

Abyssal A 381

Chapter 381 - 381: Selen's Trump Card

Pushing back the onslaught of roots, fire and briar thorns, sweat dripped down Alice's face as she realised the tree was getting faster with each passing moment.

Due to the effects of her fire, neither of them could use their Sigil abilities against the tree.

If Alice's control of the violet flames and her red spider lilies were considered to be level 1, the tree would be level 5.

It was on a whole different level!

***BANG!!!**

Slamming her staff down, Selen attempted to freeze the time around them but flames burned away her powers in an instant.

Within that instant, five roots shot towards her but they were different than usual. On the tip, syringe like spikes aimed to pierce her body as Selen realised they wanted to drain her of blood!

Twisting her body, she managed to dodge three but two were about to hit.

***CLANG!!!**

Creating a blood mirror above Selen, Alice appeared and kicked the two roots away before dragging Selen into her mirror.

Sliding across the floor, the two glared at the tree that was now focused on defending itself once more.

"Do you have anything to burn this damn thing to the ground?" Selen asked as Alice furrowed her brows.

Swapping Sigils only works once and once it's been replaced, it'll stay like that for hours. Right now, she couldn't afford to get rid of her second, third or fourth.

Granted, she ate the blood of the guard so she's equal to a six Sigil Hunter but those Sigils can only be assigned once. If something bad occurs and she's already replaced them, it'll be difficult to escape the predicament.

"Depends but if it doesn't work I won't be able to do anything about it. It's a trump card ya know?" Alice forced a smile.

Hearing this, Selen furrowed her brows as she let out a sigh.

"Can you buy me a bit of time then? I'll activate my resonance." Selen asked as Alice furrowed her brows and nodded her head.

"I'll certainly try."

Taking a deep breath, Alice slammed her palm down as a pool of blood began to expand across the area.

From the blood, weapons manifested and shot towards the roots that surged towards Selen.

Detonating it into a brilliant display of flames and explosions, Alice glanced back and saw Selen with her eyes closed.

In front of her, she held her staff.

'Seems like her resonance has something to do with the power of time. If I just defend, it'll be easy for the tree to overwhelm me.'

Crouching down, Alice set down a node next to Selen before dashing towards the tree.

Snapping her fingers, she created three Void Fluxes next to her and fired it at the largest root she could see.

*CRACK!!!

Slapping her attack out of the air using a smaller root, the tree tunnelled the large root into the ground, aiming for Selen but Alice was ready.

Clasping her hands together with a Void Flux, she activated the node she set around Selen.

*BANG!!!

A dome of flames and flowers burst out from the ground, creating a barrier of sorts that prevented any roots or thorns from hitting Selen.

Using this chance, Alice aimed her third Void Flux at the cocoon.

Adjusting its shape for penetrative power, she narrowed her eyes and fired.

The recoil of the blast caused the pool of blood around her to scatter but it was within her calculations. Controlling the blood, she had them flank the modified Void Flux and warded off the thorns.

Spider lilies blossomed along the trunk as they formed a protective net.

Upon coming into contact with the Void Flux, it began to twist and snap.

However, Alice noticed its goal.

By having it twist and snap, it was able to reduce the spin on her attack, thus reducing the penetrative power. Before it lost more momentum, Alice forcefully detonated the spark.

*BOOM!!!

Looking at the cloud of smoke and flames, Alice narrowed her gaze before bending her body back.

Above her, a spike thorn began to slowly retract.

"!!!" Cold sweat filled her back as Alice could feel her head beating against her ear.

If she was any slower, that thorn would've pierced her body.

The Zone that she had established around her body warned her at the last moment and she instinctively bent back. Yet it was this exact move that saved her life and prevented the thorn from tearing off her head.

Just as Alice was recovering from her initial dodge, two more thorns rushed out as she dodged the first but was struck by the second.

"Arg!" Gritting her teeth, Alice created a dagger and cut off a piece of her forearm that the thorn struck.

However, her cut wasn't deep enough as she could see roots burrowing into her flesh.

"Gods f*cking dammit!"

The speed of these thorns was far too fast for Alice to defend using the automated defence of her Shard of Kara. Yet her Zone wasn't stable enough to control the shard with pinpoint accuracy.

Taking a deep breath, she didn't hesitate to create a Void Flux and aimed at her arm.

*BANG!!!

Destroying the roots that were trying to reach her main body, Alice jumped back to create some distance before more thorns could strike her.

Since she had used the Void Flux, her regeneration was slowed down by the flames but compared to having roots inside her, this was the more preferable outcome.

As the dust cleared, Alice could see a single arm reaching out from the cocoon that had controlled the briar thorns.

A strange darkness covered the arm similar to her first Resonance and slowly blended back into her natural skin tone.

Grabbing the edge of the cocoon, the arm tore away at the chunks as a woman's figure began to reveal herself.

Dishevelled crimson hair, the same shade as the red spider lilies that blossomed on the tree. A pair of unfeeling red eyes with the pattern of the lilies printed upon her face.

A visage similar to that of a mix between Velouria and Alice herself. The outfit consisted of briar thorns digging into her flesh and a curtain of blood that acted as fabric.

Stepping out of the cocoon in her bare feet, the woman glanced around cluelessly while raising her hand.

Seeing the blood drip down her arm, she opened her mouth and licked the blood before curling her lips up into a smile.

"Alice! Get out of the way!" Selen shouted while Alice was frozen by the appearance of the beast.

Hearing Selen's shout, Alice immediately dove into a blood mirror and Selen pulled out her staff and aimed it towards the beast.

In her resonance form, Selen's hair turned into a crystalline white. Adorned with a marble coloured and black dress with straps of fabric hovering around her as though it was underwater, she rushed forward.

With each step she took, the sound of a clock hand ticking could be heard as she weaved through the countless thorns that the beast sent towards her.

Taking another step, she pivoted on her foot and stabbed her staff into the ground. Biting her finger, she drew a line along the shaft of the staff before circling the beast in an anti clockwise motion.

A barrier manifested around the staff while Selen reached the next zone and created a second staff.

Once again, she drew a single line of blood upon the shaft of the staff.

Noticing what she was trying to do, the beast began to send more thorns towards Selen but Alice wasn't going to stand by and do nothing.

Slamming her hand down, orbs of blood appeared around Selen. Just as the thorns were about to reach her, an orb would intercept and transform into a mirror, sending the attack elsewhere.

While she may struggle with dodging thorns while they were rushing towards her, positioning her mirrors around someone else was a different matter!

Giving Alice a side eye, the beast furrowed her brows ever so slightly before aiming her hand towards Alice.

Sensing danger, Alice rolled to the side and fired a Void Flux towards where she was standing out of instinct.

***BANG!!!**

Colliding with a pillar of thorns that pierced through the ground, flames erupted beside her but Alice made sure to keep most of her attention on Selen.

While she may be a master at controlling her body along with slowing the time around her, without Alice's help, she would've been stabbed by several thorns already!

Upon placing the twelfth staff, Selen jumped back and slammed both her hands against the ground.

A ritualistic circle manifested around the beast as illusionary glyphs appeared above each staff. Blue energy flooded into the room, forming a barrier with each point being anchored down by a staff and above, space cracked apart.

[There's no doubt, this is indeed the power of Miralith, the Abyss Lord of Time. Selen's formed a ritual but the Lord should be sealed. How is she able to bring out its power?] Cayla frowned.

A Sealed Abyss Lord cannot die nor can they exert their powers with few exceptions such as Tiamat. And even then, they are limited to a minuscule fraction of their abilities. Miralith certainly doesn't belong to this tier, even if it can control certain aspects of time.

However, Selen was able to bring out its power.

Either the Zenia's have found a loophole or Miralith's bindings have become loose!

From the crack of time, a pair of illusionary claws tore apart the entrance as a colossal beast revealed its head.

With a pair of jagged horns, two pairs of eyes and a wingless draconic body that seemed to shimmer between skeletal form and flesh, the Sealed Abyss Lord of Time manifested in the banquet hall!

[Abyss Lord of Time: Miralith – ??????????]

Chapter 382 - 382: Alice Vs The 'Product'

[Abyss Lord of Time: Miralith – ?????????]

Widening her eyes, Alice took a step back upon seeing the visage of a sealed Abyss Lord.

While it wasn't here in its true form, the pressure it exerted was no less than Tiamat from the Inverted Realm!

Seeing all of this, Nyer scratched his chin with amusement.

'Miralith huh? It's not the same Miralith I know from this time. Meaning this lass is from the future as well. . . Interesting.'

With the ritual zone established, Selen gritted her teeth as blood began to pour from her orifices but she continued the ritual.

Meanwhile, the beast tried to break out yet the barrier held firm.

Little by little, her movements began to slow down as the zone within the barrier slowly lost its colour.

Even without Cayla, Alice could tell that Miralith was slowing down the time within the barrier until it came to a stop.

[Once Miralith completely stops the time within the barrier, anything trapped inside will essentially be removed from the flow of time. In essence, they die.] Cayla explained using her previous knowledge of Miralith as a basis.

However, things didn't go that smoothly.

From inside the barrier, the beast narrowed her gaze as she could feel the withering of her body. The slow decay and the removal of time from within this barrier.

If she were to do nothing, she would die!

Die? No, she couldn't let that happen.

She had to survive! She refused to die in this place!

"ARGGGGG!!!" Letting out a cry of anger, briar thorns exploded out of the beast's back as it latched onto the barrier.

While it couldn't pierce it, the beast didn't care as it wasn't her goal in the first place.

*BANG!!!

Violet flames and red spider lilies blossomed across her body while strange marks appeared. It reminded Alice of Sigil patterns yet they were very different at the same time.

A fake Sigil.

"What the hell is this beast?!" Selen widened her eyes, clearly sensing a familiar power contesting against her ritual.

The briar thorns that exploded from the beast's back began to glow as pulses of blue energy could be seen rushing towards the main body.

*URAHHH!!!!

Letting out a roar, Miralith cracked her jaw open as energy gathered into a single orb.

Firing it towards the beast that was attempting to siphon her power, Miralith slammed her claws into the ground.

Within the barrier, light began to fade. The material that composed the floor and rubble cracked apart and was reduced to dust in the blink of an eye.

The briar thorns and the flowers withered while the flames reduced in size.

Alice wanted to assist but there wasn't much she could do right now. Anything she did would interfere with the barrier that Selen had established.

'It's not enough. The flame isn't extinguished, the... beast is still alive.' Alyss frowned.

The pulse of the fire held on as it flickered to a heartbeat.

*Ba-dum... Ba-dum...

With each beat, the flames would fight back before calming down.

Fight back then calm down.

With each flicker, it acclimated itself to the surrounding pressure of Miralith attempting to extinguish it. With each flicker, it anchored itself in this realm that was slowly being drained of time.

With each flicker, Alice could feel herself being drawn towards that flame.

Unknowingly, the violet flames that she commands began to manifest around her body.

"Selen, you should get back." Alice frowned.

She could feel the beast gaining more power with each pulse and soon, the barrier wouldn't be able to hold it back anymore.

Selen wanted to protest but decided against it. Seeing as how Alice's flames were beginning to sync up with the beast's, it was clear that Alice understood what was happening inside that realm.

Not only that, but Selen could sense her ritual beginning to fail with Miralith struggling to exert more pressure within the barrier.

It felt as though an invisible wall was blocking her, preventing more time from slipping away.

Clenching her fist, Selen nodded her head before pressing her palm against Alice's back.

"It's a slight speed buff. It's not much since the effects are diminished when used on someone other than me. But it should help you keep up to some extent."

Raising an eyebrow, Alice chuckled before nodding her head.

Watching Selen jump back, Alice placed her hand over her chest.

She could feel the beating of her own heart in tandem with the rhythmic pulses of the flame.

While their meeting may have been coincidental and should never have happened, now that she's here, a resonance has been formed.

Much like how a beast would feel threatened when an equally strong opponent was to invade their territory, Alice instinctively felt anger and threat towards 'herself'.

Only one of them can exist!

'Calm yourself. Don't lose sight of the goal and switch when you need to. We're not a one woman show, there's two of us here.' Alyss reminded, understanding that Alice's state was abnormal.

Not only was she psychologically stressed due to the revelation that she was a product all along and not even the Original Alice, but her body was also reacting strangely due to the presence of the beast.

*Fuuu...

Letting out a breath, Alice nodded her head.

'I know. I won't do something stupid.' Alice forced a smile even though she didn't feel like smiling.

She understood that neither Alyss nor Cayla could hear the ringing in her ears. A command that continued to echo while the flames fester within the boundary of frozen time.

KILL!!!

*CRACK!!! SHATTER!!!

Breaking out of the barrier, several thorns shot towards Alice.

Crouching down, Alice activated her partial Bloodline Release and dashed towards the beast without any hesitation.

Creating a sword similar to Void Fang using her blood manipulation, she activated the Shard of Kara.

Using the shard to defend her blind spot, Alice pivoted on her right foot and slashed down.

*KRKKK!!!!

Tearing apart the root using her blade coated in flames, Alice adjusted her grip into a reverse grip and parried two more attacks.

Just as a third thorn was about to collide with her body, the Shard of Kara slammed into it from the side, knocking the thorn off target.

Taking a deep breath, Alice manifested a wall of blood beads and sent it towards the beast. Each of the beads began to pulse as flames erupted from the centre. Sparks of light detonated within and it turned into a blanket of Void Fluxes!

*BANG!!!

Colliding with a wall of thorns, smoke and debris shot out while the beast furrowed her brow.

'Behind!'

Snapping her head 180 degrees, it watched as Alice burst through the smoke with her blade in hand.

However, she was ready for the sneak attack as she curled her lips into a wide grin and revealed her sharp teeth.

Clusters of thorns appeared behind Alice and exploded before she could jump out of the way!

Gritting her teeth, Alice could feel the thorns digging into the flesh on her back.

Now that she was face to face with the beast, she might as well get a good hit in before she distanced herself!

*KRK KRK!!!

Two rapid slashes, one on the right arm and one on the left.

Just as the beast was about to regenerate, Alice interfered and snapped her finger.

Metal stars stabbed into the beast's wound as red spider lilies blossomed!

First Resonance!

Looking at Alice who has flower patterns manifested on her face while her form shifted to match her Resonance, the beast unleashed a barrage of roots to force Alice away.

Panting heavily, she glared at Alice who looked at the thorns that squirmed beneath her skin.

Letting out a small chuckle, golden chains and cuffs materialised across her body.

The appearance of Alice's first Resonance changed to match Alyss as countless black limbs burst out of her shadow, clawing at her flesh, forcefully dug out the thorns and tossed them onto the ground.

Stitching her flesh together, Alyss narrowed her eyes and taunted the beast.

Gritting her teeth, the beast created a blade of thorns and removed her arms from the shoulder before regenerating new limbs, matching Alice's actions.

Grabbing the sword, she stabbed it into the ground.

At that moment, a ritual circle erupted around Alice, the very same that Selen tried to trap her in!

"That's not gonna work on me." Alyss laughed as she exploded with blinding speed and appeared next to the beast. Twisting her body, she kicked the beast in the head, sending her body flying into a wall.

However, the beast managed to leave a thorn in Alyss's stomach. But she didn't care for the damage and clawed it out forcefully.

Watching this short exchange, Selen winced at the thought of sustaining such injuries.

It didn't feel like a battle between a Hunter and a beast. Rather, it was more reminiscent of two beasts clawing at each other in desperation!

Looking at the beast who was pulling herself out from the rubble, Alyss frowned as she could see the beast improving with each second.

The longer they fight, the stronger the beast became.

Thus they must finish it as soon as possible. An attack to completely surpass their regeneration.

Closing her eyes, Alyss handed over the controls back to Alice as she reached into her pouch and pulled out a single orb.

Looking at the swirl of energy that seemed to resemble a screaming face, Alice apologised inwardly.

She wasn't able to free them or undo what had been done.

What she could do was grant them a chance at vengeance.

To foil the plans the Zenia's have worked towards and end the beast along with this Inverted World.

She was going to tune herself with this orb to create her Personal Artifact!

Chapter 383 - 383: The Beast's Resonance

Looking at the orb made from an unborn human, Alice hesitated.

There were other ways she could use to try and defeat the beast but they would take too long.

Not only that but because the tree was 'her', there's an inherent risk that the tree would steal her power.

It had already happened earlier with the barrier and with each passing second, she was getting stronger through siphoning the abilities around her.

'I won't be surprised if she steals my blood abilities next.' Alice thought to herself, stepping to the side and dodging a thorn strike.

Just as she dodged, the thorns cracked open to reveal several seeds that shot towards Alice.

Widening her eyes, Alice controlled the Shard to appear in front of her.

Expanding the shield, she watched as the seeds grew roots and dug into the barrier before sprouting spider lilies.

'She's adapting already!'

Recalling the shield, Alice twisted her body and created an orb of fire in her hands. Swiping up, a wave of flames rushed towards the beast as she took this moment to channel her energy into the orb.

A Personal Artifact.

A weapon that is perfectly matched with her abilities allowing her to bring out more than 100% of her potential.

In order to reach a level of power that's capable of killing this beast in one go, Alice had to choose her Sigils carefully.

Her first Sigil was stuck as the Mirror Jester. An unfortunate situation but she couldn't do anything about it.

Her second can't be changed right now, not that she wanted to. It's the Sigil that makes up the foundations of her power. Taking it out would cause her to lose access to all of her main attacks.

Therefore, under no circumstances can she change out her second.

Her third can't be changed either. The blood and metal manifestation was far too beneficial as it stopped her from using her own blood as a resource.

Had it not been for this, each time she fights, Alice would become anaemic even if she cycles the blood back into her own body.

Her fourth was a safety net that also doubles as an offensive option. The power to manipulate the Void helped her close the gap of physical power using teleportation. Even with partial Bloodline Release, she couldn't fully close the gap between her and someone who's been permanently affected by Abyss Blood.

But her tricks and gimmicks helped her bypass this for most of her fights.

With all of this in mind, Alice could only change two Sigils out of her six.

The strongest person that she knows, Allura, was the obvious choice for her fifth Sigil. Out of everyone that Alice could access, Allura was by far the strongest.

But the problem was which Sigil should Alice take?

From her knowledge, Allura's first Sigil was Flame Control. Her second was Flame Manipulation which coated her body in fire. Third was being able to further channel her fire and condense it beyond the normal capacity, hence the white flames.

Allura's fourth was invisible blades that prevents wounds from being healed. Fifth was a Berserk type Sigil. Sixth, which she chose for her identity as Kale, was Instant Slashes, letting her bypass the 'slow' travel time of her attacks when fighting Lords. Not only that, but this Sigil could also directly attack the soul for beings such as Immortality and Spirituality.

Alice wasn't sure about Allura's seventh Sigil. From what she saw, it was a stacking type that Allowed Allura to activate her new skill that was only devised in the Inverted World.

The Seven Days of Execution.

As for her Eighth, the Power of Destruction that used to belong to Shura.

However, this was a gamble as Alice highly doubted the fact that she could access the eighth Sigil purely based on the timing of which she gained access to Allura's Sigil.

The moment in time where she 'siphoned' a small part of Allura's soul was during their sparring, far before the fight during the war.

'There's another way for you to... update your information on Allura.' Alyss spoke up as Alice glanced over in surprise.

'What do you mean?'

'You still have it right? Allura's Amulet that she gave you to save your life.' Alyss reminded.

The Amulet created from Allura's condensed flames. A gift from their moment of parting that lost its use since the connection was severed once they entered the Inverted World.

'Even though it lost Allura's essence which connected her to the Amulet, it was still created from her fire.'

Furrowing her brows, Alice paused as she realised that Alyss was correct.

While Alice was contemplating her options, the beast moved.

Digging her hands into her chest, she tore open her flesh, cracking apart her ribs. Housed in the centre of her body was a beating heart wrapped in a veil of thorns.

Resonance!

Alice felt a sense of danger. A feeling of death looming ever closer and closing its frigid claws around her neck.

Blinking her eyes, she realised her surroundings had changed as she was dragged into a special type of Resonance similar to what Selen had done yet not the same. Selen was an ability but Alice could sense the energy of Resonance from the beast's body.

A monotone world filled with black and white. The only colour breaking apart this monotony was the deep crimson of red spider lilies that blossomed from the corpses of countless chimeric beasts scattered across the land.

A harrowed landscape of corpses and destruction filled this realm while a blanket of mist rolled in from the edges.

Beyond the horizon of this realm, colossal ruins crafted from the skeletal corpse of a leviathan sized beast with countless limbs grafted onto its body.

Blood dripped from the desolate sky with chains descending from the clouds.

Hanging directly above her head, a single eclipsed sun stared down at the battlefield.

[Theres... two sources of Divinity here...] Cayla muttered with a trembling voice.

Alice didn't need Cayla to explain as she could feel it too. Powers that she was all too familiar with.

The Divinity of the Abyss and Eclipse!

Biting her lip, Alice clenched her fist. She knew that her birth was far from natural but this was beyond her initial expectations.

A product created by Nyer, the blood of a fallen Goddess and the blessing of Enris. What else was this body of her's hiding? Moreover, it was the Eclipse of all things!

The very same cult that ruined the life of Ria!

*Tap...

Snapping her gaze to the right, Alice could see the approaching figure of the beast.

No longer was she bound to the tree, limiting her movements.

Each of her steps caused the ground to splatter with blood and wherever the blood landed, spider lilies bloomed.

Alice wanted to jump back but in her moment of observation of this realm, she hadn't noticed the spider lilies taking root across her body!

'How could I miss this!?' Gritting her teeth, she slammed her palm against her chest as violet flames flooded her body.

But in this realm, her flames lost their colour.

Seeing the fire surge across her body yet the spider lilies continued to bloom, Alice felt confusion assault her mind.

Why did her flame stop working?

The fire which she relied upon all this time to cancel out the abilities of the Abyss. Why could it not burn away these flowers despite having done so before?

'Dammit! This is no time to think of this sh*t!' Alice cursed inwardly as she created blood blades and slashed away at the roots preventing her movement.

Jumping back, she glanced to her hand and saw that her blood retained its colour within this realm.

'Is 'red' the only thing that works here?'

Regardless, Alice made a choice.

Her fifth Sigil will be updated to Allura!

Reaching into her pouch, Alice grabbed the amulet and threw it into her mouth.

Just as she did this, the beast appeared in front of her and grabbed her head.

Raising Alice into the air, it attempted to slam her into the ground but Alice reacted in time.

Adjusting her body, she kicked the beast in the face while firing a bead of blood towards her chest. Upon collision, the bead transformed into a Void Flux which pushed the beast back and failed to deal any meaningful damage.

But Alice didn't care since this was just fine for her.

The key was to create some space between them so that she could assign her sixth Sigil.

She wasn't sure if eating the Amulet worked but there was no time to properly test. The fastest way was to eat something else and see if she could designate it as her Sigil.

Naturally, there was only one target for this.

Forcing herself to smile, Alice reached into her pouch and threw the item into her mouth.

###

Interrogating a Zenia Scholar, Kaden flinched as he accidentally exerted too much strength and crushed the Scholar's skull with his hand.

"What the hell are you doing?! He was about to tell us something!" Nalem panicked while Kaden's smile twitched furiously.

". . .Sorry." Kaden flicked the brain matter from his hand as he took out a handkerchief.

"Well? What the hell happened?"

"Alice just ate my f*cking feather."

Hearing this, Nalem felt his brain collapse in on itself as he failed to fully comprehend what he just heard.

"What?"

"She. Ate. My. F*cking. Feather." Kaden clarified as Nalem had to raise his hand and massage his eyes.

"She ate your feather?"

"I'm not repeating myself for a third time."

"Your feather than you gave her to save herself?" Nalem asked.

"Yes." Kaden nodded.

"The feather holding the power belonging to a Lord and Apostle?"

"Yes."

"And she ate it?"

"Yes."

Blinking his eyes, Nalem only had one thought.

'The f*ck?'

Chapter 384 - 384: Alice's Personal Artifact

There have been moments when a person felt like they could see the whole world after consuming Abyss Blood. The surge of knowledge, so vast and paralysing. A flood of information that renders you unable to move, react or comprehend whatever you have just discovered.

Alice was in this exact state.

Upon consuming the feather gifted to her by Kaden, Alice felt a wave of information flood her mind. It wasn't anything grand such as methods of casting nor was it the steps to becoming an Abyss Lord.

What it was, was a compendium of all the monsters he had access to. How to summon their mimicry and how to fuse it together.

It felt as though all the information given to Cayla's library was forcefully inserted into her mind without any filters.

*COUGH!!!

Covering her mouth, blood poured out of her orifices as Alice wanted to jump back to avoid the beast while she digested this knowledge.

However, the beast wasn't about to let her go that quickly.

Stabbing the thorns into her arm, she sent countless strands covered with her own blood towards Alice.

Gritting her teeth, Alice conjured a wall of blood before transforming it into a wall of spider lilies, fending off the attack.

While she wasn't fully aware of the rules within this realm, thus far, only blood based powers are working due to the 'colour red'.

Alice wasn't sure if this was the gimmick but if it worked, she wasn't going to question it.

Meanwhile, the information granted by the feather continued to pour into Alice's brain.

Unlike the moment where she consumes someone's blood and gains access to their Sigil, this was a constant flood of information that didn't care whether or not she could accept this knowledge at all.

An entirely different experience from when she drinks blood.

She wasn't sure if she had properly 'borrowed' Kaden's power or not but there was only one way to test it out.

Slamming her foot down, a pool of blood expanded with her in the centre.

*BANG!!!

Bursting through the layer of blood, beasts crawled out of the pool and lunged towards the thorns, tearing them apart.

Widening her eyes, Alice curved the corners of her lips into a smile and jumped back while pulling out the orb once more.

With her blood beasts to distract the 'younger her', this was the perfect opportunity for Alice to create her Personal Artifact.

All six Sigils have been prepared. Powers optimized!

*CRACK!!!

Shattering the outer shell of the orb, black tendrils burst forth from the orb and dug into Alice's arm.

Flinching from the pain, Alice widened her eyes as she could feel it invading her body. Digging through her flesh and surging towards her heart!

At that moment, Alice felt completely exposed. A dark energy scanned her body, marking down everything she could do, everything she could access and everything she knew.

Imprinting the orb with Alice's experience, these dark tendrils retreated back to the orb as chains and rings wrapped around it, transforming the orb to act as Alice's Personal Artifact.

Shaking off this feeling of disgust, Alice cringed as the orb in her hand pulsed like a beating heart.

It wasn't an instant transformation as it still had to adapt to Alice's entire skillset to become an ideal Personal Artifact for her. During this time, Alice had to make sure she could survive this entire ordeal!

###

Keeping only Cayla open, Nyer observed the movement within his product's Resonance.

Even though he may be the creator, his product still holds many mysteries that are unknown even to him. It's what makes it such an interesting creation.

The ability to adapt, mimic and even enhance. The perfect vessel for Velouria if he plays his cards right.

However, despite the fight between his two products, the orb and feather caught his attention.

The feather contained the aura of Kaden meaning Alice knows both Kaden and Allura in the future.

Just knowing that those two are still... alive and 'well' was enough for him to smile in nostalgia.

His nostalgia was short lived as he looked at the orb in Alice's hand.

'Is... Is it trying to match itself to my product's adaptability?' He mused inwardly while focusing on the flow of energy between the two. The resonance from the orb to Alice's Spiritual Heart was clear as it tried to match her 'wavelength' but struggled.

His product wasn't something that could be matched easily since he had spent several centuries perfecting it.

Powers from Null, blood belonging to countless beasts that focus on Adaptability, the power of Gods and the 'data' of Spiritual Hearts belonging to Hunters across the ages. He had prepared everything for today, the day when the strongest vessel is born from young Alice's tenth birthday.

However, the way the Orb was trying to keep up and even match the adaptation intrigued Nyer.

Had it not been for the fact that he was a memory and that his discoveries couldn't be given to the 'real' him, he would've stolen that orb to perform some experiments.

Noticing a slight commotion to the side, Nyer glanced over and saw that Selen was facing against Luthor and his guards.

After the initial panic, the sealed entrances were opened and Guards had flooded into the room.

Several of them were at the peak of six Sigils with some even showing signs of potentially becoming Lords if the conditions are right.

But at the end of the day, he was simply a spectator. A scholar observing the battle between his product today against the progress made in the future. To see how much it's improved and not to interfere with unimportant pawns.

While the fact that Selen could conjure the illusionary figure of a sealed Lord did indeed interest him, it was not enough for him to make a move.

###

Crossing blades with the beast, Alice felt a strange feeling gnaw her at chest.

A discomfort she couldn't quite put her finger on. It wasn't the orb that caused this discomfort, no. The source was... The beast?

Out of all the opponents she's fought seriously, this may be the first that no longer hold a killing intent for her.

It felt... Empty.

Devoid of distractions.

Simply aiming to kill the thing in front of her so that she could survive. Not because it hates or wants to.

'She's just trying to survive...' Alice thought to herself.

Since it was 'her' of the past, was she the same?

No, she couldn't say she was the same. Ten years of experiments made her a body of hate targeted towards the Zenia family.

Even if it was a misunderstanding, even if her father may have been a good man at one point in time, that time had long passed.

Understanding does not mean forgiveness. Simply accepting what Luthor was like in the past doesn't mean she can spare the Luthor she knows.

In this regard, she was different to the beast that had just been 'born' wanting to survive.

Twisting her body, Alice slammed her heel into the beast's chest, sending her stumbling backwards.

Clutching her wounded area, the beast opened her mouth.

"Ma... Ma... It hurts..."

"!!!"

It had already begun its transformation back into 'Alice'. The voice that echoed from its mouth was slightly off sync with her lip movements but there was no doubt that it was beginning to change.

Even her appearance which was similar to Velouria had shifted to match that of Alice, the first human she ate.

A crackle of red energy erupted from her back, whipping towards Alice who blocked with the Shard of Kara and redirected to the side.

Lunging forward, Alice created a spiral arrow using blood and aimed it towards the beast.

In this realm, only 'red' worked. With blood as the foundation of her powers, she simply needed to use blood.

The power of Void Flux that doesn't use her flames. Instead, Alice sought to use her red spider lilies as a base!

Briar thorns twisted around the grooves of the arrow as she fired it into a blood mirror.

Sensing danger from above, the beast widened her eyes as a pulse of energy erupted from her.

Blood instantly lost its colour as violet flames exploded out from her body.

Seeing this, Alice realised she must've modified the rules of this Resonance and reacted accordingly.

With the controls suddenly thrust into her hands, Alyss slammed her hand down as fire and limbs rushed towards the beast.

Two 'different' sources of violet flames collided while the limbs secured her in place. While the beast was restrained, she modified the properties of the arrow and turned it into a Void Flux arrow!

But before the arrow could hit, the beast's arm exploded into a mass of chimeric limbs, swallowing the flames and arrow in an instant.

Even though she modified the arrow to the best of her capabilities, it still lost a majority of its power with the beast modifying the rules of this realm.

'What's the plan now? I don't think we can stall any longer.' Alyss asked with a frown.

More and more of their abilities were beginning to lose their effectiveness and if they were to tap into Allura's power as well, then that's their most offensive power rendered useless.

'We don't need to stall anymore, the Artifact is almost ready.' Alice smiled, taking over the controls.

Looking at the orb hovering above her hand, wrapped in rings and chains, she could see cracks beginning to form across its surface.

A simple question appeared in Alice's mind.

What kind of power does she seek?

The answer was simple. A destructive power able to bring out the most of her second and fourth Sigil. To deny the Abyss and manipulate the space around her!

*CRACK!!!

Shattering the shell into countless pieces, Alice's Personal Artifact manifested above her palm.

A singularity warping the space and absorbing it into absolute darkness similar to the entrance of the Inverted World only far more destructive. Golden rings rotated around the singularity, keeping it contained within the boundaries of this artifact.

[Key of Destruction – Ruinous Void]

Chapter 385 - 385: Key Of Destruction - Ruinous Void

[Key of Destruction – Ruinous Void]

Looking at her Personal Artifact, Alice felt a strange sense of connection with it.

The feeling of grabbing a familiar tool that had been by her side this entire time. Even without Cayla's help, Alice understood exactly what this weapon could do.

Much like Alice, the Ruinous Void had two sides to it. One for Alyss and one for Alice.

A physical and a casting mode and each side had three abilities.

[Ruinous Void – Physical]

Lance Form: Changes form to become a lance that harnesses the power of the Void. In this state, the user can manifest the Void inside the weapon for a guaranteed hit. Three uses before completely exhausting the user.

Gauntlet Form: Changes form to become a pair of gauntlets. Wherever you punch, a 'detonation' zone will be left behind. You can choose to detonate these zones whenever you want. Detonations will ignore most forms of armour to inflict direct damage.

Axe Form: Raw destruction. Slowest attack but mightiest power. Cleave through the Void with each strike and leaves behind the power of the Void, obstructing regeneration and making your next hit on them hit harder.

All three had varying offensive powers with the Lance capable of hitting fast targets, Axe hitting slow targets and the Gauntlets being a balanced state. For Alyss, this was perfect.

For Alice, rather than offensive power it was more focused on versatility and casting.

[Ruinous Void – Casting]

Unbound Form: Capable of opening pathways to the Void at will, harnessing the natural forces within the Void to push or pull.

Fractured Form: Unleash the chaotic nature of the Void, fracturing the reality around you. With the Void overlapping reality, realm based Resonances cannot be used. Void based abilities gain a boost.

Singularity Form: Transforms [Key of Destruction – Ruinous Void] into a medium for abilities. Significantly enhancing ability power, casting speed and allowing the user to gain high levels of control over the Void.

The abilities granted were rather abstract and allowed freedom of movement. However, with this abstractness, it also means the dangers are unknown.

With her previous experiences with weapons, Alice understood that channelling too much energy risked the Artifact or weapon breaking from the stress.

Since Ruinous Void didn't have enhanced durability unlike Void Fang, she didn't want to go too overboard with channelling the energy.

Naturally, this concern was due to the passive ability.

Adaptive State!

User can overlap Sigil powers with Ruinous Void. Different Sigil powers grant varying effects.

For someone like her who would constantly switch out her Sigils, this was perfect. No wonder it was called a Personal Artifact. Even though she faked her fifth and sixth Sigil, the Artifact understood that and adjusted!

Unfortunately for Alice, this was no time to admire the power of this weapon as she still had to deal with the beast in front of her.

'First things first, let's deal with this annoying resonance!' Alice grinned as she slammed the Artifact into the ground.

Fractured Form!

*CRACK!!!

Glass fractures began to manifest around them as the beast looked around in confusion.

Reaching out, she tried to touch the fracture with her finger. But upon coming into contact, the rift between her realm and the Void tore her finger apart!

Stepping back in shock, she watched as more and more fractures appeared until...

*SHATTER!!!

Her realm was forcefully torn apart!

Returning the both of them back to the Zenia banquet hall, the beast glared at Alice in bewilderment when an invisible force gripped her body.

Unbound Form!

The rings around the Ruinous Void shattered apart, allowing the singularity sealed within free as it imprinted itself onto the back of Alice's hand.

Pulling the beast towards her, Alice narrowed her gaze as golden chains manifested around her.

Gauntlet Form!

*BANG!!!

Punching the beast in the stomach, Alyss launched her into the air before Alice pulled her back using Unbound Form.

The constant switches between the two had the beast being flung around as though it was a doll, unable to fight back.

"ARGG!!!!" Letting out a shout of anger, violet flames coated the beast's body, breaking apart the invisible hold Alice had on her.

However, her shouts were cut short as Alice created a blood mirror to allow Alyss to jump through and appear behind her.

Axe Form!

In her hands, a large axe could be seen with the main body of the Ruinous Void housed in the centre between two large axe blades.

*BANG!!!

Cleaving down with the axe, the power of the Void ripped forward, tearing into the back of the beast as her body was sent towards the ground.

Violet flames tore away at her wound, preventing her regeneration as Alice took over once more.

Singularity Form!

Breaking apart the chains that held the singularity within its confines, Alice pulled her arm back and turned it into an arrow.

And to guarantee the kill, she activated her ritual.

'Same as always aye?' Alice smiled inwardly as Alyss nodded her head. Seeing her twin being so excited about an attack, Alyss couldn't help but laugh.

'Go for it, I'll funnel you as much power as I can.'

"Feast o' flame of mine."

*KACHIN!!!

Shattering the chains around her body, Alyss was given partial freedom as the shadow of a beast manifested behind Alice. The countless blackened limbs wrapped around the arrow before exploding with a surge of violet flame.

Sigils burned across her body, Alice's resonance flared and her connection to her Personal Artifact was reinforced.

The entire world seemed to tremble from the power gathering towards Alice as she arched her back to draw out as much power as possible.

Just as she was about to fire, her pupil shrunk in a mixture of anger and shock.

While the beast had landed against the ground, clutching her wound with fear in her eyes, Sienna of all people ran in front of her!

"MOVE!!!" Alice shouted in anger.

She didn't have time to hesitate and if Sienna refused to move then she could die alongside this beast! Alice didn't care if she was her mother or not. This was not a time she could hesitate due to stupid decisions from other people.

Seeing that she wasn't moving, Alice bit her lip. Doubt and hesitation clawed at the corner of her mind but she didn't dare to hold back. Not when her opponent was a younger version of her but reinforced with the power of Gods!

Ruinous Void – Nova Core!

A collapse of stars surged towards the singularity. Light erupted then simultaneously consumed by the darkness. A swirl of gravitational force mixed with the burning power of her violet fire birthed a nexus of destruction that shot towards the duo.

Nyer could feel the laws of the Inverted World bending with this attack as his eyes glimmered with excitement.

"What marvellous demonstration of power~ This! This is what a vessel should be like!!!" He roared at the top of his lungs, applauding Alice's destructive power and disregard for even her mother who tried to protect the product!

On the path to power, this is how one should act. To disregard the ignorant masses who hold you back!

"Armament!"

*BANG!!!

Several armoured knights manifested in front of Sienna, forming an iridescent blue barrier that collided against Alice's attack.

*SHATTER!!!

The first layer broke apart with ease as the calamitous energy of the Nova Core tore away at the barrier, shredding away at its energy and consuming it to empower itself.

But the loyal Guards of the Zenia family weren't going to back down even in the face of such danger.

Behind one layer, another formed and the Guards organised themselves into a defensive formation around Sienna and the beast.

Luthor was keeping Selen busy so she couldn't interfere.

"What the hell are you doing?! Get the f*ck out of the way!!!" Seeing them blatantly protect the beast in such a manner triggered something within Alice.

A deep-rooted anger and hatred.

Where was her protection? Where was this care when she was crying out in pain on the operating table?

The two of them were no different so why? Why is the beast protected but she ignored?

Why does her mother stand in front of the fake, protecting it with her own body?

Can they not see the danger of the beast?

"ARGGGG!!!" Letting out a cry of frustration, Alice clenched her fist, prematurely detonating the Nova Core into a maelstrom of chaotic energy.

Wrapping herself in a barrier of blood and flames, she rushed through this energy without a care of the damage she was taking.

Recalling the Artifact, she reactivated the Singularity Form. But instead of a giant Nova Core, she opted for it to act as the catalyst for her Cleave instead.

Void Flux – Cleave!

Shredding a guard in half, Alice stomped against the ground and lunged at the beast who was hiding behind Sienna.

"Momma! Help!" She cried out, using the same voice as young Alice.

"Not this time!" Alice glared at Sienna.

Activating the Unbound Form, Alice dragged Sienna away using the gravitational forces of the Void in case she had a defensive artifact that could protect the beast.

Just as she appeared in front of the beast with the sword in hand ready to strike, Alice watched as the beast curved its lips into a malicious smile.

The time she had to spend to drag Sienna away was enough for the beast to think up of a plan!

Columns of flesh and teeth burst out from the ground as the guards were consumed in an instant.

Both Luthor and Selen was able to react in time and dodge but the beast didn't care.

Her main goal had been achieved and an influx of abilities surged towards her body!

There was only one thought in the beast's mind.

'I've won!'

Chapter 386 - 386: Reversal

The instant Alice was about to land her hit against the beast, she widened her eyes while watching it split into a giant net of flesh.

Seeing the excitement in the beast's eyes, Alice sighed inwardly.

How does one fight against a copy of yourself? Do you use brute force? Grow stronger during the fight? Both were right answers with the right execution but Alice preferred a different approach.

To observe the habits.

During the fight, Alice understood that while they were different in terms of the time they spent alive, their habits were far too similar.

The way she sought to use her fire and flower against her opponent, to consume their blood to empower herself and so on.

It felt as though she was watching herself through a cracked mirror. Slightly imperfect yet it was definitely her in the reflection.

With their habits being so similar, Alice decided to keep one key factor in mind. The moment the beast sought to consume her!

That was the moment when she could truly strike.

The moment when the beast would drop its guard thinking it's won. It's a bad habit of hers after all, thinking she's attained victory just because she managed to consume their blood.

There are always exceptions and in this instance, it was Alice!

For her Artifact, Ruinous Void, it had the passive where its abilities change slightly depending on which Sigil she's using to power the weapon.

Earlier, Alyss used the Violet Flames which helped significantly boost the potency of her flames. It helped surpass the regeneration of the beast and even eat away at some of its abilities.

But that's not the Sigil Alice wanted to use in tandem with her Artifact.

No, there was a much better option.

One that will completely cripple the beast in front of her.

Allura's Sigil!

The Sigil belonging to the Apostle of Severance!

Time around her seemed to slow down as she focused her attention solely on the beast in front of her.

She could see the flickering of her Artifact as it began to adapt to the powers of Allura's Sigil.

The slow movements of the flesh that was wrapping around her body, ready to envelop the 'prey' caught within.

With everything going to plan, Alice felt as though she had all the time in the world to herself.

Little by little, pieces of metal and blood coiled around her hand, turning into a sword while housing the Ruinous Void in the guard of the blade.

Tendrils of energy belonging to Allura's Sigil burst forth, wrapping the blade in a shimmering white energy.

Singularity Form!

Using the Artifact as the catalyst, Alice felt a familiar yet foreign aura. Right now, she could do it.

During their previous battle against Enris, Alyss achieved something that infuriated her. The replication of her beloved weapon.

Back then, the conditions were absolutely perfect for Alyss to replicate the weapon despite it being the armament of a God. But right now, she wasn't seeking the weapon of a God and thus the requirements were more relaxed.

Yet even then, she couldn't drop her guard.

'My understanding of Artifacts is lacking. But I know the flow of energy and how it's roughly composed. The outline doesn't matter so long as the effect remains the same. Even if it looks ugly, as long as it can do the job, I don't care.'

[Replication – Nihility's Edge]

A twisted amalgamation of blood, metal, the singularity and the chain that bound it wrapped around Alice's arm.

There was only one thing Alice wanted to strike and that was the connection between the beast and her Spiritual Heart!

Alice understood that their adaptability came from their abnormal Spiritual Heart that's connected to the countless souls of beasts they've gathered. It allows her main body to be untouched by the consequences and only linking to the souls when needed.

Outside of that, she was akin to a normal Hunter.

Thus, if she were to sever the connection of the heart, the beast would no longer gain power!

Gritting her teeth, Alice adjusted her stance.

One chance, one attack.

Missing it means the beast consumes her.

But despite these risks, Alice felt calm.

A single attack to determine life and death.

Dancing on the edge of salvation and destruction.

*Badum... Badum... Badum!!!

She could feel her heart beating against her ear. Fear? Nah. It was the pure excitement of slaughter!

Ruinous Void Flux – Cleave!!!

Releasing the strike with all of her power, a maelstrom of energy ravaged towards the beast's innards.

Tearing, shredding and consuming everything that stood in her way. The space bent to her will, the Void opening to allow the attack to strike true.

Crackles of energy seared the beast's flesh but its face revealed no sign of reaction. An attack so fast that she didn't even know she was struck!

Clawing into the beast's body, the energy rushed towards the heart before detonating with a brilliant spark.

*BANG!!!

A crimson cross exploded out from the beast's back as her flesh twitched and flailed in pain.

Stumbling back while rolling across the ground, she clutched her chest as blood and tears rolled down her face.

The impact of the strike detonated at such a blistering speed that not even Nyer realised what had happened! An attack that transcended the rules laid down by the Abyss and directly crushed the Spiritual Heart!

Staring at the scene blankly, questions filled Nyer's mind as he watched Alice walk towards his product with a malformed blade in hand.

'What just happened?'

Even with the remanent power of Cayla, all he could see within his product was a gaping darkness devoid of life. The complete absence of a Spiritual Heart and the souls latched to it.

The blood of a fallen god, the blessing of the Eclipse. Everything was gone in that moment.

Cold sweat dripped down Nyer's back as for the first time since he started this project, he questioned the end result.

Was this truly the right path? To birth such a heinous vessel for his beloved Goddess?

###

Looking at the squirming and tearful body of the beast, Alice wasn't sure of the feeling inside her chest.

The way it tried to drag itself away from her. The incoherent screams and the tears that rolled down her face.

Even though they were enemies, they were still the same being. The same product. If her own Spiritual Heart were to be crushed in the same manner, would she be the same panicking mess?

To lose the power she's come to rely upon, to lose her connection to Alyss.

Wincing at the thought, Alice prepared to dispose of the beast when a voice halted her.

"W-wait! Please... Alice... Please don't kill her... Don't kill my daughter..." Sienna cried out, bleeding from her wounds but continued to stumble towards the two.

"Haven't you done enough already? If it wasn't for you, I would've killed it much faster. I wouldn't have needed to kill those guards. Why do you even care for a beast that ate your daughter?" Alice sent a barrage of questions towards her 'mother'.

Ignoring these questions, Sienna collapsed next to the squirming beast and wrapped her arms around its body, giving the beast comfort.

"Please... Don't take my daughter away from me..." Sienna begged, looking up at Alice with tearful eyes.

Hearing this, Alice's face warped in anger.

They were the same so why?

Why was her mother so tearful over the squirming mess? They were both 'Alices', so why didn't she care about what she was feeling?

Would Sienna be like this if she was the one lying on the ground, gasping for life? NO!

Gritting her teeth, Alice wanted to slash the two to pieces but her body refused to move.

Tears welled up in her eyes as she bit her lip.

"ARGGG!!!"

Letting out a shout, she slammed her sword into the ground next to Sienna, shattering it to pieces.

Panting heavily, Alice stumbled back.

Bitterness.

An overwhelming bitterness assaulted her heart.

"Why... I'm the same as her... Why do you protect her?" Alice asked with a trembling voice.

She thought she had long disregarded the Zenia family but now she realised a small part of her still wanted their love. Their forgiveness and their acceptance.

Seeing the beast receive everything she wanted brought out a rage from within but more than that, sadness.

Tilting her head back, Alice closed her eyes as the sound of footsteps rushed towards them but Alice ignored it. It was her father and the remaining guards running over to protect Sienna while Selen also walked over.

She felt exhausted.

It was a futile question. Of course they wouldn't accept her. After all, in the true history, she killed the real Alice.

She killed her own mother who tried to protect her.

She killed the guards who came to stop her.

Why would her father and brothers accept her? After she had calmed down and revealed the form of the young Alice, her father tried to see if there was anything left of his daughter.

But all he saw was a monster with the skin of a human.

"Let's leave..." Alice muttered, opening her eyes and glancing towards the wounded Selen.

She was going to leave the rest of her feelings for the Zenia family inside this Inverted World.

All of her remaining desires and expectations of the Zenia family left with the false clone who received the protection of her mother.

"There are still Lords waiting outside for us. How do you plan on dealing with them?" Selen asked with a deep frown.

"We're not going through the main entrance. Now that I've made this replication, I know how to collapse this Inverted World. We'll ride the Void out of here so they think everyone died inside." Alice explained as she glanced towards Nyer who had a complicated expression.

But seeing as how he wasn't going to make a move, Alice ignored him.

Giving one last glance towards her mother and the crying beast, Alice bit her lip and turned away.

Her goal remains unchanged. Only this time, new objectives have been added.

Eliminate what has become of the Zenia family and kill Nyer.

Chapter 387 - 387: Collapsing The Inverted World

Now that Alice merged her Personal Artifact with the power of Allura, she was about to sense the 'connections' that were usually hidden from the naked eye.

While she could 'see' it with Cayla, unless she knew what she was looking for, it was still hard to filter through everything.

But Allura's power was the opposite. It singled out this connection so that she could sever it without any issues.

Sensing the countless complex seals placed around the Inverted World, Alice furrowed her brows as collapsing this was going to be harder than she thought. But still not impossible.

She had the absolute counter to such abilities that relied on the Abyss!

'If I merge Allura's power and my own, it should be sufficient. I'll drain the barrier so that it loses its power then sever the final connection using Allura. Without anything holding it back, even if it's three Lords waiting outside, they wouldn't be able to stop the destruction.'

"I'm planning to ride the Void out of here once I collapse this entrance. You got plans of your own or do you want to follow me?" Alice asked curiously.

If she was being honest, she'd rather not hang around with Selen if she could help it. However, because Selen had given her assistance during this fight, Alice couldn't abandon her either.

Scratching her hair in annoyance, Selen sighed.

"Even with my abilities, I can't guarantee my safety through the Void. If you have a better option then I'll tag along."

Nodding her head, Alice closed her eyes.

Her senses weaved through the countless strands of energy and sought out the connections maintaining this realm.

'Found you...'

###

Crossing her arms, Renna furrowed her brows while looking at the entrance of the Inverted World. Considering how much time has passed, it should be more than enough for them to enter and come out with the so called antidote.

But seeing as how they're taking longer than initially expected, she couldn't help but worry. But then again, the antidote for such a pandemic wasn't something that could be found in a day.

Just thinking about the sight of the pandemic, Renna couldn't help but sigh as it was her first time seeing something like that. Even if she's been alive as a Lord for quite some time now.

*RUMBLE!!!

Glancing up in shock, Renna froze upon seeing the space around the entrance begin to warp.

The seals that were put in place cracked little by little. The maelstrom of energy frozen in time began to resume!

"Renna! What the hell is going on?! Did you sabotage the seal???" Kizen, a Lord belonging to the eastern nation, rushed over with a face of anger.

"Do you think I would do something like this? Shut up and help me stabilize this entrance!" Renna snapped as veins bulged on her neck.

Sigils flared across her body as she framed the entrance between her hands before slowly bringing her hands together.

However, there was an invisible resistance from the entrance as it continued to shrink.

Seeing that Renna wasn't the source of this, Kizen clicked his tongue before pulling out his blade in a reverse grip.

Slashing towards the entrance, an army of spectral blades manifested in the air with flaming chains connecting them to one another.

With two Lords attempting to stabilize the entrance, the collapse slowed down but showed no signs of stopping.

"URIGAR! ARE YOU GOING TO KEEP WATCHING OR ACTUALLY HELP?!" Renna roared, glaring towards Urigar who was hovering in the air with furrowed brows.

"In the face of a collapsing mountain, how can mortals fathom how to stop what's already begun? Even with my help, we cannot stop this." He shook his head.

"I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU THINK, JUST HELP YOU DUMB OAF!!!"

Glancing down at her, he sighed before reaching out with his hands and slamming them together.

*RUMBLE!!!!

The space surrounding the entrance was torn apart as a pair of illusionary arms grabbed hold of the edges and attempted to pull the entrance open.

'Indeed deserving of his title. One move and the pressure of the entrance closing was relieved by this much.' Renna thought to herself.

The God of War belonging to the northern mountains, The Impenetrable Wall of Verona. The final bastion and the Immovable Mountain.

Urigar, The Abyss Lord of Titans

*CRACK!!!

Furrowing his brow, Urigar watched as cracks began to form along the arms of his manifestation.

The unstoppable storm of power leaking from the Inverted World violent enough to harm him!

"What kind of monster was killed here? More than that, what kind of Hunter was able to kill a Lord of this calibre?" Urigar questioned before letting out a sigh.

"I suggest you evacuate the citizens while I hold the entrance back. If all of us were to let go, none of the people below would be able to survive the subsequent explosion." Urigar warned as Renna gritted her teeth.

"But the cure?!"

"We can find it elsewhere. You know full well that this entrance is a lost cause." Urigar shook his head.

"The big guy is right. We're done here." Kizen raised his hands as the swords began to fade away.

"We'll have better luck asking elsewhere for help regarding the pandemic. If anything, isn't the Extalia Kingdom the one having the most issues despite housing the Zenia family? We're only getting small cases and with enough precautions, we should fair just fine." Kizen snickered while scratching his chin.

"Rat b*stard!"

"So fierce. But don't blame me, we're still at war you know? Perhaps I can earn some merit by taking care of you. The life of a Lord is rather precious, no?" He narrowed his eyes as killing intent began to seep out.

Widening her eyes, Renna glanced towards the city momentarily before turning her attention back to Kizen.

Since things have gotten to this stage, she wasn't going to bother about the city.

Compared to the life of a Lord, how can a city be placed on the same table?

If Kizen was going to take this chance to try and kill her, she wasn't going to just stick out her neck and let him try!

"Try me you filthy sand b*stard!" Renna retaliated with her own killing intent as she gave up maintaining the entrance and aimed her sword at Kizen.

Adjusting her body, green and blue energy coiled around her blade as she lunged towards Kizen.

Seeing this, he revealed a wide excited grin and raised his blade above his head.

Whispers of smoke rolled around him, twisting unnaturally and began to form the visage of a demon. Bursting through the smoke, the personification of demonic fury appeared.

It wore a dark crimson mask pulsing with a malevolent force. Two large jagged horns jutted from the forehead, curving into the spikes of a twisted crown. Its scarlet hair, roaring and flaring behind like an untamed flame, whipping around in the wind refusing to be extinguished.

Eyes burning with an unholy light, mouth filled with rows of jagged teeth. Large canines pushed out as its mouth formed a wide grin, filled with the excitement of battle.

As the two auras belonging to Lords clashed, the Abyss reacted. The skies above turned cloudy with thunder crackling through the clouds.

Furrowing his brows, Urigar wanted to stop the two as the civilians were going to get dragged into their clash but letting go of the entrance would spell doom for them all.

Just as their attacks were about to clash, their auras reaching their apex, a single figure stood between them.

*Tap~ BANG!!!!!!

"Oh my~ My dear guests, please don't use such frightening attacks near my Academy. I'm afraid the building can't take the power released by esteemed Lords such as yourself." Rosalyn revealed a smile as she redirected their attacks to the sky.

At first, both of them were confused as to how their attack was parried then came the realisation that it was Rosalyn who did it! A six star Beast stopped the attack of two Lords!

Neither of them held back and both attacks were released with the intent to kill. They may not have used their resonances but it's still an attack from a Lord. It wasn't something a six Sigil beast could withstand.

Jumping back, both Renna and Kizen narrowed their eyes at Rosalyn.

"Is this your doing?" Renna asked, gesturing to the collapsing Inverted World.

"Oh deary me, of course it wasn't. Did you think I could pull off such a stunt in front of three Lords? I'm flattered. Though I will admit the thought definitely crossed my mind and the scenarios certainly favour my plans." Rosalyn let out an elegant laugh while glancing up at the shimmering entrance, resuming its fate of destruction.

"May I ask if the two Lords are familiar with the way beasts attain the status of Lord?" Rosalyn glanced at the two while slowly floating up towards the entrance.

Without answering Rosalyn's questions nor giving her a chance to approach the Inverted World, Renna appeared behind her and cleaved down with her sword.

But to her shock, her attack didn't deal any damage! Rosalyn's body turned partially into a blood mist that evaded the attack.

*Sigh...

"Not even going to answer my question? How boring. And to think you'd strike so soon as well, I'm hurt~ Have I not been loyal to the Kingdom for all these years? Fostering youths as it demanded and repurposing the Inverted World for the benefit of mankind?" Rosalyn shed a single bloody tear as Renna's form began to shift.

Without communication, Kizen followed suit and the two of them activated their second Resonance, attempting to drag Rosalyn away.

They weren't sure what she was up to but their many years of instinct honed by countless dangers told them not to let her reach the entrance!

"Shh!" Rosalyn narrowed her gaze and placed her finger against her lips.

*CRACK!!! SHATTER!!!

Breaking apart before it could even form, the Second Resonances belonging to the Lords failed to activate!

Widening their eyes, they could only watch as Rosalyn sat upon the arms used to hold open the entrance.

"Let's not get violent here." Crossing her legs, she leaned forward.

"How many years do you think I've spent in this place? Bold of you to assume I've been sitting idly without preparing anything." She sighed while waving her hand lazily.

"So now I ask for a second time my dear esteemed Lords. Are you familiar with how us Abyss Beasts attain the status of Lord?"

Chapter 388 - 388: Rosalyn's Ascension

Hearing her question for a second time, neither Lord sought to answer as they simply glared at Rosalyn who shook her head with a sigh.

"It was more fun talking to Alice. At least she's responsive." Rosalyn lamented while raising her hand.

Snapping her finger, blood erupted around her as a tidal wave descended towards the city before freezing in space.

Looping back, it created a veil around the entrance of the Inverted World.

"For standard Hunters, there are many ways for them to attain the rank of Lord. Whether that be through self cultivation, constant hunts and even inherited for that matter. Over the course of countless years, I've watched the method to attain the rank of Lord change. Some nations even hide their unique method while vagrant Hunters find new ways.

"While humans have a multitude of paths they can take, there is only one path fit for a beast of the Abyss. Survival of the fittest. To fight, to kill, to eat, to sleep. Everything they do is for the singular goal of becoming a Lord. To become a Lord and transcend the limits cast by the Abyss." Rosalyn explained with a smile.

Creating a needle, she pricked her finger and released a single drop of blood onto the veil that she had cast.

"For a beast, to attain the appearance of a human is no easy feat. You may not know but there are remnants of an old rule. A rule to allow us beasts to become human and gain Sigils like you. But due to an ancient war, the rule was sundered and left to rot. Only fragments of the rule are still in place today which is why I can exist.

"I am both beast and human, I can communicate and survive without killing and eating you lot but I cannot get Sigils. A strange fusion is it not? Even with the fractured rule, many beasts still fail to become human. Whereas for me, I've been 'human' for a long, long time.

"Only beasts who attained the rank of Lord can maintain a human form. That was part of the rule in the old age. Can you answer why that is so?... Ah! Sorry, seems like I've gone on a little tangent. But believe me when I say it still matters." Rosalyn chuckled before standing up.

Even though Renna and Kizen wanted to stop Rosalyn, an invisible pressure wrapped around their bodies. The chains of a devil restraining their limbs, choking out the air from their lungs and sapping the strength from their body.

During this, Renna noticed that Urigar was untouched. Left to maintain the entrance of the Inverted World.

"My dear Lord belonging to the North, you may let go of the entrance now. I thank you on behalf of all my students and the civilians who live within this city. Your deeds will not go forgotten and I will not point my sword towards you." Rosalyn glanced over with a smile and a wave.

Letting out a strained sigh, Urigar nodded and released his grip before folding his arms and taking a step back.

He could see the situation was already beyond their control.

*BANG!!!

Crashing against the restraints of Rosalyn's veil, the entrance started to implode as she revealed an excited smile.

"The energy of a departed Lord, sealed in time. The Inverted World that's welcomed countless guests. Though it may be the pathway to a library of knowledge, it has also become a giant reservoir of power. After years of patience, my plans can finally come to fruition.

If only I hadn't drank that blasted blood of Allura, this would've been so much easier." Rosalyn clicked her tongue while recalling the mistake of their youth.

She had thought that she'd obtained the greatest benefit a vampiric beast could ask for. The blood of a Lord! Not only that, it was the blood belonging to the Apostle too!

If she drank it, it would serve as the foundation of her ascension into Lordhood. However, little did she know that Allura's blood was f*cking poisoned with the power of another. Instead of becoming the foundation of her ascension, it became her prison.

The blood was so potent that it changed her form but also stunted her growth!

Over the countless years, she's tried to purge this damn blood from her system but it refused to leave. It continuously latched on like a goddamn parasite, preventing her from reaching her true potential.

It was also the reason why she's known as the strongest below the rank of Lord. She had the strength, the experience, the powers. The only thing she lacked was a proper ascension.

Now that things have gotten to this stage, Rosalyn made a move. The blood of two Lords along with the reservoir of Energy sealed within the Inverted World. It was her time to finally purge Allura's blood!

Pulling her arm back, black and red energy surged towards her fist as her eyes flickered with a crimson light.

Years of torment, stress and being anchored by Allura's blood poured out in an instant as she slammed her fist down with all her might.

*BANG!!!

A rush of blood stabbed towards the centre, forcefully detonating the entrance earlier than expected!

With the surge of blood triggering the detonation, a flood of energy rushed out from the centre, slamming against the veil and threatening to tear it apart.

However, instead of being fearful, Rosalyn's eyes glimmered with happiness.

'Finally! Finally I can get rid of this damn appearance!' She laughed inwardly.

She could get rid of these excessively long limbs, this large physique and Allura's face that reminded her of her mistake for countless years. Finally, she could revert back to her original self having attained the status of Lord!

"This energy... I'll take it all!!!" Rosalyn shouted, raising her hand as the veil began to crack apart.

*RUMBLE!!!

As though understanding what was going on, the Abyss began to tremble, welcoming the new dawn of an Abyss Lord.

Strands of energy leaking out from the veil began to coalesce towards Rosalyn's hand.

Dark clouds loomed above while a torrent of Abyssal energy flooded from the space around them.

Even though both Renna and Kizen had felt the phenomenon of becoming a Lord, it was far more tame compared to the transformation that Rosalyn was going through!

Worst of all, they couldn't move!

A suffocating energy permeated the air, holding them in place. At this point, it wasn't just Rosalyn's energy. No, the Abyss was helping her! Telling the two Lords to watch the advent of a new Lord without interrupting!

"ROSALYN!!!!" Renna shouted, gritting her teeth in anger. She hated the fact that Rosalyn didn't breach her contract despite all of this! Meaning she couldn't even use it against her!

Condensing all of the violent energy into a single volatile orb, Rosalyn opened her mouth and swallowed it.

*RUMBLE!!! BANG!!!

A column of crimson energy erupted from the clouds and crashed down upon Rosalyn!

Within the column, her flesh began to peel away, cracks formed across her body but she didn't scream.

In fact, the more her body shaved away, the wider her smile became!

As the last piece of her body crumbled away, a pulse of darkness sparked within the column. From a single spark, it grew until it became a raging inferno of power. First, the bones then came the flesh.

Rosalyn's body was reconstructed though this time it was much smaller than her previous form. After all, Allura was ridiculously tall even by Ayrian standards!

"Ah~ How long have I waited to reclaim my true form." Rosalyn laughed, her voice different to before.

Raising her hand, she snapped her finger and a surge of blood shattered the column of light.

Behind her, reality started to warp as all four of them were dragged into Rosalyn's Second Resonance!

Second Resonance – Crimson Walpurgis

As the light cleared away, Renna glanced up and paused. Her pupils shrunk upon seeing the dark castle suspended upon a mountain with a large crescent moon hanging behind it.

Standing atop the tallest spire, a girl could be seen with flowing white hair.

She wore an elegant dark gothic frilled dress with silver and red highlights. A set of crimson ornaments decorated her wrist and neck with a pair of black evening gloves.

A long black veil hung on her hair, fluttering in the wind as she revealed a mesmerising smile with a set of crimson eyes seemingly innocent yet seductive.

"Ah ah ah~ Fufu~ How sweet it feels to finally hear my own voice after so long. My dream has finally been fulfilled at long last~" Rosalyn chuckled before looking down towards the two Lords frozen in shock.

"My dear Lords, since you've witnessed my long awaited rebirth, I trust that you won't spoil the moon. Or do you perhaps wish to stay the night? If you do, I guarantee that I will be a good host and treat you with the courtesy you deserve." Rosalyn asked, curling her lips into a smile and revealing her elongated fangs.

Behind her, a set of vampiric wings unfurled.

"Congratulations on becoming a Lord. I'll take my leave now." Urigar nodded his head as he turned around and created a gap in space.

Giving him a gentle wave, Rosalyn turned her gaze towards the remaining two.

"And now we turn to my two, violent yet esteemed guests. Will you take your leave now or enjoy the night view of my Resonance? Permanently." Rosalyn warned.

Furrowing his brows, Kizen sheathed his blade with an annoyed sigh.

"Congratulations on becoming a Lord, Lady Rosalyn. I'll also take my leave." He turned around as Rosalyn nodded, flicking her finger and allowing him a passage out.

"Then there was one. Lady Renna, what will your choice be?"

Gritting her teeth until blood began to flow, Renna sheathed her blade.

"I'll let the King know that you've ascended to become a Lord." She spat with hatred, causing Rosalyn to let out a laugh.

Now that she had become a Lord, the chains of the Kingdom could no longer hold her back.

[Rosalyn – Abyss Lord of Scarlet Ruin]

Chapter 389 - 389: Alice's Whereabouts

After the Lord's retreated from Rosalyn's Resonance, 'calm' returned to the city.

No longer were they being pressured by the Aura of Lords. Instead, they were concerned by the sudden disappearance of the Inverted World.

Students questioned the reason for staying behind in this Academy now that the main attraction for coming here was gone.

Shopkeepers wondered about profits while civilians worried about their safety if people were to abandon this place.

Meanwhile, Rosalyn was enjoying herself in her office with a wide smile on her face.

She leaned back on her chair and rested her heels against her table.

In front of her, she could see the confused yet concerned expression of Garret, Department Head of Combat.

"Why the long face? Not used to how I look?" Rosalyn chuckled, swinging herself around her chair.

This new sense of freedom brought out a childishness inside her that she had long forgotten and she relished this feeling. This giddiness.

"Well... Without the Inverted World, we can't conduct any lessons nor can we prepare any excursions. To put it frankly, this Academy has lost all of its value." Garret scratched his chin.

"Hmm... You're not wrong. The Inverted World was the main reason why people came to this backwater place. But now that it's gone, no one would give a sh*t. But this is perfect. Let the ones who don't want to stay leave. There are other facilities that we can use and I'll also call up some old friends of mine.

"Now that I've reached the status of Lord, it'll be much easier to ask for favours of them." Rosalyn smiled, playing around with her hair.

Seeing that the principal was stubborn and nonchalant, Garret could only sigh as she didn't seem like she was going to change her mind.

"Understood."

"Either way, don't worry about it~ I have it handled. Plus, now that I've become a Lord, I plan on redeveloping Silverwind Valley to suit my needs ya know?" Rosalyn reassured.

Hearing this, Garret nodded as she dismissed him from her office.

Leaning back on her chair, Rosalyn let out a sigh of satisfaction and closed her eyes. She was living her dream life right now and nothing could bring her down.

*Knock knock

"Come in." Opening one of her eyes, Rosalyn glanced towards the door and saw that it was Elara.

*BANG!!!

Slamming a mountain of documents on the table, Elara took a deep breath as there were dark bags under her eyes.

"Principal, I've done all the work that you've requested of me."

"Oh my... That was fast." Rosalyn blinked her eyes.

With how lazy Elara usually was, she couldn't help but think that there was something else she was after.

More Abyss Blood? Research funds? Perhaps even her blood now that she's a Lord?

"There's something that you want right? How long have we known each other? Just tell me and I'll see if I can arrange it." Rosalyn waved her hand. Elara was lucky that she caught her in a good mood otherwise she wouldn't have given this kind of reward for some fast work.

"I won't hold back then." Elara licked her lips.

Seeing this, Rosalyn chuckled.

'It must be Abyss Blood that she wants.'

"The application change for Alice Agnelia. I believe she was registered for the Combat Department right? Please transfer her to my department instead." Elara requested.

"A transfer? Easy... Enough? Huh?" Rosalyn blinked her eyes.

"Ah! It's easy you say? That's perfect then! I'll let her know fufu~ How the research we can conduct~" Elara panted as she prepared to leave the room when Rosalyn massaged her eyes.

"Wait just a moment. You want... to transfer a student to your department?" She clarified as Elara nodded her head.

"Is that too difficult?"

"Well... Not exactly? But you don't want Abyss Blood? I'm a Lord now, you know that right?" Rosalyn raised an eyebrow.

"Oh pardon my late congratulations but the entire city knows." Elara nodded.

"Weren't you desperate to get my blood before though?"

"Yes, but that was the past. I found something else that stirs the emotions within my chest!" Before Elara could begin to explain her love for Alice's abnormalities, Rosalyn shook her head.

"Right right, I get it. I suppose it's only a matter of time before you're dragged into her mess." She sighed.

"So can you commence the transfer?"

"You see, therein lies the issue. Alice isn't here anymore." Rosalyn shrugged.

"Eh? What do you mean she's not here? Is she elsewhere at the moment? Another city?" Elara asked, unsure as to what Rosalyn was trying to say.

"She's not in the Abyss. Not in a city, not in some weird stranded location. An accident happened and she's flung herself all the way to the surface." Rosalyn sighed, pointing her finger up.

After the last Lord left, Rosalyn wanted to find Alice and thank her personally. She wasn't sure what she pulled off in the Inverted World but it was thanks to her that her ascension could go so smoothly.

Otherwise, she would've not only had to hold back three Lords but also had to destabilize the Inverted World enough for her to absorb it. In that situation, it was a do or die moment that was leaning towards die.

Yet no matter the method she chose to track Alice down, the leads ended where the Inverted World was.

Naturally, since she was tasked with looking after Alice, Rosalyn had to take accountability.

###

*Gulp...

Glancing up at the Raven who was standing atop her chair, Rosalyn didn't dare let out a single peep as she couldn't tell what Kaden was thinking.

Even though she knew there was a gap between them, having attained the status of Lord, she figured the gap would've been bridged. But now that she's reached this stage, she could tell how much of Kaden's power she wasn't seeing before! Hell, she wasn't even sure if this was everything!

In her ignorance, she had tried to stand her ground earlier but the Raven slapped her into a wall with a single beat of its wing!

"I can't track her either. Though I know that she's alive." Kaden's Raven sighed, scratching its head.

"If she collapsed the Inverted World from the inside and is still alive, she probably rode the Void to safety. Well either way, as long as she's alive it'll be fine. I'll leave both Ria and that kid Luke in your care. Keep an eye on them, train them if you must." The Raven shrugged, preparing to leave but Rosalyn stopped him.

"W-wait!"

"Hm? Do you want another beating?"

"No! How should I explain it to Allura? You know I also need to notify her right??" Rosalyn explained as the Raven tapped its beak.

"If I can't sense Alice in the Abyss then there's a 95% chance she's at the surface. I'm not 100% sure though so just do what you can." Without giving Rosalyn more time, the Raven flew up before diving into its own shadow.

###

Just thinking about her brief exchange with Kaden that resulted in her being slapped and then tasked with looking after two kids, Rosalyn shivered.

While she may have been freed from the chains of Allura's blood, Kaden was still holding her leash tightly.

Shaking her head, she glanced over to Elara who was twitching strangely.

*BANG!!!

"!!!" Jumping up from Elara's sudden movement, Rosalyn wondered what she was up to.

"What's this?"

"My resignation letter. I want to quit."

"???" Blinking her eyes, Rosalyn watched while Elara left the office. After a moment to digest what Elara just did, Rosalyn's veins bulged on her neck.

"All of these motherf*ckers leaving without giving me a chance to reply..." She muttered, clenching her fist.

She was an Abyss Lord dammit!!!

Even though she wanted to throw her table out the window, it had been recently replaced and she couldn't do that. Not when their budget was tight for reconstruction and development.

Once she left the room, Elara let out a sigh of boredom.

She thought that Alice would be her new reason to remain in this Academy but not that both the Inverted World and her love had gone, there was no point in staying.

Plus, it wasn't like this was a sudden decision. She had already thought about resigning for a while now since nothing's really caught her eye and it's constantly been the same old same old.

Seeing Arunya waiting by the side, emotionless as always, Elara patted her on the shoulder.

"Things might get tough on you Runi~ You'll have to look after a new Department Head once I'm gone."

"There won't be a department head that's as perverted or weird as you, professor." Arunya replied while glancing at the hand touching her shoulder without turning her head.

Gently picking up the arm by the sleeve, Arunya couldn't help but wonder if the professor washed her hands after exploring her own body thoroughly.

"Rude. I know I gave the principal my letter of resignation but still." Elara pouted as she made her way out of the main building.

Strangely, Arunya followed behind.

"What are you doing?"

"Professor, if I may be honest, I doubt you can survive out there. Plus, if you leave, I'll lose my role as assistant. Since the Inverted World is gone, I've lost what was keeping me in the Academy. I may as well follow you and keep you alive. That way you owe me a big favour." Arunya replied, causing Elara to smile as she tried to pounce on Arunya.

"Please contain yourself professor. While I may be following you, I don't want to be entangled in a physical relationship with you."

"So mean~ But I like that about you. Thank you for taking care of me~" Elara laughed, jumping on Arunya's back.

"Should I get you more food professor? You've gotten lighter."

"Blame the principal. Gave me a bunch of work before I quit too." Elara lamented as the two of them made their preparations to leave the Academy and go on their journey to find Alice.

###

Meanwhile, at the surface.

Looking at a bandaged Alice lying on the bed sleeping, Selen held a blade in her hand and narrowed her eyes.

Chapter 390 - 390: Northern Lands

Raising her hand, Selen prepared herself to slash down but hesitated before letting out a fatigued sigh.

She hated Alice.

At first, she thought the two of them were kindred spirits, both the result of heinous experiments conducted by the Zenia family. Little did she know, Alice was the root cause of it all.

The source of the cursed blood that runs in her veins.

Everyone that had been injected with her blood mutated without exception. It was simply too potent and the Zenia's struggled to dilute it without losing the effectiveness of its properties.

It was only recently that they had a breakthrough. To merge the abnormal blood with the blood of various sealed Lords.

To have several 'poisons' fighting one another within one body in order to balance it out. For each 'portion' of Alice's blood they injected, they needed to balance it out with the blood of four different Lords.

However, the experiment proved to be a failure as it couldn't maintain the properties of becoming immune to the effects of Abyss Blood.

What it did prove was its adaptability. By merging with the blood of sealed Lords, the user was able to take false Sigils so long as they are able to withstand the power.

Powers that held similarities to the sealed Lords.

Selen was one of the few who had a body compatible with the power of Miralith, the sealed Lord of Time. But even then, the procedure caused permanent damage to her body and side effects unseen to the eye.

She hated the Zenias for dragging her into such experiments. She hated Alice for having this blood.

However, she couldn't deny the fact that it was also Alice who dissolved her contract that tied her to the Zenias. She was the reason for her pain but also for her freedom.

Leaving the tent, Selen shielded her eyes from the harsh sunlight across a sea of snow. She had cleared the space around their tent but snow kept on piling up every night.

After Alice had collapsed the Inverted World, she tried to relocate them elsewhere on the island. Unfortunately for the both of them, outside interference destabilised the pathway that Alice had set out and instead flung them deep into the Void.

With Alice not having enough power to keep the protective barrier around them for long, she made the decision to slingshot them in a random direction. To attach a 'rope' to them and anchor the other end to a single point.

She swung them around in the Void before cutting the connection.

The next thing that Selen remembers was falling through the sky with Alice. Both of them were bleeding from head to toe but it was worst for Alice. Cuts that refused to stitch together, bones exposed on so on.

While Selen had superficial cuts, Alice was on the verge of death.

After Selen managed to protect the two of them from falling to death, she noticed a serious situation. Her control over her own powers had waned dramatically!

Compared to her time in the Abyss, Selen struggled to fully channel her powers. If using her powers in the Abyss was comparable to a gentle ride down a river, using her powers on the surface felt like pushing a heavy log through a thick swamp.

It took ten times the effort to even manifest her powers never mind using it to its full potential.

Perhaps that was why Alice's regeneration was slowing down to the point she was stuck in a state of limbo. Neither dead nor alive.

Shaking her head with a sigh, Selen made her way over to some trees that were covered in snow.

Adjusting the grip on her blade, she cut down the tree and turned it into several logs that could be used as firewood.

Bringing the log back to her tent, Selen used her powers to speed up the drying process before storing it on a makeshift shelf.

It has been around three days since they escaped to the surface. A few beasts would attack but it hasn't been anything that Selen couldn't deal with herself.

Thankfully, she had some supplies in her pouch. Healing blood, bandages and some spare clothing. The tent was made from animal skin. Crude but sufficient to block out the wind and snow.

After scouting out the area, Selen concluded that they were in the far regions of the north. She wasn't sure where but as long as she could find some traces of merchants, she should be able to find her way to a city.

But to find these traces, her best chances are to travel south towards Extalia. The borders between the two nations are constantly embroiled in skirmishes but there's a truce during this time.

Finding some help and getting a new life should be relatively easy there. She couldn't return to the Zenia family nor could she parade around as her current appearance in Extalia. The Zenia's have eyes everywhere.

Therefore, her best options would be to travel south, find a village belonging to Verona and then travel north again to start her new life. She didn't know what Alice preferred and frankly, she didn't care.

She was already doing Alice a big favour by keeping her alive. Not only that but also taking her with her during this journey.

'What a hassle.' Selen thought inwardly as it was going to be a pain in the ass to take care of everything all while carrying an unconscious Alice on her back.

But even if it's a pain, she had to do it if she wanted to live.

The only issue was food.

She was fine but she wasn't sure how Alice was doing. It seems fine so far as she's being sustained by a supply of blood that Selen had but this was going to run out soon.

'She's immune to the effects of Abyss Blood but even so, I can't keep feeding her this stuff.'

Selen had enough supplies to last another 3 ish days for Alice. After that, it'll be feeding her unfiltered blood from the corpses of beasts.

Getting the rest of their supplies such as dried beast meat, some makeshift fur coats and dried logs, she split the pile into two stacks.

One for each pouch that they had as Selen took it upon herself to borrow Alice's pouch. Naturally, she found Alice's unnaturally large supply of mead within the pouch but left it untouched.

Setting aside some logs, leather and fur, she got to work.

To secure the logs to each other, Selen used a mix of sharpened bone, teeth and tendons. A layer of leather and fur to lay Alice's body on with a blanket made of the same material on top.

A makeshift bed/sled to carry Alice around while keeping her warm in this cold.

One of the key dangers to the Northern lands was the freezing cold! Depending on the zone you were in, not even six star Hunters were safe and they could die within the first hour of not getting warmth!

"Ah... Not enough fur." Selen muttered as she noticed there wasn't enough to make another coat for herself.

Furrowing her brows, she was just about to go out to hunt when a wave of snow exploded beside her.

From the depths, a four armed beast burst out from the ground. A pair of cracked curved horns with one side being broken protruding from its head. On its back, two horns larger than the ones on its head curved out from its back and over its shoulders.

A pair of glowing white eyes, large tusks and a thick leathery chest with white fur across the body.

Horned Yeti!

One of the most common beasts that one could find within the north. Despite their large stature and powerful physiques, they were pack based beasts who often hunted in groups. The weakest of the group could be as weak as two Sigils while the strongest was at an astonishing six!

If one was to appear, more would surely follow.

After hunting these beasts in the past few days, Selen was familiar with their strategies.

And as expected, the moment she turned to face the first Yeti, two more burst out of the snow behind her, ready to strike.

"F*cking predictable." Selen muttered, conjuring her staff and slamming it into the ground.

*BANG!!!

A large ritualistic circle expanded with her in the centre as time seemed to slow to a halt. The flakes of snow that was flung by the Yeti froze in the air as Selen released her staff and maintained the circle.

Unsheathing her blade, she released a flurry of slashes and grabbed her staff. A new attack that she had thought up of after her fight in the Inverted World.

One that would make the most out of her time based abilities.

Fester!

*KRK!!!!

As time resumed, the small wounds upon the Yeti's body burst open as blood poured out like a fountain. An attack where everyone wound Selen causes would fester and age, rotting the flesh and reaching the bone within a single moment.

Looking at the corpses of the Yetis dying the snow in their blood, Selen massaged her shoulders.

Hidden in the snow next to a tree, another Yeti was hiding but Selen sensed its presence. During her attack, she had made sure to land a strike on it as well.

With all the Yetis dealt with, even the hidden one, she wasn't worried that more would show up. If anything, they would only think a strong beast had shown up in this region.

"Now then, time for me to carry the sleeping princess." Selen sighed, hoisting Alice onto her sled and grabbing the tendon rope.

Dragging it behind her, she departed for the south in hopes of finding a village where she could get some proper treatment for Alice. That way, she could pay off her debt and have nothing to do with her anymore.