

Abyssal A 391

Chapter 391 - 391: A Conversation With Alyss

Lying on her back while floating in the sea of her own consciousness, Alice groaned as she slowly opened her eyes.

Clutching her head, she sat up and saw that the realm hadn't undergone any changes.

The last thing she could remember was a desperate attempt to bring her and Selen out of the Inverted World after some... slight miscalculations.

'Why the hell did the entrance f*cking implode like that? I know I set it off but it shouldn't have exploded that way.' Alice muttered inwardly, trying to stand up but flinching from the pain.

Looking around, she saw Cayla resting on the bed, unmoving as she seemed exhausted and drained of energy.

Just as she was about to look for Alyss, a voice called out.

"I'm here, no need to look around too much."

Glancing back, Alice could see Alyss resting on a seat with one leg up and the other down.

"Want a game of chess while we talk?" Alyss offered as another seat appeared with a table between them.

Atop the table was a chessboard set.

Although Alice was a little confused by Alyss's offer, she didn't reject it and sat opposite her.

"Want to take the first move?"

Nodding her head, Alice moved the white pawn in front of the king two squares up.

In response, Alyss moved her black pawn in front of the bishop two squares up.

"Cayla's pretty tired you know? Even though she's sealed, her vitality and yours are still linked together. There's a certain amount of... force? She can exert through your body. She kept you alive despite the damage we took. The Void tearing us apart, our regeneration being taxed to the absolute limit." Alyss explained, watching Alice's next move before moving her knight.

"It's the first time this has happened. That our regeneration completely stopped."

"Have we lost it? Or is it still there?" Alice questioned.

She wasn't familiar with the game of chess and so far, she's just been playing the pieces she thinks are right.

"We still have it. It's just recovering right now. Rather, our Spiritual Heart is recovering. Whatever happened in the Inverted World sent a wave of energy back to us right after we tried to close the realm. A sort of backlash if you want to call it that. We're pretty vulnerable." Alyss shook her head.

Moving her pawn, she took Alice's pawn and in response, Alice's knight got revenge.

Alyss moved her other pawn.

"I'm guessing Selen is keeping us safe."

Alice moved her bishop.

"Alive and fed. She's got a good heart in her. Even though we're the source of her misery, she's repaying the debt she owes us. For freeing her of the Zenias and bringing her out of that collapsing world." Alyss nodded, moving her second knight onto the field.

As they began to move the other pieces, pawns started to disappear while they made sure their more important pieces were out of harm's way.

"And what about you?" Alice asked with a heavy heart, moving her queen diagonally to take Alyss's knight.

"Me?" Alyss glanced up momentarily before using her rook to take Alice's bishop.

"Mnm. With everything we found out in the Inverted World, I'm sure you've gotten some new thoughts."

"Hmm... Just a few. But even if I have thoughts, it's not going to change much about our situation, is it? Knowing that I'm the remanent of the original Alice. On the other hand, I can ask you the same question. Knowing that you're... Nyer's product and that you're part of the reason why our family changed so much." Alyss decided to be blunt.

Both of them had to face the truth and Alice had already abandoned her expectations for the Zenia family back in the Inverted World. If there was a time to talk and reveal the burdens in their heart, it was now.

Alice wanted to say that things could change but she hesitated. It felt like an empty promise.

She couldn't deny that Alyss was now shackled to her body, serving as the Spiritual Heart. If she was to get rid of Alyss, she too would become helpless and vice versa. They needed one another.

However, even if they needed one another it didn't change their stance where one is the prisoner and the other the warden.

Taking Alyss's rook with her queen, Alice let out a sigh.

"I don't know. Even if... I'm the reason that the Zenia's changed, it still doesn't change the fact that they exploited me. Deserved or not I suppose. After giving up my expectations for them I'm taking Allura's words and lessons to heart now."

From the start, Allura had been trying to teach Alice the importance of her own body, her own individuality and how she should be free from the Zenia's shadow. It was only now that she truly began to see the value of Allura's lessons.

The chains belonging to the Zenia's that wrapped around her limbs felt lighter than before. Each breath she took felt liberating. In this sense, she felt truly free.

"Mnm, that's good." Alyss revealed a small smile as she ruthlessly took Alice's rook on the other side of the board.

Hesitating for a moment, Alice opened her mouth.

"Do... Do you want to let the Zenia's go? Now that we know it was my fault to begin with." Personally, she couldn't let it go. While she may have given up her expectations, this hatred was still fresh in her heart.

The bare minimum she had to do was to completely root out all the scholars and research they've produced.

Alice took Alyss's final knight using her second bishop.

"Why would it be your fault? Didn't you see that it was Nyer who planted you in me in the first place? I will admit that in these past few days, I have thought about what life could've been like if none of it ever happened.

"If I remained the first daughter for Luthor and Sienna Zenia without thinking I'm a mutation or a split personality created by you. But if Selen can look past it can take care of us while we're injured, I suppose it's only right that I do as well." Alyss looked at the chess piece in her hand as a conflicting swirl of emotions stormed her heart.

She didn't know if she hated Alice, pitied her or liked her. The same goes with her own family. With everything that came to light, her mind was a cluttered mess and even with the time she spent alone trying to figure it out, Alyss still felt lost.

Perhaps she felt it would've been better if she was indeed the product of Nyer or a split personality. At least then, she wouldn't have needed to think about her relationship with the Zenias. Seeing the love her mother showed and the desperation of her father despite being forced to cut off her arm planted a seed in her heart.

"But it's not that easy is it?" Alice asked, noticing the conflict in Alyss's eyes.

"Indeed it's not. You might've given up your expectations while I've gained some new ones. Irony isn't it? Since we were the opposite before this." Alyss let out a chuckle, placing her piece on the board.

Nodding her head silently, the game was coming to an end as the two of them started to take important pieces while looking for a way to checkmate the king.

Alice promotes a pawn to queen.

"However, all of this doesn't change the fact that the Zenias are committing heinous crimes across the world. I wouldn't be surprised if the pandemic was caused by them in order to drag us out of the Inverted World." Alyss placed her bishop in place, trapping Alice's newly promoted queen in a trap of bishop, rook and queen.

"We also have evidence of the research they conducted at the orphanage." Alice added, using the queen to take out Alyss's queen.

Taking out the queen using her rook, Alyss nodded her head.

"We can't exactly just throw the evidence to the public either. None of the three religions are reliable, especially Enris since she's thrown her lot with Nyer. Not that I would suggest her in the first place since Ria hates them.

"The moon is a no go since they have ties with the Zenias. I won't be surprised if some of their experiments were ordered by the moon since the b*tches there are obsessed with longevity." Alyss shrugged.

"I'll withhold my thoughts on the sun for now since we haven't exactly gotten to know them. But if I had to choose one, the Sun is looking to be our best option if we want them to fight against the moon." Alyss suggested, watching Alice move her piece forward in order to threaten a check.

"This can wait until we get more Sigils though. We're too reliant on drinking the blood of others to 'promote' ourselves to the next level. If this secret gets out we're f*cked." Alice scratched her chin.

"Exactly. So take your time enjoying the surface since we're finally out. I'll sort out my thoughts in the meantime. Oh, I'll leave my piece here and call it a draw." Alyss chuckled, stepping away while Alice furrowed her brows.

"What do you mean it's a draw? You haven't- wait..." Pausing for a moment, Alice realised that if Alyss had moved her piece a single space forward, it would've been a complete checkmate with her king anchored into a corner by Alyss's pieces.

Scratching her hair, Alice leaned back and let out a frustrated sigh.

She thought she was doing pretty well but in the end, Alyss still got the better of her.

Shaking her head, she glanced over at her twin who made a bed on the other side of the mental space and Cayla who's still sleeping. Feeling glad that none of them disappeared, Alice slowly opened her eyes in reality as she could feel the shaking of a wooden cart.

Chapter 392 - 392: Information Of The North

Feeling the cold wind upon her skin, the shaking of the cart and the biting cold that assaulted her senses, Alice glanced up and saw the pale blue sky.

There was no sun in sight, only miles upon miles of clouds while snow fluttered in the wind.

Looking to her side, she could see that she was currently in a horse cart. There were three others in the cart including Selen.

"Ah, you're finally awake. The young lady over there was trying to take you to the border. Almost got caught in an ambush by the dogs of the Extalia kingdom." A middle aged man smiled, giving her a small wave.

He had dirty blonde hair with braids on the side and a messy beard. messy beard.

"Where are we?" Alice asked curiously, glancing towards Selen who had fallen asleep.

Just as she wanted to adjust her posture, Alice flinched from the wounds across her body. One of them was even torn apart and blood seeped into her bandages.

"You don't know? We're in the Verona Queendom. How did you two even get so deep into the nation if you don't know where you are? All the borders should be embroiled in war right now." He asked curiously as Alice scratched her cheek.

"Not sure, I've been sleeping this entire time after all." Alice pointed at her bandages.

"Makes sense. The lady said you two got into an accident when you were running away from a beast. The next thing you knew you found yourselves in the north. Right now, we're heading to the north and away from the borders. Kvia, that's where we're headin'.

"A military outpost of sorts. Meant to shuffle supplies back 'n forth for the war effort. You should also be able to find a carriage to take you to a safer city towards the capital."

Hearing this, Alice furrowed her brows as she didn't think she'd be sent all the way to the north. Not only that but the border was under conflict?

'Seems like the truce was broken now that the Inverted World disappeared.'

"What happened with the truce? I thought they weren't fighting for a while."

"Bah, a load a bullsh*t that's what it was. Sickness broken out over there and some of it was passed to the north and the east. Brokered a peace to try and resolve it. Unfortunately, their plans got ruined and no one could find a good cure. Now we're just biding our time for the doctors to resolve the issue but war don't wait for no one." The man sighed while waving his hand.

"The sickness breaking out is a load of crap. It's orchestrated I tell ye. They got scared that we're pushing em back and did this to scare us into retreat so they could regroup. We should've never accepted that damn truce and kept fightin'." Another man in the carriage piped up.

"You're only saying that coz you never saw it with your own eyes. I saw everything with me own eyes." The first man pointed at his eyes.

"Every man and woman going insane, blood in their veins bursting out. They stopped being human and turned beast like. Strange parts poking and prodding out their bodies, plants growin' and their organs turning inside out. Looked f*cken painful, a fate worse than death."

"It's just a hallucination from chemicals in the air. Another blasted Sigil ability no doubt. Filthy sinners stoop to all kinds of levels just for power." The second spat in disgust while Alice raised an eyebrow.

"Don't everyone get a Sigil here and there though?" She asked as taking Sigils was a rather standard procedure for even the common folk.

"Hah! As if. Not everyone's eager to sell their soul to the devil for power." He laughed in contempt.

"It's true. It may be common for the Extalia dogs but for us? Not all of us are so eager. Those who proceed do so with the goal of protecting us. True heroes and not those devil worshippers who do it for the power." The first man nodded his head in agreement.

Smiling and nodding by the side, Alice felt a little awkward.

After all, in their words, she too was a devil worshipper who got Sigils for power. Not only that, but she's the successor to the 'devil'!

Regardless, Alice was glad to see someone thinking it was premeditated rather than happening normally.

It was too coincidental for the Zenia's to go after the Inverted World, and then a pandemic broke out, giving them an excuse.

Thinking of this, Alice wondered what happened to the principal. Considering that three Lords were looking after the entrance, seeing it suddenly disappear will most certainly turn some eyes towards her.

'There's also Ria and Luke too. I wonder how they're doing.' Alice sighed inwardly as she worried about her friends.

Shaking her head, she laid out the goals for herself.

The most important task right now was to figure out where she was exactly. She knew she was in the north but where was she on the map?

Information was key and she needed a map. Soon.

Second was to heal her body. It was hanging on for now but Alice wasn't eager to maintain herself in a half dying state. Her wounds refused to close and her body felt sluggish.

Compared to the Abyss, she felt like she was walking through a swamp. Not only that but it was also hard to breathe.

Closing her eyes, she tried to spur her regeneration but there was no response. Only the bare minimum was being activated.

'Is it because I'm not in the Abyss?' Alice wondered.

With the control of Abyssal Energy being harder than before, it was difficult to bring out the power of her Sigils.

Letting out a soft sigh, she leaned back and glanced up at the sky.

She enjoyed the feeling of soft sunlight filtering in through the clouds.

The biting cold against her skin turned the tip of her nose and ears red. Letting out a breath of cold mist, Alice let out a soft laugh.

Seeing Alice randomly laugh to herself, the two men glanced at one another before shrugging.

The journey proceeded without any issues much to the surprise of Alice.

Travelling in the Abyss was always fraught with danger. Fears of a beast jumping out from the forest or ground. Fears of a plant type Abyss beast latching onto you and draining you of your essence.

Fear that a randomly infected Hunter may suddenly turn to kill you.

But here on the surface? The biggest fear may be the stray bandit or a blocked off path.

Compared to the Abyss, it was far rarer for Beasts to be roaming the lands.

According to the two men, most of the beasts are regulated into certain zones by the warriors of Verona. If people with Sigils are called Hunters in the Abyss, the Northerners call them Warriors.

Thus, it was rare to ever get attacked.

As for Bandits, they take care to scout out their target before making a move in fear of a strong warrior being tasked as a guard.

Hearing about all of this was fascinating to Alice as the people living on the surface have far different worries compared to those who live in the Abyss.

Since most of her time on the surface was spent in a prison, she considered herself a resident of the Abyss.

Naturally, the two were confused as to why Alice was asking these questions. Instead, they chalked it up to the fact that she was from a different part of the surface. Perhaps from another area of Extalia or even the eastern nation of Sikha.

However, they took care not to mention that since she was appreciating the knowledge of northerners.

Considering the wounds on her body, the two guessed that she was either a deserter of Extalia or someone who tried to cross the border for safety. Perhaps this was the 'accident' the other girl had spoken of.

With this in mind, they answered any questions Alice had.

"Hng..." Opening her eyes slowly, Selen saw that Alice woke up from her brief coma and was now chatting away with the northerners happily. Their conversation was a little too loud and woke her up from her nap.

Stretching her body, she let out a yawn.

"Ah you're up, how was your nap?" Alice asked with a laugh. In her hands, she held a flask of mead and had shared some with the other two as payment for their information.

She was confused as to why her pouch had a set of other materials such as wood and fur but she ignored it for now. She figured Selen probably took the chance to use her pouch as storage. So long as the mead wasn't touched, she was happy.

One of the important parts of the northern culture was their love for alcohol, a part that Alice was greatly interested in.

The exchange of alcohol was a sign of showing respect for these northerners and with Alice giving them mead, the three became close rather quickly.

Alice wanted to give the driver some mead as well but he rejected, saying he had to focus on the road but appreciated the gesture.

"Noisy. How was yours? Is your body any better and should you be drinking alcohol?" Selen furrowed her brows, overwhelmed by the smell.

"Strangely exhausting? And drinking mead is fineeee~ Plus it warms my body up from the cold, isn't that right?!" Alice laughed, raising her flask at the other two as they did the same and let out a hearty laugh.

"Aye the lass is correct. Nothing better than a flask of mead in this kind of weather!" The first man grinned while the second man nodded.

Not wanting to end their party, Selen let out a sigh and a smile while enjoying the atmosphere.

Through the snow and wind, hearty laughs and the clinking of flasks could be heard.

Chapter 393 - 393: Kvia

Listening to the crunch of the horse hooves against the snow, Alice pulled her fur lined coat tighter around her shoulders. A breath of cold air escaped her mouth as her eyes glimmered with childlike excitement and awe.

Above her, the darkened sky was illuminated by an ethereal dance of silken strands flickering in a multitude of colours. Ever changing, ever moving.

Jagged snowcap mountains loomed in the distance, shrouded by mist and basking in the lights above.

Located next to a large lake connected to a channel, the military outpost Kvia, could be spotted.

Alice could see tall watch towers, log cabins and small homes. Soft warm lights filtered through the frosted glass as silhouettes of happy families could be seen despite the nature of this location. Aside from the houses, she could also see large tents as warriors would patrol the outpost, ensuring public safety and making sure there were no intruders.

Amidst the frozen landscape, a warm village thrived.

As they approached the village, the carriage came to a halt just outside the gates of the outpost. Guards glanced down and gestured to their fellow warriors before opening the gates slightly.

Seeing the warriors that came out of the city, Alice understood that this was to check their identities.

The driver and the two northerners had papers that allowed them travel but that wasn't the case for Alice and Selen.

Recalling that Allura had given her an ID card when they had left for Zadash, Alice rummaged through her belongings before pulling out the card.

She wasn't sure if it would suffice but it was better than nothing. Plus, a Guild ID wouldn't let her travel between cities, merely allowing her to use the services of the Guild.

Furrowing his brows, the warrior guard examined Alice's ID before whispering something to his friend.

After this, the other guard jogged back to the outpost, allowing the other three to enter it.

Waving goodbye to the two men that she got close to on this journey, Alice looked at Selen who simply folded her arms and closed her eyes.

She didn't seem surprised that they were held back considering the only ID they had were ones belonging to the Abyss.

Considering the attitude that the other two men have shown towards those who use the powers of the Abyss, it is very likely that they may be rejected for entrance into this city.

"Pst pst, say, can you tell me what's going on at the border? The other two told me a little but I'm still not sure about the situation there. With there being such stringent checks, I'm guessing they're not giving you an easy time right?" Alice struck up a conversation with the guard and showed a harmless smile.

Naturally, she made sure to adjust her body so that he could see the wounds on her clearly. Though the same couldn't be said for her eye as she covered it with her hair.

Seeing her wounds, the guard scratched his cheek before nodded.

"There's been more and more ambushes as of late. The dogs of the kingdom are trying to target important supply lines so we need to check everyone thoroughly. I know it's beginning to snow pretty heavily but the checks should be finished soon so please hang in there okay? Once you're inside you can get the help you need." He sighed as Alice brushed her hair behind her ear and nodded her head.

"I see... Thank you. Seeing all of you working hard despite the weather really sets the heart at ease. If there's anything I can do to make your job easier, please let me know and I'll try my best to cooperate."

Hearing this, the guard chuckled and thanked her.

Not wanting to push the limits and annoy them by accident, Alice waited by the side.

This one piece of information was enough to give Alice a general sense of the situation at the border.

With the Inverted World being a dud, the fight resumed and now the Extalia kingdom is looking for ways to push for more territory from both the North and East.

Especially if they're going as far as sneaking ambushes towards supply lines like this. It meant that the kingdom didn't care whether or not the soldiers they sent here lived or died so long as they got the job done.

'Seems like heading back to the Abyss isn't going to be easy.' Alice sighed inwardly.

While she may enjoy her freedom on the surface, she needed to find a way back soon. Ria and Luke were bound to be worried. On the other hand, Alice wasn't worried about Kaden and Allura since they could sense her.

If Kaden needed her, he'd simply send a Raven.

'I wonder if the Underground has branches on the surface. If there is, I can send a message to Luke and Ria. Otherwise, the best course of action would be to enter the Abyss asap and see where we can meet up again.

'That being said... Luke should have a better sense of direction than Ria. The two of them... should be fine.' Alice sighed.

Waiting for the IDs to be checked, Alice felt as though she was about to fall asleep in the cold.

Even if it was Abyss ID, surely it shouldn't have taken this long right?!

Just as she was about to reach her limit, the guard that jogged in earlier came out and whispered something into another guard's ear.

Nodding his head, he smiled and walked over to Alice and Selen.

"Sorry for the wait, everything's been checked and approved. You'll need to get further approval and a temporary travel pass if you want to travel to other towns without going through this process again. Unfortunately, we can't do it here." He apologized as Alice received her ID.

"Ah it's okay. Thank you for telling me. Where do we need to go if we want to get a travel pass?" Alice asked curiously.

"You'll have to travel inland towards the capital. As long as you're away from the borders, it should be relatively easy to get it approved. I'm not exactly familiar with the process but this should be roughly correct."

"I see... Thank you. Let me buy you a drink as thanks if I get a chance while I'm still in this town okay?" Alice chuckled, giving him a small wave while entering the town with Selen.

Meanwhile, the guard's friend gave him a side eye and proceeded to elbow his ribs.

"Ow! What was that for?"

"F*ck you."

"???"

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Stretching her body and then flinching from the wound, Alice walked around the town with a skip in her steps.

"Seems like you're quite excited." Selen raised an eyebrow while walking behind Alice.

She felt like she was babysitting a kid with how energetic Alice was being despite her wounds.

"Just a tad. This is my first surface town after all. The mead here should be pretty tasty right?" Alice grinned while licking her lips.

"What's with you and mead?"

"Don't mind it. I'm just an alcoholic. I wonder if they sell spicy skewers too... Well I have plenty of time to look around. What plans do you have now that we're at a town?" Alice glanced back.

She was curious about what Selen wanted to do after this considering the fact that she broke off her attachment to the Zenia family.

With the contract now dissolved, she was free to do whatever she wanted.

"I... Think I'm going to wander the surface for a while. Maybe for a year or so. Maybe more." Selen replied after a brief pause.

She glanced up at the multicoloured sky and softened her gaze.

"I've spent too long shackled to the Zenia family. It's about time I live my life outside of their shadow." Selen smiled, breaking her stoic disposition.

"Hou~ Sounds nice. Indeed, the Zenia's have done too much to you." Alice nodded her head approvingly.

"Of course, I'm not going to avoid them. If I do come across a few Zenias, I may as well clean up the dirt while I'm there."

"Oh! Heroic sort. Perhaps in a few years once the Zenia's are rooted out, some bard may begin singing your story." Alice chuckled.

"You realise that this includes you right? Like it or not, I doesn't change the fact that you're blood was the start of it all." Selen narrowed her eyes but Alice simply shrugged.

"I mean you're free to try and come kill me if you ever decide to. I will retaliate in kind. But seeing as how you've cared for me and kept me alive till now, I don't think you're planning on doing that any time soon. You know as well as me that I have a grudge against them too." Alice turned around while looking for the nearest tavern.

"Everything I do will be working towards the goal of ending the Zenias once and for all. You're free to come stop me or help me. But if you're coming to stop me, just be prepared to die since I won't spare you twice." She warned.

Despite her injured state, Selen could tell that Alice was willing to struggle as hard as needed in order to survive.

"I don't plan on doing that. The Zenias have only given me pain, why would I join hands with them again? But that only makes me wonder about you. Seeing as how you're... the first daughter and all." Selen shook her head with a sigh.

"Don't worry about that. I've left that all behind. I'm not the first daughter or part of the Zenias anymore. I'm simply Alice Agnelia, student and daughter to Allura Agnelia." Alice laughed as she truly felt free from the Zenias.

Hearing this, Selen nodded her head.

"I overheard some northern folks earlier talk about a good tavern with some drinks. You should be able to get some mead and skewers there."

"Oh! Lead the way!" Alice grinned as the two girls made their way through Kvia and towards the tavern in question.

Alice's first night on the surface, free from danger.

Chapter 394 - 394: Void Hawk

After arriving at the tavern, Alice immediately asked for a room, some mead for herself and spicy skewers for Alyss.

Even though she wanted to gather some more information, she couldn't help but admit that the fatigue was catching up to her.

When paired with her injuries, a good night's sleep was what she needed the most rather than information.

Making arrangements to meet up with Selen again tomorrow morning, Alice made her way back to her room and threw herself onto the bed.

"Ouch..." She groaned, feeling the pain across her body.

Relaxing herself in the bed for a moment, she sat up and glanced at her arm.

Peeling the bandages off, she could see the state of her body clearly. Bloodied scars riddled her arm with parts of it threatening to burst if she wasn't careful. In fact, some of them have already burst and Alice could see her flesh all the way down to her bone at certain parts.

Her blood and flesh tried its best to sew itself together but it was slow.

'Selen said she fed me quite a bit of Healing Blood too but it wasn't that effective.' Alice thought with a sigh.

She wasn't sure why her regeneration was slowing down and Cayla wasn't awake to explain. Not that she would know in the first place. Alyss seemed pretty clueless on the whole situation as well.

Closing her eyes, Alice tried to activate her third Sigil.

*KSHK!!!

Furrowing her brows, she opened her eyes and saw that all of her wounds simultaneously burst apart. Her body was akin to a broken flask that was barely taped together.

Too much water and it'll begin to leak and crack apart again.

'What a hassle.' Alice sighed.

With all of her wounds breaking open, she'll need to clean her body and redo the bandages.

"There should be a bathhouse here..."

Switching controls with Alyss to let her enjoy the skewers before taking over again, Alice rummaged through her pouch and grabbed some warm clothes. In order to conserve as much energy as she could, she needed to keep herself warm.

The outfit she chose was a large fur lined turtle neck coat reaching down to her thighs. It was coloured white that blended into a soft blue with golden accents. A pair of shorts with black tights and fur lined long boots.

Adjusting her hair after putting on her warm fur hat, Alice moved some strands over her right eye.

Looking at herself in the mirror, Alice gave her body a twirl and smiled, feeling satisfied with her outfit.

'All ready.'

Glancing at the clock on her table, she could see that it was 11 pm at night. She wasn't sure if the bathhouse was open or not but a walk wasn't bad either.

Grabbing her flask Alice made her way out of the tavern.

Compared to earlier, the town had calmed down a lot more with only warriors on patrol. Now that it was reaching midnight, everyone had gone back to their homes to sleep.

Asking the guards where the bathhouse was, Alice found out that it was located near the lake and made her way over.

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"Ahhhhh~" Letting out a satisfied sigh, Alice smiled happily while soaking her body in the open air bath.

It was just her at the moment since it was rather late but it worked out perfectly for Alice. After all, having others see this scar riddled body her's wouldn't be good for their mental not to mention the blood.

Allowing the hot water to wash away her blood, it stung against the open wound yet was also strangely satisfying. Alice had to question if she had a hint of masochism in her but quickly dismissed the thought.

With the strange blend of a hot bath and the cold air, Alice felt as though she was in paradise.

'Seems like they don't use Abyssal Engineering as much compared to the Abyss. Going through such roundabout ways to obtain hot water for the bath.' Alice thought to herself while glancing at the statue that was pushing fresh hot water into the bath.

She couldn't see any signs of the usual mechanisms used for Abyssal Engineering and figured it was probably something else entirely.

Either way, if everything was like this bath, she could get used to it rather quickly.

Just as she was about to relax fully, Alice's ear twitched as she immediately stood up and grabbed the towel near her.

Narrowing her eye, she grabbed a nearby bucket.

She could be hallucinating but for a moment, she heard some movement from the bushes and trees.

Her senses were rarely wrong and at this moment, Alice tuned her focus to the max. With her body in this state, she wasn't able to deploy a zone.

After waiting for a long time, peace seemed to return as Alice couldn't hear any more movement.

Furrowing her brow, Alice decided to cut her bath short and made her way to the changing room while keeping her bucket beside her at all times.

Without a weapon right now, this bucket was her best friend.

Unknown to Alice, just as she left, a figure let out a sigh of relief from the trees.

A girl could be seen wearing dark clothing and a large hooded cloak hiding her figure.

She didn't know what kind of person appeared in Kvia but to think they could detect her presence.

All it took was her landing on the tree for the split haired girl to notice her and go on guard.

Had it not been for the countless wounds across her body, perhaps they would've been forced into a confrontation.

Regardless, she was glad that the girl decided to leave after a long pause.

The hooded figure decided to postpone her mission for the night in fear of unknown variables.

'I'll need backup from the rest of the squad if we want to do this successfully.' She sighed inwardly while sneaking out of the outpost.

Compared to trying to avoid Alice's notice, escaping the outpost was a piece of cake. None of the guards noticed her even if she made some noise. Most of them only thought it was a wild animal or the wind.

This only served to prove her concerns about Alice and needing more support.

If she was still around when they begin their mission then the chances of it failing increases drastically.

###

After getting changed and leaving the bathhouse, Alice didn't detect any more abnormalities and couldn't help but begin to doubt herself. Perhaps she was being too on guard due to her wounded state but it was far too strange for it to be the wind.

However, that brief scare was enough to reinforce her belief that she should fix her body as soon as possible.

While the surface may be far safer compared to the Abyss, dropping her guard like earlier and leaving herself in a vulnerable state was the worst thing she could possibly do. Even with such safety a sneak attack is all it takes to kill her!

'If Abyss Blood doesn't work that well perhaps there's something else that's holding me back.' Alice speculated.

It was about time she dug into the secrets of her regeneration. At first, she had thought that it was part of Alyss's power but that was clearly not the case. There was another source and that source was her.

And if it was her, what was wrong with her body for her regeneration to slow?

In previous instances, her regeneration would slow when she took too much damage and couldn't keep fighting.

There was another theory of hers and that it was something to do with her Spiritual Heart.

She noticed the regeneration of her younger self coming close to a halt once she had severed the connection, essentially turning her into a vegetable.

If cutting off the link to the spiritual heart caused the regeneration to stop then there was a chance that Alice's own link had been damaged in that fight.

'What a hassle.' Alice sighed.

She had two plans tomorrow.

First to find the Underground. Second was to see if she could find a healer to check out her body and resolve the issues.

Of course, there's an inherent risk with finding a healer since her secret could be exposed. But staying as she is right now, unable to use any Sigils was worse. A choice where she's picking the lesser of two evils.

###

"So you're planning on looking for the Underground?" Selen asked while eating the breakfast.

Compared to the breakfast in the Abyss, there was far less beast meat and mostly just eggs, butter, bread, stew and some fruit.

"Yep. I need to tell my friends that I'm alive and where we should meet after all." Alice nodded, dipping her bread into the stew.

"You'll probably struggle then. The Underground is mostly an organisation that operates within the boundaries of Extalia with some influence in Sikha. But due to the attitude of the Northerners, the Underground struggled in Verona.

"Plus, the Northerners have a different way of finding and passing information. They train specific beasts that travel back and forth from the capital by shuttling through the Void.

"Void Hawks. That's what they're called. It takes them about a week for a round trip to the capital and back but the Northerns have perfected the training system. There are probably a few thousand of these shuttling back and forth constantly as we speak." She shrugged.

Scratching her chin while listening, Alice wondered how they were shuttling through the Void.

Depending on their method, there was a chance she could recreate it using her own abilities.

The thought of shuttling through the Void to throw a bomb at someone's face then running away brought a smile to Alice's face. It would be the perfect surprise attack.

Chapter 395 - 395: Price Of A Single Message

"Pardon? How much did you say it was?" Alice asked again as her smile twitched furiously.

"10 Platina. You heard me clearly." The old man by the counter yawned while feeding the Void Hawk next to him some pieces of raw meat.

Furrowing her brows, Alice calculated the value of 10 Platina in her mind.

'Most families earn about 10 Gold per week. It takes about 100 Gold per Platina. To get 10 Platina I'll need to earn a thousand gold. That's 100 weeks or roughly two years or so...!!! F*ck this old b*stard wants enough gold for two years for one message???'

Holding back her anger, Alice cleared her throat.

"OI- No no, Sir. You're asking for 10 Platina just for a single message isn't that a little expensive? It'll take 2 years of honest work and not spending anything to save up that much."

"If you had asked me to send a message within the borders of Verona it'll only cost you tens of gold at most. But you're asking me to send my precious Hawks to find this Underground then commission them to send a message to their branch in the Abyss. Not only that, but they then need to find the damn person you're trying to look for."

"That's a lot of hurdles for your 'just a single message' young lass. And you've got to take into account the dangers of sending my Hawk to places like that. What if the Hawk gets killed? How are you going to compensate me for my pal?" The old man asked, picking his nose as Alice winced in disgust.

However, she couldn't refute him.

There are two ways for him to locate the Underground. Either by sending the Hawk past the borders or trying to find an entrance into the Abyss and locating them that way.

The dangers of the Abyss didn't need to be explained as everyone knows just how dangerous it is.

As for the border, with it being embroiled in war, the Hawk would no doubt be shot down immediately once it's been spotted.

"Even so, with the dangers taken into account, shouldn't it be 5 Platina at most?" Selen narrowed her eyes.

"Look here, I don't make the rules. Capital sends orders, I follow them. You're trying to hire a Hawk that could be used for the war effort if an emergency was to appear. Naturally, you'll need to pay the price. If you can't afford it then you can wait until the war calms down. But right now?

10 Platina's the best price you're gonna get for your request." The old man sighed as he too was helpless in this case.

What was he supposed to say if his higher ups were to ask him why he gave the Hawk out for less than 10 Platina?

Scratching her hair in annoyance, Alice let out a sigh.

"What about just locating a branch of the Underground then? Or an entrance to the Abyss?"

"8 Platina."

"YOU!!!" Gritting her teeth, Alice wanted to throw a table at the old man but Selen held her back.

"What about me? Like I said, I don't make the rules. Same sh*t different story. To find the branch, I still need to send my Hawk across the border. To find an entrance to the Abyss that's not being regulated by the Royal family is gonna cost you 8 Platina. Or you can get a map and then pay the toll to enter the Abyss.

But then you need to take into account the travel fees and wartime fees." The old man rolled his eyes.

With how clueless Alice was towards the current state of the country, it was a surprise how she even got this far. The old man had his own guesses based on her scars but he wasn't certain.

In the end, Selen had to drag Alice out of the building before she committed a crime.

Huffing in anger by a tree, Alice kicked her foot into the trunk in a fit of rage.

*BANG!!!

"HNG!!!"

Dropping to her knees, she clutched her toes in pain as tears began to form in the corner of her eyes.

Seeing this, Selen couldn't help but facepalm and sign. She wondered how someone like this was able to get strong and even take out people with more Sigils than her.

After taking a moment to let the pain fade, Alice sat down on a bench and leaned back.

"Since things are too expensive here, I need to earn some money and get a map. If I can get to the Abyss then finding the Underground should be a piece of cake."

"And how will you earn money? Just to remind you, arenas are pretty rare on the surface unless you're in the big cities. You don't earn as much as you would in the Abyss either." Selen reminded as Alice froze up.

Letting out a groan from the depths of her soul, Alice understood that she had to earn money like everyone else rather than through fighting.

"How do people earn money quickly?" Alice asked, feeling drained of energy.

The only ways she knew were either taking commissions from the Guild or gambling thanks to Ria.

With gambling struck off, there was only the option of taking Commissions but there was no Hunter's Guild here.

"You could sign up as an independent mercenary. With the war at the border like this, there are groups specifically made to recruit extra help outside of the army. Or at least that's what it was like for Extalia. I'm not sure how the Northerners do it but it doesn't hurt to ask." Selen suggested before pausing.

Looking at Alice from head to toe, she furrowed her brows.

"Can you even fight in your state?" She asked.

"Hell no. Does it look like I can fight? Didn't you just see me getting defeated by a tree?" Alice raised her eyebrow while pointing at the tree.

"I can't use my Sigils and moving my body too much causes the wounds to reopen. I don't know what's stopping my regeneration too. It's like it just stops once a bit of skin is stitched together." Alice scratched her hair and sighed in frustration.

"However, that doesn't mean I don't have any options." Alice smirked.

"Hou?" Raising her eyebrow, Selen failed to see how Alice could put up a fight in that kind of body.

However, Alice was welcome to prove her wrong.

"And pray tell what kind of options would that be?"

"Naturally, that'll be this!" Alice puffed up her chest before snapping her finger.

Detaching from her hair, the Shard of Kara broke apart into several pieces and formed a shield next to Alice.

"It's a little weak since it's only using my stamina right now. But it'll suffice to block a few attacks." Alice explained, recalling the shard.

"Yes but what about offensive capabilities?" Selen tilted her head, wondering how Alice was going to make a name for herself and earn some money using just the shard.

"Who said I needed an offensive option? I can't even use my personal artifact since manifesting it requires energy and the same goes for changing the forms. However, if I use the Shard to protect people from dying, naturally I'll get some assist points, right? I'll earn money through that." Alice grinned.

Feeling some doubt, Selen wondered if Alice could even keep up with the battle. After her eye got cursed, she could no longer deploy her Zone as she did before.

"Actually now that I think about it... Didn't you say you were going to travel the world? How come you're staying here and worrying about me?" Alice asked curiously.

With how Selen hated the fact that her blood was the start of it all, Alice was surprised she could even stomach the idea of sticking around her.

"I'm just paying off the debt. You freed me from the Zenia and saved me from the collapsing realm. Even if you were the cause of it. I'm sticking around until you can use your Sigil abilities again. After that, you can fend for yourself." Selen shook her head.

"Ohya? Ohya ohya? So attentive. Honestly, maybe I should stay injured for longer so you can keep protecting me." Alice grinned.

"If it takes too long I'm going to leave. So hurry up and recover." Selen rolled her eyes and made her way towards what seemed to be the barracks so that they could register as mercenaries.

"So heartless~ Wait for me." Alice laughed, following behind.

###

"Are you sure she discovered you? It wasn't a fluke?" A man with messy short silver hair asked with a frown.

He had a scar on his cheek and across his nose bridge.

Wearing a tight black shirt and a pair of baggy pants with boots, one could see the scars of battle across his arms.

Smoking a cigarette, he extinguished it in the snow while looking at the woman who had returned from what would've been a sabotage that was turned into a scouting mission.

"I'm 100% sure. If I didn't stay still and stop everything, she would've found me." The woman replied while recalling Alice's sharp senses.

Scratching his chin, he decided to adjust the plan a little to get rid of as many unknown variables as possible.

Command didn't care how they completed this mission so long it was done.

"Grab two others with you and set up some ambushes. Make it seem like a beast did it and see how the girl reacts. You said she was injured right?" He asked, confirming the information she brought back.

"Yes, she is."

"Good. Let's see if we can force her into action. Depending on how it goes, we'll either delay the plan a little more or strike immediately. Let everyone else know." He ordered as she nodded and dashed away.

Looking at the outpost by the river, the man narrowed his eyes before stepping away.

Chapter 396 - 396: A Warrior's Honour

Running over to the barracks, Alice could see a bunch of burly men sparing with each other using wooden weapons.

However, there was something... lacking with the training.

'They're not going for the kill. They're aiming to hit each other's weapon rather than the body.' Alyss spoke up, surprising Alice as she thought her twin still needed some time alone. But now that she was speaking, Alice was more than happy to reply.

'Mnm yeah. It looks good to outsiders but people who've actually fought on the battlefield will only laugh. Seems like these are all new recruits they brought in rather than seasoned veterans.' Alice laughed.

There were a few overseers of the training and Alice could see the disappointment in his eyes. Yet no matter how he tried to lecture them, they were unable to make the corrections to their movements.

Ignoring the inefficient training of the new recruits, Selen and Alice spotted the tent with a queue of warriors looking to sign up. Every so often, there would be a new person joining the queue having just arrived from a carriage.

However, seeing the state of these new recruits caused Alice to doubt the Verona Queendom's chances of winning this war.

To put it bluntly, rather than warriors, they looked like standard civilians or rookie mercenaries who hadn't seen the harshness of the world.

Regardless, if they wanted to earn some money, they had to sign up as freelance mercenaries.

Waiting by the queue, Alice would see people walking out with disappointment on their faces. Some passed but they were barely better than the others.

Few would show anger.

Selen ignored all of this and kept her eyes on the training grounds, keeping an eye on how the instructors were.

To her, having a decent command was far more important than the quality of the individual soldier.

One soldier may be able to distinguish themselves on the battlefield but a competent commander can increase the odds of survival.

Having an incompetent commander would increase your odds of dying and if you were to try and leave in fear of death, you'll be labelled as a deserter.

If that was the case, Selen would rather not sign up in the first place.

While Selen was observing the instructors, Alice was enjoying her time with a flask of mead to pass the time.

This was essentially a holiday to her even when she included her injured body.

She wasn't planning on fighting on the front lines and instead, looked to act as a shielder. Someone who protected the members of her team.

Not quite a full tank that stood on the front and instead, a supporting role.

After waiting for roughly an hour or so, it was finally Alice's turn as the one in front of her was rejected harshly.

He had a muscular statue with red tribalistic markings across his body and stood almost twice Alice's height. Around his eyes were red eye markings while a beast claw mark could be seen painted across his face.

Dirty blonde hair that was pulled back into several braids. On his shoulder, a bear's head was mounted onto his shoulder pad while leather and metal armour covered his body.

Alice could tell that he was rather confident in his physique because of the lack of coverage, exposing his thighs, arms, and chest.

"What do you mean I failed?! The sprouty sh*ts earlier passed so why haven't I?!" He slammed his fist into the table as veins bulged across his head and neck.

"I've already told you once. You're not fit to join the mercenaries. You have several misdemeanour offences on your record. Arrogant, egotistical and rarely listen to commands properly. You also have a track record of belittling those with whom you are grouped. With all of this, you are not fit to serve.

Please leave."

Unlike the people around him, the examiner seemed far less... 'barbaric' as he wore a tidy uniform with wild dark green hair.

A pair of calm jade eyes that resembled that of a serpent looked up at the furious warrior without an ounce of fear.

Grabbing a stamp, he slammed it against the document that the warrior brought with him and handed it back to him.

"If you wish to prove me wrong then polish up your record. No matter how strong you are, I cannot accept the risks you bring with you." The man gestured towards the exit.

Gritting his teeth, the warrior leaned towards the man and glared at him in the eye.

After a long moment, he slammed his hand onto the table before turning around to leave.

"Next." He called out calmly, ignoring the slight hindrance caused by the warrior.

Just as Alice was about to enter the building when her path was partially blocked by the warrior.

"Watch where you're f*cking walking shrimp. Can't believe this sh*tty place would even accept a useless sh*t like you to sign up." He spat out in anger as Alice shielded herself with her sleeve.

Ignoring the warrior, she stepped into the tent. It's just a recruitment for freelancers into the army.

Shouldn't be that bad.

Plus, she survived Kaden and Allura's training so something like this should be a walk in the par-

Death.

A chill ran down her spine as Alice instinctively felt the threat of death. Her fight or flight response was triggered immediately as she rushed towards the man behind the table and grabbed a spare pen in one swift moment.

Using her shard to block his arm from countering, she stabbed towards his neck.

*BANG!!!

An armoured arm holding a blade blocked her pen strike as she kicked the table towards him and jumped back.

Her sudden movement surprised everyone waiting by the side, especially Selen as the guards prepared to rush into the building but the man behind the table raised his hand to stop them.

Looking at the fragments of the pen scattered across the floor, he glanced at Alice with surprise in his eyes.

"Remarkable... What is your name?" He asked, adjusting his sleeve as the armoured arm disappeared into strands of energy.

Waving his finger, he returned the table and papers back to where it was originally and sat down.

"Alice Agnelia." Alice frowned as the earlier feeling disappeared as though it was simply her hallucination.

But in that brief moment, she definitely felt it.

This man was close to the realm of a Lord!

'A six star Hunter no doubt.' Alice swallowed her saliva as cold sweat had formed across her back.

"Alice Agnelia... Seems like you're a foreigner. Let's see..." He muttered, rummaging through the papers before stopping at a particular sheet.

"You entered the outpost yesterday after your friend brought you towards the border. You two don't know the situation and had to turn back. ID originates from the Abyss. Hmm... Are you looking to sign up as a freelance mercenary?" He asked while flipping through the short file he had on her.

"Somewhat. Though I can't exactly fight so I'm looking to work as a supporter." Alice replied as she glanced down at her arm.

Blood seeped into her bandages as her wounds were torn open from her sudden movement.

"I'm guessing you're looking to use the Artifact floating next to you. Considering the current state of your physical body, you won't be able to fight even if I order you to. Alright, approved. You'll be joining the Mercenary Squad as a supporter." He nodded with an approving nod.

As much as he wanted her in the main squad considering her reaction to his killing intent, he couldn't let that happen. Her origins are still relatively unknown even with the ID she provided.

With the Abyss being a large factor in Extalia's strength, he couldn't help but wonder if someone like her was a spy.

But even if she was, she wouldn't put herself in this kind of danger. Especially with that body.

"What kind of bullsh*t is this!?!?" The warrior from earlier shouted out as he glanced back for a moment and saw Alice attacking the examiner.

Yet instead of being told to leave, she was approved?

This shrimp covered in bloody bandages was approved while he wasn't?!

Impossible!

"Egil, you have already been rejected. Do not cause more of a disturbance or else I'll have to remove you myself." The examiner warned while adjusting his gloves.

Next to Egil, a ritualistic circle manifested as the same arm that blocked Alice's strike appeared, raising the blade next to Egil's neck.

"I won't stand for this!" He punched the blade aside.

To them, this was an opportunity to get recognition. To obtain wealth and food or even redemption.

He couldn't accept the fact that someone injured like Alice would be accepted while he was turned away.

Storming into the building, he glared at Alice who opened her flask and took a sip while giving him a small wave.

Her nonchalance only served to further his anger.

"I challenge you to duel of the Warrior's Honour!" Egil shouted, causing the examiner to let out a sigh and massage his eyes.

A common tradition with those that live in the North.

The Warriors Honour, a battle between two people with a dispute. The winner is right and the loser is wrong.

Naturally, to the Northerners, rejecting this duel is essentially saying you have no honour and to them, it's one of the biggest insults you can receive.

If Alice was to reject, none of the mercenaries in the squad would accept her but that wouldn't stop her usefulness as a shielder.

"Hah? And why would I do that? Don't you see this body of mine?" Alice rolled her eyes.

"However..."

She licked her lips.

"If you throw in a bet, I might be convinced."

Chapter 397 - 397: Rules Of The Duel

"If you throw in a bet, I might be convinced." Alice grinned as Egil almost seemed offended by the suggestion.

"A bet? For the Warrior's honour??" Egil questioned.

"Yep. You see, I'm not exactly a northerner so all of this... tradition you speak of means absolutely nothing to me. I don't see why I should care about the 'Warrior's Honour'. So for me to care, perhaps you should get something to entice me into accepting. I take coin or items that can be sold for coin." Alice explained with a laugh.

"Of course, since I suggested the bet without you knowing, I'll give you a bit of time to think about it. In the meantime, shall we set down some ground rules for this 'Warrior's Honour?'" She suggested, pointing towards the chairs in the room.

Furrowing his brows, Egil nodded his head. He stepped into the building and sat down opposite Alice.

Crossing her legs nonchalantly, Alice played around with her shard.

"For this... Duel, I won't be able to fight you head on. Plus, I don't plan on doing such a thing to begin with. My body can't handle it." Alice admitted as she expanded the shield.

"I signed up to be a support. So how will we determine who wins? If I fend off your attacks? If you break my guard? What do you suggest."

Now that he was given a chance, Egil calmed down and observed Alice.

While he may have challenged her in the spur of the moment because he couldn't accept the fact that someone wounded was accepted, it was also out of desperation.

If he's turned away now, he wasn't sure when he'll be able to join the fight.

After a long pause, Egil opened his mouth.

"You can choose a representative to fight on your behalf. You just have to make it so that they don't get hit even once while we fight. If you can achieve that within a set duration, it'll be my loss." Egil suggested seriously as Alice was surprised by his response.

With the list of reasons why he was rejected earlier, Alice thought he would be more unreasonable.

Yet, he considered her current body conditions and even suggested a rule that benefitted her.

To Alice, it felt as though Egil wanted to prove himself.

Even if he got heated earlier, he wanted to redeem himself in this duel of a Warrior's Honour.

"Hou~ Aren't you afraid I'll pick someone you can't defeat?" Alice asked curiously while shifting her glance towards the Examiner who kept quiet and pretended the discussion wasn't about him.

Furrowing his brows, Egil shook his head.

"If they accept to be your representative then I have nothing to say for it."

Folding her arms, Alice raised an eyebrow before nodding her head.

"Don't worry, I won't pick anyone like that fufu~ Since I'm joining as a shielder, it's only natural for this to be a test towards my protective capabilities. I'll someone average and protect them from your attacks." She reassured with a laugh.

"So, how long should I protect him?"

"5 minutes. If you can defend him for five minutes, even if it's a weak little sh*t on the battlefield, you'll be able to guard them till reinforcements arrive. Or we can cut it down to two and a half minutes." Egil suggested.

'A rather short duration... Is he taking pity because of my body?' Alice mused to herself.

"I'm guessing the two and a half minutes has a catch." She asked.

"During the two and a half minutes, I'll also be going after you. Once people realise you are a support type on the battlefield, there will be no doubt that attacks will be flying your way. If you can't protect yourself while keeping an eye on the battlefield, you'll be useless as a support."

Blinking her eyes, Alice couldn't help but clap her hands.

To think he would put this much thought behind the duel despite his earlier demeanour. Truly, one couldn't judge others by the cover.

Even the Examiner was surprised as the difficulty was compensated by the short duration.

Two and a half minutes was both long and short in the heat of battle.

"Hmm... Two and a half minutes. During that time I have to defend myself and the random recruit I pick. If either of us gets hit, I lose. If I survive for that duration, I win. Alright, sounds fun." Alice grinned.

Rummaging through her pouch, she grabbed her flask and swung her head back to drink a mouthful of mead.

"Now that the rules are laid out, let's talk about the bet."

"How much gold are you wanting?" Egil asked but Alice shook her head.

"This is where you entice me with a good bargain." She narrowed her eyes while pinching her index and thumb together. The hand sign for money.

"Or at least that's what I would've said if nothing changed. How much do you have?"

"Around 2 Platina's worth if I sell some stuff." Egil hesitated.

This was everything he's got. Hell, he wasn't even sure if he could reach this price if the tradesman was stingy.

However, if this helps him achieve his goal then it'll be a small price to be paid. Money can always be earned once it's spent. But the same couldn't be said for someone's life.

Playing around with the flask in her hand, Alice observed Egil's movements. The way his eyes darted around. How he looks at the ground in deep contemplation before looking back at her.

The way he clenches his fists and sat uncomfortably.

"500 Gold. If you win, you take my spot. If I win, you give me 500 Gold. Mr Examiner, that's fine right?" Alice glanced over as the man sighed.

"It's Torgeir and yes, these arrangements are acceptable. However, if Egil takes your place, he still has to prove that he can work as part of the squad during training. If he cannot accomplish that, I remove him before we head out to war." Torgeir narrowed his eyes at Egil who glared back without fear.

*Clap!

Breaking up the glaring contest with a clap of her hands, Alice smiled.

"Then seems like everything is in order. Mister Torgeir, is there a space we can use for a duel? Preferably one that wouldn't damage the outpost. Ah I also need a volunteer from the recent recruits."

Letting out a sigh, Torgeir nodded.

"I'll arrange a spot. Take this time to prepare yourself and I'll let you know when everything is ready. Now please can the two of you leave this building so that I can continue with my job?" He asked, pointing towards the queue outside the building.

While they were discussing the details of their bet, Torgeir hadn't been able to do his job.

Now that they've sorted things out, he wanted to finish up quickly.

Realising that she had been holding him up, Alice laughed awkwardly as she quickly jumped off the seat and jogged over to Selen.

"I'll wait for you by the large tree near the centre of the outpost okay?" Alice patted her shoulder as Selen nodded her head.

Running away from the building, Alice relaxed herself by the big tree while enjoying her mead.

'He was quite the strange person, wasn't he? One moment he's like a brute. The next he's civil and even honourable.' Alyss remarked.

'I want to say it seems pretty standard for Northerners considering the emphasis on the so called 'Warrior's Honour' but he's the first one that mentioned it or even acted upon it.' Alice shrugged.

'Regardless, it's a good opportunity for you to test out your control over the Shard. Right now, we only know that it can form a single shield by connecting energy with each of the fragments. But I think if you play your cards right, you should be able to form smaller shields to block arrows and so on.' Alyss suggested.

Hearing this, Alice's eyes glimmered as she decided to put it to the test immediately.

Controlling the shard, she brought it in front of her and split it into tiny fragments before commanding it to form a shield.

However, compared to when it was linked with each other, the smaller shields were unstable. Even a light flick would dispel the barrier.

'Perhaps it's something that can only be repaired once the entire shard is fixed.'

'Seems like it.' Alice sighed inwardly as she leaned back.

Playing with the shard and drinking some mead whenever she felt thirsty, Alice practised her control.

After a short while, Selen returned.

"Welcome back~ With how long that took can I assume you passed with flying colours?" Alice grinned, offering some mead but Selen shook her head.

"Most of the time was spent cleaning up the mess before Torgeir could continue. Why did you even accept the duel of the Warrior's Honour?" She asked with an annoyed expression.

The longer Alice took to heal her body, the longer she had to stay around her.

While Selen didn't mind Alice's company, she was still a grim reminder of the experiments the Zenia's did on her. The source of the cursed blood. Once she repaid her debt, she wanted to go her separate way.

"Ahahah sorry sorry~ You saw the situation yourself. It wasn't exactly one that I could back out of easily since he seemed pretty insistent on the duel." Alice scratched her hair.

*Sigh

Nodding her head in agreement, Selen could only hope that they get the battle over and done with quickly.

The main concern was still Alice's body.

"Let's get you some new bandages before the fight begins." Selen suggested as Alice hopped onto her feet.

"Lead the way boss~ And don't worry, once I win the Gold I'll share half with you."

"Forget it. Just fix your body as soon as possible." Selen rolled her eyes.

Finding some new bandages and clean water to wash Alice's wounds, the two waited for the start of the duel.

Chapter 398 - 398: Duel Against Egil

Looking at the large crowd that was gathering around the barracks, Alice was rather surprised by how much importance they placed on the Warrior's Honour.

Some came to watch Egil lose. Some came because they were curious but most came because it was specifically the Warrior's Honour.

As Warriors, their honour was equivalent to or perhaps even more important than the honour of Knights back in Extalia.

They formed a large circle around the main 'arena', which was just a large empty space where they were training earlier. Around the borders of this arena, Torgeir had soldiers make a boundary with shields that were stabbed into the ground.

Once the last shield was placed, a resonance effect activated between them, forming a dome.

"Usually, these shields face outward to stop attacks from reaching us. But since this is a duel for the Warrior's Honour, these shields will face inwards to prevent any stray attacks from coming out." Bo explained.

Bo was the soldier that Torgeir had picked. Above average but not quite at the level where he could lead a squad of his own.

He had long wild black hair shaved at the side. Markings on his cheeks and silver earrings.

Donning a fur jacket with relatively low amounts of leather armour and mostly cloth for movement, he hung two hand axes on his waist.

"Hou~ First time I've seen something like this." Alice remarked while tapping her finger against the barrier.

Hearing the low echo, it seemed to be similar to the shield her shard generates but on a weaker level. Needing multiple shields in order to be deployed.

"It's a relatively new creation. However, it's helped reduce the casualties on the front line by a lot. Even if not all of them are set up properly, the individual shields are still good to block one stray blast." Bo laughed.

"So if you want to impress the Captain then you'll have to show you're better than these shields." He suggested while glancing over at Egil who seemed to be meditating while sitting on the ground with his legs crossed.

There was another reason why Bo was the one chosen to help represent Alice during this duel.

He volunteered himself.

According to Bo, he has a slight grudge against Egil since his old friend was injured by Egil a while back and couldn't fully recover.

They took too long to get the healing blood to him and by then, if he drank the blood, it would've healed the wound in a weird way that would've impacted him more than letting it recover naturally.

However, once it recovered naturally, his life as a warrior was basically over and he could only work as a backline support. Shuffling supplies while watching his brother at arms go out to war, unable to help protect their backs.

"Don't worry, just fight how you would usually fight. I'll adapt." Alice reassured. This was also a test for herself.

A test to see if she could synchronise herself with someone who she doesn't know anything about. To learn of their fighting style, their habits and their movement in the midst of battle.

She could do it with enemies and find out ways to exploit them but struggled with doing the same on her allies.

It took her a long time to understand how Ria moved yet she could see through her enemies within the span of a fight.

"Alright. But just to let you know, I use a lot of jumping attacks so if I suddenly jump, don't be surprised okay?" Bo smiled, liking Alice's confidence.

Seeing that everything was ready, Torgeir made some final checks before stepping towards the arena.

He had expected Alice to ask for some information on Egil but that wasn't the case. Just like Egil, she was going into this battle blind.

Clearing his throat, he opened his mouth.

"Are both sides ready?!" He shouted.

Opening his eyes, Egil stood up and took a deep breath. His gaze was steady and locked onto both Alice and Bo.

Pulling out his axes, Bo took an offensive stance and glared at Egil.

Alice flicked her finger and the Shard floated next to Bo.

"The challenger! Egil will obtain Alice's spot in the squad should he land a blow against Bo and Alice herself within the limit of two minutes and thirty seconds! The defender! Alice will obtain 500 Gold pieces if she protects Bo and herself from Egil's onslaught for this duration!

Are all three Warriors ready?!" Torgeir shouted, explaining the rules to the onlookers while making sure both sides are prepared.

"Ready!" Egil shouted, a red aura flaring from his body.

"Ready." Bo nodded.

"Ready~" Alice smiled with a slight wave.

One was pumped up and ready to go, one was calm and the last... looked like she was going on a picnic.

Wondering to himself if this was the right choice, Torgeir sighed inwardly and nodded his head.

"BEGIN!!!"

*BANG!!!!

Just as Torgeir announced the start of the battle, Egil burst into action!

One step.

One step was all it took for him to leave behind a crater where he stood and close the gap in an instant!

However, neither Alice nor Bo were slouches who couldn't react to him.

Bo jumped into the air with a flip, ready to strike with his axes while Alice had already deployed the shield.

She knew the shield probably couldn't take a head on attack without any of her energy being supplied to it. Thus, in order to defend against the attacks, she had to tilt it at the right angle to diffuse the impact.

*CLANG!!!

Claws made from energy manifested around Egil's arm as he parried Bo's attack. Stepping on the shield that Alice made, he tried to use it as a foothold.

Noticing this, Alice deactivated the shield and positioned it to stop Egil from striking at Bo using his spare arm.

Surprised by Alice's fast reaction, Bo hadn't expected Alice to be able to match their pace with that injured eye. But seeing as how she could keep up with this speed then there was no reason for him to hold back!

Twisting his body, he kicked Egil's arm, breaking open his guard.

Throwing his hand axe into the air, Bo took this chance to launch a follow up kick against Egil's chin but the kick did nothing. Egil didn't even flinch as he took a deep breath.

"ARG!!!!"

Letting out a shout that shook the ground, Egil forced Bo back and slammed his fist into the ground.

Pulling out a large chunk of earth, he slammed his fist into it, launching it towards Alice!

Before Alice could make a move, Bo appeared next to the axe he threw and chopped down, splitting the earth.

'This Bo guy is pretty impressive wouldn't you say so? Rather than you defending him, it's him defending you.' Alyss blinked her eyes.

'Yep. Though this isn't exactly helping my case.' Alice laughed, not feeling the pressure of this fight just yet.

Egil hadn't put his focus on her and so far, it's just been a match between Bo and Egil.

In order to become more of an annoyance, she had to use her Shards as tools of annoyance just like how Kaden taught her how to use the metal from her third Sigil.

Staying low to the ground, Bo dashed towards Egil and threw both of his axes!

Wanting to parry the throws, Egil pulled his arm back and prepared to strike when the Shard positioned itself in front of his eyes, blocking his view!

*CLANG!

Putting up some defences as a last resort, Egil furrowed his brows while the Axes bounced off his body.

He reached towards the shard with the intention of pushing it aside but Bo was faster.

Slamming his elbow into Egil's torso, Bo clicked his tongue after realising it had done nothing and jumped away, looking to reposition himself.

Before he could land, the shard flew over and deployed the shield and transformed into a foothold!

"Oh! Not bad!" Bo laughed, jumping into the air and recalling his axes.

Narrowing his eyes, he pulled his arms back as Sigils lit up on his shoulders. On the edges of the axes, orange energy coated the blades.

Mountain Cleaver!

In an instant, Bo reached his terminal velocity and slammed his axes into Egil's body.

*BANG!!!!

The ground buckled beneath Egil as he found himself knee deep. He wanted to put up a guard but the Shard split into two pieces and latched themselves on his inner arm, stopping him from forming a proper guard!

If it wasn't for the fact that his body was durable, he might've lost right here, right now.

Since that was the case, he'll take her out first! Bo can't damage him and the only one preventing his movement was her!

First Resonance!

Activating his resonance, his Sigil markings stretched across his body while bestial traits manifested across his body. It wasn't the same kind of trait as mutations but rather spectral aspects that overlapped his form.

The claws of a tiger, horns of a bull and the body of a bear were just a few of the traits that manifested across his body.

The activation of his resonance threw Bo back.

"!!!" Sensing danger, Alice immediately recalled her shards and created a shield next to her body.

*CRACK!!!

The shield was barely formed when Egil's fist slammed into the barrier of energy, shattering it in an instant and sending Alice crashing towards the borders of the arena.

It wasn't a direct hit but just the force from her shield and his fist colliding felt as though she had just been kicked in the chest!

Wanting to recover before she slammed into the walls, Alice wanted to make a foothold with her shard but Egil had already caught up!

'Holy sh*t this guy is a physical monster!' Alice shouted in her mind as she hastily created another shield only to have it shatter in one punch once more.

With her guard broken, Alice watched as the follow up punch rushed towards her.

Chapter 399 - 399: Bo's Resonance

*CLANG!!!

Right before Egil's fist could collide with Alice, Bo intercepted him. Forcing himself between them, he tried to cut off Egil's arm with his hand axe but the aura wrapping around Egil's arm protected it.

However, this moment was enough for Alice to recover. Reaching forward, she expanded the shield in front of them.

"Hm?" Noticing something strange while Egil jumped back, Alice glanced at her hand before shaking her head.

Even though she wanted to ask Bo something, they didn't have the luxury of talking right now. Egil didn't allow for it!

*BANG!!!

Once he stabilized his body from jumping back, Egil rushed towards the two of them once more.

Compared to earlier, his speed was increased by threefold! With this increase in speed, he appeared in front of Bo in the blink of an eye and launched a punch towards him.

*CRACK!!!

Parrying the punches using her shields, Alice frowned upon seeing the barrier cracking even though she had diverted most of the impact.

But Egil was familiar with Alice's artifact now.

Twisting his body, he unleashed two quick kicks towards Bo.

One of which was dodged by Bo while the second was forcefully blocked by Alice's shield but the resulting impact shattered the barrier and sent Bo flying into the sky.

Gritting his teeth, Bo adjusted his posture in the air.

If things continued like this, it would only be a matter of seconds before either he or Alice gets hit!

Alice's shield was barely keeping up with Egil's strikes but it was beginning to slow down. The damage it's been accumulating since the start of this battle has made it slow in deploying the barrier.

Furrowing his brows, Bo was at a crosswalk of options.

On one side, he should do his job as the representative and simply try to dodge Egil's strikes while Alice protects him. That way, she can win the Warrior's Honour the 'proper' way while Egil loses.

On the other, he wanted to fight back as hard as he could. He's been taking it relatively easy on Egil despite his grudge because this was not his match and Torgeir reminded him not to get emotional.

But so what! He wasn't someone who'd just let himself get thrown around like this!

Resonance!

At that moment, Bo's hair turned silver as jagged white bones manifested around his body.

His flesh turned black while the Sigil markings glowed a menacing red.

Bones became his armour, covering his arms, torso and legs while tattered clothing fluttered around his waist.

A bestial mask appeared on his face as his hand axes underwent a transformation.

Seeing Bo use his Resonance, Torgeir furrowed his brows and sighed.

This was why he was unsure if this was the correct choice for Alice.

If the duel continued like this, it would simply be a duel between Egil and Bo. No longer was the focus of this fight on Alice's capabilities as a shielder.

Right now, she was simply a slight annoyance a little better than the standard shield.

'There's about a minute left.'

Egil, while being a liability due to his past record, was still a Warrior who was attuned to five spirits. Not only that but within those of his level, he's practically unmatched in terms of raw physical power.

Had it not been for his personality and past records, he would've been known as the ideal Warrior.

Bo, on the other hand, was akin to a wolf. He preferred to work with others and once he latches onto his prey, he won't stop until they're dead.

It's why he warned Bo not to get carried away before the fight began but it seems like his words were ignored.

Letting out a sigh, he glanced at Bo who was darting around the arena. Egil was forced to defend as he couldn't keep up with Bo's speed.

However, Bo couldn't do any damage to Egil who was able to endure everything with his physicality.

"Huh?" Pausing for a moment, Torgeir furrowed his brows as he noticed something abnormal with Bo's movements.

Even if he's fast, he shouldn't be able to make these kinds of turns in mid air...

Furrowing his brow, Torgeir calculated Bo's path.

'Two turns into a slash. That should be the optimal path.' He concluded for Bo's next attack.

Egil was the same as he turned his body to counter.

However...

*BANG!!!

Egil's fist struck the empty air as Bo was able to dash out of danger at the last moment! Flickering around the arena as though he could fly, Egil began to lose track of him!

'What is going on...' Torgeir widened his eyes.

###

Curling his lips into a shocked smile, Bo continued to dash around the arena while increasing his speed as much as he could.

Every time he felt like he should make a turn, a small platform would appear right by his feet, allowing him to dodge.

At first, it was sloppy. The platform was slow and sometimes it might even fail to deploy correctly.

Therefore, he ignored these at the start.

However...

At that last moment, when Egil had predicted his movement and Bo could only prepare himself to be hit, the platform manifested right below his feet. The timing when his knees were bent so he could exert his full power to dodge!

It was Alice!

He didn't know how she was doing this but this worked out better for the both of them!

Cranking his speed up to max, Bo understood that Alice was beginning to understand his movements. How he prepared his path and when he wanted to attack.

The moment he even shows the slight indication of wanting to strike, the platform would manifest at the right angle where it would allow him to charge towards Egil!

*CRACK!!!!

Slamming his axe into Egil's aura that protected his body, a crack was formed! The balance was tipped in their favour!

Narrowing his eyes, Bo dodged Egil's counter as jubilation filled his chest. This was the first time he felt this free when fighting. It was as though the air had become his domain. He was able to move however he wanted and fight at his full potential!

'I was wrong about you Alice!' Bo laughed inwardly.

During this fight, she has earned his respect and admiration! The foresight to be able to place footholds exactly where he wished at this speed was simply monstrous!

Egil may have not noticed but Bo understood the reality. This entire arena has become Alice's personal playground and he was simply her most effective pawn!

###

Sweat dripped down Alice's face but there was a wide smile on her face.

'It's working!' She thought inwardly.

During the brief exchange earlier, she noticed the way the fragments of her shard deployed the shields.

Similar to the shield that Torgeir had his soldiers place around the arena, each fragment acted as a 'node' that expanded the barrier. By being in close proximity with other fragments, these barriers resonate with each other and connect.

But this wasn't the important part. The important part was the fact that by fragmenting the shard further and allowing smaller deployments, she reduced the stamina it took to recover the damage!

She didn't need a strong shield that could block every attack. She just needed it to be good enough to divert the power even if it breaks!

Panting heavily, Alice could feel her body screaming out in pain as her stamina was being tapped into every time her shard broke apart and repaired itself.

If she was using her energy to fuel the shard, this would've been much easier. But because she couldn't, her stamina was being constantly drained. Despite not fighting against Egil and instead acting as support, Alice felt more exhausted than when she was fighting against Lords!

Alice circled around the edge of the arena, making sure Egil didn't put his focus on her.

With the shards as fragmented as they are right now, she was in more danger than ever. But by giving Bo the freedom of movement he desired, he was taking all of the aggro!

'How much time is left???' Alice questioned as each passing second felt like torture.

Bo was keeping Egil occupied with his rapid attacks while Alice was pushing her concentration to the max!

To understand Bo's intentions, where he wanted to strike, how he wanted to move and where her shards needed to be wasn't easy. She didn't have the kinetic vision provided by Cayla nor the time slowing abilities of Selen.

But what she did have was instinct! She had to put herself in the mindset of Bo. How would she try to optimize the way she would attack Egil?

What does she consider to be a 'dead' path?

She had to take this into account every time she made a platform for Bo otherwise the foothold wouldn't deploy properly!

There were instances where her thoughts and Bo's became mismatched. But with each failure, Alice began to understand Bo better!

She didn't know how long till the end of the duel but she didn't have the leisure to care about that right now. She had to maintain this 'grid of control' or else Bo would get hit and it'll be her loss!

Defending against Bo's relentless onslaught, veins bulged across Egil's body. He wanted to counter but couldn't find the chance!

'Not like this... I can't end things like this!'

He had to win. If he didn't win, he wouldn't be able to join the squad. If he can't join the squad, it'll take too long for him to earn achievements in war. If he can't earn achievements in war then...

It'll be too late!

"I WON'T ALLOW MYSELF TO GO DOWN LIKE THIS!!!" Egil roared, the crimson energy flaring from his body.

The flood of energy that erupted from his body rushed into the arena, submerging both Bo and Alice in its influence.

At that moment, both Alice and Bo felt their movements come to a halt!

This gap was exactly what Egil needed as his fist slammed into Bo's chest, breaking apart the armour and sending his body crashing into the walls.

Chapter 400 - 400: End Of The Duel

Silence filled the arena as Alice slowly turned her head towards Bo who was slumped against the shields.

The spectators weren't sure what happened as Egil was on the back foot until that last moment.

Collapsing on his knee, Egil looked at Bo before turning to Torgeir.

Gritting his teeth, he slammed his fist into the ground.

"F*CK!!!" He roared in anger, confusing the people around him including Alice.

*Ahem!

Clearing his throat, Torgeir stepped into the arena and calmed the crowd down.

"The winner of this duel, Alice Agnelia!" He announced.

Upon hearing his proclamation, the crowd broke into confusion as Alice stood up and recalled her shards with doubt in her eyes.

"While Egil indeed managed to land a strike against Bo, he did so after I called the end of the duel. It was his shout that caused the announcement to go unheard."

With the decision being reinforced, Egil could only sit down on the ground in fatigue.

He felt it the moment attacked Bo.

Torgeir was the reason why all of them were stopped mid attack! If it wasn't for the fact that he managed to break out of the imprisonment the moment it was cast, he would've been frozen right before he could punch Bo.

However, what's done is done. He lost the Warrior's Honour fair and square and there was no room for him to complain.

Yet a bitterness filled his chest.

"I don't agree with this." Alice's voice rang out, surprising Egil as he thought she would be happy with this victory.

The sudden change in Bo's movements was her doing after all. But at the end, even if he wanted to go for her, he wasn't able to. He could only keep his attention on Bo who was darting around the arena.

"What do you mean?" Torgeir furrowed his brows.

Alice won fair and square. It was his fault for miscalculating Egil's strength at the end. He didn't think Egil had the power to break out and once he did, he landed the hit against Bo. Thus, causing the misunderstanding within the crowd.

"Do I really have to say it?" Alice scratched her hair in annoyance.

Through a technicality, she won this fight. She managed to protect the two of them for the entire duration before Egil could land a hit.

But a fraction of a moment after the match ended, Bo was hit. Hell if it was 2 minutes and 30.3 seconds, Alice would've lost.

That was how close it was.

However, if she were to put this into the perspective of a war, she would lose. No one can predict the variable that may suddenly manifest on the battlefield. It was her fault for letting down her guard the moment she felt something restricting his body.

If she had kept up her guard and moved the shard in front of Bo, would he have been hit?

The answer was uncertain but there was a chance Bo would've managed to dodge. Yet because she dropped her guard, that uncertainty became certainty and Bo was hit a fraction of a second after the end.

In this regard, she lost.

"Anything can happen in the middle of a fight. The enemy won't stop just because time is up. If this was a real fight... Well I'm sure you don't need me to say more." Alice glanced over at Bo who was knocked out of his Resonance.

Blood dripped from the corner of his mouth while healers rushed to help him.

There were many things Alice could improve on and she knew this herself. The mistakes that she made during this duel could cost the life of her next comrade during battle.

Therefore, Alice couldn't accept this win.

Furrowing his brows, Torgeir massaged his eyes.

One side is frustrated that he lost but accepted the result. The other won but is angry because of how the duel ended.

*COUGH!!!

Coughing up a mouthful of blood, Bo dragged himself onto his feet despite the warnings of the healers and turned to Egil.

Veins bulged on his neck but Bo held himself back and turned to Torgeir.

"I lost. If it wasn't for Lady Agnelia assisting me during this fight, I would've lost at the first counter. I held her back. And..." Biting his lip, Bo let out a frustrated sigh.

"Egil won his chance."

He didn't like Egil but he had no choice but to admit that Egil surpassed all of them during that moment.

Not even Torgeir could stop the warrior and he could only watch as the fist crashed into his chest, knocking him out with one punch.

"This..." Torgeir was stuck on a choice as this was the first time this kind of thing happened during a Warrior's Honour.

Neither side seemed satisfied.

"I will compensate Lady Agnelia's reward with my own money." Bo tried to bargain but Torgeir remained silent.

"Why don't you just call it a draw?" Alice suggested, walking up to the duo.

"Oh? A draw for the Warrior's Honour? Since you're a foreigner, you may not understand our tradition. However, draws aren't an option. You either win, or you lose." Torgeir raised an eyebrow.

Sounds of discontent could be heard amongst the crowd but Alice couldn't care less. She wasn't a northerner so these traditions meant nothing to her. However, she was willing to respect them to a certain degree.

"What do you suggest then? I'm not satisfied with my win and Egil isn't satisfied with his loss." Alice asked.

Since he was the overseer of this duel, it was up to him on how they should settle the outcome.

"A rematch. I'll postpone the results of this duel for the second round. The conditions for the rematch will be the same only this time you'll be partaking in it once your body has healed. A fair one on one battle to prove a Warrior's Honour." Torgeir suggested after a brief pause.

Throughout the match, there were hints of Alice's true power. Especially at the end.

To begin with, the Warrior's Honour was meant to be fought by oneself, for oneself. Not by designating a representative.

With this arrangement, the two get the rematch they wish and the tradition isn't broken.

Crossing her arms, Alice contemplated it for a moment before nodding her head with a smile.

"I'm fine with that. What about you big guy?" Alice turned to Egil who wanted to say something but stopped himself and nodded his head.

"I'm... Fine with this arrangement."

Tilting her head, she wondered what else was bothering him when it clicked in her mind.

"Say, Torgeir." Alice called out as he glanced down.

"What do you say about giving Egil a chance? He's proved himself to be a capable warrior and he did keep things fair. I don't see the sign of his previous misdemeanour records except maybe when he was heated. Plus, didn't Bo say it earlier? Egil won his chance when he broke out of that restriction." She suggested with a chuckle.

With both of the winners suggesting such an outcome, Torgeir sighed before turning to Egil.

"One chance. I'll keep an eye on you."

Hearing this, Egil's eyes trembled as he bit his lip and nodded his head.

With the results of the match being postponed till a later date, most of the spectators lost interest and began to leave. Some ridiculed both Alice and Egil but Alice didn't care about their words.

After all, if they had someone like Egil charging at them, they'd probably die in one hit. The weakest people talk the most.

"Why?" Egil asked, walking up to Alice.

Conflicting emotions swirled in his chest as the girl in front of him granted him the reward he asked for even though he lost.

"What do you mean why? I don't see why he should limit your participation in the first place. Plus, you're pretty desperate for that spot, right? With your strength, there are many things you can do.

"I won't ask why you want it that much but everyone gets a second chance. Just don't waste it okay? Ah! But I fully expect my share of the bet too. After all, I did get your spot in the military." Alice grinned as Egil froze for a moment before letting out a slight laugh.

"I'll get the gold to you as soon as I can. And don't worry, I won't forget this favour that you've done for me. Thank you."

Watching the big guy walk away, Alice scratched her cheek.

Contrary to his appearance and history based on the reports, he was a pretty chill guy once things calmed down. He was simply prone to emotional outbursts it seems.

Once Egil left, Bo approached.

"Lady Agnelia." He called out, causing Alice to let out a laugh.

"So formal all of a sudden. What happened? And how are your injuries?" She asked, glancing at his tattered shirt.

"My injuries will recover. As for the formality... Simply put it's the respect shown towards great warriors. How did you manage to understand what I wanted to do at the end? And how were you able to make that many footholds? If I didn't know any better, I'd say you were using an ability to control the entire arena." Bo asked with a glimmer in his eyes.

"It's nothing fancy like you think. Simply doing my best to understand what you wish to aim for during the fight and make some educated guesses. Though if I didn't make any changes, my artifact wouldn't have been able to cover the entire arena." Alice chuckled.

Splitting her artifact into smaller fragments, she continued to divide them until they looked like large grains of sand.

"Simply put, I spread these fragments across the arena and assign them into grids that cover the arena. Each fragment is responsible for one grid and I made predictions based on your speed and direction.

"Once I have that down, I simply move the fragment and focus on making a foothold that lasts just long enough for you to change directions."

Hearing her explanation, Bo felt a chill down his spine.

With the way she was putting it, it felt as though she had completely grasped his fighting style in the brief cooperation they had! Not only that, but the calculations required to move these tiny fragments precisely in order to accommodate his movement.

And she was doing all of this while keeping an eye on Egil, making sure he couldn't attack her!