

Abyssal A 491

Chapter 491 - 491: Living Shadow

Enjoying their time on the bench, Selen glanced up at the sky.

"How do you think I should improve? Even if I'm good at controlling stuff, there's still a limit to what I can do. It kind of worked on the Lord of the Forge but he broke out of it quickly and basically disarmed me." Selen asked, hugging her knees.

"Wait what?" Egil blinked.

Since he had gone for a walk to clear his mind after seeing his mother, he didn't know that Alice and Selen had gone to meet the Lord.

Not only that, but she also used her skill on him? And it worked?!?!

"Well the Lord wanted to see what I was capable of so he asked me to demonstrate everything I know. After I did, he said I was holding back since I didn't use my new skill. Once I showed it to him, he blanked out for a moment. Just a moment and not long enough for me to do anything with that time." Selen explained, showing Egil the ring.

"Afterwards, he made this ring for me. Number 247 – Aeternum Vow. Equipment designed to help boost all of my time based abilities and even lets me see a bit into the future based on predictions."

Handing him the sheet that Sigurd had given to her, detailing the effects of the ring, Selen glanced up at Egil who was silently contemplating.

Perhaps its because she accepted his confession but she couldn't help but focus on each of his movements. The way his eyelashes trembled as his gaze flickered across the sheet. How he would furrow his brows or how he bites in the inside of his mouth when he's thinking.

"You've done acceleration, deceleration and perception. Have you ever tried to speed up the passage of time in a small area? Like withering someone's hand or something?" Egil asked, looking down, and saw Selen staring intently at him.

"A little. But I didn't really focus on that aspect since it was exhausting to do." Selen nodded her head.

"Maybe with the ring, it'll become easier now. But in terms of controlling a battlefield, I think just hindering their movements and stopping them from being able to do what they want would be enough." Egil handed the sheet back to Selen.

In his opinion, Selen was already a very annoying opponent to deal with. Acceleration, deceleration and perception adjustment was things that are hard to avoid. No matter what, one of these WILL affect your performance.

Once that happens, it's up to the damage dealer to do the rest. Of course, there were things that she could do to ensure her crowd control lasted longer. But for now, just disrupting the flow of battle was good.

Rubbing her finger across the ring, Selen had a few thoughts in her mind. Certain ideas that were yet to sprout. All she needed was a little push but that veil refused to budge.

While she didn't know it, it was a similar state to Alice before she had her awakening.

All it takes is a moment of inspiration.

"Argggg, how does Alice keep up with thoughts like this? I dunno, there's just too many things to consider but I don't even know when to begin." Selen complained with a pout, laying down on Egil's lap.

Chuckling softly, Egil patted her head.

"Just take your time with it. There's plenty of chances to try."

Curling her lips into a smile, Selen nodded her head.

But just as she was about to say something else, she noticed a faint sparkle above the capital.

'Is it a star?' She couldn't help but wonder.

However, that wonder soon turned to dread.

The fabric of space cracking apart. Lightning ripped open the curtains to an army of beasts with a familiar figure at the forefront.

A dreadful pair of multi coloured wings that shimmered with a myriad of vibrant colours. Jagged scales hindering the outburst of white blue and green flames. A beast on the verge of becoming a Lord.

A Hybrid!!!

Sitting up immediately, questions filled Selen's mind.

Didn't this city have a barrier? Weren't there Lords here? How did they even get in?! Why are they attacking with Lords defending this place?!

But before she could even contemplate the answers to her questions, the beast reared its head back.

Cracking open its jaw, rings of fire bloomed out in pulses, dying the sky in countless rings of blue and green.

From the centre, a single pillar of light shot down in an instant.

*BANG!!!!

Before the light could crash into the ground, ice materialised into a crystalline barrier that reflected the attack towards the sky.

"Foul beast! How dare you attack the capital!" A woman's voice roared out as Selen recognised it to belong to Frida, Lord of Winter.

Clasping her hands together, a blizzard erupted out, enveloping the skies in frigid destruction.

Yet strangely, despite this commotion, the people around them didn't even know what was going on. If they weren't looking at things from below, they wouldn't even have noticed this fight!

From the portal that the hybrid opened, an army of beasts crashed down. Each beast had a different size with some only rearing their heads through the portal.

Watching this happen, veins bulged on Frida's neck as her anger reached its peak.

"Since you dare attack the city of my beloved queen, don't even think of leaving!" Pulling her arm back, she punched down as a pulse of ice energy erupted from her body.

Resonance + Second Resonance!

The world began to tremble with reality beginning to distort. An array of northern lights decorated the sky.

This time, she wasn't going to drag the beasts into her realm since there were simply far too many. Instead, she'll make the entire airspace her realm!

*CRACK!!! SHATTER!!!

Frida's pupils shrank as she watched her realm break apart before it could fully establish itself.

"Delicious." A voice rang out nearby.

Twisting her body, Frida released a slash of ice energy behind her out of instinct.

*CRUNCH!!!

Crushing the energy between its jaws, a beast could be seen cackling with joy.

A nightmarish twisted amalgamation with flesh whips protruding from its body. A beast of writhing shadows and blood.

Its form, forever shifting and twisting as if it were living shadows. The beast's head is a grotesque twisting of strands, barely forming a semblance of a bestial head with a pair of glowing beady eyes. The jaws hung open with a malefic crimson energy leaking out.

'A Lord!!!' Frida gritted her teeth as the energy was unmistakable.

While it was a little stranger than most, there was no doubt that the beast in front of her was a Lord.

"Why the caution? Weren't you excited to introduce us to the city a moment ago? You didn't even want us to leave." The Lord level beast narrowed its eyes with a sharp grin.

*BANG!!!!

Before it could say another word, a hammer of flames slammed into its body, sending it crashing back.

"If you're going to visit the city, please do the proper procedures. Entrances are closed at night." Sigurd stood atop a tower with a war hammer hoisted onto his shoulder.

He narrowed his eyes at the army as a bad feeling dominated his chest.

An uncanny sensation.

Flames glowed around his eyes as he observed their flow of energy. Yet the sight of which almost caused him to hurl in disgust.

This unnatural flow invoked a feeling of rejection. A rejection that stems from the fact that his mind couldn't comprehend the existence of such beings.

"Frida and Sigurd. The Lord of Winter and the Lord of the Forge. Two Abyss Lords tasked with protecting the Capital of Verona. If I recall, Urigar doesn't live in the Capital so it should just be you two with the Queen. Am I correct?" A voice rang out next to Sigurd.

"!!!" Sigurd wasn't even sure when this man appeared next to him but cold sweat dripped down his back.

Rather than a man, it was more accurate to call it a 'shadow'.

A humanoid figure cloaked in a tattered jacket while dark tendrils of energy whipped around his body. His head was obscured by a hood but instinctively, Sigurd understood that there were no facial features to be seen. Much like the twisted beast that he hit, this man felt like a living shadow.

Pulses of red and black energy formed the majority of his body. A colony of strands that fused to form the outline of a man.

Behind him, a crimson halo spun slowly.

Before Sigurd could even reply, a torrent of tendrils slammed into him as he crashed into the cliff face.

"If the queen appears, I'll keep her busy." A woman landed gently next to the shadow. She had long dark hair and a pair of violet eyes. Stiches could be seen across her body with scales on the corners of her face.

Wearing a black dress with long sleeves, the woman glanced towards the giant tree situated in the centre of this city.

"But it seems she won't be making a move. At least not for now."

"Doesn't that work better for you? You're the most unstable one out of all of us after all." The living shadow stood up and glanced towards the direction of Sigurd who clawed his way out of the cliff face.

Nodding her head, the woman sat down and waited patiently.

###

"It's an ambush! We need to tell the guards immediately!" Selen gritted her teeth as her body trembled from the aura of three Lords in the sky.

On top of everything, their uncanny nature proved that they were also Hybrids!

'The Zenia's have succeeded in making Lord level hybrids!' Panick filled her mind as she glanced back at Egil but her pupils constricted in shock.

Little by little, blood began to drip from his orifices as Egil collapsed on his knees.

Scales began to form on his arms as bestial side effects manifested across his body!

Chapter 492 - 492: Outbreak

Egil felt a wave of dizziness strike his mind. A hallowed whisper echoing in his ears.

He could feel a foreign energy invading his body, changing him, corrupting him. A sensation not unlike the feeling he got when he first drank Abyss Blood.

The touch of corruption that changed him on a fundamental level.

Raising his hand, he could see the scales breaking through the top layer of his skin while black blood filled his veins.

He saw Selen calling out to him with a panicked expression.

Instinctively, he understood what this was. He had seen many patients with these symptoms after all.

Glancing up at the destructive battle taking place in the sky, Egil gritted his teeth as his Sigils flared with power. Several spirits wrapped around his body, and their forms began to distort due to the black blood infecting him.

However, by burning his power, he was able to maintain a semblance of sanity and defence against this disease.

His senses began to clear up but the corruption burned through his energy much faster than what he had expected. Compared to the disease that latched onto his mother, this was far worse!

"No... No, no, no, no!" Selen gritted her teeth as she watched the side effects manifesting across his body. Her pupils trembled in panic as she didn't know what to do.

She only had resistance to this kind of poison thanks to the innate abilities that Alice's blood provided to her. But that was to her alone. Even if she was to feed her blood to someone else, there was no guarantee that they'd be able to adapt to such a potent poison.

At that moment, Egil hugged Selen, calming her down.

"It's alright. Everything will be fine. It's a little tough but I'll manage. The important thing is to take care of the beasts above, right?" Egil forced a smile as Selen bit her lip.

She recalled the conversation she had with Alice. How things were uncertain but Alice was still in the midst of developing a cure for this disease that the Zenia family unleashed.

Activating her Sigils, Selen imprinted a marker onto Egil's body.

Deceleration!

Slowing down the progress of time within Egil's body, Selen supported his arm on her shoulder.

She had to get him to Alice immediately!

For the first time in her life, Selen felt truly happy. No matter what the Zenias has done, no matter what she had to experience, it was fine for this moment of happiness. But she refused to let the Zenia's rip that away from her!

Glancing up at the beasts that were pouring down through the portals, Selen gritted her teeth and dashed towards their inn with Egil leaning on her.

###

After the discussion with Alyss, Alice decided to focus a little more on the technical skills and properties behind each of her abilities.

Sitting by her desk, she had a sample of her blood in a vial while she observed the reactions based on what she did.

Her second Sigil manifests the properties of her blood, that being negating Abyssal Abilities, in the form of fire as that was her ideal image in her mind.

Allura's power.

However, if her mental image of this skill were to change, there were perhaps more variations of her second Sigil that she hadn't seen before.

One instance of this was her spider lilies. None of her abilities should've manifested the spider lilies yet they still appeared.

Alice had no doubt that it was her second Sigil at work. Every time she experiences a change, an awakening, an epiphany, the Sigil reacts and changes.

'Allura's impression on you is pretty big after all. It's no wonder it keeps defaulting back to fire.' Alyss folded her arms.

For her, the Sigils manifested as darkened limbs that grab and tear apart anything they get their hands on. A reflection of all the torture she had to endure in Alice's place. The hands of scholars that rummaged through her body, pinning her down.

It had forever left a mark on Alyss's mind and thus, the second Sigil solidified this power into limbs.

Spinning the pen on her fingers, Alice furrowed her brows.

She closed her eye and recalled Kaden's power. The power of shadows.

As her saviour, the one who sent her into the Abyss to meet Allura, Kaden had just as big of an impact on her as Allura did.

But unlike Allura, his power was more... conceptual in nature.

The power of curses, shadows and adaptation based on his understanding of the world around him.

To manifest aspects of his power through the second Sigil was going to be difficult unless Alice had a clear visual imprint of his power.

"It's difficult." Alice muttered with a sigh.

Out of all of her Sigils, her second one held the most potential as it synergised with the blood inside her body. A Sigil obtained from a modified beast.

Activating her fourth Sigil to tap into the power of the Void, the blood within the vial began to shift as the liquid began to shimmer with an otherworldly glow.

She could see the energy of the Void travelling through the blood while it began to adapt to the change.

Tapping her finger across the table, Alice closed her eyes and tried to imagine her ideal self.

An ideal self capable of cleaning out the Zenia family.

First of all, she needed a cleansing or resistant type ability.

If she was to take out the family, she needed to ignore their control type abilities. If she can't, she'll be a sitting duck. Next was a way to kill them without completely exhausting herself. This was going to be a one vs many situation and if she's alone in the matter, she needs to have a way to replenish her stamina.

Right now, she had firepower, plenty of it. But her stamina was sorely lacking.

Her fifth Sigil offset this to a certain degree but it was still far too little.

Most importantly, she needed information. A way to scout. This could mostly be resolved via Cayla but she was sealed right now so there was nothing Alice could do about it.

'You realise that the others will be more than happy to help you out right? You don't need to take revenge solo. Selen hates the Zenias as much as we do, Ria will be happy to assist and the same with Luke. They know that we'll help them in a heartbeat if they need it against the Eclipse Cult after all.'

Alyss reminded.

Trying to cover everything alone was rather ambitious even with their unique skill set of being able to replace Sigils. They still had to take into account the fact that each Sigil can only be replaced once per day and once it's done, they can't undo the change.

'I know, but it's more of a precaution in case we're in a situation where the others can't help.' Alice nodded.

She knew she had people she could trust in but she had to consider the worst case scenario. If she prepares herself for the worst case scenario, things will go more smoothly.

'First Sigil bolsters strength and poisons blood, second adapts to my blood and grants me Abyss negating flames. Third grants me blood and metal manipulation. Fourth grants me Void control and fifth... Fifth gives me the biggest boost while risking the chance of being exiled from the realm.'

In terms of the pattern of her getting Sigils, it was leaning towards the Void while removing the influence of the Abyss. Rather ironic considering the fact that she has obtained all three key relics of the Abyss and is destined to be the next Velouria.

However, what the Abyss gives, the Abyss can take back. In order to take care of those abusing the gifts of the Abyss, she must first rid them of the blessings.

Creating a singularity above her finger, she thought about the Skill she was trying to create. A personal skill that only she could use. It was still lacking that final touch, that final flare before it could truly be called a skill.

The go to ability and her trump card.

Before she could continue indulging in her thoughts, the door was kicked open.

***BANG!!!**

Glancing over, Alice noticed that Selen was the one who kicked the door. Her joyous surprise soon disappeared as she saw the panic on Selen's face while Egil was leaning on her shoulders.

In an instant, Alice understood the situation.

The side effects manifesting across his body despite Selen trying her best to hold it back, the dark strands of energy invading his body and most of all, the familiar flow of energy that she saw coursing through his mother's body when they went to visit her.

"Get him on the bed. I'll see what I can do." Alice gestured as she had Alyss wake Cayla up.

"What happened?" She asked while activating her Second Sigil.

Violet flames began to worm its way through Egil's body, hindering the progress of the disease. She had to be careful with the strength of these flames. Too strong and it'll permanently damage Egil's body. Too weak and the disease will continue to spread.

"An ambush, by hybrids. Lord level ones. Egil he- he just collapsed. They're spreading the disease through the capital. People aren't realising what's going on." Selen tried her best to keep things short but her mind was in chaos.

"Leave him with me, I'll try my best to stop the disease. Go help the city. Since your skill works on Lords, even if its for a moment, you should be able to help them get the upper hand. The sooner we drive them back, the faster we can deal with this outbreak properly." Alice ordered.

She wanted to rush out and stop the invasion but she couldn't leave Egil alone. Not when so much time had passed. If she was to leave him alone, it'll go past the point of no return.

The only one that could delay them while she figures out a solution for the outbreak was Selen.

Hearing this, Selen clenched her fist. Looking down at Egil's struggling expression, she gritted her teeth and nodded her head.

"You have to help him, please." Selen practically begged as Alice nodded her head with a reassuring smile.

Turning around, Selen rushed out the door.

Her eyes were bloodshot as Sigils lit up across her body.

In her hands, energy gathered into a single staff.

Right now, she only wanted one thing. To tear off the heads of these hybrids!

Chapter 493 - 493: Cur(s)e

Jumping onto the roof of a building, Selen glanced at the destruction around them. Beasts tearing apart houses while guards try their best to fight back. But with this outbreak, many of them were having trouble just standing never mind fighting back.

"Hounds! Come to me!" A voice roared out as Selen noticed that it was the governor whom they met earlier.

Behind her, several figures flickered into existence as all of them had the distinguishing feature of animalistic ears and tails.

"Burn Spirits at full power! Do not let the corruption take hold! Kill the beasts and believe in the Lords! That is all!" The Governor ordered as six Sigils lit up across her body.

"UNDERSTOOD!" All of the Hounds shouted in response. Without a moment's delay, they rushed towards the beasts, each of them activating their Sigils and all of them had six!

Already, Selen could see the unwavering faith they had towards Frida and Sigurd, the Lords tasked with protecting the capital.

'They're targeting normal beasts while the hybrids are commanding the airspace. The Lords are dealing with the Hybrid Lords and there seems to be another prepared for Queen Verona.'

Holding back her anger, Selen calmed her mind.

If she was to let anger take hold, she'd lose her advantage. That being the hybrids don't know she's here right now.

There were two options for her. First was to act as support for the Lords.

However, choosing this method could cause the third Lord to enter the fight. And if she was to help them, the other hybrids would be left unattended.

That brings in the second option.

To assassinate the hybrids before joining Sigurd and Frida!

Can you even do it?

A doubt crept into her mind. Her doubt towards her own abilities.

Could she pierce the defences of the hybrids that even Alice struggled against?

She didn't know.

But! Even if she didn't know, even if she wasn't sure, she had to do it. Just the image of seeing Egil struggling on the bed was enough to light a fire of anger in her chest as Sigils lit up across her body.

'I have less damage than Alice and I'll struggle to get through their armour. But with perception manipulation, I should be able to disrupt their formation and chain of command. Even if I can't do that, I should be able to be a nuisance to them. I just need to buy time for the right moment.' Selen thought to herself.

This battlefield was not for her to stand out in. That was reserved for the Lords. But where the eye can't see, she'll do what she can.

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Laying the flame across Egil's body, sweat rolled down Alice's face.

"F*ck... How the hell did the Zenia even make something like this." Alice gritted her teeth.

Compared to the disease she saw plaguing Egil's mother, this was far more destructive. Far more violent and volatile. Even the slightest stimulation was enough to drive it into a frenzy.

Had Egil not instinctively protected himself with his Sigils, the disease would've invaded his spiritual heart already.

If the disease in Egil's mother could be described as an infection that's slowly spreading, then Egil could be described as being dunked into a tank of curses.

Side effects that assaulted every part of his body without stop.

Not only that but there was even a slight hint of Alice's own blood within this mix.

'It's similar to your blood mist. I just didn't think they would actually go this far and make it into a weapon.' Alyss frowned.

In the past, Alice had entertained the idea of doing something similar.

But to see it in action was truly horrific.

Just dealing with Egil was enough to give her an idea of the chaos occurring in the capital right now. People sleeping peacefully only to be woken up by the horrific transformation.

Biting her lip, Alice decided to do a small gamble.

'Don't even think about it.' Alyss shut it down immediately.

Even though she wasn't at the heart of the battle, her twin was still trying to attempt something truly stupid without caring about herself.

'Why not though? I think it'll work pretty well. I have my hands tied with trying to figure out a solution anyway.' Alice pouted.

'It's not a matter of you being occupied or not. It's the fact that you're exposing yourself if you do. What do you think the Zenia's will do if they realise that their outbreak was hindered? And what if, I'm just saying what if, a Hybrid sees that it's you doing it?' Alyss frowned.

'Alternatively, what if Verona owes me a debt of saving her capital from falling to ruin.' Alice grinned with a peace sign.

'... ' Letting out a deep sigh, Alyss face palmed.

'Then you can tell Cayla of your plan and see if she approves or not.' She suggested as Alice nodded her head.

Not far from them, Cayla was sitting on the floor with several sheets spread out around her. In order to track her thoughts and findings better, she manifested her theories, tests, and results on sheets.

Noticing Alice approaching, she paused while listening to the plan she had in mind.

[Alice... Did you hit your head? Or are you drunk right now?] Cayla asked, making an expression of disbelief.

'I'm not drunk! If I do this, things will be far more advantageous for us don't you agree?' Alice folded her arms.

[Advantageous yes. Downright stupid? Also yes. Reckless? Very much so. How do you even guarantee that you'll be able to keep your consciousness if you were to lose so much blood? I get that you have regeneration but losing focus for a moment while exposing yourself will get you killed. Also, you need to think about Egil's condition while you do it.] Cayla scratched her hair.

Between Alice and Velouria, Alice was no doubt the most reckless one.

However, both had similar thoughts when it came to helping people. Similar to the extent that Cayla couldn't help but to relent to these ideals and try her best to help her accomplish it.

[If you regulate your power slowly, you should be able to do it without passing out.] Cayla smiled as Alice grinned.

'Huh??? I told her to talk to you so that you can dissuade her not encourage it!' Alyss blinked her eyes in disbelief.

[Just look at Alice, does it look like my words would've dissuaded her? If anything, it's more like she's trying to persuade us so she doesn't feel bad about doing it.] Cayla laughed as Alyss let out a fatigued sigh.

'Just do what you want.' Alyss relented. Her twin was always like this. Stubborn to a fault. But she knew that Alice wanted to do this since her blood was the root cause. To see this level of destruction, if she didn't do anything, it would haunt her conscious.

Upon getting approval from Alyss, Alice created a portal next to her as she transferred Egil to a floating blood bed.

Stepping through the portal, she appeared near the top of the giant tree situated in the centre of the city.

"I'm going to apologise before hand for this your majesty. But this isn't a situation where I can wait for your approval okay?" Alice called out as she understood that Verona was probably watching everything that was going on.

It was still a mystery why she hasn't made a move yet but that wasn't Alice's focus.

With the tree in the centre of the city, it was the best place for her to be since this way, her ability could reach every corner of this capital.

Taking a deep breath, Alice set Egil aside.

She kept a sliver of her focus on him to ensure the disease didn't progress further.

After trying to resolve the issue in his body, Alice got a slight hint on what she should do. It wasn't enough to completely purge the disease but halting the progression was enough.

Resonance!

Activating her resonance, spider lilies began to blossom around her as a pool of blood swirled into existence.

To hold back the disease, she needed to use her own blood to counter it. Poison vs poison. While it had its benefits, it had an equal amount of risk. That being how much blood could she actually use without people just dying from the dosage.

The only advantage she had over the outbreak was the fact that she could control her own blood.

One misstep and it could be pure destruction.

But... Within the dangers of destruction, comes the chance of creation.

She will use her destructive blood and forge a cure.

Bloodline Release!

Behind Alice, her soul manifested itself.

Strangely, she was not crying tears of black blood. Instead, a pool of blood began to expand with spider lilies blooming in crimson.

Silken strands of energy began to emanate from Alice, stretching far into the sky.

What Alice wanted to do, what she had to do, was spread her blood across the entire capital. And the best way to do that was from the tree.

Raising her hands, energy and blood converged into a single orb.

She recalled her previous experiment, recalled Kaden's power. She couldn't visualise his abilities properly but there was a feeling that she wanted to grasp.

A sense of warmth within the curse. Just like how she was going to use her blood to fight against this poison, she'll use the curse as a catalyst for her cure.

A cur(s)e for the people of the capital.

Upon her body, the Second Sigil began to glow as Alice fired the orb into the sky.

A single trail of red shot up before detonating into a spider lily amidst a land of snow and ice. A single red lily that stood unyielding as blood mist enveloped the capital.

Chapter 494 - 494: Neia

Dashing across the different rooftops, Selen glanced towards the tree and saw the giant spider lily.

Her gaze trembled in surprise before furrowing her brows.

With such a big phenomenon hanging over the city, it was clear that everyone was going to be distracted by it.

Acceleration!

She had to use this opportunity to the best of her abilities. To deal as much damage as she could before stopping them from going to Alice!

###

Seeing the spider lily blossom in the capital, Elowen couldn't help but furrow her draconic brows. For some unknown reason, she was feeling... Enamoured by this strange source of energy.

A warmth that was strangely familiar yet at the same time foreign.

Not only that but from this warmth came the paradoxical sensation of disgust and repulsion.

She wasn't sure what the source of this energy was but it was no doubt a bad sign. So far, they have 8 hybrids on their side excluding the Lords. With the 8 of them, they've brought an army of beasts along with the airborne disease that was recently developed by the Zenia family.

Rather than developed, it was more accurate to call it a failed product. A failed attempt to recreate and resupply the already dwindling supply of sacred blood.

Instead, this failed attempt brought forth a weapon far deadlier than what they had produced before.

"Neia, go and check it out." Elowen commanded as she glanced back at an ethereal figure that hovered nearby.

Her form was shrouded by a thick darkness with no distinguishing features behind exposed except for a pair of hallow white eyes.

Her 'jacket' was a strange liquid like energy that shimmered with a light blue. It trailed behind her in strands similar to the tentacles of a jellyfish. The jacket itself was grafted onto her body with a few strands fusing with the darkness.

"Do I have to..." Neia groaned, her voice soft and lacking energy.

"Can't we just let it be? We just need to spread the disease and make sure the Lords are dead right?" She asked but Elowen gave her a glare.

Jolting up from the glare, Neia sighed and nodded her head.

"Fine... I'll go check it out."

A stream of energy stretched out before her as she jumped up slightly before diving in, joining the stream and rushing towards the Spider Lily in the distance.

Watching Neia leave, Elowen wanted to massage her eyes but it was a little difficult in her current form.

Neia was the best one out of them when it came to scouting due to the unique properties of the beasts that she's fused with. It allowed her to join the energy stream, avoiding most attacks and detection. Not only that, but it allows her speed to increase exponentially, letting her arrive at the target location practically in an instant.

"Elowen Elowen~ What should we do?" A cheerful voice asked behind her as a young girl bobbed her head up.

The girl had soft lavender coloured hair and a pair of mismatched eyes. The right was black with a white cross while the left was white with a black cross.

"Don't bother the captain. She'll tell us what to do later." Another voice rang out as a young boy smacked his twin on her head.

Much like her, he had soft lavender coloured hair and mismatched eyes. But instead of the right being black with a white cross the left being white with a black cross, it was the opposite.

If one were to put these two in front of each other, some might even think there's a mirror between them.

"Laura, Kagen, I'll let you two have fun later. For now, we need to see how Verona responds to the situation. If she were to make a move, I can send all of us into the Void quickly." Elowen chuckled.

Laura and Kagen, a pair of twins who had a unique resonance effect due to the status of their birth. When experimented on using the hybrid protocol, the scholars discovered a fantastic reaction. They were able to fuse to become one beast.

It meant that they could insert twice the number of beast blood since there were two hosts while creating one strong beast containing a myriad of properties, far more than the standard hybrid.

A pair who saw everything as a game and had fun while killing the people she told them to kill. Products that are broken in the mind.

But even if they're broken in the mind, they made fantastic weapons that the Zenias are more than happy to put to use.

"I'm guessing you want me to be the one probing around for a bit while the rest of you watch." A familiar tree beast asked as Elowen nodded her head.

It was the same beast that had transformed into the cartographer and sent the information regarding Alice being the one to deal with Keira.

"Probe around and see if you can find the girl called Alice. If she can deal with Keira, aside from the Lords, she poses the biggest threat." Elowen ordered.

"Roger roger boss." Folmar gave her a joking salute before transforming into a bundle of roots and diving down towards the capital.

She was their guarantee for escape, Troy and Haldir acted as their defence. Haldir being another hybrid that's been built to focus on defence.

Laura and Kagen are there as their trump cards. Aside from the Lords, the last member was the wild card, in case anything unexpected happened.

Ayla, the one who they brought to deal with Queen Verona.

A perfect ambush with pawns to react to any change in situation that may occur. In Elowen's mind, there was no single chance of failure.

Unbeknownst to the hybrids, a single woman hid on the rooftops and eavesdropped on their conversation. A woman who eliminated herself from their perception.

'The tree hybrid is looking for Alice while the ghost looking one is already rushing towards her. The group is split.' Selen thought to herself as she activated acceleration on herself.

This made her job easier as she just needed to deal with the ghost and the tree before targeting the others.

Glancing towards the Lords, she could see a dance of fire and ice painting the sky while the twisted malefic lord level hybrids responded in kind. Eldrich streams of energy, tendrils and pulsating shadow collided against the flames and ice, swallowing them in the darkness.

Neither side could drag each other into their second Resonance as doing so would leave them open to a sneak attack.

With a third Lord watching by a nearby rooftop, Sigurd and Frida dare not expose themselves even for a moment.

As much as Selen wanted to help them out, she couldn't let the other hybrids move freely for now.

###

Gliding through the stream of energy, Neia approached the tree. There were a few barriers in the way thanks to Verona but she could bypass it rather easily due to her unique trait.

What's more confusing for her was the fact that Verona was observing things with her barrier but not making a move.

Regardless, if she didn't want to make a move then it's better for her.

'Let's see what we're dealing with I guess...' Neia sighed.

Materialising not far from the stem of the spider lily, she paused in shock upon seeing Alice who was kneeling with a spectral figure hovering behind her.

A constant pool of blood flowed from her body with her face being pale and sweat rolling down the side of her face. A haggard appearance despite the power that was emanating from her body.

Even from this distance, Neia felt her control waning, her connection being tested.

However, what's most shocking was Alice's appearance.

That face, that form... It was unmistakable.

'Alya? No... Alya was made as a failed clone of the original that was then placed in the hybrid experiments.' Neia frowned as her pupils trembled. A thought crept into her mind as her heart pounded against her chest.

If this woman wasn't Alya nor was she part of the Hybrids that came with them then...

"She's the original that went missing..." Neia muttered.

Countless thoughts rushed through her mind as she immediately turned around and prepared to leave.

She had to report this!

The original that the family has been scrambling to find with their ever dwindling resources was here in the north!

There was no doubt that she'd survive the outbreak due to the property of her blood. Rather than Verona, they had to focus on taking her back!

"Where do you think you're going?" A voice rang out above her as Neia widened her eyes and glanced up.

*KRK!!!!

Catching sight of Selen right before her blade was plunged into her back, Neia gritted her teeth and released a pulse of energy to push Selen away.

However, before her attack could go through, it scattered apart before the pulse could fully form.

Selen had also disappeared from above but the wound remained.

'Where?!?!' Looking around her in a panic, Neia wanted to dive back into the stream and run but doing so would expose her back again.

"Don't bother looking around."

"ARGG!!!" Feeling a blade stab directly into her face, Neia cried out in pain as she couldn't even register when Selen appeared. She wanted to lash out around her but none of her attacks succeeded in activating. It's as though the activation was cut off from completing at the last moment.

'What is going on?!?!' Neia flailed to no avail.

No matter what she did, no matter what she tried, nothing succeeded. Selen continued to phase in and out of existence while stabbing Neia across the body.

Even though she tried to regenerate her wounds, it failed to seal up as blood continued to flow.

Fear dominated Neia's mind as death wrapped its hands around her neck.

In a last ditch gamble, she focused her power on a energy web around her in an attempt to find Selen before she could strike.

Just once was fine. As long as she can find Selen, it'll be over!

'Eh? Why is the world spinning? Why can I see my own body? Why am I missing my head? Why is she on my back?'

. . .

'How did I die?'

Chapter 495 - 495: Folmar

Throwing away Neia's head, Selen took several deep breaths as she could feel her heart pounding against her chest.

During the assassination, she had to exert more energy than initially expected as Neia's regeneration was far stronger than what she had theorised. In order to slow down the closing of the wound and speed up the blood loss, it drained roughly 40% of her energy.

Just thinking about how she still had to kill the others gave her a headache as she glanced down to see Alice giving her a smile.

Selen had questions in her mind, one of which was why she was even out here with Egil.

But knowing Alice, she had her own plans and Selen wasn't going to question it. At least not right now.

'There are still seven hybrids left and I only have around half of my energy remaining. Even if I take it slow, I can only drag it out for 2 more fights at most if I push it. I need to change my options for attack.' Selen thought to herself as she pulled her hair back into a ponytail.

She needed to be more efficient, more logical, more deadly.

To discard the wasted movements and kill with minimal flaws.

Right now, she needed to become an assassin.

###

Halfway through their conversation, the hybrids stopped.

Veins bulged on their necks as their auras began to shift with killing intent.

"Is that girl at the root of that flower? The one who killed big sis Keira." Kagen asked as scales began to form across his body.

"She must've killed big sis Neia too." Laura agreed. Both of their aura's soaring.

Elowen took a deep breath and held back her anger.

Even if Neia was suited for scouting, her regeneration and escape capabilities are not to be trifled with. But she still died.

Was there something hindering their regeneration? Was there someone who had the overwhelming power to kill her in one go?

"Don't be rash. We don't have enough information. But ultimately, she is just one woman. Let Folmar return first, he shouldn't sensed Neia's demise as well.

###

"F*ck! Neia's dead?! How?!" Folmar hissed in anger as he landed on a rooftop while roots spread out from his feet.

A network of information spreading through the capital with him at the centre. He could see the battle of the Lords, warriors of Verona fighting back, especially the Hounds that were keeping the beasts in check.

The governor of the capital was no joke as she was able to drag tens of beasts into her second resonance and even redeploy it rapidly.

It was the first time Folmar had seen anyone repeatedly activate their second resonance even if they have a large reserve. It was clear that the governor was someone who focused on utilising her personal realm rather than individual skills from Sigils.

However, the biggest abnormality he was witnessing right now was the progress of the outbreak.

Ever since the spider lily blossomed by the tree, the progression of the outbreak slowed down drastically. Through their estimations, the outbreak should've wrought havoc in the capital by now with beasts bursting out from homes.

Mothers killing sons, fathers killing daughters and so on. But that was not the case.

They struggled on the bed while briar thorns and spider lilies blossomed on their bodies.

The thorns dug into their flesh while the lilies used their blood as their fertiliser, linking their vitalities together.

Before he could continue with his theory, he detected something approaching his location rapidly.

"!!!"

Yet before he could fully understand what was approaching, he already felt a blade stab against his neck.

Out of instinct, he bent his body back and avoided having his head torn off. Instead, a chunk of his neck was cut off but was soon repaired by roots.

It wasn't a regeneration so Selen's skill failed to take effect.

"Tsk!" Gritting her teeth, Selen was surprised by Folmar's reaction as he was far faster in recognising her approaching him than Neia.

Scanning her eyes around the field, she noticed the roots weaving through the ground and understood that he must be obtaining information through them.

Landing on the ground, she slammed her hand down as a ritualistic circle expanded outwards, decreasing the speed within this zone and hopefully reducing the speed of which he could get his information.

'Again!'

Activating her perception manipulation, Selen rushed towards Folmar.

"Ah~ what a freaky ability. If I focus too hard, you disappear like a ghost." His voice rang out next to her as Selen's pupils shrank in shock.

***BANG!!!!!!**

Barely blocking a kick, Selen crashed against a wall as she could feel her body crying out in pain.

Blood dripped from her lips as she glanced up in disbelief.

There were now two Folmar's standing in front of her with one of them slowly breaking down into roots.

Gritting her teeth, she forced herself to stand up as her mind began to think up of solutions for her predicament.

The main question that lingered was how he was able to find out! After one interaction at that.

'Roots? He must be sharing his senses with his roots. Rather than focusing on me, he must be perceiving the information of the entire space.'

Against her perception manipulation, this was probably the worst matchup. Her perception works on people focusing on her rather than the space she resides in. Therefore, with Folmar's ability of perceiving the space through roots rather than on the person, it essentially eliminates the effectiveness of her skill.

However, there was a way to bypass this.

Clasping her hands together, Selen activated her personal realm.

Monochrome World!

The space around them immediately began to distort as a black material escaped from Selen's palm, forming a single guardless blade.

Furrowing his brows, Folmar attempted to disassemble the monochrome world through understanding and logic but notice that the space around him had paused. A segment of space that's been frozen in time.

But rather than frozen, it was slowed down to a near halt.

*BANG!!!

The instant he understood that her ability was to manipulate him, Selen appeared in front of him and jammed her blade into his chest. Folmar noticed his movements being slowed down by time but adjusted by having roots shoot towards Selen from below.

Not bothering to dodge, Selen froze them mid attack before twisting her body and slamming her heel against the handle of her blade.

Cleaving down diagonally through Folmar's body, she furrowed her brows while seeing the roots stitch his body together.

Rather than a living being with a body, it felt more like Folmar was an amalgamation of materials. Roots, flesh, bone and so on. It was hard to pinpoint where his main body was for her to land an attack he couldn't recover from.

'If Alice had my powers, what would she do right now.'

Jumping back, Selen conjured her staff and slammed it into the ground.

A bell toll sounded out as symbols appeared above her.

'A ritual!'

Wanting to interrupt this ritual, Folmar slammed his hands down as thorns burst out from the roots around him, stabbing into Selen's body.

However, she curled her lips into a grin.

The roots that touched her body began to wither and break apart.

"I knew it." Selen grinned.

In order for Folmar to avoid a 'wound', his body was constructed of materials rather than 'flesh.' Thus Selen's ability of prolonging a wound and making it worse didn't work since Folmar could just 'replace' the damage.

However, if she was to take that into account, then this 'body' of his was more of an object than flesh.

And if it's objects, then her acceleration, when boosted by her realm, would wither it!

The roots that Folmar spread across the ground began to wither as he jumped back in shock.

While the ability to manipulate time to this extent surprised him, what truly shocked him was what occurred on the inside when his thorns pierced her body!

A resonance of the original's blood!

The girl in front of her was a product of the Zenia family!

"Traitor!" Folmar howled as vines shot out of his body. A flood of green energy lashed out but in his panic, he had placed his entire focus on Selen rather than the space around them.

"Gotcha~" Selen grinned, disappearing from his view.

'SH*T!'

Stepping back, Folmar was too slow as Selen appeared behind him.

Pulling her arm back, energy converged towards her fist as she funnelled it through her staff and unleashed an explosion in front of her. The detonation of the energy began to wither Folmar's body at a rapid pace, leaving him screaming out in horror and panic.

Layers upon layers of material were stripped away as his imposing form was torn apart, revealing the defenceless being that had hidden itself within the bundle of vines.

A small sapling that tried to escape as Folmar attempted to revert back to his human form in order to fight.

However, with the barrier that Selen put in place, his movements were slow and she wasn't going to give him the chance to live.

Raising her foot, she crushed the sapling under her heel and twisted it.

*CRUNCH!!!

With the tree hybrid now dead, Selen made one last check before dispelling her personal realm.

Sweat rolled down her face as she collapsed onto one knee. Bags could be seen under her eyes as she was struggling for breath.

Two quick fights back to back were taking its toll on her as her energy was running on empty. To fight the other hybrids would be pushing her luck.

But she had to push on.

Stumbling onto her feet, she reached into her pouch and grabbed a vial of healing blood.

Right as she was about to take a drink...

***BANG!!! CRASH!!!**

A colossal being of ice and snow crashed into her body, breaking several bones before launching her into the opposite building.

Coughing up a mouthful of blood, Selen peered through the smoke and debris and saw the silhouettes of two hybrids walking towards her.

Chapter 496 - 496: Rails

'Ah... What a mess...' Selen thought to herself.

She could feel the strength fading from her limbs, the blood pouring out her body. She could feel her heartbeat slowing down.

After killing two hybrids, she was already on the brink of exhaustion. But to bring two more without even giving her a break?

"What a joke..." She squeezed out her lips.

Glancing down, she could see metal beams sticking out of her stomach. She could feel the sharpness of metal against her back.

A familiar sensation to the days where she was being modified.

The cold touch of the scholars, the bright rays of light.

Their cold indifference even if she was to call out for her parents.

She couldn't help but wonder if it was because she's on the verge of death that she thought back to her birth parents.

The two who sold her to the Zenias only to be killed soon after.

Their greed for money.

She understood that the family was struggling... but to sell off their daughter for some money.

But strangely, before meeting Egil and Alice, her time with her mother and father were perhaps her happiest times.

A period where she didn't need to worry about the next experiment. If she would lose herself to the Abyss due to the blood or whether or not she'll survive the next culling.

Even if you could adapt to Alice's blood, there was no guarantee that you could survive. They still needed to weed out the useless ones without talent.

Selen could remember a boy who was sold roughly the same time as her. Someone who also had an affinity for Alice's blood.

Since they were part of the same 'batch', they hung around one another rather frequently. They talked about their fears, how they were scared of the next experiment. She could still remember him comforting her, reassuring that everything will be fine.

However... She also remembers strangling him and seeing the light leave his eyes. The first time she killed a person, the first time she partook in the culling.

'What a sh*tty life this has been. Though... I guess it wasn't all bad.' Selen's vision began to distort. The joy she felt tonight before the invasion... Just a little more, she wished she could drown herself in that emotion once more.

'I'm tired... So... very tired.'

Closing her eyes, Selen thought about letting go.

'Ah... Egil will be sad wouldn't he...' Just earlier, he had promised to keep supporting her. To be the extra pair of hands that she would need if she wanted vengeance. He accepted all of her yet she was here thinking about giving up.

'What a selfish woman I am.' Selen smiled bitterly as Sigils flickered across her body.

Their power nearing the brink of being exhausted but she squeezed out the last bit of power.

To slow down her death.

Glancing to her right, she saw arm crushed between two pieces of debris, leaving only her left arm free.

'I'll take a page out of your book Alice.'

Taking a deep breath, Selen gritted her teeth and twisted her arm. Tears formed around the corners of her eyes from the pain but she bit down harm and continued to pull.

"ARGGGGG!!!!" Letting out a scream, she tore her arm out of the debris as blood, flesh and shards of bone flew everywhere.

Using her left hand, she pushed herself free from the metal jutting out of her stomach as she could see the hybrids walking towards her.

She felt as though she could see a crossroad in front of her. Two paths.

[Give up?] [Push Forward.]

There was only one choice that she could make. One choice that'll leave her with no regrets, one choice that'll make Alice and Egil praise her.

###

"Seems like we're still too late." Troy gritted his teeth as he glanced over at the corpse of Folmar who was slowly withering away.

Haldir, who had slammed Selen into the building, picked up some of Folmar's roots and watched it wither away.

He had a large muscular physique covered by fur, ice and snow. A pair of giant curved horns and a head similar to that of a bull. White fur extended from his jaw, mimicking a beard while a large pair of arms reached all the way down to the floor.

"And another one of our brethren disappears." Haldir sighed.

"Which we why we need to take her back and make her pay for it." Troy narrowed his gaze.

In one expedition, he had to feel three of their brethren disappear. That feeling of sensing your brother and sisters die...

Gritting his teeth, he glared at the pile of rubble where Selen should be.

Her death will not come easily, they will torture her to the end of her days.

Just as he approached the rubble, he noticed a pool of blood but Selen was nowhere to be seen. In fact, he couldn't even sense her aura.

"!!!" A bad feeling dominated his mind as he jumped back and slammed his fists down.

*BANG!!!

Crystalline towers erupted around them, forming a defensive barrier.

"Ah... So close. If only you didn't put up that barrier of yours." Selen's voice rang out as they looked up in shock.

They could see Selen staring at them with a pair of cold eyes. Her blade radiating a dark aura was halted by the barrier at the last moment.

With both of them focusing on her, Selen curled her lips into a grin and faded away like a phantom.

Raising his hands, Haldir created a blizzard around them, freezing anything and everything in hopes of catching her.

But she was nowhere to be found.

'She should be on the verge of death after that hit. I felt it.' Haldir frowned.

Selen should've been in no state to fight back. But more than that, he clearly felt the bones breaking from his punch.

However, if she was the one to kill both Neia and Folmar, it's only expected that she could do this much.

*BANG!!!

Turning around ready to punch, Haldir frowned seeing nothing behind them.

The barrier clearly trembled from something attacking yet there was no one in sight.

"Oi, what the hell is going on?" Troy questioned. With each passing second, he could sense the crystals he created beginning to crack from some sort of outside interference, forcing him to expend more energy to repair it.

But no matter what he asked, Haldir couldn't give him an answer.

Right now, his survival instincts were screaming at him to run!

###

'Ah~ I feel great.' Selen thought to herself as she glanced down at the two from the rooftops.

A spark of inspiration, an idea that occurred on the verge of death.

Time.

Her powers manipulate time whether that be deceleration, acceleration or even dragging out a single instance for a prolonged period. Her perception manipulation.

There's also manipulating time in a certain space, halting attacks or speeding herself up.

This got Selen thinking.

She had been 'logical' about her appliance of time for all her attacks and skills. But what if she was to think more on a conceptual scale. Time moves as a railway, always going in on direction.

Even if she was to slow it down, it never stops. Her experience with her skills told her this much.

When she drags out someone's perception in order to erase herself, she's essentially stretching out the rails so that the distance between point A and point B is increased.

However, what if she was to manipulate the rails itself.

To take a fragment of that rail and bring it to the 'future'.

Even if its just for a short instant, even if its only a few seconds into the past, it'll be as though she's turned back the time in her own body.

Crouching down, Selen narrowed her gaze at the two beasts that were still looking for her. She only had a fraction of her energy left, not enough to use the skill again but it was fine.

Rather than being the one to kill these two, it was far more efficient to have them harm one another.

To pave a path forward and wait for an opportunity.

While the beasts fight, the Hunter profits!

Unbeknownst to Selen, the faint outline of a beast could be seen slowly manifesting behind her.

Faint but noticeable.

A beast with a pair of jagged horns and two pairs of eyes. The head belonging to a wingless draconic body that she was familiar with.

The sealed Abyss Lord of time – Miralith.

Curving its lips into a grin, the eyes slowly closed before the visage disappeared.

###

Folding her arms and crossing her legs, Verona kept her eyes closed. She observed the movements of Alice who slowed down the progression of the outbreak. The battle between Lords.

The hounds who are keeping the beasts at bay and Selen who killed two of the hybrids and fighting two more.

A precarious situation.

However, even with this, she couldn't make a move.

If she was to make a move, everything they've worked towards would've gone to waste. There was only one thing that she was hoping for and that's Alice and Selen being able to help tide them over this difficult time.

"Is this nation of yours about to kick the bucket, Verona?" A woman asked as she walked towards the Queen. Jumping up, she sat on the railing of the throne above Verona and leaned down.

"If it's about to kick the bucket then maybe I should leave." She mused while playing around with some gadgets.

The woman had light blue hair fading into a light pink. A pair of strange crimson eyes with even stranger circles around her pupil. A familiar face that Alice had seen in the Inverted World.

Adjusting her glasses, the woman glanced at the reflections of ice around Verona.

"This girl, she seems interesting. A little familiar and similar to what you're trying to do." She pointed at Alice.

"You mean..." Verona opened her eyes and glanced up.

"Yep. She's also got divinity in her. Plus that method of casting... No doubt Kaden's work." She frowned.

That familiar casting method and even the way she looks. It brought up old memories in the woman's mind. A home long destroyed.

Ayr.

Chapter 497 - 497: A Resonance With The Infected

Keeping her eyes closed, Alice gritted her teeth as this was harder than what she had initially expected. The resistance of the disease and its progression was too hard to hinder.

Plus, with her spreading out her power like this, it reduces the effectiveness of her current 'solution'.

But she couldn't stop.

Egil wasn't the only one she wanted to help. If she were to drop her current skill, the progression of the disease would immediately end the capital.

Taking a deep breath, Alice forced herself to calm down. She needed to adjust her way of confronting the disease.

'Any updates?' Alice asked as Cayla was working hard on a solution.

[None. It's more resistant than I initially thought. Any changes I impose on it short of completely severing the connection to the spiritual heart is healed.] Cayla scratched her hair in frustration while tossing the sheets aside.

She didn't know how the Zenia's were able to make something so horrific but it essentially gives everyone Alice's physique. Even if its just for a brief period before they die.

Upon being infected by this outbreak, the disease latches onto the energy flowing through your body and connects itself to the spiritual heart. From there, it begins to drain you dry while your body suffers countless side effects.

[You have to think of it as dealing with your own body. The cure we're trying to concoct is like Abyss Blood. The moment we apply the cure, it dissolves.]

Furrowing her brows, Alice sighed before sitting upright.

'Wait a f*cking moment... There's no way... Would it work?' She muttered.

In her entire life, there was only one instance of a permanent change enacted onto her body. A change she couldn't get rid of until she 'updated' herself.

Single Sigil Resonance!

A dangerous method that causes an imbalance within the body, leading to a permanent change. If she was to forcefully activate this kind of resonance within the body of the victims then... a cure could be applied!

'Wait no... They still need a Sigil for this to work. If they don't have a Sigil then this method falls flat.'

Seeing as how Alice was beginning to piece together the clues, Cayla decided to stay silent.

In these types of situations, it was best to let Alice contemplate on her own.

'Sigils... Spiritual Heart... Permanent change... Spiritual Heart? Bloodline release... Two Spiritual Hearts... Catalyst? Maybe... No, that wouldn't work... Crown... Heart...' Alice continued to mumble away as her eyes darted from Egil to herself before back at the city then finally, at her own soul hovering behind her.

'Resonance... Artificial... Balance... One? No one would be too little for civilians... They'll die before the effect takes place. Three? Anchors...'

Taking up, Alice's eyes began to widen as a smile appeared on her face.

'F*cking hell I'm a genius.' Alice grinned.

'I've got it, the way to break this curse!'

Slamming her hands down, Sigils began to light up across her body. The crown began to manifest above her head while the Bloodline Release behind her started to bleed.

Chains of blood latched onto the spider lily as Alice took a deep breath.

In order to thoroughly dismantle this curse, there were certain requirements she had to first achieve.

First, a three link resonance. But not a traditional three link resonance, no. A resonance between the infected, 'herself' and the Bloodline Release.

With this, she can achieve the balance of a three way resonance while also getting the power of a one Sigil resonance within their body. A split moment, an opportunity to modify her target in order to carve out this curse.

But if it was just the resonance, it wouldn't work either. As she thought earlier, there was a chance of death before the resonance could end.

Which is why she needed her Bloodline Release, her own Spiritual Heart.

She needed a secondary heart for this curse to latch on so that it releases the grip on the civilians.

In essence, she was transferring this outbreak to herself.

However, as the source of this blood and the original host, it'll do nothing to her!

Not only that, but I'll also remove the side effects accumulated by the curse. With this, it'll be as though the outbreak never took place.

Unfortunately, this method only works with the outbreak since it's her own blood.

If she were to attempt to 'heal' people using the same method, it wouldn't work since the target now becomes their innate connection to the Abyss and the contracts that they've made.

But she couldn't be too greedy. The fact that she had a solution for this predicament was already a miracle.

Blood began to pour out of her hands as crimson symbols manifested around Alice.

A ritual to expand the targeted area to be this entire city.

Each infected Civilian will be Sigil A, she will be Sigil B and her Bloodline Release will be Sigil C.

For the Civilians, they're forming a connection with one person, Alice.

But for Alice, she's forming tens of thousands of connections.

But even if it's a connection with tens of thousands, Alice will do it. She'll dismantle this curse that the Zenia's have made with her blood!

###

"Heh~ that's a pretty interesting method." The blue haired woman muttered while observing Alice's movements from the top of the tree.

She had already retrieved a sample of this curse and she had to admit, it was far more potent than anything she had seen before. Even if she was given years, she might not have a good solution for it.

Her only answer would be to delay it as much as possible.

But this girl?

Using her own skill set, she formed a resonance between three targets.

While she wasn't sure what Alice was gunning for, she had to give points for her imagination.

That being said, her attention was captured by the crown above Alice's head.

It's no wonder what she thought back to her old destroyed home when the successor was right in front of her.

The question for her now was if she's a pawn of the Will.

'If Kaden went as far as to teach her, she should be her own individual rather than one serving the Will.'
She adjusted her glasses.

After all these years, she finally saw the gears turning.

'Is it time to fulfil the promise?'

Thinking back to the pain she felt watching her home being destroyed by the Gods, the peace of the Abyss shattered and the expansion commanded by the Will, veins bulged on her neck as anger filled her mind.

However, she soon calmed down as she continued to watch Alice.

If the nation was going to fall, she'd leave as she had promised Verona in the past. The only reason why she was staying in the north was to see if a new God could rise from mortals like what Velouria did. Though her situation was a little unique.

But with Alice here resolving the curse, this nation would not fall. So there was no reason for her to leave.

All she had to do was to keep an eye on Alice and ensure that she wasn't interrupted.

Leaning back, the woman let out a sigh.

The wave of nostalgic memories continued to flood her mind without stop. A pain of longing stabbed her heart.

She missed the days where she would joke around with her assistants in the lab, causing trouble and asking Kaden for a raise in budget. They did everything they could to make life better in the Abyss, for those who sought to be human despite beings beasts.

To protect the paradise created by Velouria.

But it was futile when the army of Gods came crashing down on them.

None of the Lords in the city could fight against the Gods with Velouria dead and Kaden was in a panic saving Allura.

With their Goddess dead and the Apostles unable to help, the city couldn't hold on for long.

Almost everyone was killed with a few stragglers managing to survive thanks to the sacrifices of others, including herself.

Her assistants who held back the enemy from reaching her, their final farewell as she was thrown into the teleporter to the upper layers.

After all these years... she had forgotten their faces. Faceless silhouettes that smiled as they sacrificed themselves.

She had always thought of this as a curse. A curse of the Will to all those that survived the culling of Ayr. To continue living so long as the Abyss persists. To watch the invaders desecrate their beloved land.

But no more. With the appearance of the Successor, vengeance is at hand. A full Armageddon with no care of the casualties.

She wished destruction towards the followers of the three Gods.

She wanted to Alice to become the new God of the Abyss and kill the false idols who killed their beloved goddess out of jealousy and fear.

She will give the rightful successor everything she can give. Her theories, her creations, her genius, her soul, her body, everything.

Everything will given to the new Goddess in name of vengeance.

To kill the eclipse, to kill the sun and moon, to kill those who believe in them.

To bring hell upon them and make them feel the anger and fear they felt in the past.

She wanted Alice to bring down the wrath of Ayr!

"Ah~ How long as it been since I last felt alive? The beating of my heart~" The woman smiled as she raised her hands to the sky.

"I, Caera, will give you my everything. So that the world will bathe in the blood of Gods."

Chapter 498 - 498: Selen's Mutation

Everything in the world has a 'time limit'. Nothing is eternal.

Even for those deemed as cursed, immortal or even the Gods, time limits exist for everyone.

Some may not be the standard type of 'time limit' that one would think of, but nothing truly lasts forever.

For the Goddess known as Velouria, that time limit was the Will of the Abyss.

Sooner or later, the expansion of the Abyss would've taken her life if the Gods failed.

When the sealed Abyss Lord of Old, Miralith, taps into the powers of time, she interferes with this time limit.

That's the key goal of the ritual performed by Selen when she 'summons' Miralith.

A barrier is formed around the target and within that barrier, time slowly comes to a halt. Once time is fully halted, the target is removed from the flow of time and erased.

But rather than halting time, it's better to describe it as forcefully dragging the time limit towards the current time. By exhausting all of the 'time' they have allotted to them, they're removed from this life.

The stronger the opponent, the harder it is to drag the time limit.

*CLANG!!!

"HAH! You puny sh*t! You'll never get through our defences like this!" Troy roared as he stomped down and punched towards Selen.

Bending her body, she dodged easily before disappearing like a ghost once more.

They couldn't kill her, but she couldn't kill them either.

It'll only be a matter of time before the others come here to deal with her since it was taking too long.

Sweat dripped from her face as she landed on the roof and took a few breaths. However, her break was short as Haldir appeared next to her with his arms raised.

"!!!"

*BANG!!!

Jumping back just in time to dodge, Selen narrowly avoided the fate of being crushed into the roof.

'My perception manipulation is losing effectiveness.'

It wasn't a case of her opponents adapting but rather her energy was almost reaching rock bottom.

Ducking down, she avoided the sneak attack by Troy before slashing up with her blade.

*KRKKK!!!

Once again, she couldn't pierce his skin and her blade was deflected. Gritting her teeth in annoyance, she slid through his legs and rolled to the side, avoiding the tail slam.

*BANG BANG BANG!!!

Footsteps heavy like cannon shots roared out as Troy jumped to the side, revealing Haldir who was charging at her with his horns first. A barrier of energy lashed out around him, making it hard for Selen to dodge.

Acceleration!

*CRASH!!!

She didn't want to have to cast acceleration since it exhausts a lot of energy but there was no choice. Even she could tell that charge was dangerous and if she was to allow herself to get hit by that, she didn't have another safety net to rely on.

Right now, she had no healing vials and no energy. She had to kill these two with what she had available to her.

But their defences were still a large issue that she couldn't deal with. If she can't deal with the defences, she'll never kill these two.

One other option would be a ritual with Miralith. But considering she needed to set up the perimeter and stand still, she doubted it would work.

[We can make a different kind of contract if you desire.] Miralith's voice growled in her ears as Selen widened her eyes.

Rolling away to avoid Troy's attack, she frowned.

The only other time Miralith has taken the initiative to talk to her was the first time they were 'fused' to a certain degree. The moment her blood was infused into her body and granted the power to manipulate time.

That was the only time they talked and the moment she established the first ritual of utilizing her strength.

'A bit suspicious that you're offering it to me now. You've been watching haven't you.'

The timing was too good to be a whim of the sealed Lord.

[You expect me to rot here and die silently? After the b*stards fed you my blood? Hah! Fat chance.]
Miralith laughed as Selen flipped back and avoided Haldir's slam.

Running up his arm, he tried to stab him in the eye but Troy was ahead of her.

He jumped over Haldir, ready to punch Selen but she swung herself from his horn and avoided the blow.

'So what do you want from me then?' Selen asked as she could feel her heart crashing against her chest.

[If you desire the power to kill these two, I can help you out. A contract to connect me to your Spiritual Heart. I'll funnel the power into you and in return... You allow me to take over from time to time. A fair trade don't you think? After all, I've been stuck here for so long. I too long to take a breath of fresh air.]

If it was before, Selen would've said yes.

However, after her recent awakening and understanding of Miralith's power, this was clearly a trap. A vile trap designed to take over her body completely.

The moment she allows Miralith to take over her body, she'll use her powers to stretch out the time she had with it and find a way to eliminate Selen from the equation. Essentially, her body becomes an avatar for the sealed Lord.

'I'll pass. I'm not so desperate to give up my body like this. It's not like I'm completely out of ideas either.' Selen narrowed her eyes.

There was still something she could try, something she learned from Alice and her reckless plans.

Sometimes, it is within the danger that one will find the path to survival.

Adjusting the blade in her hand, Selen crouched down and dashed towards both Haldir and Troy.

Without her perception manipulation, both of them could see her coming from a mile away.

Curling his lips into a grin, lightning sparked through his crystals as Troy slammed his hands down to get into all fours and cracked his jaw open.

Truth Seeker!

Activating the skill of Truth Seeker, Selen's view of the world began to shift.

After fighting these two, the information she's obtained and the habits she's observed gave her all the tools she needed for a perfect prediction.

The next 10 seconds was completely in her grasp!

A torrent of raw destructive energy.

Stepping to the side, Selen used her blade to swing herself away from danger, dodging the initial and fastest part of Troy's breath attack.

After witnessing it missing, he swiped it to the right in an attempt to catch Selen but she dodged over it with ease.

Throwing her blade towards Troy's eyes, Selen watched as Haldir blocked it for him but it was fine since she just needed one opportunity for him to lose sight of her.

Grabbing her blade, she ignored Haldir's grab towards her as she slashed at the corner of Troy's mouth.

Stopping his breath in anger, Troy grabbed Selen by the arm and held her in the air.

*CRUNCH!!!

His jaw crashed down on her torso, the sound of bones shattering and blood oozing out could be heard but there was no scream.

Only laughter.

A fearful feeling crept into Troy's heart as he glanced towards Selen's face and saw her grinning like a wild woman while blood dripped from her lips.

"Yo hybrid, have you ever heard of your predecessors?" Selen asked as Haldir and Troy were immediately on guard.

They remained in their beast form this entire time so how did the girl know that they were Hybrids?

"Failed products who couldn't fully adjust to the blood of the original. So instead, they gave us the blood of sealed Lords to try and offset it. But you guys... hehe... You guys have more of her blood in you don't you?" Selen laughed as the wound she cut in Troy's mouth pressed against her wounds.

The blood of the hybrids and her own blood began to mix. The concentration of Alice's blood within the Hybrid's body was far higher than Selen's and she could already feel her body burning up from the inside.

However, after she was forced to take care of Alice during her weakest period, consistently exposing herself to the full concentration of her blood, Selen's resistance had increased drastically!

"Spit her out!" Haldir roared as Troy swung his head and tried to throw Selen away.

"Too late!" Selen laughed.

Grabbing one of his crystals the moment Troy let go of her, Selen swung herself onto his back and stabbed towards the back of his head with her fingers.

Troy tried to blast her off his back using the sparks of electricity but it was no use, Selen ignored it all.

A dark energy wrapped around Selen's hand as her fingers came into contact with his scales.

At that moment, Selen could see a strand of green from the contact point. A frail strand, flowing with the progression of time.

*KRK!!!!

Ripping that strand in half, Selen's hand tore through his scales as it began to wither.

"ARGGGG!!!" Letting out a frantic scream, Troy wanted to slam Selen into a wall as Haldir punched towards her.

A pulse of energy erupted with Selen in the centre. Everything around her began to slow down as she took hold of Troy's brain.

A cold light glimmered in Selen's eyes as she clenched her fist and crushed it without hesitation.

Before Troy could hit the ground, Selen threw his brain matter towards Haldir's eyes, blocking his view.

Jumping up, she grabbed him by the horns.

She tried to wither him earlier but Troy always got in the way. But now? There was nothing covering for him.

Rather than wither, she had a better idea in mind.

She was going to 'steal' his time!

A maniacal grin appeared on Selen's face as runic patterns appeared above her head. From Haldir's body, strands of green energy could be seen escaping his body and entering Selen as he began to age and decay rapidly.

His speech, an incoherent mess of panicked screams and cries.

Soon, he collapsed on the ground as a dried up husk with old white hairs all over him.

Letting go of Haldir, Selen stumbled towards Troy.

Haldir was a lost cause but Troy still had Alice's blood in him. Licking her lips, she grabbed a knife and carved out his heart.

Miralith was silent while looking at the husk left behind by Selen.

After increasing the concentration of Alice's blood within her body, a mutation had occurred! The ability to steal time from others...

At this point, Miralith could no longer call it an extension of her powers.

It was simply... Demonic!

Chapter 499 - 499: Lost Lamb Of The Family

Raising the heart above her head, Selen curled her lips into a menacing grin. There was a strange light in her eyes as she crushed the heart and opened her mouth.

*Gulp

Drinking the blood, her body trembled as Alice's blood diffused into her body.

"Haha... Hahahahaha!" Letting out a laughter from the depths of her soul, Selen tossed the heart away.

She felt a high like no other.

Seventh heaven.

She could feel her energy replenishing as strength coursed through her body. Glancing down at Troy's body, she giggled to herself.

It was too much of a waste to leave this be.

*KRK!!!

She dug her hands through the corpse and began to drink what blood she could get her hands on.

A laughter howled out in the area as those who were curious felt a chill down their spine. Illuminated by the moonlight, Selen dressed herself in a outfit of blood, scales and innards.

Twisting the flesh above her, she bathed herself in blood.

A pair of bloodshot eyes scanned around for her next targets but she couldn't find anyone.

"Ah~ I want more~" She giggled.

Standing up, she wanted to leave when her smile faded away.

Gritting her teeth, anger filled her chest as she gathered energy into her fist and turned around in one swift movement.

*BANG!!!

Punching Troy's corpse so that pieces of him flew everywhere, Selen let out a scream of anger.

Kicking pieces of Troy's body while panting, tears began to fall.

She kneeled down and cried a river of tears that mixed with the blood around them.

Her mind spun in turmoil as black feathers and spikes began to manifest across her body.

Clutching her eyes, Selen felt the urge to claw them out as a pin like pain stabbed against the back of her eyes.

Countless strands of energy representing the flow of time stretched out in front of her. A blinding swirl until colour began to fade from the world.

She could see her flesh writhing beneath the skin as though a thousand insects were crawling through her body.

Raising her hand towards the moon, Selen let out one more cry of pain before deafening silence.

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Floating in the air, Elowen gritted her teeth as things deviated from their initial expectations.

Things were quickly spiralling out of control as four hybrids have now died.

Half of their numbers were gone!

"Captain, are you still going to ask us to stay here?" Kagen asked as a dark aura exuded from his body, hiding his appearance as only a pair of crimson motes could be seen, representing his eyes.

His tone was calm with a hidden anger.

"His words have some merit. Perhaps it is time for you to consider a different plan." A woman landed next to them gently.

It was the same woman who appeared next to the living shadows that were sent to deal with the Lords.

The wild card brought to deal with the queen herself, Ayla.

"Are they not here as a trump card to begin with? Or are you suggesting that you're going to take care of the anomaly?" Ayla asked with a small smile on her face.

Furrowing her brows, Elowen sighed.

She was here to make sure all of them had a path back.

"The anomaly is taking care of us one by one. Even though both Troy and Haldir are dead, it's clear that she took much longer to deal with it than Folmar and Neia. Sticking as a group will make it much harder for her to single us out." Elowen replied.

Even though she wanted to see what was happening at the base of the strange flower, that was the domain of Verona. Even if Ayla was here to deal with her, it was still risky to fight on her home turf.

They had to be careful.

With the Queen not even showing her face, it only raised more questions. What was she waiting for? Was she hesitant about being infected? Why was she doing nothing while chaos filled her capital? Or was she confident that things would end just fine?

"So in the end, we're still just waiting then? Even after she killed our family?" Laura gritted her teeth as her aura began to match her twin.

Frustration and anger.

"That's..." Hesitating for a moment, Elowen couldn't deny it as there were too many unknown variables at play.

With her being their only way out of the capital, she couldn't risk it. It was already enough that they lost four hybrids. At this point, they should just cut their losses.

Right as she turned around to tell them her decision, her pupils constricted in shock.

Standing silently in the middle of them, a woman stood with a wide grin on her face. Feathers and spikes decorated her body with a pair of wings folding in front and hiding her eyes. Long black hair that fluttered in the wind and the thick stench of blood filled the air.

On top of all that, it was only now that Elowen could feel an unstable aura similar to the Hybrids. Rather, her aura had traces of Troy mixed into it.

One thought came to mind.

'She's the one that killed Troy and Haldir!'

"One... Two... Three and four... Seems like this is all of you." Selen tilted her head slightly.

With Elowen noticing Selen, her presence became clear to the hybrids around her.

The twins immediately attacked with Laura releasing a torrent of white flames and Kagen slashing towards her with a claw coated by a black mist.

However, before their attack could land, it was frozen in mid air.

"Tsk tsk tsk, I'm only saying hi, why so hostile? Unless... you wanted to die? Oh you poor souls, should I liberate you from this life?" Selen asked, disappearing and reappearing behind the twins.

Her hands slowly reaching towards them but Elowen managed to compose herself.

A Void fissure cracked open in front of Selen, pushing her back while the twins were teleported next to Elowen.

Tilting her head, Selen glanced at her fingers before turning her head to the Hybrid that controls the Void.

"I remember you... You're the one that ambushed us when we were going to the port..." She muttered.

"!!!"

Glancing to her side, Elowen felt sweat drip down her back as Selen appeared on her shoulder with her hands stroking her draconic face.

"Whatever should I do with you... Thanks to your ambush, we went through quite the trouble you know?" Selen let out a soft giggle as the scales slowly began to wither.

Elowen wanted to move but instinctively, she knew that she if did something hasty, Selen wouldn't hesitate to kill her.

The cold hands of death wrapped around her neck, slowly tightening with each passing second.

"Get your filthy hands off the captain." Kagen warned with gritted teeth as he prepared to attack but Selen held up a finger.

"Let's not get violent here. If anything, I should be the one angry you know? You barge into this capital, release your disgusting disease and laugh as people are transformed. But when I kill your allies responsible for this, I'm disgusting?" Selen's smile slowly faded as her aura began to climb.

In the next moment, she disappeared from everyone's view and reappeared next to Kagen, dispelling his aura and halting his transformation.

Her hand wrapped around his neck as green strands of energy could be seen pulsing on his neck.

"It doesn't really sound fair now does it? Don't you think life should be repaid with life?" Selen asked as Laura lashed out.

But before her attack landed, a hand grabbed her by the wrist and pulled her back.

In front of her, time halted and pieces of her clothing that were caught withered into dust.

"Lucky gal~" Selen chuckled.

Ayla was the one who pulled Laura back before she was killed.

For the twins to show their full strength, both of them needed to be alive.

Just having one half would significantly decrease their fighting power.

"Lost lamb of the family, should I congratulate you on your upgrade? To go from a failed product to becoming part of the new order like us." Ayla smiled.

She could clearly sense that Selen's body was undergoing changes thanks to Troy's blood, the blood of a hybrid.

Even now, something shifting inside her mind, inside her body. But... If there wasn't a foundation to work with, this wouldn't have happened.

Meaning, she was a product of the Zenias. Only a product would have the foundations necessary for an upgrade like this.

"Lost lamb? No... I'm not lost. I never wanted to be part of this family to begin with. Ah~ How infuriating. To think you would even think of me as family... Disgusting." Selen frowned as veins bulged on her temple. Her grip began to tighten around Kagen's neck but soon, she calmed down.

"You may not like it but you cannot deny the power it has given you. Are you not drunk from its excellence right now? The feeling of becoming a hybrid. The power at your fingertips, it draws the true you out from all of that façade." Ayla slowly curved her lips up into a smile.

Darkness spread out from her like tentacles, dyeing the world in darkness as Selen furrowed her brows. There was something... Eerily familiar with this woman.

Little by little, the feathers and spikes around her eyes began to peel away, revealing a pair of darkened eyes similar to Cayla's true form.

The sclera was black while the pupil shimmered with an ethereal green and blue.

With her sight partially restored, Selen's gaze trembled at the sight of Ayla.

"Alice?"

Chapter 500 - 500: Evolved Monochrome World

"Alice?" Selen muttered upon seeing Ayla's appearance.

Similar yet also different at the same time.

The scars across the face, the way she dresses, those mannerisms... Selen knew that the woman in front of her wasn't Alice.

Her brief moment of distraction was enough for Kagen to break free of her grip and kick her in the stomach, forcing her back.

Elowen wanted to take this chance to attack but noticed Ayla paused on the spot.

Her smile faltered as her eyes were focused on Selen.

The appearance of the original host was not known very well through the family. Even for the hybrids, they don't know exactly what happened.

But Ayla was a recent addition to the hybrids. An attempt to recreate the original host. She knew whom she resembled and what her name was.

If the woman in front of her was able to accurately say the name upon seeing her appearance then...

"The original host still lives..."

On top of that, the woman in front of them knows her!

"Elowen, a change of plans. We're capturing this woman in front of us alive." Ayla smiled.

"Huh?!" Laura looked over in shock.

"Why are we taking her back with us alive? She killed our family!" Kagen questioned with a burning rage.

"Because her knowledge will be a great asset to the family. It is her knowledge that'll let the family achieve their goals." Ayla explained.

Hearing this, Kagen and Laura gritted their teeth in anger.

But if its for the family, then they had no say in the matter.

"Taking her alive is fine. We can beat her up a little right?" Kagen asked.

"Go ahead. Just don't kill her." Ayla nodded with a wave of her hand.

While the hybrids were talking, Selen came to her own conclusion.

First of all, they don't know that Alice is alive.

Second of all, they still don't know where she is.

Third of all, most of them didn't know what Alice looked like.

Selen understood one vital fact from these three truths.

Even if she was feeling the high of power, even if she felt like the world was spinning around her, she refused to let the Zenias hurt Alice any more than they already had!

To achieve that, she had to kill all witnesses!

Feathers and spikes covered her eyes once more as a malevolent aura burst out from Selen's body.

Monochrome World!

However, after her mutation, her realm experienced a few changes.

Above them hung a swirling chaotic spiral of clouds and rampaging energy. A single bleeding eclipsed sun connecting the skies above to the lands below.

Scattered throughout the monochrome lands stood broken decayed clock towers, each one surrounded by a pile of ruin. Each clock face had countless cracked glass with the clock hands jumping back and forth around the same number, perpetually stuck in one moment of time.

Dark twisted trees with clocks fused into the trunk. Warped bases coated by spikes.

Branches that melted while barely maintaining their form, leaving dark liquid strands hanging off the trees.

Some trees didn't have branches, only a trunk leading up to a single broken clock face.

A river of darkness created by the bleeding sun meandered through this nightmarish hellscape.

Even without fully understanding Selen's realm, Elowen could sense that it was unstable.

'If Ayla's words are right, she's still trying to adapt to the changes in her body. We have the advantage!' Elowen reared her head back as the energy around her body shifted to a neon yellow.

*BANG!!!

Lightning crashed down from above but Selen disappeared from her spot.

"Captain! Permission!" Kagen shouted.

"Granted!"

With permission finally granted, Kagen and Laura rushed towards one another as their aura began to soar.

However, before they could reach one another, Selen appeared in the middle of them.

Twisting her body, she released a spinning kick and launched them away from one another.

It didn't take a genius to realise that these twins had something up their sleeves. The fact that they asked for permission only solidified this thought.

Thankfully, Selen had already gained a rough understanding of her opponents. Elowen seemed to be more of the utility kind, lacking proper damage. While it may be good against weaker targets, it lacks the lethality to kill someone like her. The twins were rather weak while they were separated.

As for the Alice lookalike, Selen didn't have any information on her so she had to keep an eye on the wildcard.

"ARGGG!!!" Releasing a torrent of white flames in anger, Kagen tried to hit Selen but she disappeared like a ghost.

*BANG!!!

Appearing next to him, she slammed her knee up into his jaw, forcefully closing his mouth and launching him up.

She then grabbed him by the ankles and slammed him onto the floor. Summoning her sword, a dark energy wrapped around the blade as the clocks around her began to toll.

But before she could stab down, a portal opened next to her with Elowen rushing out in her hybrid form.

She was dressed in a flowing white gown that shimmered with the same radiance of her flames. Smoke that formed a raiment that weaved through her armpit, over her shoulders and behind her head. Her blond hair shifted to the same white as her scales and in her hands, she held a large white scythe.

Leaning back, she slashed up with the scythe as Selen faded from her perception and reappeared not far away.

The space that she had occupied earlier was torn apart with hints of the real world leaking through before repairing.

Furrowing her brows, Selen understood that there was a risk of Elowen dismantling her realm skill.

"Laura! Kagen! Do what you need to do, I'll keep her occupied." Elowen ordered, adjusting her stance.

Hearing her declaration, Selen burst out in laughter.

"You? Keep me occupied? Pft! Ahahahaha! Alright, try if you can. Keep your eyes on me and don't let me escape your notice now~" Selen giggled, tilting her head with a wide grin.

Furrowing her brows, Elowen wanted to attack when a slash wound appeared across her torso.

"!!!" Widening her eyes, she didn't even know when Selen got so close to her!

Twisting her body, she wanted to push Selen away but she disappeared once more and another wound appeared on her back.

"What's wrong? I thought you were going to keep me occupied? What if I was to disappear and hit the twins instead~" Selen taunted.

Confusion filled Elowen's mind as she couldn't work out what Selen's powers were. Turning around, she looked towards the twins and saw Selen raising her blade in hand.

Reaching out with her hand, the space around the twins began to distort.

*KRK!!!

Slashing down with her blade, she appeared next to Elowen and cut her arm in two.

Flinching from the pain, Elowen was a little late in blocking as Selen twisted her body and kicked her in the stomach, throwing Elowen back as she crashed into the twisted trees of this realm.

The twins that she saw weren't the real twins but rather a 'recording'. A reflection of where they were a few moments ago.

The real twins were already suspended in a prison of time by Selen, unable to reach one another despite the short distance between them.

*Clap clap clap~

Glancing towards Ayla, Selen could see the girl clapping her hands.

"Simply remarkable. I don't understand why you don't feel gratitude in your heart after the family has granted you such power. Do you think you could've attained such a feat had it not been for the family?" Ayla asked, crossing her legs and resting her chin on her palm.

"I never chose this path." Selen raised her sword towards the girl but didn't make a move.

Her opponent was too confident to the point it was eerie.

There was something about this girl and she couldn't rush in blindly.

"You never chose this path? Stop lying to yourself. You could've stopped at any point the moment you left the family. But you continue to use this power have you not? And... To seal the deal, you even bathed yourself in the blood of us hybrids. You wanted more power didn't you?" Ayla grinned.

Selen wanted to retort but it was the truth.

She was already at her limit during the fight against Troy and Haldir. If she didn't gamble with her life and infuse herself with the blood of hybrids, she would've died then and there.

She hated the Zenias but had to admit that their research and experiments had created beings with immense power. If it wasn't for this, for the power to control time, Selen probably wouldn't be able to contend against these hybrids without a perfect set of Sigils.

"I don't feel gratitude because there wouldn't be a need to have this power if the Zenias didn't create freaks like us."

"Still denying your saviour to the end. No matter, I simply need to guide the lost lamb back to the family." Ayla sighed as Sigils lit up across her body.

From her back, three pairs of wings began to unfurl itself, wrapping her in a cocoon of white feathers.

Not wanting the girl to finish her transformation, Selen conjured a staff to halt the time but a frown appeared on her face.

Around the girl, there existed an invisible barrier that her powers couldn't bypass!

As the feathers unfurled, Ayla's bestial appearance revealed itself.

She had a skeletal form with pieces of silver armour adorning parts of her body. Flowing white hair that reached to her ankles and a tattered red cloak that contrasted the white bones and hair.

Behind her, six wings unfurled, revealing their pristine white feathers.

Ominously, eyes decorated the centre of these wings as two golden halos spun to life above Ayla.

In her hands, she held a single bloodied white spear.

In front of Selen now hovered an angel of death. A blend of holy and demonic.

"Allow me to guide you back to the right path."