

Glancing back, Alice could see Erick gesturing for her to go ahead and pick something that she liked.

There were two options for Alice right now. First, pick an artifact and call it a day. Second, she could check out the different Abyss Blood and find something that suited her!

She wasn't sure if drinking Abyss Blood that had been kept in a vial would hold the same result. But if it was indeed successful and she could 'extract' a Sigil from it then it would be worth it. She had never succeeded before but there were always exceptions.

But compared to an Artifact, Abyss Blood was still lacking.

Making her way to the right side, most of the Artifacts on display were weapons, grimoires or shields. Each Artifact was encased in a glass display and beneath, their name and effect were written down.

[Lothim's Rapier – Intermediate Grade]

Increases physical attributes, especially speed.

Increases stabbing speed tremendously.

Each stab leaves behind a mark.

Each slash detonates the mark.

The most Artifacts could be classified into three grades. Low, Intermediate and High grades. Anything higher, even if it is Artifacts, was hard to come by.

'What grade do you think Void Fang would be considered as?' Alice asked curiously as Cayla contemplated the answer.

[Based on its usual properties, I would say it's Peak Grade. Above High grades are Peak, Legend, Myth and then Holy grade. While its properties are certainly amazing, being able to turn into any weapon with enough blood and durability to withstand Void Flux – Cleave, it was lacking to properly manifest as a Legend ranked Artifact. But since Velouria has upgraded it, it's definitely Legend grade.]

If Void Fang had a display like the Artifacts in Erick's vault, it would be like this:

[Void Fang – Legendary Grade]

After absorbing blood, can take any form.

After absorbing blood, increases lethality.

After absorbing blood, enhances and adapts to the user's Sigil powers.

Significantly enhances Violet Flame abilities.

Significantly enhances Void Flux attacks.

Decreases energy used to manifest Violet Flames and Void Flux attacks.

Returns to user's hand if recalled.

Superior Durability.

After all, Velouria modified the weapon so that it suited Alice's fighting style. A style that revolves around using her Void Flux and violet flames.

If it wasn't for the fact that she hasn't fully bonded with the weapon, it may as well be her Personal Artifact!

Browsing through the different High grade Artifacts, Alice furrowed her brows as all of them had useful abilities.

Weapons that could help her breach defences, armour that enhanced her fighting capabilities and grimoires that summoned beasts to her aid.

In the end, Alice narrowed down her choices to three Artifacts.

A sword, a staff and a floating shard.

The Sword was crafted from a crystalline material with a cross guard embedded with a blue crystal.

[Sword of Frost – High Grade]

- Passively enhances all physical attacks with cold energy.

- Absorbs energy to coat the blade in a layer of ice to enter an enhanced state.

- During the enhanced state, the user can release aura blades with devastating cold energy.
- Create a blizzard zone by stabbing the sword into the ground, hindering movement except for the user. Ice blades are created in the ground for the user to use.
- Absorbs blood to enter a breakout state. Breakout state enhances physical attributes and casting abilities. Swords manifest around the user and bend to the user's will.

At first, the blade simply looked like a standard weapon that was better than usual but what caught Alice's eye was the breakout state. In this state, it enhanced physical attributes and casting abilities.

Meaning, in this state, her Void Flux and Void Flux – Cleave would become more devastating!

Even if she doesn't use this weapon as it's intended, just having the breakout state is enough for her to consider this to be her choice.

The staff was made from a black material that pulsed with a bloody red in the gaps. Secured at the top was a swirling red orb covered by a jagged claw.

[Blood Moon Staff – High Grade]

- Boosts casting speed of Blood, Lunar and Blood Moon abilities.
- Boosts spell power of Blood, Lunar and Blood Moon abilities.
- Decreases energy consumption of Blood, Lunar and Blood Moon abilities.
- With every cast of Blood, Lunar and Blood Moon abilities, stores charges. Once enough charges are gathered, activates Blood Moon realm.

- Blood Moon realm is a short duration area of effect ability that reduces the consumption of all Blood, Lunar and Blood Moon abilities to near zero. Enhances Speed and Power immensely.

For Alice, this staff allowed her to boost her most versatile ability, her blood manifestation and control. Boosting the casting speed and power meant her Void Flux, which was created through a mix of her blood and violet flames, would be enhanced!

Not only that, but the Blood Moon Realm meant that she could use the special properties of her second Sigil without limit for a short duration. Just the thought of being able to constantly abuse the effects of her red spider lilies and violet flame tempted Alice to take this staff.

And finally, a single floating shard.

Usually, one would stop at the previous two mentions due to the immediate benefits they grant to Alice's skills and power. However, after seeing the shard, Alice was swayed.

A simple floating shard that looked as though it used to be part of a mirror. A shard with a splintered centre surrounded by vines and flowers.

Compared to the other two, this Artifact was... lacking in abilities. While the others had five features, this one only held three.

[Shard of Kara – High Grade (Damaged)]

- Can form a shield using the user's Sigil power.

- Automated defence that can be manipulated.

- Absorbs stamina and energy to block attacks.

A damaged Artifact yet still preserving the rank of High grade simply due to its defensive capabilities.

While Alice was an agile fighter who avoided taking damage whenever she could, now that her right eye is blinded, gaps will no doubt appear.

Her blood and metal manifestation can defend her to a certain extent but it was still lacking. Since she had plenty of firepower, she needed a survival tool and this shard was the perfect tool for her.

Not only that, but the third ability to absorb her stamina and energy to block an attack could turn out to be more helpful than she expected. However, she needed to limit-test the durability of this shard to truly understand its value.

[The shard will help you tide over this period where you're not used to your current vision.] Cayla suggested while Alyss shook her head.

'The shield is good but we'll unlock the eye eventually, right? Wouldn't the sword or staff be better? While the staff doesn't suit me, it's better for you who focuses on casting abilities.' Alyss reminded as Alice folded her arms.

After a long moment of contemplation, Alice still chose the shard in the end simply to act as a means of survival.

Their regeneration is strong but they can't be relying on it all the time. Especially for abilities that latch onto their bones and hinder regeneration.

When both options take her stamina, it is better to block than to tank the strike.

Taking the shard out of the vault, Alice showed it to Erick who nodded his head.

"Shard of Kara, a good choice. It'll help cover your blind spot since your eye is damaged right now." He smiled while Michael closed the vault.

Alice felt a little regretful since she wanted to leave a tracker in order to find the vault in the Void but it was too risky to pull off right now.

"Did you know that this Shard used to be a Peak grade Artifact that was given to a member of the main family? But after it was damaged, it was downgraded to High grade and the drain for the third effect is exceptionally high. Regardless, it's still a good defensive tool." He explained while Alice affixed the shard to her hair as a hairpin.

Closing her eyes, she funnelled some of her energy into the shard while using Tiamat's power.

Detaching itself from her hair, the shard shattered into several small pieces that acted as anchor points while an illusionary barrier appeared beside her.

"Oh~" Alice blinked her eyes in wonder while knocking the shield with her finger.

Hearing the echo, she retracted her energy and the shard returned back to normal.

'The energy drain is a little steep but if I focus on blocking a strike the instant it's about to hit, I should be able to reduce the impact to some extent.' Alice thought to herself before turning to Erick with a grin.

Now that she's picked her High grade Artifact, what's left is the Personal Artifact.

The reward that she had been looking forward to the most yet also had the most questions about. After all, how could the Zenias mass produce a Personal Artifact?

"I know that look. Seems like you're pretty eager for a Personal Artifact huh?" Erick chuckled.

"Well of course. Who doesn't?" Alice shrugged as he nodded.

"Indeed. But before we continue, let me ask you this. Do you know how a Personal Artifact binds itself to the user?"

Chapter 372 - 372: Secret Behind The Personal Artifacts

"Do you know how a Personal Artifact binds itself to the user?" Erick asked as Alice shook her head.

Artifacts and Abyssal Engineering are topics outside of her expertise and knowledge. The most she learned from the Zenia family was all information on Abyss Blood.

"You see, the difference between a Personal Artifact and a standard Artifact is that the Personal variant moulds itself to the user. It takes in what they've chosen for Sigils and modifies their abilities to match that. For that to occur, the Artifact must be able to accept a portion of the user's power.

"Their soul in other words. The Artifact must synchronise and become a container for the user's soul in order to become a proper Personal Artifact that enhances their strength. The difficulty in procuring Personal Artifacts is that there are two requirements to fulfil." Erick explained as he stood up and walked to the balcony.

"First, you must find an Artifact with a set of compatible abilities. You see, compatibility is key when it comes to achieving a Personal Artifact. So much so that people are willing to pay hundreds of millions to get even ONE compatible ability on a weapon.

"And when I say compatible, I don't mean if you squint hard enough. No, I mean it has to be 100% compatible. Preferably from the same source as the Sigil. It is only when this step is fulfilled will the equipment even have a slightest chance to succeed.

"Then comes step two. You need to get a piece of equipment strong enough to survive the binding process between the user and the Artifact. When a blacksmith focuses too much on compatibility, durability suffers. And if durability suffers, the Artifact breaks apart during the binding process. With these two requirements, man made Personal Artifacts are very expensive and rare.

"But the same can't be said for naturally occurring Personal Artifacts that are awaiting a new owner. After being submerged in the ambient energy of the Abyss and left to grow, these pieces of equipment have attained a durability that's hard to achieve through human means. Not only that, but there are often times when there are... slots that have been left empty.

"An empty slot that's waiting for an ability. The ability of their owner. This is why naturally occurring Personal Artifacts are practically priceless. Even more than the purest Heart Blood of the strongest beast.

So I ask you this, Kale, what makes it difficult for a Personal Artifact to be made through human means?" Erick turned around, raising a glass of wine that he picked up on the table before taking a sip.

Folding her arms, Alice was silent.

On one side, the man made Artifacts could be tailor made to the individual. Making it so that it's much easier to fulfil the first requirement of finding a compatible ability.

On the other hand, naturally occurring Artifacts are often open to being imprinted by the new owner. A slot left empty on purpose so that the owner could bind itself to it.

[For Allura and Kaden, their Personal Artifacts were crafted by Velouria with the best artisans of Ayr. To ensure that the Artifacts could withstand the power of an Apostle as well as the power of nine Sigils, Velouria used her own flesh and blood as the ingredients.

[It's safe to say that while Nihility's Edge and the Grimoire of Original Sin are man made Artifacts, they are heads and shoulders above the quality of even the best naturally occurring Personal Artifact. A Personal Artifact made for an Apostle using the flesh and blood of a God. O' master mine, do you know why Velouria decided to use her flesh and blood?] Cayla asked.

'Didn't you say it was because she wanted to make sure it could withstand the power of the Apostle?' Alice replied as Cayla nodded her head.

[Indeed. To ensure that the Artifact could be bound successfully, Velouria used her own flesh and blood. But that wasn't the only reason. As Erick mentioned, the Artifact needed two requirements. First, compatibility. Second, durability.

The only thing compatible with the power of an Apostle is the God they received their powers from. The only durable enough to withstand the channelling of divinity is a God's flesh. Velouria HAD to use her flesh and blood if they wanted equipment strong enough for Allura and Kaden.

[That is the same with you o' master mine. When Velouria upgraded Void Fang, she used her own flesh and blood. While incomplete due to the fact that she is a spectre, a memory of the past, it still holds

fragments of her power. A faux ritual if you will. It is the only way for her to find something compatible with your strange power that denies the Abyss.

As someone who had implemented rules to go against the natural order, Velouria is the most compatible source to you when it comes to power.]

Furrowing her brows, Alice let out a sigh. She felt as though she was on the precipice of finding out the truth of why Personal Artifacts were hard to make but a thin veil blocked her way.

'Think Alice think...'

Personal Artifacts are equipment that's meant to stay with the Hunter while they grow.

Durability is a key factor to the Artifact's success.

Kaden and Allura needed their Artifacts to be made by Velouria herself using her flesh and blood.

Only Velouria's flesh and blood can act as the base for an Apostle's power because she is the source.

Adapt to the user's power... Preferably the source of that power... Why?

Apostle... Goddess... Only equipment that can handle their power...

Compatibility... Durability...?

Source of power...

Source is a beast...

Durability of the equipment...

Power, durability, source...

'There's no way...' Alice blinked her eyes as she swallowed her saliva. If... If the Zenia's did what she thinks they're doing then...

Biting her lip, Alice took a deep breath.

"Because the Hunters outgrow their equipment, right? The durability and compatibility are directly tied to the source of the power. A beast. If the beast is a weak beast, it's only natural it can't withstand the power of a let's say five Sigil Hunter, no matter how compatible they are." Alice replied as Erick clapped his hands.

"Amazing. You're both smart and cute." He chuckled, placing his glass of wine down.

"You're exactly right. Even with the best blacksmiths, they struggle with the fundamental issue of Hunter's outgrowing their equipment. No matter the compatibility, it'll fall short of a high level Hunter's full strength and break apart."

It's the exact reason why Velouria needed to use her flesh.

When Allura and Kaden became Apostles, they weren't yet Abyss Lords.

But with their identity as Apostles, it was only an issue of time before they reached the pinnacle of human power thus Velouria needed equipment that could last until that moment. That being equipment made from the strongest beings, Gods. With the flesh of a God, the issues of Compatibility, Durability and even growth are resolved.

"That's why Personal Artifacts can't be made easily. It's simply not worth it. Not only does it cost a fortune but if it breaks the next time you get a Sigil, you might as well not buy it in the first place." Erick shrugged before walking up to Alice.

"So how do you think the Zenia's resolve this issue? What is the most compatible source, the most durable and a source that can grow alongside the Hunter?"

Clenching her fist inside her sleeve, Alice closed her eyes.

Revealing her true feelings would betray her act thus she must recall the sight of those loathsome Scholars who tore away at her.

Curling her lips into a maniacal laugh, Alice tilted her head back and covered her eyes.

"Pftahaha! I didn't think the Zenia's would go this far. You're being serious right? For real?" Alice asked, 'excitement' glistening in her eyes as Michael and Melissa paused in surprise at her outburst.

A sight they were familiar with seeing within the labs as the two of them looked at one another, wondering if they found another kin.

"I was wondering how I was going to hide this but if the Zenia's are truly like this then aren't I in heaven?" Alice wiped away her tears before glancing up at Erick.

"It's humans right~?" She asked, slowly as Erick's pupils shrank in a mixture of shock and surprise.

"Humans! The most adaptable beings within the Abyss. A being that can hold the effects of multiple Abyss Bloods and STILL FUNCTION! They can accept the blessings and engrave Sigils upon their body, drink blood till they are full and no beast can contest.

"Should you use a beast as the source for the Personal Equipment, they'll expire quickly. But a human? No~ humans will keep growing and adapt to their surroundings. But therein lies the issue of using Humans as the resource for these Artifacts.

"Their souls have already been modified right?" Alice asked, circling the room while glancing towards Michael and Melissa who were nodding their heads in agreement.

It was clear they anticipated her answer.

"So how do you resolve the issue of the human being tampered with already? You can't use such a resource as a weapon now can you? You run into the issue of compatibility. So what do you do?" Alice faked being clueless as she tapped her chin with her finger.

"You simply return to zero." She laughed.

"You find humans without any Sigils to act as the base and reforge them into the material that acts as the foundation for the equipment. But even Children would've been tampered with to some extent which is why you need to go even further than that~ Ah~ I can see the answer as clear as day now.

"The secret behind the Zenia's mass production of Personal Artifacts are human babies that haven't been born yet, right? A catalyst to be used as the material, a resource that can grow and mature alongside the Hunter. We simply need to change their shape into an Artifact and instead of Sigils of their own choosing, they receive whatever the Hunter's get.

"What better Artifact could you ask for than one that adapts to your every move?"

Chapter 373 - 373: Lords Of The Surface

To Alice, it was a 75/25 gamble. While she knew how the Zenia family operated and the basis of their thoughts regarding advancement, she had no evidence on hand.

The things she claimed just now were speculation based on her own understanding of the family and the hints she'd gotten from sources and their expressions.

All that was left was for them to admit it themselves.

*Clap... Clap... Clap

"Simply... Spectacular." Erick clapped his hands while letting out a small laugh.

"I had expected you to be taken aback by the news but it seems like you're a kindred spirit after all. And to think you'd actually figure out the truth behind the Personal Artifact... You'll be just fine in the Zenia family." He patted Alice's shoulder with a nod before turning to Michael and Melissa.

"Show her the first prototype so that she can bind herself to it. We'll leave for the docks in a moment to... welcome the new guests from the other Kingdoms." Erick waved his hand as he gestured for Selen to follow him.

Giving Alice an annoyed side eye, Selen followed behind while Michael and Melissa walked up to Alice.

"I didn't think you were the kind to think of this solution. Please, how did you come to this conclusion?" Michael asked with expectant eyes, wanting to see the thought process behind Alice's answer.

"Well... It's just the natural conclusion isn't it?" Alice smiled as Michael gestured for her to explain.

"He mentioned the two requirements. First, compatibility. Second, durability..."

Little by little, Alice explained her understanding and the reason she could come up with this conclusion.

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Outside the room, Erick tapped his chin with a mysterious smile.

"What do you think of Kale?" He asked out of the blue, surprising Selen who continued to look forward.

"She's strange. An abnormality and a dangerous variable. But if used well, it seems like she can be of great value." She replied honestly while Erick nodded in agreement.

"Indeed. That mind inside her head is phenomenal. In the past few days that I've met her, she has never once shown this kind of capability. I mean who in their right mind would even think of the truth? She'll fit perfectly within this family."

"Yes, yes she will." Selen narrowed her eyes.

Alice was more of a wild card than she initially expected. While she may have known the truth about the Personal Artifact, it took her a while to find out. But one hint and Alice managed to think of such a diabolical solution to a question that plagued the common blacksmith.

Truly, it might've been better to dispose of Alice during the first night but now they're both entangled in the web known as the Zenia family.

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"Ah~ Simply sublime~ Please, you must tell me more about the theory of souls more often!" Michael smiled brightly as he continued to question Alice regarding her thoughts.

In order to avoid suspicion, Alice only gave a slight insight to what she truly knew yet it was enough to enlighten Michael.

[That's because you had the benefit of visiting Ayr and myself. Being able to see the secrets of the world invisible to the naked eye along with witnessing the soul are opportunities that many scholars would kill for. Literally.] Cayla reminded as Alice nodded her head.

"Anyways, don't we need to leave soon? I still need my personal equipment, right?" Alice chuckled as Michael smacked his head.

"Right, my bad. I got too carried away ahahaha. Here, this is the node that will form your equipment. When you find the chance, sit down and focus your Sigil power into it and it'll modify itself to match your power." Michael smiled, handing over a crystalline orb to Alice.

The node looked similar to the Inverted World but with a swirling mass of darkness within.

Though it may be momentary, the darkness seemed to form a crying face as Alice winced inwardly before storing it in her pouch.

"I'll do attune to it later since we need to go to the docks." Alice chuckled.

Nodding his head, Michael gestured for the other guard to follow as they made their way out of Erick's room while Melissa gave Alice's arm a hug.

"Can I call you little sister from now? Fufu~ You should join the research department when we get back. I'm sure you can get a much better position as a researcher than you would being a combatant. Plus, what's so fun about fighting ugly beasts all day~" Melissa sighed while pulling Alice into her embrace.

"There's fun in both sides." Alice replied despite holding back the killing intent she had for this group.

Little by little, step by step.

Since entering the Inverted World was inevitable, she may as well kill them inside and find a chance to close it.

The principal will find it hard to deny the power of the three countries behind Zenia. If she were the one to make a move, it would be akin to declaring herself an enemy.

However, there was one exception. And that's for Alice to be the one to break the Inverted World from the inside out.

If she was the one to break the Inverted World while the Principal was under scrutiny, it gives her an alibi and dissolves the suspicions.

[The principal doesn't know about the new order. Meaning she cannot 'warn' us beforehand and can't pull anything either. If it wasn't for the fact that you approached Erick, we would've been taken by surprise.] Cayla furrowed her brows.

Truly, she never expected the Zenias to be able to rope in three Kingdoms into this negotiation.

At this point, calling it a negotiation was generous. If anything, it's more of an order.

'That's just how influential the Zenias are. They've pretty much got a monopoly of Abyss Blood on the surface and their reputation is rather 'good' as well. Not only that, but they also borrow the influence of the Church of the Moon with distribution. All these things combined make it so that not even the leader of these countries can take the family lightly.' Alyss frowned.

While it's speculation, they can only assume that the Zenias have access to several Abyss Lords at their disposal.

'Regardless, we need to find a way to break the Inverted World from the inside out. If we can't achieve that, we'll be giving the Zenias access to an unlimited supply of experimental subjects for their house of horrors.' Alice narrowed her eyes.

If they are able to make Personal Artifacts out of unborn babies, there's no telling what else they could do. They simply need the resources to experiment before trying it with real victims.

[It's as you say o' master mine. I'll try to think of a way to destabilise the space holding the Inverted World. But I need to warn you. Doing this could lead to two conclusions.

[If things go well, the Inverted World simply collapses in on itself and the space is repaired. If things go bad, the energy released by the death of an Abyss Lord would assault this island. It's going to be a gamble on which results we land on.] Cayla warned.

'I'll take that into consideration.'

Leaving the inn, Alice saw Erick waiting with Selen and gave her a small wave.

"Come, we must go to the docks. The ship carrying the new guests is about to arrive. I have to warn you though, even though you may be part of the Zenia family, you still have to show respect. Our guests are Abyss Lords, beings that can kill us with a snap of their fingers." Erick warned as Alice paused for a moment before nodding her head.

Considering the fact that the principal is the strongest beneath the Lords, sending Lords is the natural conclusion if they wished to force her to abide by the rules.

"Wait, they're really sending Abyss Lords to this backwater island? Why?" Michael furrowed his brows.

"That just goes to show how important this mission is. So we can't afford to fail." Erick winked.

To the public, this was a mission to find a solution to the pandemic. But to the Zenia's, it's an opportunity for development.

As they approached the docks, Alice didn't even need Erick to tell her that the Abyss Lords were coming.

Even from this distance, her senses were warning her of the passengers upon that ship. Beings who can flatten the island in mere moments.

Civilians who felt goosebumps but didn't know the source.

Hunters felt the looming sense of death and became on guard.

Alice felt the aura of a Lord for the first time properly while they weren't suppressing themselves.

Allura suppressed her aura, same with Kaden.

When she fought the Lords during the war in the Inverted World, she had power 'equal' to a Lord in terms of Sigil power. But now? She only had four Sigils and just their presence was enough to send her into a fight or flight response.

Holding onto her arm, Alice furrowed her brows as she followed silently and soon, they arrive at the docks where three figures could be seen stepping off the ship.

"Man what a bother. I could've just arrive here faster myself than to ride a slow ship." A young man complained.

He had long blue hair and a pair of emerald eyes and wore a loose fitting white outfit with scaled paddings on the arm, shoulder and waist. A red belt with a scabbard tied to the back.

"Have some self respect. We are here representing our nations. Don't do anything that will cause shame, even if you are a Lord." A woman reminded.

She had a pair of elongated ears pointed upwards and a pair of azure eyes with red markings along the edges of her eyelid. Platinum coloured hair and wore a knight's attire with plated armour across her body.

And finally, a man with a large stature, far bigger than the average Hunter and the same height as Allura.

He let out a silent huff and refused to say anything more.

Compared to the other two, he seemed far more aged yet his aura was the most potent. A man with greying hair and a full beard. A scar over his eye, nose and lip.

His attire consisted of a large fur collar cape hiding the thick leather armour below with chainmail and buckles.

These three were the Lords sent forth by the nations of the surface.

Chapter 374 - 374: Three Lord's Orders

Just from their aura, it was hard to tell what kind of power they wielded. But between the three of them, the man with the large stature felt the most dangerous to Alice.

If she had to put it into words, it'll be akin to facing an unstoppable beast. Silence yet ready to pounce at a moment's notice.

"Erick of the Zenia house welcomes three esteemed Lords." Erick took the initiative to greet the three of them with a slight bow as they glanced over to him for a brief moment.

Their gaze didn't last long before looking towards the Academy.

"Mnm. Prepare to enter the Inverted World, we'll deliver the news to the Principal." The woman nodded her head and took the lead.

Giving the three a bow, Erick gestured the others to follow behind them.

"Which nation do each of them belong to?" Alice whispered to Erick curiously.

Without Cayla acting as her source of information, it was hard for her to see what kind of Lord they were.

"Lady Renna belongs to Extalia and is part of the King's guard. Lord Kizen is part of the eastern nation while the largest stature amongst them, Lord Urigar, belongs to the North. All of them are high ranking Queens and Kings guard to ensure that the principal listens to the order properly without pulling anything strange." Erick explained, understanding that Alice must be curious about the Lords.

However, what surprised him more was how she could keep her composure despite their pressure.

Selen and the others that are part of his group had seen Lords before so it was only natural for them to be used to their presence.

But Alice? No ordinary Three Sigil Hunter can compose themselves in front of this aura.

To Erick, the mysteries around Kale Grani continued without stop. Her twisted mind was comparable to the Scholars in the Zenia family, her combat ability put her on par with the guards and her unknown background.

Even though they couldn't use the Underground anymore, the Zenia family still had a good intelligence network. Yet even with this, it's as though she just appeared out of nowhere.

Had it not been for the fact that Alice signed the Law of Agreement, he wouldn't have been able to rest easy around her.

Indeed, the moment she signed the Law of Agreement everything was determined.

As they followed behind the Lords, Alice wondered if Kaden was watching everything happen. But since he was dealing with potential leads to Allura's recovery, she doubted he had the luxury to keep an eye on her.

The only possibility would be the Raven feather he gifted her but Alice didn't want to trouble Kaden time and time again. This current situation was one where she could resolve it without his help.

'Have you not found a method to collapse the Inverted World yet?' Alice asked but Cayla shook her head.

[there hasn't been another case that's remotely close to the scale of the current Inverted World. Due to its sheer size and destructiveness, it achieved a miraculous balance that allows people to peer deeper and further into history than a standard entrance.

[Other similar cases can only focus on one point in time, naturally occurring entrances of the Inverted World. Dungeons for another word. But this? This is like a thousand Dungeons condensed into a single entrance. I knew it was going to be hard but this is outside of my expectations.] Cayla replied with a deep frown.

'I see...' Furrowing her brows, Alice sighed before nodding her head.

Since there was nothing that could be done for now, Alice simply needed to gather more information and power. Then, at the right time, she can close this damn entrance.

Thinking about this, Alice had a sudden thought.

'Since the Lords are coming, do you think they're entering the Inverted World as well?'

Tilting her head, Cayla contemplated the possibility before shaking her head.

[It's possible but very unlikely. In the event that the Lords indeed join this expedition, the Inverted World will react to their presence and make adjustments. If Erick is smart, he also understands that he can't expose the Zenia's plan to them and will probably suggest that they enter with just our group.]

Nodding her head in agreement, Alice let out an inward sigh before glancing over at Alyss who had been strangely silent this entire time.

'is something bothering you?'

'Hm? Oh nothing. Haven't been much for me to comment on.' Alyss shrugged. She was used to it. Spending time silently while watching Alice go on with her life. If anything, their interaction has been abnormal.

Neither of them should be able to talk to the other.

'I'll try let you out more often after this mission okay? Sorry if I've been neglecting you recently.' Alice apologised as she too knew that she had been busy with tricking Erick.

If it wasn't for this, Alice would've given Alyss her time of freedom at least once per day.

'Urg... Stop saying sorry all the time. We can't change the state of our body in the first place. Just focus on this and repay me with some spicy meat skewers when you finish.' Alyss huffed in annoyance.

Even though Alice seemed tough on the outside, she was prone to saying sorry too often. Perhaps it was guilt but there was nothing she could've done about it in the first place.

Hearing that Alyss wanted spicy skewers as repayment, Alice nodded her head with a smile. With their body in this state, Alyss's time outside was very limited.

As they approached the principal's office, Alice could see the special grade students, department heads and their assistants looking at the Lords with wariness in their eyes.

All of them could sense the dangers of these people but dare not make a single move. Doing so meant sparking a fight between the academy and the three nations of the surface.

Pure suicide!

Standing in front of her office, Rosalyn narrowed her eyes as cold sweat covered her back. Clenching her fist, she could only grit her teeth and stay silent since she couldn't disobey the orders of three nations.

"What brings three esteemed Lords to my humble Academy? Unfortunately, I haven't prepared anything to properly welcome guests such as yourself." Rosalyn asked with a forced smile.

"There's no need to concern yourself with welcoming us. It's a very impromptu meeting after all." Renna shook her head, taking the lead and stepping into Rosalyn's office despite her not saying anything yet.

Stepping to the side and letting the other Lords enter, Rosalyn glanced at the staff and students before giving a small shake of her head.

Dismissing the crowd, Rosalyn gestured for the rest of Erick's group to enter since they came with the Lords.

Closing the door, she listened to the Order.

"Rosalyn, Crimson Witch of Ruin, despite being a beast you've been given pardon and allowed to oversee this Academy. The Kingdom of Extalia is grateful for your service but a new threat has arisen. A pandemic most foul broke out in the west of Extalia, one that rots you from the inside out." Renna sat on Rosalyn's seat and crossed her legs.

"The strange disease is not one that can be dealt with easily and even some of the best clerics of the Moon church are struggling with containing the spread. Usage of the Inverted World for the Zenia family

has been authorised. Even though you have been placed as its guardian and given a contract, I'm sure you understand the severity of the situation right?"

It sounded nice to the ear but everyone knew it was a threat. To let her know her place and force her down.

While the pandemic was a real threat and there was no sign of falsehood in Renna's words, it was still forcing Rosalyn against her will despite everything she's done.

"I... Understand. Please allow me two days to ensure there will be no issues with the Inverted World. As you may have heard, there was a incident recently that affected the stability of the passage. If we recklessly enter, it could cause a collapse." Rosalyn bargained but Renna simply tapped her finger against the table.

"Rosalyn, I'm saying this for your own good but don't force my hand. We've been sent here to oversee the process and to place a new seal on the passage to ensure it's preservation. You do not have to worry about it's stability. For now, simply await further commands." Renna narrowed her eyes.

Swallowing her saliva nervously, Rosalyn bowed and nodded her head.

"...Understood."

"Gather in front of the entrance in 8 hours. That should be enough time to stabilise the entrance. After that, I hope the Zenia's can fulfil their side of the promise and find a solution." Renna glanced over to Erick who gave her a smile.

"Of course my Lady. The Zenia's will naturally use all of its power to fulfil any promises made to the nation."

Nodding her head, Renna made her way out.

The other Lords, while displeased, allowed Renna to take lead since this was technically a part of Extalia's territory.

Watching the Lords leave, Erick gave Rosalyn a smirk before leaving as well. Naturally, to keep up her disguise, Alice followed.

Once she was alone in her office, Rosalyn let out a shout of anger as she wrapped her chair in a swirl of blood and crushed it to pieces.

Veins bulged on her neck as she took a deep breath to calm herself.

All this time, she had maintained her stance as a subordinate to the Kingdom due to the fact that she needed the Inverted World. But if it was going to get stolen from her like this, she may as well stop holding back.

As Kaden said, she simply needed to be stronger.

After all these years, Rosalyn finally contemplated the chances of obtaining the title of Lord.

Chapter 375 - 375: Zenia Compound

Unable to stay behind to talk to Rosalyn, Alice could only follow the group as they made their way to the base of the Inverted World.

Looking up at the entrance locked in stasis, Renna glanced at the other Lords before nodding her head.

Pulling out her sword, she stabbed it into the ground while the other Lords rushed to the peaks that flanked the entrance.

Two surges of energy could be sensed as Alice understood that the other two Lords must've done the same as Renna.

[They're stabilizing the entrance to the World. That way, even if the principal was to try sabotage it from the outside, it wouldn't work. It's a seal created by three Lords after all.]

Watching the convergence of energy descend from the sky, forming an illusionary cage around the entrance sent shivers down Alice's spine.

If all of that energy was used to focus an attack then...

Shaking her head, she didn't want to think about it while the three maintained the protective barrier.

"Go on ahead while we stabilize this entrance some more." Renna glanced at Erick. The three of them needed to reinforce the entrance for it to become a permanent entrance rather than a temporary one sealed in stasis.

Once that happens, even with the power of a Lord, the entrance will not collapse.

Nodding his head, Erick gestured for his group to follow him as he took out an orb from his jacket.

Realising that the Lords weren't going to follow them, Alice narrowed her eyes.

She understood that this was her last chance to deal with them while also sealing the entrance.

First, she wasn't afraid of being inside the Inverted World while it collapsed simply due to her fourth Sigil. It'll allow her to traverse the Void to safety. Not only that but there were other methods through the Sigils she stored in her Spiritual Heart.

Now that the biggest variable, the Lords, were taken out of the equation momentarily, Alice had confidence in succeeding with this near-suicidal plan to erase the Inverted World.

Standing next to Erick, Alice watched as he activated the orb. A pulse of energy encompassed him, Selen, one guard, the two researchers and Alice herself.

With Selen being against the Zenia family, it's effectively a two vs three. So long as it wasn't Selen, Alice was confident in taking them out.

For a split moment they disappeared towards the Inverted World, Alice accidentally let her killing intent slip as Renna snapped her gaze towards the group only for them to disappear.

Furrowing her brows, she couldn't help but wonder if it was a hallucination or if it was real.

In that split moment, killing intent thick enough to send her into a flight or fight response.

'There were no Lords in that group. It's impossible.' She dismissed.

For someone to make a Lord like her feel the threat of death, it could only be another Lord. No being beneath the level of Lord could house that kind of killing intent and danger.

Shaking her head, she ignored this nagging feeling in her chest and focused on stabilizing the passageway into the Inverted World.

###

Shielding her eyes, Alice furrowed her brows as a strange sense of sickness washed over her. She wanted to throw up everything she ate in the morning.

Clutching her head, she glanced around her and saw that everyone was in the same state except Selen who was pale in the face but tried her best to maintain her neutral disposition.

Michael was less fortunate as he was throwing up by the side while Melissa was using his sleeves to stop herself from doing the same.

Erick washed out the bad taste with some water before standing up.

"Just a... Urg... Slight side effect from forcefully choosing a point in time. We'll be doing this again in order to actually find the solution for the pandemic." Erick explained as he stored the orb away.

"I thought it was randomised? Or did you find out how the Academy controlled the trajectory of the passage?" Alice asked curiously, holding herself back from gagging on this feeling.

"It depends on what you can have as a waypoint or marker towards the intended direction." Erick shook his head before sitting down and taking a breather.

"Even I'm surprised we succeeded in the first try since it usually takes one or two attempts."

Hearing this, Alice glanced around as her pupils shrank for a moment before she forcefully regained her calm.

This architecture, this blue sky, the garden that her mother tended in her spare time... It was indeed the Zenia compound of her memories.

"Where are we exactly?" Alice asked, clenching her fist with an innocent smile.

"The Zenia compound roughly 10 years ago. I haven't told you why we're here yet have I? The... Artifact we're looking to recover isn't an item but rather a beast disguised as a human. Aside from that, I'll explain the rest to you later when you see what happens with your own eyes. The key is to retrieve the target from this world." Erick explained as Alice furrowed her brows.

"I thought you couldn't take living beings out of the Inverted World? Isn't it inanimate objects only?"

"It depends but don't worry, just follow me and you'll see." Erick laughed, patting Alice's head as she held herself back from swatting his hand away.

Once everyone had recovered, Erick had Michael hand out outfits for the group. A mixture of maid and butler attires.

"The head of the family has already given me instructions on how to blend in until the moment arises. Don't do anything stupid, don't do anything I don't say. Just follow alright? It's a command." Erick snapped his finger as both Michael and Melissa twitched for a moment.

Understanding that this was Erick exerting his command, Alice followed suit and nodded her head.

"Good, get changed here and we'll infiltrate the party." Erick nodded as he stepped to the side with the guard and Michael while the girls went to the other and got changed.

Selen was used to changing fast while hiding her scars while Alice furrowed her brows at the attire. It felt off putting to wear but for the sake of the disguise, she swallowed down her bitterness and changed into the maid outfit.

After making sure everyone was dressed well, Erick didn't say much else and led the way while the four followed behind.

As they approached the party hall, Alice could feel her heart beating against her chest.

The familiar gardens, the laughter in the distance and even the doors of the compound.

It had been 10 years but now that she was here again, memories rushed to her without stopping as a single tear rolled down her cheek.

But that's when the fond nostalgia ended.

A silent scream exploded in her mind as she stumbled on her foot and clutched her head.

The scraping of scalpels, hiss of machinery and the tearing of flesh. Screams, cries, panic. Tables being knocked over, guards kicking down the doors and pained voices shouting her name.

Taking several deep breaths, Alice could see her hands trembling as she clenched her fist and focused her gaze.

She could see the group concerned over why she suddenly collapsed over but Alice simply smiled and shook her head, refusing to say more.

Despite his confusion and concern, Erick didn't comment and proceeded towards the party hall located in the centre of the compound. There were two sections, an outdoor party and an indoor party.

While Erick was speaking with the other butlers and maids, Selen took this time to stand next to Alice.

"Why did you take the contract?" She asked, her tone neutral yet held a hint of anger and annoyance.

"Don't worry about it. I have my own backup plans. Just tell me if you're still going against the Zenias or not." Alice whispered back.

"Of course I am." Selen narrowed her gaze before stepping away. The longer she stayed next to Alice, the more suspicious it became while Melissa and Michael made their way over.

"I didn't know you two were close?" Melissa asked curiously, wondering why the ever so stoic Selen was speaking with Alice.

"Nothing much. She was just telling me not to mess up the operation because I fell over earlier. Just not used to these shoes you know?" Alice dismissed with a cheerful laugh as Melissa nodded her head in understanding.

"I know right? It just digs into the back of your heels and it feels tight around the ankle. Honestly, if it wasn't for this being needed I would've thrown these shoes away immediately." Melissa lamented as she chatted with Alice to pass the time.

Soon, Erick returned with a trolley, a map and several trays holding refreshments.

"Gather up and listen closely because if we mess this up we'll need to leave and redo everything again, understood?" Erick warned as they nodded their heads.

"Our target will appear at the party in approximately 1 hour. During this time, we'll be splitting into these locations handing out. Kale, you'll take the southern entrance. I want you to seal it once things go south. An accident WILL happen, watch and don't let anyone leave. The more people are involved later, the more annoying it becomes to extract the target." Erick explained.

While he was explaining the other roles to Selen, Melissa, Michael and the guard, Alice had her eyes on the northern entrance.

The entrance she steps through with her father and mother while her brothers stood beside her.

Even now, she could remember the timeline of events that occurred and didn't need Erick to remind her.

After all, this was her birthday and she was the main star.

Chapter 376 - 376: Beginning Of The Banquet

The main banquet hall could be split into 4 different zones. First, the 'stage'. The northern entrance where she'll appear in the hall with her family later.

Second, the main floor. The centre of the room is where all the guests gather and chat amongst themselves.

Third, garden exit. A place where you can enter the Zenia garden to get a breath of fresh air.

And finally, the guard entrance. It's the location where the guards will come pouring in once the accident happens.

Copying the attitude and actions of the Maids around her, Alice stood guard by the southern entrance.

Since the guards, Melissa and Michale have been with Zenia for a while, Erick wasn't worried about their actions during this party. Each of them was taught the basics of etiquette amongst the nobles but Alice?

Her background was still a secret to Erick.

'Was she part of a noble family in the past?' He thought to himself before turning his attention away for now.

Honestly, if it wasn't for the death of Jyn and Rita, he wouldn't have even brought Alice into the Inverted World and a contract wouldn't have changed that. But without Jyn and Rita, the southern entrance is left unchecked while Selen is forced to take on two jobs.

It's a temporary measure but Alice's presence allowed him to continue on with the plan.

A few of the staff were wondering about the appearance of new butlers and maids but Erick sorted that issue out with a handwritten notice by the Lord of the house and a seal. An item granted to him by Luthor himself to avoid troubles within the Inverted World.

Who would dare question a notice written and signed by the Lord of the House?

As such, Alice and the others weren't questioned about their presence.

###

'There's quite a few big names here aren't there?' Alyss asked while glancing at the guests of the house.

'Nightingale, Carman, Bellian and the Palmer family just to name a few.'

Before the incident that was about to occur and the shift in how the Zenia family acted, they held quite an amicable relationship with most of the noble houses of Extalia. Most of the houses in the party had ties with Abyss Blood and the Zenias acted as a middleman to distribute the goods.

Of course, the Zenia had discoveries of their own but compared to their current reputation as the single best family to do with Abyss Blood, it was negligible.

'It is the birthday of their 'treasured' daughter after all. Plus this is a big event.' Alice shrugged.

Rather than hosting a celebration for the birthday every year, the Zenia's celebrated the fifth, tenth and sixteenth publicly while the yearly celebrations were left for close friends and family.

Fifth to introduce the child as a member of the family, tenth to welcome them to the society and sixteenth to congratulate them for their coming of age.

Most of the families follow this tradition not just the Zenia's.

For Alice, the only daughter of Luthor Zenia, the next time she'll be seen 'publicly' after today would be on her sixteenth birthday. Thus a lot of people have gathered today to congratulate Luthor and to form connections for the future.

[It's rather different compared to Ayr.] Cayla muttered while observing the celebration.

'How so?' Alice asked curiously.

[As you know, most of the Ayrians are humans who used to be beasts. Thus we do not know our birthday. Instead of a yearly celebration, we host a festival every half a cycle called Day of Rebirth. It's to celebrate everyone who's managed to follow Velouria's law and achieve a human form.

[Aside from the Anniversary of the creation of Ayr, the Day of Rebirth is the biggest festival in the city. Oh how I wish you could've seen the spectacle.] Cayla reminisced with a happy smile on her face.

[Though these days neither Allura nor Kaden or anyone else for that matter celebrate this day anymore. Doing so would just draw attention to the remnants of Ayr. Those that survive have followed the change in traditions and switched to celebrating once per year on a day we choose to be our 'birthdays' in an attempt to blend in.] She shrugged with a somewhat bitter expression.

Seeing this, Alice thought for a moment before opening her mouth.

'Do you think Allura and Kaden would be offended if I was to... Well, you know. Celebrate a private Day of Rebirth with them?'

[!!!] Pausing in surprise, Cayla chuckled before shaking her head.

[Of course not. I think both of them would be pleasantly surprised about it.]

'Then you need to tell me what I need to do to prepare for this Day of Rebirth once we sorted out some things here.' Alice nodded with a smile as she focused her attention back to the Inverted World as more and more nobles began to enter the banquet hall.

Selen, Alice and Melissa began to attract quite a bit of attention as both Selen and Melissa were good looking women.

As for Alice, her appearance was more 'toned down' compared to the other two but was still considered a beauty nonetheless.

Melissa joked around with some of the young Lords who were talking to her while Selen kept herself 'professional' and stoic as per usual.

As for Alice...

"Sorry but I'm not interested~" Alice tried to keep up her act as Kale but the young lords of noble houses kept pestering her.

"Aw don't be like that. Just a meal is all I ask." One of them offered while Alice's smile twitched.

Trying to reject his offer for a second time, she let out an annoyed sigh as it didn't seem like he was going to listen to her.

In the end, she resorted to drastic measures.

"Yiya~ Young lord if you pester so much even I'll be swayed." Alice sighed as the young man widened his eyes in happiness.

Grabbing his hand, she leaned against his ear and opened her mouth.

"But young lord... I'm not sure if you can handle me~" She whispered, causing him to shiver before clearing his throat.

"I-I'm sure I'll meet your expectations."

"No no~ I don't mean it that way, my Lord. Perhaps you didn't realise but please, look down." Alice let out a soft chuckle as he nodded and glanced down.

But when he did, his pupils shrank as his body shivered in fear.

A monster bulge beneath that skirt.

Colour drained from his face as he apologised and immediately ran away.

"Idiot~" Alice stuck out her tongue as it was a simple illusion but quite effective in getting people to leave her alone.

'Maybe I should use this trick more often.' Alice contemplated while Alyss let out a scoff.

'And what will you do if they're into it?'

Hearing this, Alice paused for a moment as her smile twitched.

'Surely not... Right?'

'Well, you never know.'

Shivering at the thought, Alice decided to not use this trick again for the sake of her own mental sanity. Unfortunately, her mind works in wonderous ways and a quick mention caused a vivid scene to assault Alice's mind in an instant before she could drive it away.

'ARGGG!!! Stupid b*tch can you not drag me into your fantasies!?!?' Alyss shouted in a panic. As they were residing within Alice's mental space, such a vivid scene was revealed to both her and Cayla.

Cayla simply hid her face with an awkward cough, not wanting to judge her master.

'It's a misunderstanding!'

###

While Alice was trying to convince Cayla and Alyss regarding the misunderstanding, she continued to serve the guests.

A few curious gazes were scanning towards her. More specifically, towards her skirt but no one took the initiative to talk to her which Alice was grateful for. It allowed her to focus her mind on the guards around the banquet hall along with the northern entrance where her father would appear soon.

Suddenly, a horn sounded as all of the guards slammed their staff into the ground, silencing the banquet hall.

"Lord Zenia is entering!" One of the butlers shouted as the doors swung open.

From the door, Luthor Zenia stepped out. The Lord of the Zenia family.

Unlike the aged old man that Alice was familiar with over the years, the Luthor here seemed far younger with fewer wrinkles around his face. His eyes were calm, relaxed and warm with no sign of stress.

If it wasn't for his appearance, Alice would doubt if this was her father at all.

"First of all, I would like to thank everyone for attending this party. It brings me great joy to have all of you celebrate such an important time for me. As a father, I watch my daughter grow with each year. Her laughter, her joys.

"But it is at events like this do I truly get the chance to reflect back on what's happened in the passing years. Five years. That's how long it's been since the last public celebration that I've held for my daughter. But I'll keep my words brief as I am not the main character for today's event." Luthor let out a chuckle as Alice clenched her fist until it bled.

A sizzling sound could be heard as her wounds tried to mend itself but her nails were in the way.

All of this warmth yet he was brutal enough to experiment on his daughter for ten whole years.

'What a load of sh*t...' Alice thought to herself as Luthor continued to give his welcoming speech. Nearing the end, he raised his glass of wine.

"So please welcome my wife, my sons and most of all, my dear beloved daughter!"

The first to step through the door caused Alice to pause. A woman whom she had very little memories of, a woman whose voice brought her a sense of heartache.

Her mother, Sienna Zenia.

Chapter 377 - 377: Unexpected Appearance

Sienna Zenia, an elegant woman with long dark purple hair. A pair of violet eyes and a soft smile paired with a gentle demeanour.

As it is a special occasion, she wore an elegant black dress that seemed to hold the universe within. Each of her movements caused the dress to shimmer with countless stars.

Watching her mother step through the door while giving everyone a wave, Alice bit her lip.

This heartache, this bitterness. Why?

And most importantly, why doesn't she have any memories of her!?

'What's... going on?' Alice asked with a trembling voice.

Alyss wasn't able to respond as she too noticed this strange phenomenon. They could clearly recognise her as their mother and yet... the memories of her past seemed out of reach.

Holding her head, Alice shook her head but still wasn't able to remember anything.

Even if she had been locked away for ten years, it shouldn't be enough to the point where she forgot her own mother.

Hell, she could even remember the times with her father and brothers before her birthday!

So why couldn't she remember her mother?

Unaware of Alice's dilemma, the party continued as Sienna stepped to the side and allowed the main character to step through.

Walking while holding both her brother's hands, three children stepped through the door as young Alice could be seen in the middle.

Unlike her current self with the split hair and eyes, young Alice had dark brown hair similar to her father only much darker in colour.

She had a cheerful smile while wearing a glimmering dress of white, the opposite of her mother.

Seeing young Alice, Selen's pupils trembled for a moment.

'Is that... No... There's no way?' She thought with doubt. But the resemblance was uncanny. It was hard not to compare her with Alice yet at the same time, it seemed impossible.

"That's the target. Remember, do NOT, make a move until the accident occurs. Stand your guard and try to stop as many people from leaving as possible." Erick whispered as he stood next to Selen, cutting off her train of thought.

"Understood." Selen nodded.

Repeating the process for the others, Erick soon approached Alice who couldn't take her eyes off the members of the Zenia main family near the stairs.

"Kale, are you alright?" Erick raised an eyebrow as Alice nodded her head.

"I'm fine don't worry. I don't believe I've heard much news about Lord Zenia's precious daughter." Alice asked 'curiously'. With such a big party, it was hard not to know about the members of the Zenia main family.

But ever since she escaped from the Labs, Alice hasn't heard a single mention of her existence until now.

Did the Zenia's suppress the news? Or did they announce her 'death' as to hide her existence?

Therefore, she had to act as an unknowing bystander.

"The Lord's daughter is... a touchy topic. If you ever meet the Lord don't mention her at all. But you remember what I told you right? Guard the exit and go for the target once the 'accident' occurs." Erick reminded as Alice nodded her head.

"When will I know the accident's happened?"

"It'll be a big commotion so don't worry. Plus, you'll see me and the others move so just follow. As long as you remember to guard this exit it'll be fine." Erick reassured as he made his way to the centre of the room. It'd be more suspicious if people were to find him talking to Alice and the others.

Narrowing her gaze, Alice let out a soft sigh as she snuck a glance towards her mother who gave young Alice a warm hug. Meanwhile, her brothers and father looked on from the side with a soft smile.

If Cayla wasn't aware of everything that the Zenias have done, she would've begun to doubt that this was even the same family that Alice spoke of.

Just as Alice was about to turn her attention elsewhere while trying to recall memories of her mother, a man stepped into the banquet from the southern exit, the exit she was guarding.

A chill ran down Alice's back as though an untamed beast had just stepped through the door beside her. She dared not to turn around as doing so could directly lead to death!

"Hm? How strange. Are all Maids supposed to be in disguise as you are or is this just a personal hobby?" A familiar voice asked as all three of them froze up.

Slowly turning around, Alice came face to face with someone she didn't think would show up here.

A man who used to have medium length wild brown hair and sharp black eyes with a messy stubble. A man who used everything and anything in an attempt to reach his ultimate goal. An enemy whom she can't forgive.

Lord commander of Ayr, Nyer!

While the Nyer in the past felt rather relaxed and a man with the weight of the world on his shoulders this was no longer the case.

Scars riddled his body and his hair was cut short. He wore a large cloak yet even this wasn't able to hide the damaged body beneath the cloth.

Even with all the wounds, Nyer felt far more dangerous and threatening!

Cold sweat filled Alice's back as she didn't even dare to shiver in front of him.

If Nyer was a silent guardian beast in the past, the current Nyer is akin to a starved beast, hungry for flesh.

Narrowing his gaze at Alice, he let out a laugh as he reached for her head and gave it a pat.

"No need to be so scared. I know I look scary but I'm just a guest today." Nyer chuckled, his gaze focused on Luthor Zenia and his family.

As Nyer stepped away, Alice was finally able to breathe as she panted heavily.

'Why the f*ck is he here?!?!' Alyss shouted in a confused panic while Alice was the same.

Nyer shouldn't be here. There's no reason for him to be here since he didn't know that she was the successor in the past!

[That's not his real body...] Cayla muttered as her eyes widened at the sight of Nyer.

'Of course it's not, we're in the Inverted World.' Alice furrowed her brows while pressing her hand over her chest. She could feel the restless beating of her heart that couldn't calm down even as he stepped away.

[No that's not what I meant. This isn't his real body that he's contracted with the Abyss!] Cayla explained, clearly distressed.

Pacing around, she began to bite her nail while mumbling to herself.

Her panic allowed both Alice and Alyss to calm down as whatever Cayla had realised was clearly unnatural.

[He's broke off his contracts. He's completely free of the Will's influence and the bindings of the Abyss. The current 'him' is not a Lord, merely a four Sigil Hunter. But rather than the conventional Sigils that we're used to, it's forged! A fake!] Cayla explained while sitting down on her bed.

[No I need more information. Arggg!!! O'master mine, why did you have to seal me?!] Cayla tugged her hair in annoyance as she wasn't able to find out how Nyer has achieved this and what his intentions were.

Furrowing her brows, questions flooded Alice's mind.

Nyer's appearance, his thought process and his intentions. These variables had thrown her predictions into the wind as her understanding of the banquet began to stray from what had happened in her memories.

Perhaps she was too young at the time but she couldn't recall anyone that looked like Nyer. Or maybe she simply didn't notice.

But there was another variable that confused Alice.

The variable regarding Enris's energy on his body!

Since Cayla was sealed, she wasn't able to 'see' the strands of energy that belonged to Enris.

But as someone who's fought the God of the Eclipse, her followers and felt the energy personally, it was hard not to sense it from Nyer's body. No matter how faint it was, it like seeing a black dot on a white canvas!

Unmistakable!

'Did Nyer come to an agreement with Enris? She loves chaos so perhaps she desired this outcome? But even so, there should still be issues with that no? I thought he claimed a portion of Velouria's divinity? So why is he able to showcase Enris's divinity too?' Alice asked with a frown.

But before she could get her answer...

*BANG!!!

A sudden collision of power within the centre of the banquet.

The building trembled as rubble crumbled from the ceiling.

"NOW!" Erick's voice could be heard, clearly as a sign to seal the exits.

Seeing the spiral of energy exploding out from the centre of the banquet hall, Alice furrowed her brows but followed the plan.

There were many questions in her mind, many of which could only be answered while she observed the situation.

Thus to ensure that things weren't going to become even more hectic, Alice made a move.

Slamming the doors shut, Alice stood in front of the door and activated Tiamat's power, draining the world of energy into a single orb.

"What is the meaning of this?!"

"Open the damn door!"

"Let me out you whore!!!"

Shouts of protest and panic rang out but the Erick group and Alice stood firm.

The first to make a move was someone near Selen but they were dealt with instantly.

Alice couldn't care less if anyone was to charge towards her since all she had to do was kill them.

However, her gaze slowly turned towards the source of the collision.

Standing in front of young Alice who was clutching her arm, Luthor glared at Nyer with killing intent while sparks crackled around him.

"What's the meaning of this?!" He shouted, demanding an answer.

All Nyer did was smile and in his hands...

A single empty syringe.

Chapter 378 - 378: Chaos At The Banquet

Upon seeing the syringe, Alice's mind went blank.

This entire time, the events that led to her torture, it was Nyer all along.

Nyer planted the Abyss Blood inside her body!

Her breathing sped up as her vision flickered between Nyer, her younger self and her father who stood in front of her.

Gritting his teeth, Luthor let out a shout as he turned around and slashed down with his blade.

"ARGG!!!" Letting out a cry of pain, young Alice collapsed onto the ground as Luthor had cut off her arm!

Black tendrils of ink exploded from the veins, trying to claim Alice's main body but Luthor kicked the arm away.

"Sienna! Take Alice away! NOW!" He roared, dashing towards Nyer who created a beast of ink that collided with Luthor, stopping him in his path.

Biting her lips, Sienna nodded and grabbed Alice who was crying while blood poured from her wound.

Her brothers were panicking and unable to react while the guests were trying to find an exit.

At that moment, briar roots exploded from the arm that was cut off and a large tree sprouted in the centre of the room.

"Why choose such drastic measures as cutting off your own daughter's arm on her birthday? I merely gifted her a personal project of mine. Are we not supposed to gift presents to the princess of the day?" Nyer chuckled, curling his mouth into a grin while caressing the tree trunk.

Briar thorns shot out from the tree and embedded themselves against the walls while the exits were being sealed one by one.

As the roots approached the southern exit, Alice could feel something stirring within her. Try as she might, she felt as though her powers were going out of control.

Violet flames burst forth from her body and within that flame, her red spider lilies blossomed.

"Hm?" Furrowing his brows, Nyer paused as he glanced back and saw the reaction of Alice's body.

'Wait...' Widening his eyes, he closed his left eye before opening it to reveal a transformed eyeball!

The whites turned black and the pupil turned purple!

That power, that radiance. There's no doubt that it's an artificial power outside of the Abyss. Not only that, the flames and flowers rejected the very notion of the Abyss itself!

"Ah is that how it is? Pft ahahaha! If the truth of this reality is such, this one should see how far my product has grown." Nyer let out a laugh.

His mind began to piece together the hints that he'd seen thus far and understood the truth of the matter!

Focusing his gaze on Alice's body, he saw past her disguise and saw her appearance for what it is.

"Is this how a father feels seeing their product all grown up?" He muttered while scratching his chin.

Creating a knife from ink, he slashed along her arm and poured his blood onto the tree. Reaching into his pouch, he retrieved a shimmering vial of blood. Blood that flickered with the light of the stars and gold in colour.

The blood of a God!

Pouring it onto the tree, Nyer smiled as the tree began to absorb the blood without any issues.

###

'Urg... What the hell is going on?!' Alice gritted her teeth as she could feel her power going out of control. The roots that dug into her flesh, the fire that burned without control.

Alice wasn't the only one feeling these effects as Alyss buckled over from the pain.

'F*cking Nyer...' Alyss squeezed out while clutching her body.

With this variable thrown into the mix, their understanding of what transpired on this day began to shift.

She doubted her perception of her birthday.

For Alice, it had always been 'someone' stabbing a syringe into her causing her to go on a rampage. But the current event didn't follow the timeline at all.

Nyer stabbed the syringe into her, Luthor cut off her arm and a tree sprouted in the centre.

Watching the swarm of people trying to leave and ignoring the fact that she burst into flames, Alice turned her attention to Erick and the others who were beginning their slaughter of the guests.

Alice could roughly guess their plan of action. Seal the room, prevent the guards from entering, kill the guests and take care of Nyer along with Luthor before extracting the 'relic' from this memory.

[What... is that tree...] Cayla muttered, unable to comprehend the composition of the tree that sprouted from young Alice's arm.

A coldness that assaulted her mind, the fear of looking at something completely unknown. Every part of her was saying that this is a tree that shouldn't exist and yet here it stood.

She had this feeling with Alice before but never to this extent.

This feeling of helplessness. The feeling of a prey looking up at a predator.

Moreover, Cayla could see the resonance between Alice and the tree. Perhaps it was due to the passage of time but right now, Alice was akin to a branch, an extension of this power but not the source!

[We have to switch out the second Sigil, immediately!] Cayla shouted.

If they didn't switch it and allow this resonance to continue, there was a risk that Alice could be completely dominated by this foreign object. But neither Alice nor Alyss could reply.

Alyss had recognised this danger from the start and had already tried to replace it but the Sigil took root deep within their Spiritual Heart, refusing to be replaced.

Acting as a waymark, energy from the tree was siphoned into Alice's body while Alice's energy was siphoned into the tree. This link prevented Alyss from swapping out the power!

Slashing down a noble who tried to leave, Selen wiped away the blood before glancing over at Alice who was buckling over while violet flames flickered around her uncontrollably.

Within these flames, red spier lilies began to bloom as they also appeared on the tree.

'There's no doubt anymore!' Selen widened her eyes.

Kale Grani or rather, Alice Agnelia was in fact Alice Zenia, firstborn daughter of Luthor Zenia and their target for this mission!

This appearance, that power. Selen knew that the goal was for the tree to merge with their target.

But if she was indeed Alice Zenia, why was she here? How is she here and why doesn't the Zenia family know about this?

'Did she sign the contract because she's higher than Erick on the hierarchy? No... If she did she still can't harm the family. That's one of the conditions for the contract...' Selen furrowed her brows, slamming her staff down and pausing the time around her momentarily.

Flickering through the crowd, she flicked the blood off her blade as the people slowly broke apart into chunks of flesh.

'Does that mean there's another loophole I didn't know about?'

"What the hell is going on with Kale?! Since when did she have a Sigil with blue flames?!" Erick panicked as the plan had immediately begun to derail.

"I'm not sure. It seems to be resonating with the tree though." Selen sighed.

Now that things have gotten to this stage, she could only bide her time and wait for Alice to make a move.

Since she's the first born daughter, it'll allow her to override a part of her contract with Erick, letting her break out of the bindings.

"Forget it, focus on the mission first. We need to let the tree assimilate itself with the young girl otherwise we can't take her out of the Inverted World. Stop Lord Zenia for now and stall him. I'll deal with the rest." Erick shook his head as Selen nodded her head.

As this was a memory, her contract doesn't apply to the mimicry of Lord Zenia. Meaning she could use her strength against him.

Taking a deep breath, Selen sighed as she summoned her staff and rushed towards Luthor.

As for Erick, he needed to separate young Alice from Sienna.

Melissa and Michael were having their fair share of 'fun' spreading a new poison amongst the nobles while the other guard was tasked with keeping Alice's brothers at bay.

Even though they're young and posed no danger, having them interfere would make things more annoying when they extract the 'relic'.

Watching the chaos unfold, Alice stumbled to her feet as sweat dripped down her body.

With so much energy coursing through her, she felt as though she would explode at a moment's notice.

Taking several deep breaths, she glared at the guard holding her brothers.

She wasn't doing this out of love or care, no those feelings can be fed to beasts for all she cares. She was going to target the guard since all the others were distracted!

Narrowing her gaze, she redirected this energy across her body and used it as fuel for her partial bloodline release.

*BANG!!!

Before she could rush towards the guard, Nyer dropped down in front of her with a maniacal grin.

"Are you sure you should be focusing on that friend of yours?" Nyer smiled as Alice didn't hesitate to gather her energy and fire a point-blank Nova Core.

"Oh hou~ Now that's something I haven't seen in a long long time." Nyer let out a laugh, swatting her hand aside and knocking the blast off course.

*BOOM!!!

Creating a hole in the roof, Nyer grabbed Alice's arm and pinned it against her back, threatening to break it as he grabbed her chin. Forcing her to look towards Sienna and young Alice, he opened his mouth.

"You've already proved my success. Shall we witness it together?"

Widening her eyes, Alice could see Erick pushing Sienna away before grabbing young Alice and throwing her towards the mutating tree. Briar thorns erupted from the trunk as a female figure formed from the bark.

Cracking her mouth open, the beast grabbed young Alice with its roots.

*CRUNCH!!!

Chapter 379 - 379: The Truth Of Alice and Alyss

*CRUNCH!!!

Flinching from the bite, Alice was speechless as she watched the beast eat her younger self.

Young Alice's body twitched before falling limp. The sounds of her mother crying out with a soul-wrenching scream, her father trying his best to break past Selen and her brothers who shouted her name.

"Ah~ How wonderful it is to see one's own birth. And yet... Unfortunately, this is incomplete wouldn't you say so, my dear product?" Nyer whispered into her ear as he created a small spark on his finger and tapped her neck.

At that moment, a golden collar shimmered to life with chains attached.

"Why is there still a remnant of young Alice within you? By all rights, you should've devoured her the moment you crushed her skull and absorbed her into you." Nyer asked, jumping back as Alice gritted her teeth and wrapped herself in violet flames.

"Did your make-belief become a reality? Or was it a miscalculation on my part to allow you the memories of young Alice?" Nyer tapped his chin.

"Shut up!" Creating a blood blade in her hand, Alice lunged towards Nyer and activated Void Flux – Cleave.

Releasing a wave of destruction towards Nyer, she watched as he stepped to the side and flicked the face of the wave, breaking it in half.

"Let's see... Ah~ There you are." Nyer made a circle with his fingers and scanned Alice.

Clapping his hands together, the bindings manifested around her limbs as Alyss was forcefully brought out, taking control of their body.

Looking down at her hands, Alyss sighed before looking up at Nyer.

"What do you want?" She asked calmly.

Alice had expected her other self to scream and fight but this calmness? This is a first and frankly, it scared Alice more than anything.

"Are you trying to bargain?" Nyer raised his eyebrow while Alyss shook her head.

"You brought me out, forced me to take control. Either you want to say something to me or kill me right? So your product can be whole." Alyss asked, dismissing the blood blade.

All this time... Both of them thought that she was the 'product' invading their mind. All this time, she was given the name Alyss because she wasn't the 'original'. A split soul created with a mysterious origin.

But the reality was that the original Alice was dead all along. She was killed by the product and the remanent soul was renamed into Alyss.

Perhaps that was why her father hated her. Her brothers didn't see her for who she was because she was never the original Alice.

She was the beast who killed her and took her form.

"A scholar does not interfere with the experiment when new variables appear. He merely... Observe and records. I want to see the results of my experiment for I am but a memory am I not? The fact that you've appeared before me is a sign and thus I shall observe.

Observe the results of my work in the distant future." Nyer let out a laugh, snapping his fingers and collapsing into a puddle of ink, disappearing from their sight.

Watching the chains fade away, Alyss let out a sigh before turning to Alice.

'I'm sorry.' Alice apologised while clenching her fist.

Even though Alyss had returned her control to Alice, Alice didn't move and simply stood still.

'Why are you apologising for? The fact that you killed me originally or the fact that I'm here now?' Alyss asked, laying down on her bed and covering her eyes with her arm.

Opening her mouth, Alice wanted to speak but nothing came out. She merely stood in silence.

How would a person feel if they realised they were never who they thought they were? That everything was a lie.

She was never Alice Zenia but rather a product produced by Nyer. Just another f*cked up experiment.

Alyss was the original and she's the parasite that stole her appearance, her blood, her memories and her body.

If... if she had never killed the original Alice then perhaps her family wouldn't have turned out the way it did.

Before she could continue her train of thought, Alyss grabbed her by the collar.

'Look at me. How is it that me, the one you f*cking killed, is taking this better than you? We can talk about who to blame later but for now, can we do our f*cking job and stop these freaks from getting you/us out of this damn place?' Alyss gritted her teeth.

Biting her lip, Alice hesitated for a moment before nodding her head.

Right now, she didn't want to think. Don't think about the truth, don't look at the ugly reality and simply do what she came here to do. Kill the Zenias, collapse this realm.

Nothing else matters.

Just kill.

Slamming her hand down, a pool of blood began to expand across the entire hall. Reaching down, Alice grabbed the leg of the first guard and dragged him in front of her.

Confusion filled his mind as he wondered why he was upside down.

Seeing the emotionless eyes of Alice who was staring back at him, fear gripped his heart.

*BANG!!!

Jamming a Void Flux into his mouth while red spider lilies blossomed across his body, Alice detonated the spark and watched as his head was obliterated in one go.

Throwing the body aside, Alice wiped the blood splatter across her face, creating a ghastly smear of blood.

"That's one..." Alice muttered.

Was this why she always felt at ease during battle? Because she was made for it?

'Three left. Michael, Melissa and Erick. Selen is keeping... Luthor busy.' Alice thought to herself as both Michael and Melissa were annoying targets to take care of.

Even though they were focused on killing the nobles, there was a protective barrier around them, keeping them safe.

Alice couldn't repeat the same method she did with the guard since neither of them was open to a sneak attack.

However, just because both of them have placed precautions doesn't mean she can't make an opening!

Focusing her flames into two tiny sparks, Alice began to modify their shape before aiming it towards Michael and Melissa.

*BANG BANG!!!

Firing the modified Void Flux, Alice leaned back into a blood mirror and teleported above them.

Just as the modified Void Fluxes came into contact with their barriers, it exploded into a blood mist and began to eat away at the energy.

"Huh?"

Noticing the blood mist that exploded around them along with their barrier that was being dissolved away, Michael furrowed his brows when two hands came into his view.

*CRACK!!!

Breaking Michael's neck, Alice created a compressed orb of blood and jammed it into his throat.

From his body, briar roots burst out from his orifices as red spider lilies blossomed across his body.

Widening her eyes in horror, Melissa glared at Alice in terror and shock then anger.

"KALE!!!"

"Shut up, I'm not deaf." Alice glanced over while Melissa manifested a bloodied halo around her.

Ritualistic patterns appeared across her body as she was about to activate her ability when Alice used Michael's body as a shield and dove into the blood mirror.

Confused as to where Alice went, Melissa activated an area of effect ritual to create a zone of safety.

However, she didn't expect Alice to crawl out of the blood surrounding her feet.

Two slashes against the tendon, forcing her to fall over while two fingers appeared in her view.

"ARGGGG!!!"

Letting out a scream of pain, Melissa could feel Alice gouging out her eyes as her head was pulled back.

Activating her partial bloodline release Alice curb stomped Melissa on the back of her neck.

Each stomp caused her blood to splatter around her as Alice pulled her head and spine from her body via brute force.

Since it would be a waste of resources, Alice snapped her finger and gathered the blood of Melissa, Michael and the guard into a single orb and threw it into her mouth.

*BANG!!!

Parrying a sneak attack that had invaded her zone at the last moment, Alice's disguise began to flicker as she noticed it was Erick who fired the attack.

"You won't get out of this alive. Three Lords are waiting outside and you've also broken the contract." Erick threatened as he glared at her.

Hearing this, Alice tilted her head before letting out a laugh.

"Pft AHAHAHAHA! Oh my dear young master, do you really think I signed that contract because I had no way to get out of it?" Alice narrowed her eyes.

*Crack...

Little by little, the disguise provided by the mirror jester started to fade away.

Her split hair, her scarred eye that was sealed by Kaden and the outfit of Ayr.

Alice revealed her true form to Erick who widened his eyes at the resemblance.

"The contract stated that it will take effect once I join the family. But if I'm already part of the family, does the rest of it still apply? And even if it did, how will you command the first born daughter? But all things considered, I guess the first born daughter part doesn't apply to me anymore." Alice smiled bitterly as the only one it applied to would be Alyss.

Regardless, since their soul was in one body, the contract couldn't be applied to them.

Sienna, who was dragged away by Erick, saw Alice's appearance and her gaze trembled.

She had just seen her daughter get eaten by the monster but another appeared in front of her.

Confusion filled her mind but that was no doubt, the appearance of her darling little girl.

"You're the missing relic!" Erick gritted his teeth.

The reason why they were on this mission was because the real relic was missing.

But if she was here all along then all he needed to do was warn the rest of the family!

"What was one of the clauses again? Ah right, obey the hierarchy, right?" Alice revealed a cruel smile.

Widening his eyes, Erick realised what she was about to say as he reached out, wanting to stop her but it was too late.

"Erick Zenia, kill yourself."

Chapter 380 - 380: Dissolving Contracts

"Erick Zenia, kill yourself." Alice ordered coldly.

Widening his eyes in horror, Erick started to lose control of his own body.

Little by little, his hands reached for the blade sheathed on his waist.

"You b*tch! You won't get away with this! The family will know! They will know the relic is still around!" Erick shouted, trying his best to hold himself back but the contract stood firm.

Grabbing the blade, he began to repeatedly stab himself in the face.

Blood, flesh and bones splattered around him while Alice watched on coldly.

This was far too good of a death for him but she couldn't spend too much time on this fool.

After the beast ate her younger self and received Nyer's blood along with a strange vial, it began to shift and morph.

A cocoon of sorts could be seen within the trunk of the tree while red spider lilies blossomed around it.

Taking a deep breath, Alice glanced over to Selen.

'Cayla, is there a way to break Selen's contract? Might as well do it so that she'll feel in debt to us. I need her help.' Alice asked curiously.

If a contract can be established, there should be a way to nullify it. Especially since she is... No, she was the firstborn daughter of the Zenia family.

The contract recognised the blood within her, hence she could order Erick to kill himself. But she wasn't sure if it'll accept the nullification of the contract.

[The method is rather simple o'master mine. If Selen carries the Law of Agreement on her or if there's a mark, simply using your own blood to resolve the contract would be enough.] Cayla replied.

She didn't say anything more than necessary as both Alice and Alyss were in a delicate situation.

Alyss was taking in the fact that she was the original and that Alice had killed her and absorbed her.

Alice was taking in the fact that she was the product of Nyer, made to consume the original Alice and take over her body.

The anger and hatred from her family towards her had been justified. She was the one who broke apart the happy family.

Nodding her head, Alice made her way to Selen while the cocoon hadn't hatched yet.

"Do you have the Law of Agreement on you? I'll dissolve the contract with my blood." Alice asked as Selen nodded her head.

Pulling out a rolled up piece of parchment, she watched as Alice made a cut on her finger and stamped it on the roll.

Golden energy filtered through the void as it wrapped around the contract.

*SHATTER

The sounds of chains breaking could be heard as Selen felt the contract that's been binding her this entire time fading from her body.

Closing her eyes to enjoy this sensation, she took a deep breath before lunging at Alice!

*BANG!!!

Her blade was parried by a blood sword as Alice glared at Selen.

"The f*ck are you doing?!"

"Venting. So you're the first born daughter of the Zenia family. If it wasn't for you, they wouldn't have poured that vile blood into me. Do you know how much I had to go through because of you?" Selen gritted her teeth as the two of them stared at one another.

"Congratulations. I don't know if you know this but you're not the only one that suffered okay? Now can you help me kill the relic or not? If you don't want to help me, kindly go f*ck yourself and let me deal with this." Alice frowned as flames and flowers erupted around her.

It was clear that Alice was willing to go all out if Selen didn't cooperate. While Selen was confident that she could put up a fight against Alice, she wasn't sure if she could do the same against the strange man who had the syringe.

There was something abnormal about him that terrified her to her core.

If he was to make a move, she wouldn't be able to fight back.

"Fine. Our cooperation ends once we get out of this place." Selen frowned as she conjured her staff and turned to the tree.

"Care to spare a drop of blood first?" Alice smiled, causing Selen to raise an eyebrow.

"Why?"

"Just some preparations." Alice shrugged.

Since she knows they weren't going to be on the same side after this, she wasn't going to hold her cards close to her chest.

Narrowing her eyes, Selen remembered their previous fight and frowned.

"You're going to copy or steal my power aren't you? I was wondering how you can have so many abilities. It must be blood, right?"

'Sharp b*tch.'

"Perhaps. So are you going to give me a drop or not?" Alice asked.

Since they were cooperating and Alice wanted her help, the likelihood of it being 'steal' was unlikely. It was leaning more towards 'copy' as Selen bit her finger before throwing some blood towards Alice.

Using her blood manipulation to attach some blood mist to the droplet, Alice threw it into her mouth.

"Are you taking offence, or shall I? we still need to be careful about the weird guy and I'm not sure if we can kill him or not." Selen asked as Alice glanced up to see Nyer sitting on the pillar, giving her a wave with a small smile.

"Ignore him. He's an observer and won't interfere. He simply wants to see how I deal with his tree of his." Alice shook her head.

Taking a deep breath, Alice activated her partial bloodline release.

"We'll switch roles depending on the situation!"

Charging forward, Alice created four floating blood blades and shot them towards the roots that burst out of the ground.

Exploding into wall of violet flames, Alice noticed that the tree had flames of its own.

'It's resonating with the powers I have.'

"Don't get hit by the fire or flowers. Get hit and you won't be able to use your Sigils." Alice warned as Selen nodded.

Flipping her body, she vaulted over a root before the flowers or flames could reach her.

Just as she was about to land, a trap of briar thorns manifested but Selen was prepared.

Stabbing her staff into the ground, she used it as a platform before slashing away at the roots around her, tearing them to shreds.

Once again, Alice was reminded of just how much control Selen had over her own body.

Even when she flipped her controls, Selen was able to adapt almost instantaneously.

Using her hand as a medium, Alice created several modified Void Flux – Cleaves and used it to fend off the roots that reached for her before aiming a Void Flux at the cocoon.

*BANG!!!

Firing the spark, Alice frowned upon seeing a wall of briar thorns absorb her attack and sprout red spider lilies.

"Tch!"

Watching the two of them try to approach the cocoon, Nyer chuckled inwardly.

Truly, he never expected Alice to be able to use Allura's techniques.

'Seems like the gamble was a success after all.' He smiled.

The 'product' he had injected into young Alice was a type of parasitic blood. One that had extremely potent adaptability capable of even accepting the blood of a God. However, there was one issue with this.

A vessel.

It needed a capable vessel to hold its power otherwise even with superb adaptability, the host would die in due time.

In order for him to create a new body for his Goddess, he needed to fulfil several requirements. And right now, his main goal is to procure the right body for her.

An immortal body and a vessel capable of sustaining the powers of the Abyss.

Young Alice matched this description. Through his countless years of exploring the Abyss, the surface and all of its inhabitants, she was the strangest that he had seen.

While the product was designed to be a blank canvas, she was on a completely different level.

Not only could she adapt, but she could 'clean' the canvas. If paired with his product, he could truly create something miraculous.

A miracle in the flesh that can accept the power of a God. The foundation of a man made God.

Seeing the Alice of the future, it seems like he was right all along as she has truly taken advantage of her own physique. The countless powers stored within her body yet she maintains control.

However... To truly become the vessel of a God, it was still a little lacking.

Hence why Nyer decided to... 'enhance' his product in the current world.

His own blood that had siphoned traces of divinity from Allura and Kaden along with powers granted by Enris, God of the Eclipse. And on top of this, the blood of a God.

With all of this, it should allow the product to undergo a metamorphosis, advancing to the next stage. Once Alice defeats the enhanced product, a resonance effect should occur within her own body as it did earlier, absorbing the residual energy.

'Don't disappoint me now~' Nyer smiled.

Noticing some movement in the back, he could see Luthor and Sienna evacuating their sons while Alice fought against the beast.

Sienna was conflicted and wanted to save Alice. She wasn't sure of her true identity but that was now doubt the appearance of her daughter.

Luthor on the other hand, was more doubtful as he witnessed the beast eat his daughter.

Not only that, but the two of them share the same power meaning the Alice they were seeing was the beast but from a different time!

Scratching his chin, Nyer wondered if he should give Alice another push but upon remembering the hatred in her eyes after seeing Luthor, he shook his head.

He simply needed to watch the events unfold. There was nothing else he needed to do, nothing that he needed to prove. Alice's existence has already proven the progress of his plan and nothing else was needed.

Soon, he will be reunited with his beloved Goddess.