

ABYSSAL AWAKENING

Chapter 4: Fighting Arena

Waking up from the sound of chains clashing around her, Alice sat up to see several Bruisers moving about, ordered around by men in black cloaks.

Looking at the display in confusion, she spotted the Bruisers carry different cages onto a leather belt moving on cylinders. There was a tube placed along the length of the belt with a flashing red liquid moving around from within.

'Is that... Abyss Engineering?' Alice wondered to herself, finding the sight completely alien to her understanding. She only heard bits and pieces of information about such technology, from the scientists who sometimes chatted with each other while she was experimented upon.

Noticing something off to her left, she glanced over and widened her eyes in shock. The man from last night had completely melded to the wooden walls behind him. His skin was a deep, sickly shade of green, while a pool of fresh

blood oozed out of him. Flowers blossomed all over his body as he stood motionless.

'Did he die in his sleep?' Alice thought to herself with little pity. Perhaps it was from seeing her own body being opened up countless times before but she didn't even feel her heart fluctuate at the sight.

"Seems like he died while everyone was sleeping. Poor guy overdosed on A.B. I must say you don't seem surprised by his body, did you come from a battlefield?"

Hearing the voice, Alice turned to her side. It was the same woman from last night. She was currently sitting with her legs crossed while watching the Bruisers carry people away.

"A.B.?"

"Yeah. Abyss Blood. Hm, I thought with how you talked, you probably came from the streets. But it doesn't seem that way if you don't know about A.B." The woman scratched her head in confusion.

"Sorry, situation weird." Alice apologised.

She didn't want to go into detail of her past with someone she had just met, especially someone in this weird place.

"Fair. No one has a normal situation if they got sold here. You do seem out of it, to boot. Regardless, it was nice talking to you. I hope we meet again." The woman smiled while pointing at the Bruiser about to lift her cage away.

"Ah, your name?" Alice asked in a hurried tone.

"My name? You can just call me Lilia." She replied, giving Alice a small wave.

"My name... Alice!" Alice shouted out before she lost sight of the woman.

Sitting back down on her cage, there was a hint of happiness in her eyes.

It was her first time talking to someone else like a normal person after 10 years.

'I'm glad she's a nice person.' Alice thought inwardly. Despite her happy mood, her face did not reveal any of her thoughts. It was blank as usual.

Soon, her cage was placed on the leather belt and moved through the building. She didn't know what to expect so she could only do her best to calm her heart. There were others in a similar situation to her, but they soon disappeared from view as her cage was placed into a wooden box.

Considering that the man she saw last night died from Abyss Blood, Alice knew that the substance was most likely going to be involved. The only issue lay in how it was used.

'I don't want to come into contact with any of the blood, if possible. If anybody finds out about my mutation like they did, who knows what will happen to me.' Alice bit her lip in fear as she hugged her arms at the thought of her old family.

Tilting her head back, she peeked through the gaps of the wooden box. She was currently on some platform that may raise her up, since there was a large empty space directly above.

With no idea about what was going on, she could only wait in silence. Thankfully, the wait was rather short. Clamorous sounds could be heard above along with the echoes of many footsteps and the chatter of hundreds of people.

Alice couldn't hear what they were saying. But she knew that more and more people were filling up the arena, as the sounds only got louder.

The footsteps continued for a time before a loud voice overwhelmed all noise.

"Welcome, ladies and gentlemen! I am happy to welcome you to tonight's coliseum event! I am sure that many of you are excited to find out what we have planned for tonight! You've heard the rumours! You've seen the posters! And you certainly know the dangers!

We are excited to announce that we have obtained the infamous Grave Robber! A behemoth of flesh and bones, stalking the shadows of the Slaughter Docks and digging up the bones of Hunters!

"And tonight! He'll be facing against a batch of newly acquired slaves from around the Abyss! There are some fine combat slaves along with a few poor souls who are simply in the wrong place at the wrong time! Feast your eyes tonight and bid to your hearts' content!

We have plenty of hunters to assure that the asset you win will be protected should they be chosen!" He shouted out with glee in his voice while the thunderous cheers in the crowd shook the coliseum.

Before Alice could continue listening in on the announcements, a blue glow appeared on her choker as the number 10 manifested itself. Understanding that this was how they were going to identify her, Alice could feel her platform being raised up towards the trap door.

'From the sound of things, it seems like I'll have to fight against Abyss Beasts. If they get interested in me, I'll be bid on and protected.' Alice thought to herself while clutching her chest.

She had no experience fighting anyone, let alone Abyss Beasts. However, compared to the fear of going back to that white room or dying before she could get her revenge, a little bit of fighting didn't even make Alice react.

Filling herself with a false sense of bravery, Alice clenched her fist and focused up.

The moment her cage opened, things will become a battle of life and death.

As her cage reached the surface, Alice could see more than 20 slaves in different cages being released into the arena.

There was three layers to the coliseum. First, the base arena, where a myriad of obstacles, walls, and platforms were placed. Second, the viewing stands where hundreds of people watched with smiles on their faces, their identities hidden with masks, each of them provided with a wooden board for bidding purposes. Third, a place exclusively for VIPs.

They had special rooms hanging over the arena to allow for a full view. Despite their distance, Alice found it strange she could see them in full clarity. Her eyesight was never this good before.

Furrowing her brows, she turned her attention back to the arena. Her cage had been opened as she was allowed to step out. She could feel several glances, probably due to her weird hair colour. However, the gazes were brief since she wasn't the main attraction of tonight's event.

Aside from the Abyss Beast that they had brought in, the announcer started to introduce one of the slaves.

"Plucked from the front lines of the twilight zone, our slave here has seen the battle with his very own eyes! He was arrested for accepting bribes and allowing criminals through the defensive line, causing the assassination of his superior! He has not been branded by the slave brand yet, so you can be the very first owner!

Despite his traitorous behaviour, he is a three sigil warrior!" The announcer shouted out in excitement as the crowd went wild.

'Three sigil warrior? What's that?" Confusion filled Alice's mind as she turned towards where the spotlight was focused towards. A single man that stood in the centre of the arena.

He looked to be middle aged, with scars across his body. The side of his brown hair had been shaven clean while the top of his hair was tied back into a ponytail. He was given a rough set of clothing that was still much finer than what Alice wore. He was also equipped with a longsword and shield.

The cuffs around his body were much bigger than those around the other slaves. There were glowing purple runes etched on their surface.

"Lars! Show the power of your sigils!" The announcer shouted as the cuffs started to glow with a purple hue. Faint sparks of electricity crackled as the man flinched before gritting his teeth.

Through the gaps of his clothes, one could see a writhing shadow expanding into a tattoo that spread across his body, forming intricate sigils across his skin. One was on his neck, one was on his right hand and the last was on his back.

Hearing that he was going to demonstrate what it meant to be a three sigil warrior, Alice focused her attention on him.

Taking a deep breath in, Lars gritted his teeth as the sigil on his neck started to glow with a golden hue. His flesh started to bulge as rock-like material started to pierce through his skin and reinforced his body in a suit of armour.

As the second sigil activated, flames erupted through the gaps of his armour. Waving his sword, he stabbed it into the ground before pulling it out. The blade was now covered with a layer of molten rock that spewed flames with each wave.

With the final sigil lighting up, all of the flames turned blue and his body started to grow in size. Cracking his mouth open, he let out an earth-shattering roar that resounded throughout the arena, causing the crowd to cheer even louder.

"And there you have it! A quick demonstration of his sigils so that our fantastic VIPs know his potential! I can guarantee that he will make a spectacular battle slave once you purchase him! He will be proving his worth through a battle against the Grave Robber tonight while the other slaves will fight against our regular entertainment beasts.

Keep an eye out though, there may be a diamond in the rough amongst this batch! You never know what might happen!"

From the opposite side of the arena, several new cages appeared from the ground. Each cage holding a nearly identical quadrupedal beast without a speck of fur. Grey muscle covered its body while sharp talons protruded from the spine and claws. Its whole body seemed to be shaped for speed as it had an arrow shaped head with crimson eyes.

Standing out from the batch of monsters in cages was a single reinforced prison holding a ghastly white behemoth of bone and flesh.

Three skulls adorned its humanoid body, with one on the neck and one on each shoulder. A stinger-like tail protruded from the back of the head and whipped against the cage while an iridescent glow reflected from its skin due to the lights shining against the surface.

A low growl reminiscent of the clicking of rocks echoing against each other escaped its skulls. Beads of red lit up in the eye cavities and focused upon Lars. It seemed to have recognised him as the biggest threat.

But it sensed someone else, too. A faint resonance from within the group of slaves, something that sent an aura of oppression within the Grave Robber's body. Before it could focus its attention to the source of the resonance, Lars released a wave of killing intent towards the beast.

He knew that his future depended on how well he performed. If he surprised the VIPs with his power, he'll be treated better than the average slave.

"It's you and me, beast!" Lars roared with a flamboyant flare, making sure all eyes were on him.

"Seems like our main attraction can't wait any longer! Then let's get the show on the road! Release the beasts!" The announcer shouted as the crowd cheered.

*CLANG!

With a loud rumble, the cage bars dropped as the beasts jumped into the arena. Despite the obstacles in the arena, the hound-like beasts immediately started hunting down the weak looking slaves as they couldn't deal with Lars.

Alice braced herself for the incoming battle.