

Abyssal A 501

Chapter 501 - 501: Avatar Of Winter

Sitting by the base of the spider lily, Alice's body was covered by countless strands of red and black. Flowers and briar thorns.

Even with her resistance, she could feel the energy of the curse coursing through her body as parts of her would mutate before returning back to normal after a short moment.

She could see the red link formed between her and the infected, a cage that spiralled through the capital.

She could see the pulses of energy rippling from the infected to her own body.

It was a strange sensation. A disgusting familiar sensation.

Like the days in the lab as blood was pumped into her body. Yet strangely, it was... warm and soothing after a short while. It was her own blood in the end but Alice disliked this feeling.

Sweat rolled down her face as Alice gritted her teeth.

Within the warm sensation that is her blood, she could feel something else. Something else that spurred her blood to mutate in such a vile way. To latch onto the target's spiritual heart and consume them from the inside.

'Enris? No... it's too different to be Enris. But it does hold traces of Eclipse. The moon? Not quite either.' Alice made a guess but this foreign feeling didn't match either of these two.

There wasn't even a need to consider the Sun seeing as how there was not even a speck of resemblance.

[It's probably Nyer's handiwork then.] Cayla dismissed while continuing her work of analysing this curse.

She wanted to see if there was a better way to break it rather than just having Alice accept it all into her body. If the curse was to break out in multiple areas, it would be an issue since she wouldn't be able to reach all of them.

'Fair point.' Alice chuckled, distracting her mind from the pain of having all these curses flooding her body.

At certain moments, her flesh would twist and writhe beneath the skin, threatening to break out and mutate.

But she held strong.

While accepting the curses in her body, Alice could sense the space around each of the victims. Through this resonance, their senses were shared with her.

The panic of the Hounds as they find themselves slowly being backed into the corner by the ever increasing beasts.

Guards who trembled as they tried their best to protect the civilians.

The fears of children as they watch the swarm of beasts approach.

Even though the outbreak has been held back, they were still struggling with the beasts.

None of the warriors could fight at full power, not when the Hybrid Lords were pushing Sigurd and Frida back.

'Selen also needs help...' Alice thought to herself.

She watched Selen kill four of the hybrids before drowning herself in the blood. Just to make sure that Selen wasn't consumed by the side effects, Alice attached her into the resonance as a patient.

However, even for Selen and her new abilities, fighting against four at the same time might be beyond her. Especially considering the fourth that felt eerie even for Alice.

After dragging them into the personal realm, Alice lost connection and could only hope that things were going good.

With Selen dealing with the hybrids all by herself, Alice turned her attention to the Lords that were facing one another.

Both living shadows were hard to push back as Sigurd and Frida were also careful with their abilities. Careful so that the city doesn't take any unnecessary damage.

Unfortunately, the living shadows didn't have the same worries. They fired off their attacks without care, carving the landscape and killing hundreds in the process. Alice may be able to hold back the curse but healing people from mortal wounds was beyond her.

She needed a bit more time before she could cut off the connection to the infected. A little more time before she's thoroughly removed the curse from their bodies. If she wasn't careful, even a tiny bit left over could spiral into the death of the infected.

She could only pray that they could hold on for that extra bit of time...

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*BANG!!!

Gritting her teeth, Frida was covered with wounds as all of her attacks were being 'consumed' by the shadow in front of her. All she could do was slow him down while wounds piled up.

Worst of all, these wounds had special properties. Black tendrils writhed in her flesh, digging into her body. Even if she was to freeze them in an attempt to expel the foreign entity, they would break out from the ice and prevent her wound from closing.

"What's wrong? Running out of gas already? Come on~ Gimme something more to eat." The bestial living shadow cackled as he unhinged his jaw.

From inside him, a swarm of writhing black mass spewed out towards the city.

"B*stard!" Slamming her hands down, an ice barrier prevented the mass from crashing down on the city but this moment of distraction allowed the living shadow to appear in front of her.

Slashing down with its claws, he watched as Frida was barely able to move back in time, suffering only a light scratch on her skin.

However, this light scratch was all he needed to place more of his parasites into her body.

Coughing up a bit of blood, Frida furrowed her brows as things weren't looking too great.

"Frida!" Sigurd shouted out as she glanced back while keeping her guard up.

"I'll defend! Go all out!" Sigurd roared, twisting his body and slamming his hammer into the body of the humanoid living shadow.

The collision caused his body to splatter before returning back to normal.

No matter how Sigurd tried to burn and break him, he would always recover before counter attacking with the same attack if not stronger.

Raising his guard, he braced himself for a hammer strike as the humanoid shadow slammed a writhing mass in the form of a shadow into Sigurd's body.

With Sigurd telling her to go all out, Frida nodded her head.

Clasping her hands together, all of her Sigils lit up across her body as blue markings spread out.

A blizzard erupted around her with the bestial living shadow lunging forward to stop her.

But before his jaw could reach, Sigurd appeared, bloodied and bruised.

Leaning back, he uppercut the beast using his hammer, throwing him back before creating a barrier of flames to fend off the attacks of the humanoid living shadow.

Around them, the blizzard continued to rampage as space itself was frozen before shattering apart, revealing a woman with skin as white as snow and white silken hair. A pair of pristine blue eyes and a flowing garment of white.

The Avatar of Winter.

Raising her hands towards her mouth, the Avatar took a deep breath before exhaling towards the shadows and the city by extension.

A tsunami of cold mist rushed down and both of the living shadows felt a threat of death.

Meanwhile, Sigurd jumped down, spinning his hammer and slammed it into the ground.

*RUMBLE!!!

From below, flames slithered through the ice and began to melt through the layers.

*BANG!!!

Breaking out of the ice, a flaming serpent coiled upwards, letting out a loud hiss as glowing red markings appeared across Sigurd's body.

Avatar of the Forge!

A wave of flames crashed up, colliding with the tsunami of cold mist. With extreme heat on one side and extreme cold on the other, the two living shadows writhed in pain.

However, Sigurd's goal wasn't to kill the two. Rather, his goal was to stop the ice from reaching the city!!!

*CRACK!!!

Collapsing on one knee, veins bulged on Sigurd's arms as he was struggling to hold it off.

Ever since he was cursed by the Enris, his Avatar of the Forge had been weakened considerably. While he continues to maintain his powerful defence, his offensive capability practically disappeared. At this point, it was no different from a sealed beast.

But as long as he could hold off the cold mist from reaching the city, they can win!

"Ku! Hahahaha!!!"

A shrill laughter could be heard as a chill ran down Sigurd's spine. He snapped his gaze up and saw a mass of darkness within the collision of flames and ice.

Within this mass of darkness, tendrils could be seen harvesting this frozen energy. Many were frozen and destroyed but double the number was regenerated.

In mere moments, a barrier of writhing mass was formed and Frida's attack failed!

Seeing this, Frida instinctively took a step back out of disbelief and fear.

What kind of beast was this? That they could 'consume' her strongest attack meant to freeze even the Lords and extinguish their vitality?

"F*cking... Delicious." The bestial living shadow grinned as his form had increased by several folds. All of the tendrils across his body was in a state of excitement as he cracked his jaw open.

In an instant, a thin line of raw energy shot out, piercing Frida's shoulder.

"ARHG!!!" Letting out a cry of pain, Frida was barely able to shift her body in time out of instinct. If it wasn't for this, this beam would've hit her heart!

Panting heavily, she froze the wound and glanced at the beast with sweat dripping down her face.

The Avatar above were started to fade away as cracks formed across the surface of her body.

But before she could fully fade away, a dark hand gripped her neck.

*BANG!!!

"!!!" Grasping at her neck, Frida choked on her breath as her gaze glanced up and saw a dark avatar slowly appearing from the ripples in space.

A dark twisted amalgamation of limbs and shadow grasped her avatar by the neck. Its head, a mass of flesh began to split open, revealing countless rows of teeth and writhing tendrils.

A horrific thought filled Frida's mind as fear revealed itself in her eyes.

It was trying to consume her Avatar!!!

Chapter 502 - 502: Ayla's Powers

What is an Avatar?

The Avatar of a Lord is a crystallisation of their powers and title that's been granted by the Abyss. An icon for them to channel the full extent of their abilities to the extreme. In essence, it's their 'third resonance' without getting 9 of the same type of Sigil.

However, crystalising your power this way has its risks as it weakens the Lord when they don't utilise it. It's a separate reservoir where they keep their power.

Repairing a damaged Avatar was easy. All they needed was a bit of time and effort. But if it was to be completely destroyed or 'consumed' in this case?

Fear lingered in Frida's eyes as she watched the bestial Avatar approach her own. Its jaw hung open with countless rows of teeth within.

*CRACK!!!

Crunching down with its jaw, it bit down on the Avatar's neck as Frida cried out in pain. Wounds appeared on her body matching the wound of the avatar.

"FRIDA!" Sigurd roared, jumping up in an effort to assist but the humanoid living shadow was already prepared.

Intercepting Sigurd, he twisted his body and released a hammer swing, sending him crashing back into the ground.

Coughing up a mouthful of blood, Sigurd gritted his teeth. In order to help Frida, he had to get through this humanoid living shadow first!

This damn curse of his, restraining his powers! All because of Enris!

Punching the ground, Sigurd let out a shout from the depths of his soul as flames burned around him.

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Watching everything unfold, Verona had a frown on her face. She knew she had to make a move and soon.

But if she did...

She was at a crossroad of choices.

Frida and Sigurd's life or their dream.

Could she really sit by and do nothing?

Biting her lips, Verona contemplated. She weighed the options.

If she was to make a move now, the nation was going to be doomed regardless. One move and everything they worked for would be for naught and an army of the three gods will invade their nation and raze it to the ground.

But if she didn't do anything, it would be razed to the ground regardless.

If she didn't make a move and Frida was to lose her avatar, it would give their enemies an incentive to just attack.

They wouldn't be able to defend the nation with just one Lord. Sigurd was cursed and Frida would only be classed as half of a Lord.

Making up her mind, she was about to stand up and leave when a spider lily began to drift down from above.

###

Slashing her blade towards Ayla, Selen gritted her teeth as her attacks weren't working.

Every time her ability was to reach Ayla, the space she occupied seemed to shift and her attack would dissipate. This wasn't limited to just her direct attacks either.

Something was warding off her perception manipulation.

None of her time based abilities worked.

She couldn't be slowed, accelerated or even held in place.

"Such futile struggles, is it not a waste of effort? Just relax your body and allow me to guide you to your rightful path." Ayla sighed.

Jumping up slightly, she batted her wings as a pulse of energy rippled out.

Raising her guard, Selen was confused when she didn't feel any pain. But one glance behind her caused her pupils to constrict.

A spectral figure of similar to her unchanged form could be seen floating with her eyes closed.

Curling her lips up into a devilish grin, Ayla flicked her finger and an arc of light lashed out, cutting off the arm.

"!!!" Feeling a sting of pain on her arm, Selen glanced down and saw her arm being cut off by an invisible force.

Immediately activating her new skill, she recovered her body back to the state it was before Ayla cut off her arm.

Jumping back, Selen could see her spectral form slowly dissipate and reenter her body.

'Abilities doesn't seem to work on her, she can push out a spectral form and any damage done to it is reflected onto me.' Selen made a mental note as a frown appeared on her face.

She could tell that Ayla was playing around with her right now.

Selen was keeping the twins and Elowen in check so the moment she gives up her focus on them, it'll become a 1 vs 4 again. In that kind of situation, her death was guaranteed.

'Those eyes on the wings are creepy too...' Taking a deep breath, Selen forced herself to calm down.

In her current state, her mind was filled by a myriad of voices. Some angry, some sad, some jubilant.

But she had to be the one in control.

Letting those voices dominate her mind will only accelerate her death.

"My dear, are you still thinking of a way out? Isn't it easier just to give up?" Ayla's voice whispered in Selen's ear as she snapped her gaze to the right but no one was there.

"I've already marked your soul for redemption, you can't escape my voice anymore."

This time, the voice seemed to exist in her mind as Selen twisted her body and launched an arc of energy towards Ayla.

Not making a single move, Ayla watched as the blade dissipated before it could even reach her.

"How about you stop this futile resistance? Seeing you put so much effort is exhausting even for me when it all comes to nought." Ayla sighed.

The eyes on her wings twitched for a moment before focusing on Selen.

Spectral chains shot out of the ground as red energy lashed out towards Selen.

Slamming her hands down, she froze the time in the space around her and jumped out of the way before launching another arc of energy towards Ayla.

"Trying the same thing over and over won't yield you a different result. Things simply don't work that way."

"No, but it distracted you didn't it?" Selen grinned.

While throwing the attacks and dodging, she had slowly inched towards where the twins were so that she could finish them off for good!

She placed her hand on the twins as green energy could be seen flowing from their bodies into Selen's.

Her wound began to patch up while the two slowly dried up into husks.

"Oh my... How vicious." Ayla remarked.

The death of the twins didn't affect her at all as she didn't care about their life or death.

All she cared about right now was the recovery of the original.

If she could get that, all of the lives they used in this expedition could be forgiven.

If they could get their hands on the original, another army would rise.

"If you want to grant dear Elowen a peaceful death then please, go ahead. I'll wait. I'll wait and let you understand your futile defiance of your fate." Ayla gestured, leaning back slightly.

Furrowing her brows, Selen walked over to Elowen who gave her a hateful glare.

Grabbing her by the head, Selen didn't give her a second glance before stealing her time into herself.

Now that it was truly a 1 vs 1, Selen could focus everything into killing Ayla.

Since abilities don't work on her, she'll have to rely on the physical!

Acceleration!

Blinking from her spot, she appeared above Ayla who slowly turned to her with a smile.

Slashing down with her blade, her pupils constricted after noticing her attack phased through Ayla's body.

***BANG!!!**

Before she could register what had happened, Ayla's wing slammed into her body, sending her crashing towards the ground.

It felt as though an entire building had crashed into her as blood seeped from Selen's lips.

She wanted to recover her wounds but Ayla was faster.

***BANG!!!**

Slamming her heel down into Selen's chest, Ayla smirked as she lifted Selen by the hair.

"The flames of life still burn in your eyes... How rebellious."

Lifting her up slightly, Ayla twisted her body and punched Selen in the face before grabbing her ankles.

Slamming her body into the ground, she gathered energy into a white orb and jammed it against her stomach.

Blood splattered everywhere as Ayla lifted Selen once more.

She could see that Selen was barely breathing.

Her lips trembled as Ayla wondered what she was trying to say.

"You... Finally got... close enough." Selen squeezed out as a small smile could be seen on her lips.

At that moment, Ayla wanted to let go but it was already too late.

Her hand withered in an instant as she let Selen go and kicked her away.

Furrowing her brows, she tore off her arm and threw it away before the withering could get to the rest of her body.

"You're different from Alice after all. An inferior copy. You might be able to negate abilities thrown at you but once it hits your body, you're no different than the rest of us." Selen cackled as blood poured out from her mouth.

Unfortunately, she could only roll back her wounds by a small degree since it took too long.

Forcing herself to stand straight, she looked at Ayla's twisted expression of anger while her arm was missing.

"Struck a nerve did I?" Selen taunted.

She understood what the Zenias were aiming for when they created Ayla. They wanted to use the properties of Alice's blood to fight against people who focus on casting. Naturally, she had her own countermeasures to physical attacks but once she grabbed Selen's hair, that countermeasure disappeared.

It allowed Selen to directly inject her abilities into Ayla's body, stealing her arm in the process.

Seeing Ayla's arm bulge and writhe, Selen understood that she probably had her own form of regeneration but it was far inferior compared to Alice.

Unable to hold her anger back, Ayla rushed forward ready to kill Selen.

'Seems like 7 was my limit... Did I do good?' Selen asked in her mind despite knowing that neither Alice nor Egil could hear her.

Closing her eyes, she waited for the final strike.

***BANG!!!**

But the pain never arrived.

In front of her stood an armoured knight donned in black plating and demonic horns across his body. Red energy fluttered through the gaps as he grabbed Ayla by the hand, preventing her from reaching Selen.

He stood as an impenetrable wall, protecting the woman behind him.

Chapter 503 - 503: A Zenia Experiment

Sitting in silence, the spider lilies around Alice glowed with a mesmerising crimson hue.

The side effects have stopped manifesting across her body as most of the patients were now 'cured'.

Despite forming a resonance to balance out the effects of the curse, there were still lingering aftereffects that she couldn't completely get rid of.

Simply put, they were infected for too long.

Their soul had been permanently dyed and she did what she could to return them back to 'normal'.

Most of them will spend their life feeling a little on edge around Abyss Blood and develop some form of slight resistance. It's a good and bad thing considering side effects are harder to appear on them but at the same time, healing vials will become less effective.

Alice could drink healing vials and they maintain their effectiveness. These folks will find the vials losing their effectiveness after a few drinks.

Meaning, that every time they get injured, they'll have to worry about spending more money to heal injuries next time.

However, compared to losing their life here and now to the side effects, this was a very, very small price to pay.

The bigger worry for Alice was... The warriors who were burning their energy to fend off the curse. Because they were burning their energy, most of their natural resistances were being burned away and replaced by the curse.

To put it into perspective, their body and spiritual heart was a canister. Every time they burned energy to fend off the curse, the energy inside the canister was being displaced by the curse once it's been

expended. Meaning the longer they fought while being infected, the faster they were damaging their body.

The effects may be ward off momentarily but that's only on the outside. They were rapidly burning through what remains of their life.

She managed to offset this through the resonance since she's replacing the energy she burned with her own that could combat the curse. But it's not a long term solution. They'll no doubt exhaust it eventually and be left with a permanently half empty supply of energy.

After tonight, they'll never be able to fight the way they could before.

'What a pain in the ass...' Alice sighed.

The toughest part was now resolved but it was still hard to deal with the lingering effects.

As of right now, it was going to be impossible for her.

"Urg..." Groaning out in pain, Alice turned her gaze towards Egil in surprise as she didn't think he would wake up this early.

She didn't know why but his body reacted far more aggressively to the curse.

If others were reduced to 50% of the normal capacity, Egil was reduced to only 20% of his overall capacity.

Meaning, unless something was done, his life as a Warrior was over.

"Where... Where..." He stuttered, feeling pain across his body as his vision blurred.

"You're safe. We're at the big tree right now." Alice replied, thinking he was asking about where they were.

However, he shook his head and sat out in pain.

Clutching his head, he took several deep breaths before turning to Alice.

"Where's Selen? Is she safe?" He asked as Alice let out a small sigh.

He wasn't even worried about his own safety. Rather, the first thing on his mind was Selen's safety.

"She's fighting the hybrids right now. Killed 4 of them before I lost contact since she dragged the last few into her personal realm."

Hearing this, Egil nodded his head before trying to stand up but his body collapsed beneath him.

"You're in no state to fight right now. The curse did a number on your body. If you go now, you'll only be a hindrance." Alice let out a deep sigh.

*BANG!!!

Punching the ground beneath him, Egil forced himself to stand up.

"Just be honest with me Alice. My body isn't looking good is it? I can feel it myself. The spirits I've attuned to can't be manifested." Egil smiled bitterly.

All of his Sigils refused to activate and every time he tried, a stinging pain would assault his chest.

Considering the state of those who were infected by this curse, Egil understood that it was quite a miracle for him to even be standing right now. But he was greedy. He didn't want to just fall down and call it quits.

Not when Selen was risking her life killing hybrids.

Even if he was to die, he wanted to be a shield for her in his last moments.

". . ." Hesitating for a moment, Alice gave the back of his leg a light jab, forcing him back down.

"Yes, it's a mess. You only have 20% of your usual capacity. You kept burning it to keep yourself alive. Honestly, after tonight, you should probably think of doing something else other than being a Warrior." Alice told him truthfully since he is a friend.

For Egil, his Sigils consume a lot of energy to activate but are highly efficient once it's been activated. But that activation cost was the issue.

With just 20% of his capacity, Egil couldn't activate any of his Spirits.

Hearing Alice's assessment, Egil's eyes trembled for a moment before letting out a fatigued sigh.

"Is there nothing I can do about it?"

"I... Don't know." Alice turned her gaze down.

If it wasn't for her Spiritual Heart taking on his burden, his capacity would be at 0 right now and he would likely be dead.

For Egil to resume fighting... Alice wasn't sure how.

His main issue was capacity. If he didn't have a way to increase his capacity, even artificially, there was no way for him to return to fighting condition.

But in order for him to make an artificial container for energy, he'll have to form a resonance effect. To use the balance of three sources to form a container.

Just using his Sigils won't be enough since his Sigils work on his main container.

Closing her eyes, Alice was hesitant. There was an idea in mind.

But doing so would be... Similar to what the Zenia family does.

To use her blood and take advantage of the marks left behind by the curse. By fusing Egil with her blood, she'll allow him to access his full capacity one more and perhaps even expand it.

But then comes the question of resistance.

How well can he resist the transfusion?

However... Is she really willing to go down the same path as the Zenias? Would it not be hypocritical of herself to hate them for what they do only to turn around and do it herself? Alice struggled with the choice.

Egil noticed his hesitation.

"Please Alice, I don't want to lose Selen. Please let me go help her."

Biting her lip, Alice scratched her hair.

If he was to ask her like this, how could she say no? If she was the in same position, she wouldn't hesitate to gamble either. But that's only because she's in a position to gamble!

Her own body helps offset the side effects but Egil doesn't have the same boon.

[If you're worried about resistance, why not introduce a third source so that he can balance it out like you do?] Cayla suggested.

She knew that Alice wanted to help Egil out but without a way of resisting the side effects, she couldn't go ahead with the idea.

'A third source? Hmm...' Furrowing her brows, Alice considered the sources available.

'Can't you just teach him the Bloodline Release like what Tiamat did for you? His powers are based on summoning Spirits to overlap his body right? Sounds like he'll do just fine with manifesting his own.' Alyss cut in.

'Right! That's true! Tiamat never said I couldn't teach it to anyone else.' A glimmer appeared in Alice's eye.

However, even with the right conditions, it was still going to be risky so Alice needed to let Egil know the consequences of failing.

"I have a way for you to fight again. But it's... How do I put it. Risky isn't even doing it justice. With this method, you'll have to learn a new technique. One that'll let you fight but only when you activate it. Because if you don't, your body will crumble from the inside out from the effects of my blood." Alice warned.

If they were to form a resonance between Egil's current energy source, Alice's blood and the Bloodline Release, it'll help him balance out the effects and maintain a state of fighting capability.

But if he were to try and only use his current energy source with the damage done by the curse, her blood would only accelerate the 'infection' in his body and cause side effects to manifest, killing him in the process.

Therefore, unless he's able to use Bloodline Release properly, he'll struggle.

"I'm not talking about an ordinary death. It'll be extremely painful and far worse than what you experienced from this curse. If you thought this curse was painful, just know that it only holds a small fraction of my blood. But what we're doing is injecting you with the undiluted source. Are you sure you want to do this?" Alice questioned.

Closing his eyes, Egil recalled the acceptance he felt from Selen. The warmth that spread through his chest.

He wanted to protect this.

If other people saw the choices he was given, they may call him stupid to accept. However, he wanted to be there for Selen. Through the good times and through the bad. If she was fighting against four hybrids right now, he wanted to be there as her shield.

To make sure nothing bad could happen to her.

"Yeah, I want to do this. Plus, I trust you Alice." Egil grinned.

Letting out a sigh, Alice nodded her head.

"Sit up properly. I'll show you the technique. The rest will be up to you."

###

Grabbing Ayla's hand, Egil glared at her with bloodshot eyes. Anger assaulted his mind as the living armour around his body twitched.

There was only one thing on his mind right now...

To slaughter the woman who tried to kill Selen!

Chapter 504 - 504: Selen's Shield

Jumping back, Ayla furrowed her brows as the feeling she was getting from Egil was strange.

That aura... No doubt it belonged to a Hybrid. But it was unlike any Hybrid she had felt before.

It's something far more... Raw, primitive. Not to mention the high concentration of blood within his body.

Even now, he's still mutating but something was keeping him in check, stopping him from tipping over the line of no return.

"What are you?" Ayla questioned, unable to wrap her mind around Egil's existence.

*BANG!!!

"!!!" Widening her eyes, she felt Egil's fist collide with her face.

Crashing back from the hit, she quickly recovered and saw him charging at her once more.

Adjusting herself so that his attack wouldn't work, she revealed a confident expression only for it to freeze up as his fist slammed into her chest.

"WHAT THE HELL!?" She roared, unable to comprehend the fact that Egil could hit her!

As a Hybrid, she was able to shift herself through two states. One is the soul state where physical attacks cannot harm her whatsoever. The second was the physical state where there was a barrier around her that prevented the Abyss abilities from harming her.

Even after shifting to the soul state, Egil could still punch her?!

Letting out a bestial growl, Egil glared at Ayla with crimson eyes before crouching down.

*BANG!!!

Leaving a crater beneath his feet, he zipped next to Ayla and twisted his body.

Unleashing a roundhouse kick, he sent her flying into the air as she adjusted herself with her wings.

Gritting her teeth in anger, the eyes on her wings locked onto Egil who was flickering through the realm through raw speed alone.

Quickly suppressing the joy of seeing Egil alive and well to some extent, Selen forced herself to stand up and took a deep breath.

Acceleration!

Since she couldn't affect Ayla, the best one to use this one right now would be Egil!

*BOOM!!!

Getting a sudden boost in speed, Egil flickered above Ayla and pulled his arm back.

*CRACK BANG!!!

Punching her down from above, he watched as she crashed into the ground and coughed up a mouthful of blood.

A glare of pure unrestrained anger could be seen.

She was sent here to deal with the queen, knowing that she was a pure caster. Her entire skill set was engineered to counter that. And just in case she had to fight before the Queen appeared, they even gave her the ability to avoid physical attacks.

However, this random armoured knight appeared out of nowhere and was able to hit her despite physical nullification?

Absurd!

She simply couldn't accept this kind of outcome!

Glancing around her, she noticed the corpses of the other Hybrids and curved her lips up into a grin.

Creating a barrier of energy around her, she dashed towards the corpses.

Egil tried to stop her but spectral chains burst out of his body, restraining his movements. The eyes on Ayla's wings continued to focus their gaze on him.

"Care to stop looking at my boyfriend?" Selen asked as she stabbed her blade into the barrier, breaking it apart.

With Ayla worrying about Egil's punches, she had kept herself in the soul state and forgot about Selen who was looking for an opportunity.

Twisting her body, she blinded one of the eyes with her blade. One of the chains around Egil's body broke apart.

Ayla's anger reached its peak as she didn't even have anything to say to Selen.

Swatting her away with her wings, she flinched upon seeing the feathers beginning to fall out as the flesh withered.

With one of her wings now withered, the chains around Egil were reduced by half and he managed to break out of the restraints.

Landing on the ground, he rushed towards Ayla with a burst of speed. His claws aimed towards her head.

*BANG!!!

Before his claws could tear that head off her shoulder, the space in front of her distorted and prevented Egil from getting closer.

Ayla could be seen with blood dripping from her hand as the corpse of Elowen slowly stood up next to her. Her expression was hollow and one could assume that Ayla had turned her into a zombie.

Regardless, her abilities could still be used.

With Elowen now revived, Ayla dashed towards the twins as Egil wanted to follow. However, Elowen ignored him and ran directly towards Selen who was still recovering from her wounds. That last attack was already pushing things as blood poured out of her stomach.

When given a choice, it was clear what Egil would choose.

*BANG!!!

Punching Elowen away, he stood in front of Selen as her shield.

Blood seeped out from the cracks of his armour as Selen could hear him struggling for breath.

"I... Stall her. Take this chance to run if you can." Egil squeezed out. It felt like the armour was eating away at his flesh.

The longer he stayed in this state, the harder it was to avoid crossing the line of no return.

Alice had already warned him.

Because he wasn't used to the Bloodline Release, the duration was going to be short. Once it's exhausted, he'll be returned back to his base state unless he wants to risk death. The instant the armour comes off, his capacity will return back to what it was.

Unable to even activate a single spirit.

Therefore, he wanted to use what little time he had left to help Selen run if possible.

"Don't be stupid. Even if I run, I can't go far in my current state. It's better for us to stick together right now. She's spooked. The fact that she had to rely on the corpses of the twins and the Void controller means she's desperate. I've noticed that aside from being defensive, she lacks a lot of offensive attacks. It's all just control." Selen revealed a small smile.

The myriad of emotions that clouded her mind seemed to have calmed down now that Egil was here. The high she felt upon drinking Alice's blood disappeared, replaced by a warmth from knowing someone precious was next to her.

She felt calm.

Hesitating for a moment, Egil sighed and nodded his head.

He had one more attack left in him. One final all out attack in hopes of driving her away.

###

Standing by the base of her spider lily, Alice stood with her arms crossed.

She let out a small sigh, wondering if it was the right choice to modify Egil like this.

'Don't let it bother you. You're doing it to save him and by his request. You're not like the Zenia's who do it out of greed and ambition.' Alyss tried to comfort but it did little to help.

Alice only revealed a bitter smile and nodded her head.

Seeing Alyss struggle to convince her twin, Cayla sighed and closed the book she was working on. She wanted to document the results she's gathered but there was more important matters right now.

[Alice. What makes the Zenia evil for you?] Cayla asked as Alice glanced over.

What makes the Zenia's evil? Well it was clear for Alice.

The way they use lives without care all in the name of experimentation. The way they locked her away for half her life and abused every part of her body. Their clear negligence and dismissal of the value of life and the choice of freedom for the individual. How they ignore morality to experiment in ways that no human should.

All of it was reasons for why the Zenias are evil to her.

Seeing as how Alice had the answer in her mind, Cayla nodded her head.

[Then let me ask you this. Did you have the same objectives when healing Egil? Power is ultimately a tool. How you use it determines whether its good or evil.

[Granted, there are some things that should have never been created in the first place. But we can't turn back time so we must live with it. You're not the same as the Zenia family, you didn't transform Egil into a hybrid because you wanted to see what kind of weapon you could make.

[You did it so that your friend could protect something dear to him. It's different to what the Zenia's do.] Cayla smiled as Alice let out a sigh.

'I get that. But that's not the issue. It's not a issue of whether or not I did it with good intentions or not. It's about the line I crossed the moment I did the same as the Zenia family.'

[Pardon my language but would you rather Egil live as a cripple then? You know as well as I do that his life was over the moment he got infected. Your journey with him would've been cut short. Would you rather not cross that line and ignore his request, or would you help him? The fact that he's helping Selen out now is proof of your choice.] Cayla replied.

Seeing the hesitation to accept the truth, Cayla sighed. It was no doubt hard for Alice to accept.

Only because it was the Zenia family method. Had it been anything else, she would've been fine.

Just as Cayla was about to say something else, Alyss grabbed her shoulder and shook her head.

'Twinnie, you feel sh*t that you had to use the Zenia method right?' Alyss asked as Alice nodded her head.

'Good, keep that feeling close to your heart and don't lose it. It's what separates you from them. The fact that you have this feeling means you still have morals and think deeply about the consequences and whether or not you should do it. But the Zenia's don't think of this at all. To them, this is just part of their everyday life.

'The moment you become numb to this feeling is when you should worry.' Alyss reassured as Alice paused.

She placed her hand over her heart and after a brief moment, a small but noticeable smile appeared on her face.

'Thank you and... sorry for the trouble.'

If this feeling is what separates her from the Zenias then she'll never forget it.

Chapter 505 - 505: A Reunion/First meeting

Taking a deep breath, Alice glanced out at the city. After being cheered up by her twin and Cayla, she felt as though the burden in her heart had been lifted. As long as she keeps this feeling close to her chest, then she won't step down the same path as the Zenias.

That is enough for her.

Glancing towards where the Lords were fighting, she could see Frida struggling.

Depending on what Sigurd chooses, there are two things she could do. First was to assist to the best of her abilities. The second was to help out the other Warriors who were reaching their limits.

She had already given him an... Opportunity.

'What are the chances that he'll accept?' Alice asked curiously.

'Hmm... Pretty high I'd say. I don't know why the Queen still haven't made a move yet but it's safe to assume she probably wouldn't unless the city is literally about to be destroyed.' Alyss shrugged.

[It entirely depends on what he prioritises right now. He has impressive defensive capabilities from what I've seen but lacks the offensive power. If Frida was to die, he'd be able to handle two Lords without threat of death.] Cayla replied while going back to her notes.

She doubted that Alice wanted to turn the other Warriors into hybrids. Not to mention the fact that they'll most likely struggle with bloodline release.

Meaning, she needed an alternative method to 'fix' their energy reserves.

'I think he's probably going to accept.' Alice chuckled.

Right before sending Egil off to help Selen, she offered Sigurd an opportunity. A contract.

In order to fight against the two Lords who are negating what they're doing, Alice offered him the usage of her Violet flames.

After all, the source of the Hybrid's power comes from her.

In return, Sigurd would need to give her a sample of his blood. A small fragment of his soul so that Alyss could mark it down as a Sigil.

An even trade.

All that was left to see was whether or not Sigurd was willing to take this trade.

*BANG!!!

Watching a torrent of Violet flames rush up into the sky in the distance, a smile curved up on Alice's face.

'Seems like he took the contract after all.'

With Sigurd accepting the contract, the Sigils belonging to the Lord of the Forge were now open to her.

"As expected of the true successor. To bring a man back from the brink of death, invigorated by a new power and to offer a contract bearing flames of such potential. Simply remarkable."

A voice rang behind Alice as she furrowed her brows.

Judging from the aura that she was feeling, the woman behind her was no doubt someone stronger than the average Lord!

But there was something strange about her.

There was a lack of... Abyssal energy?

'If there's a lack of Abyssal Energy then why does she feel like a Lord?'

Right when Alice was about to turn around, a finger poked her cheek, stopping her from turning her head.

"Keep your eyes forward dear successor. If you don't mind, can I ask some questions?" She chuckled as Alice frowned before nodding.

Since the opponent got the upper hand right now, she decided to play along.

"How's Kaden? Is he still brooding and being depressed or has he gotten better? I want to assume he got better since he's taught you how to cast."

Hearing the woman mention Kaden, Alice's guard was immediately raised.

"Don't be so stressed now successor. I'm not asking because I want to do something bad to him. If I did, Allura wouldn't let me hear the end of it. That is if she finds me of course." The woman chuckled.

"Who are you?" Alice asked.

Energy was slowly converging towards her palm.

[Be careful. Even if she used to know Kaden and Allura, I'm not sure if she's a friend or foe. The only ones I know are friendly are Kaden, Allura and Nalem.] Cayla warned.

There have been moments when Kaden had to put down old allies because their objectives were changed with the passage of time.

Nodding her head, Alice waited for the woman's response.

"Hmm... me? Well... I'm just someone who wants to see if a second Velouria can appear. You sensed the divinity in this place, right? That's part of my doing." She chuckled.

"But you have some divinity as well. There's also Kaden's curse on your eye and the bracelet."

Lifting Alice's arm, she observed the bracelet.

"Yeesh it's a pretty heavy curse too. Not something that can be unsealed at will. Did you piss him off or something?"

"It's by my own request." Alice replied.

"Are you a masochist???"

". . ." With such a fast response by the woman, Alice was speechless.

"Ah forget it. I'm not one to judge. So how well do you know Ayr? Do you know the different departments and what they're responsible for?" She asked with a chuckle.

"To some extent."

"Oh~ This makes it much better then. Have you heard of the research department of Ayr? The home of geniuses."

Alice could practically hear the grin on her face as she recalled her time in the Inverted World.

Out of everyone in the research department, there was only one who made a big impression on her.

Caera.

The genius who created the teleport gates through the different layers and someone many struggled to understand.

Rather than replying with words, Alice raised her right hand and created a blood mirror.

A familiar experiment, one that she used to show Caera her understanding of the gates in the Inverted World.

Creating a dagger in front of the mirror, its form twitched for a moment before disappearing while the reflection in the blood mirror remained.

There was a long silence as the woman grabbed Alice by both of her shoulders and turned her around.

There was a glimmer in her eyes along with a wide smile.

Seeing the strange eyes, and the vibrant hair, Alice let out a chuckle.

"Nice to see you again Caera. Though I suppose this is more of a nice to meet you than anything." Alice greeted.

"Oh my oh my~ Successor are you out to steal my heart? How long has it been since someone understood what I do?" Caera squealed as she lifted Alice up and spun her around.

"You get how my gates work, don't you? They're a little out of energy but with the right stimulation you can still activate them and punch a hole to the different layers." Caera laughed.

"Ah, but what do you mean by nice to see me again? Did you meet a version of me in the past? A spectre? The only way that can happen with the amount of knowledge you have can only be... Inverted World right? How many of them still exist? And even if they do, how did you even get one to link you back to Ayr?"

"Oh the mysteries you carry~" Caera let Alice down while circling around her.

"Ah I'm getting carried away. Almost forgot what I wanted to talk to you about." She coughed before kneeling down in front of Alice.

"Dear successor, do you know how Ayr fell?" She asked, looking up at Alice who was silent.

There's a sadness in her eyes as she recalled the death of Velouria, the state of Kaden and Allura in the past and the army of the Gods.

She remembered Nyer's betrayal and him stealing the power of the Apostles.

"Yes, I know."

Seeing her reaction, Caera's heart began to pound against her chest.

"Dear successor, may I ask what you intend to do? You who have inherited the divinity of my fallen Goddess and the hopes of those that survived Ayr?"

Glancing up at the sky, Alice paused before looking down at Caera who was kneeling in front of her.

She could see the expectations in her eyes.

"I want to rebuild Ayr. It might not be as good as what Velouria once created but I still want to rebuild her home. A home for Allura and Kaden."

Clenching her chest, Caera couldn't suppress the smile on her face.

"Ah~ And what about the fate of the traitor who caused the fall of Ayr?"

There could only be one traitor. The man who started everything. From the fall of Ayr to the creation of 'Alice' and the blood that flows in her veins.

There was only one fate in store for him.

"Death." Alice replied with a coldness in her eyes as Caera's body trembled in joy.

'I'm glad. I'm glad the successor is everything I thought she is. I'm glad that she will become the blade of vengeance that cuts down the traitor and the will.' Caera thought to herself.

If Alice proved lacking...

She might've had to do something that both Kaden and Allura would've hated.

But if they can make one successor, they can make another. All so that they can get vengeance for the death of their Goddess and the fall of their home.

To achieve this goal, no line was too low for Caera. Even if she has to stoop to the levels of Nyer, she'll get the revenge she desires with every fibre of her being.

"For you, my master, I give you my everything. The knowledge I have accumulated, the tools that I have created, my genius, my soul and my body. For my new master, I, Caera, will offer all that I have. So that Ayr may rise once more. So that the traitor be granted the most painful death." Caera bowed down.

She will help refine the blade of vengeance that both Allura and Kaden have found. To help Alice walk down the path of destruction and create the city of Ayr from the ashes of the new civilisations.

A culling WILL commence. She will make sure of it.

Chapter 506 - 506: Retreat

Scratching her cheek from Caera's proclamation, Alice coughed awkwardly.

"Erm... Yeah sure. Setting that aside, are you sure you should be out here? You know there's a curse in the air right?" Alice asked, wondering if Caera was aware of the dangers.

"Oh I'm aware. It doesn't bother me." Caera reassured with a grin.

"I noticed it when I helped create a stabilizing agent for those who were previously infected in the outbreak. It's a little hard to get out of your system but there are ways to prevent it from spreading. Naturally, I made sure I was safe before coming out. Though I must say, you're completely unaffected aren't you?" Caera asked as her eyes flickered for a moment before changing colours.

Sweeping her eyes over Alice's body, she could see no sign of destabilization or side effects trying to break out. In fact, Alice's body was 'enjoying' this curse.

Seeing the fervent gaze that Caera was looking at her with, Alice couldn't help but shiver and remember a certain department head who was just as excited by Abyss Blood. A certain someone whom Arunya warned her about.

Elara.

"Setting that aside, how do you suppose we can help combat the side effects caused by the curse? Their capacity is reduced and replaced by the curse, ending their lives as warriors." Alice asked.

Since Caera was a genius, she figured that Caera might have an idea about this. After all, she made the stabilizing agent for those already affected by the first outbreak.

"It's hard to say. Honestly it's easier to stop people from getting infected in the first place than it is to cure them." Caera sighed while folding her arms.

"Is that so?"

Right before Alice was about to tell her about her findings using her blood, she snapped her head towards the direction of Egil and Selen.

"No time to talk. Give me a hand and help out the Lords. Sigurd has my contract so his fire now negates Abyss power. Avoid that if you can. Don't let Sigurd die." Alice ordered, creating a blood mirror in front of her and diving in without hesitation.

"Of course my master, have a safe trip." Caera waved with a smile.

After Alice left, Caera swallowed her saliva as her eyes spun with excitement.

Contract? Flames that negate the Abyss? I want to see it!

"How many years has it been since I last fought? Ah~ I might be a little rusty but children of this era shouldn't be too difficult to put down." Caera massaged her shoulders as a menacing grin appeared on her face.

In the past, she was never a fighter. She purely focused on research and only got Sigils when she lacked energy to commence her experiments.

But after the culling of Ayr, she understood just how helpless she felt without strength.

Only with strength can she continue to experiment without obstructions. Only with power could she protect the assistants that helped her during her research.

Therefore, she sought the title of Lord.

However, the idea of bowing down to the Will disgusted her so she thought of an alternative way to achieve the title.

In the Abyss, there is only one way to reach the apex. To gain the recognition of the Will and obtain a title that encapsulates the path you walk.

Most who gain recognition will obtain a title that someone has uncovered in the past.

Then there are rare geniuses who can manifest a title never seen before.

One instance is the Slayer. A man so talented in the art of killing that the Abyss saw it fit to not even give him the title of Lord. He was not someone who could be fully described even when calling him a Lord.

But even if it is the Abyss itself that grants the title and power, Caera understood that the Will is an extension of the Abyss. To some degree, it has an influence on what the Abyss does.

Therefore, she refuses to be acknowledged by the Abyss.

Instead, she sought out a different kind of power.

Eyes began to open in her shadow as a strange power wrapped around her body. Her figure began to fade into nothingness.

###

*Pant... Pant... Pant...

Egil collapsed on the ground as his armour broke apart. Around him, the corpses of Elowen and the twins were scattered and Selen was nearby, passed out.

She had exhausted everything to help him fight. Whether that be speeding up his movements or slowing down the enemy.

With him acting as vanguard, the two formed a two person party and fought against the three hybrids.

He was able to land a few devastating blows against Ayla but in the end, he couldn't finish her off.

Next to him, a portal opened up as Alice stepped through with a frown.

She glanced at the two hybrids before turning her attention to the traces of Void energy left behind at the scene.

One of the Hybrids escaped.

"Are you alright?" Alice kneeled down next to Egil and grabbed a few healing vials from her pouch.

*COUGH!!!

Coughing up some blood, Egil forced himself to drink the vial as the wounds started to close around his body. However, the recovery rate was extremely slow, a side effect of having Alice's blood in his body thanks to the curse.

"Yeah, thanks." Egil forced a smile as Alice nodded her head.

She was glad that the two were safe.

When Selen's realm barrier dropped, she sensed the two on the verge of death and rushed over as fast as she could. Egil's condition was unstable while Selen's aura was similar to that of a Hybrid.

Helping Selen sit up, Alice fed her a healing vial.

"Urg..." Groaning in pain, Selen had already returned to her natural state but there were traces of her hybrid form across her body. Black spikes protruded from parts of her body.

What was surprising, however, was the scars on her back had now disappeared.

Perhaps it was because her entire body underwent a transformation once she became a hybrid. Regardless, Alice was rather happy that the scars disappeared.

"You... You have to chase after... her." Selen groaned.

Even with the healing blood, her body was extremely fatigued after killing seven hybrids solo.

"She, she knows who you are Alice."

Hearing this, Alice furrowed her brows as it was a little too late to look for the hybrid now.

"The Zenias have made a clone of you. Not an exact clone but she knows your name and found out that you're in the north." Selen warned but Alice patted her hand.

"It's fine. They're bound to find out anyway. Plus, it's too late to look for her even if I wanted to. I'm just glad the two of you are safe." Alice smiled.

Hearing this, Selen let out a sigh and nodded her head.

With Alice reassuring her, she fell asleep from the fatigue.

"Can you carry her to the Inn?" Alice glanced over to Egil who forced himself to stand up and nodded his head.

"The curse might've reduced my energy capacity but my physical power is still the same." He grinned, flexing his bicep.

"Then I'll leave her to you. You two should rest up now since the fights are coming to an end. There's only the Lords left to deal with."

###

Sigurd recognised these flames.

They're the same flames that Alice used. Flames that repelled the Abyss.

"OUT OF MY WAY!" He roared, creating a violet flame serpent that rushed towards the humanoid living shadow who was surprised by Sigurd's sudden boost of strength.

Just as he created a barrier of writhing shadows to block the strike, his pupils constricted in shock as the shadows were burned away without any resistance.

Confusion filled his mind, creating a gap for Sigurd to exploit.

Slamming his hand down, flaming spears shot out from the ground, piercing towards the Bestial living shadow.

"DODGE!!!" The humanoid living shadow shouted.

However, the beast ignored his warning.

He simply opened his jaw and tried to consume these flames.

"ARG!!!"

The flames lashed out in his mouth, burning away the 'flesh' that made up his body while the spears he didn't eat stabbed into his avatar.

Flaming symbols appeared across his body, forcing him to let go of Frida who took this chance to retrieve her avatar before it's destroyed.

"How?! How do you have our power?!?!" The beast roared, confusion filling his mind.

The flames cancelled out his 'consumption, allowing Sigurd's power to run rampant through his body.

There was only one source from which this could possibly be.

The Original's blood!

Glaring at Sigurd with bloodshot eyes, he dove into his shadow and tried to ambush Sigurd but he was ready.

Creating a flaming spear, he stabbed down into the ground as violet flames lashed out around him, forcing the beast out of his shadow.

Neither the beast nor the humanoid dared to take Sigurd lightly with the new addition of these flames.

Thankfully, Sigurd wasn't used to it.

Collapsing on his knees, he felt his vision becoming blurry as these flames exhausted far more power than he expected.

Seeing this as a chance, the beast lunged forward only for ice to appear around Sigurd, protecting him.

Frida could be seen weaving energy into a spear to assist Sigurd from above.

"We're killing Sigurd. No holding back. The others are already dead and Ayla retreated. Once he's dead we're leaving." The humanoid furrowed his brows as his shadows began to fuse with the beast. Their bodies broke apart before being reformed into a single entity.

A single horned demonic beast with bone white plating across its body. A pair of piercing white eyes and a set of crimson claws. Underneath this plate was the familiar writhing shadows that made up their body.

Without hesitation, the beast slammed its claws down and rushed towards Sigurd.

He wasn't even able to react in time as the beast had already pierced the barrier and the claws were on the verge of piercing his eyes.

"Be sure to thank my master when you get the chance okay? But kids these days are pretty rowdy, taking on all kinds of poisons into their body. Ugly looking thing." Caera chuckled, sitting on Sigurd's shoulder while stopping the claw from getting any closer with her finger.

"Who are you?!" The beast glared at Caera.

But the moment he made eye contact with her, a chill went down his spine.

He had to run!

"Bye bye~" Caera grinned.

*BANG!!!

A tentacle erupted from the beast's shadow, crushing him into a paste as mouths ate up his corpse before disappearing.

In one move, two Lords were erased.

Chapter 507 - 507: Clean Up Of The Capital

Looking down at the smear that used to be two abnormal Lords that gave him and Frida a lot of trouble, Sigurd couldn't help but shiver as his gaze slowly turned up to Caera.

She had a sadistic grin on her face while flicking her hand.

What kind of power does one need to get in order to reach this level of power? There was no sign of Abyssal Energy too! Was this power artificial? Or was she simply that much stronger to the point he couldn't even sense it?

Sigurd didn't know.

All he knew was that an absolute monster was sitting on his shoulder.

"Why the cold sweat mr blacksmith? I'm not going to kill you. You're an ally after all." Caera chuckled.

Most have this kind of reaction after seeing her attack.

"Caera!" Frida called out in surprise.

She knew about the Queen's attendant who's been helping her with certain tasks but she didn't think she was this strong!

The two have met a few times after all.

But never had Frida ever sensed the power of a Lord from her.

"Seems like having your Avatar broken hasn't reduced your spirit at all. Since I've dealt with the problem, I shall go back. The Queen is rather worried but the danger is now over. All that's left are stragglers which I'm sure you two will have no issues in subduing right?" Caera asked, hopping off Sigurd's shoulder.

Nodding her head, Frida wanted to say something when Caera disappeared from her spot.

While she was grateful for Caera's help, a question popped into Frida's mind.

What caused her to act?

In the past, whenever there was an issue, she would always be the first to ask if the nation would fall and if she should leave.

Never has she offered to help or took the initiative.

But what changed? What made her help out? If she had this kind of power, they wouldn't have needed to lose a Lord in the past.

Letting out a deep sigh, Frida took this chance to recover her wounds while helping Sigurd up.

Aside from Caera, there was another abnormality.

Sigurd's new flames.

'What is going on...'

###

The clean up of the battlefield was handled swiftly. All of the beasts that were released by Elowen was dealt with by Frida using what remains of her power. Wounded or not, dealing with beasts was an easy task for the Lord.

However, what was not easy was the fact that everyone in the capital had their maximum capacity reduced. A majority of the Hounds and guards could not activate more than three Sigils which severely hindered their fighting power.

As for the civilians, they were spared from that fate since it was rare for them to get even one Sigil.

The biggest mystery was the red spider lily that blossomed beneath the great tree.

A lily that brought comfort and relief while the curse rained down on the capital. It was this lily that saved them from experiencing a hellscape of monsters crafted from the bodies of their people.

As for the source of this lily... She was currently sitting in Caera's lab.

"What is this??? It's simply... marvellous! This adaptability, this repulsion towards the Abyss, isn't this the perfect weapon to fight the Will?!" Caera remarked as she observed the movements of Alice's blood under a microscope.

She had tools laid out around her, each with a sample and recording down the values and reactions of Alice's blood depending on different stimulants.

"Don't get too excited by it. No normal human can consume even a fraction of my blood unless you dilute it." Alice reminded.

Both Egil and Selen were heavily exhausted and wounded after their battle and the two of them were still resting.

She brought them to Caera's lab for further observation since there's no telling what her blood would do to them in the long run.

"I'm aware. One drop and even the most resilient flesh was turned to mush." Caera waved her hand while adjusting the microscope in her hands.

"How did you even get blood like this? A body that can resist it?" Caera asked as Alice fell silent.

Her eyelashes trembled for a moment before a coldness appeared in her eyes.

"Human experimentation. Someone you're familiar with injected something into my body and turned me into this. I still don't quite understand the source of my power myself."

"Oh? Someone I'm familiar with? Someone else from Ayr?" Caera paused, sitting up in confusion.

In her mind, there was no one who could compare to her in the department of research. If so, then who was this familia-

"Nyer."

*CRACK!!!

Breaking the microscope in her hands at the mention of Nyer's name, Caera cleaned up the mess in silence.

"So Nyer was the one who made this blood?" Caera asked, her voice cold like the northern winds.

"Yep. I don't know what he's planning but despite us being enemies, he's still gunning after the Will. It's pretty likely that he's joined hands with the God of the Eclipse too." Alice nodded her head, giving Caera some of the information that she'd gathered.

"How unpleasant." Caera frowned.

The fact that the traitor of all people was able to create such a marvellous weapon infuriated her. It should've been her! It should've been her to create the blade against the Will but he was a step ahead.

However, just because he's the one who created it doesn't mean it's complete. As much as she loathed to carry on his research, in order to make a proper weapon against the Will, she needed to refine this blood so that the successor understands how to use it properly.

The first step would be to master the anti Abyss effects.

And the perfect opportunity was here.

"Do you think you can make a proper cure with my blood? For the curse that infected everyone who fought." Alice asked, changing the topic.

"A proper cure? I thought you had one already." Caera pointed to Egil and Selen who were sleeping.

"That's not a proper one. It involves turning them into hybrids. I'll be honest, I'm not too fond of the idea." Alice sighed.

Even though she wasn't fond of the idea, she might have to resort to it in the end.

While they won this battle, there was one major issue she had to deal with.

The Zenias now knowing she's in the north.

With them losing so many precious hybrids and two Lords, there's no doubt they'll be wanting to get a bit of revenge.

In fact, even if they didn't lose hybrids, the moment she was discovered to be still alive and in the north, it's already put this nation in great danger.

'The Zenia's probably don't care about the relationship between nations so long as they get their hands on us. Everything else can be dealt with at a later date.' Alyss reminded as Alice agreed.

She was their top priority, the origin of their blessed blood. With her in their grasp, they'll be able to make more hybrids.

'We'll need to warn the Queen and think up of ways to fend them off. But it's not going to be easy.' Alice massaged her eyes.

She still didn't have a full grasp of what the Zenia family could do. In fact, just the demonstration last night was enough of a worry since it's no doubt a small portion of their overall forces.

Precious no doubt but small in number.

Tapping her finger against the arm rest, Alice struggled to think up of any counter measures.

"If you don't want to turn them into hybrids, why not simply increase their resistance? Even without taking the offensive power of your blood into consideration, the defensive capabilities are already absurd." Caera suggested, swirling some blood in the test tube.

Taking a small bite of her finger, she dripped her own blood into the tube and watched as the two began to fight.

In the end, her blood lost to Alice's and was assimilated into the mix.

Even with her unique blessings... her blood lost?

Narrowing her eyes, Caera simply couldn't understand what Nyer put into the mix to create such a horrifying and tyrannical blood.

"How would I even go about increasing their resistance? The moment I inject my blood into them they'll die." Alice frowned, it didn't seem feasible to her.

"They're already infected right? Just treat it similar to hydraulics. A push pull mechanism within their body. It's a little hard since you need the right amount of blood to latch onto them. Every time they take a hit, blam the balance tilts. Then they need to zap it with their own stuff to push back the balance.

"It's a bit difficult with all the factors taken into account but overall, it should be possible. But that's only because the curse has already created a structure for you to latch onto within their body. It's not going as far as hybrids but they can't be classified as 'pure' humans either." Caera shrugged.

Granted, they aren't really pure humans either since they have Sigils in their body.

Blinking her eyes, Alice thought about the feasibility of such an idea and it did seem possible.

But what's more surprising was that Caera had become much better at explaining her ideas. If it was in the past, it'll probably be a jumbled mess of words.

"Do you think you can make an example for me? If I have a structure in mind, it'll be a lot easier to replicate."

"Of course. I'll need a specimen to demonstrate it on though I suppose we have plenty of subjects to choose from. It's not like the capital survived unscathed from that attack after all, plenty of corpses to use." Caera nodded her head as Alice furrowed her brows.

Using the corpses of civilians dragged in the crossfire was a little...

"Leave the corpses be. Just draw me a diagram if anything." Alice sighed.

They were innocents dragged into battle. She didn't want to desecrate their bodies in the name of experimentation.

"If you wish." Caera shrugged but she couldn't help but think it's a bit of a waste. There were plenty of resources to choose from yet she chose the hard path.

'Truly a waste.'

Chapter 508 - 508: Beware The Approaching Ruin

Swallowing her saliva nervously, Ayla kneeled in front of a figure with sweat running down her back.

Her heart beat against her chest as the fear of death gnawed at her mind.

Only the man in front of her could invoke such fear, the man who prodded and poked within her body.

The man who created her from the blood of the original.

"You lost... 7 of my precious Hybrids. And two of my proto Lords? All for the Capital to be safe and sound. All for the culprit who killed one of the Hybrids and learned of your existence to still survive to this day?" He asked calmly.

Yet it was this calm that shook Ayla.

Biting her lip, she didn't dare look up and nodded her head slowly.

"Did you learn nothing of value? Or are you here just to disappoint me?" He asked as Ayla could feel the man's gaze narrow.

"Ah! Tha- I discovered something that's- of gre- great interest to you!" She stammered as the man stood up and leaned over her.

"I don't believe I created you with a speech defect. So why are you stuttering?"

"I'm sorry!" Slamming her head against the ground, Ayla tried her best not to tremble before this man.

"Don't bore my ears with words of apology. Tell me the information you got and pray that it's enough for me to spare you of punishment."

Hearing the word punishment, Ayla's pupils constricted as her shoulders trembled.

Each part of her body itched as she wanted nothing else but to just run away but she understood that it was futile.

"The original lives! I heard news of her in the North!"

"!!!" Pausing in surprise, the man was silent as he stood up straight.

Ayla sighed in relief inwardly.

"The original... lives... you say? And she's in the North? Do you have any proof of this matter?"

"Yes! There was a woman, a traitor of our kind. Not quite a Hybrid but had traces of the original's blood. She turned herself into a Hybrid by ingesting the blood of two subjects and when she saw me, she questioned if I was 'Alice' or not." Ayla reported.

"A little lacking to call it proof but regardless, it gives your claim some foundation to work with."

Scratching his chin, the man walked past Ayla.

"If it's truly the original, then we must utilize everything to get her back. But if it isn't... And you simply used it as an excuse to justify the loss of resources... I'm sure I don't need to explain the rest to you." The man chuckled.

Clapping his hands lightly, Ayla widened her eyes as she threw up a mouthful of blood.

Her flesh beneath her skin began to writhe as spikes pierced out.

Clutching her chest, she gurgled on her own blood while tears formed in the corner of her eyes, mixed with the blood seeping out.

She wanted to tear apart her skin, to dig out whatever was crawling inside of her so that the pain would stop.

Around her neck, a 'Sigil' appeared as veins bulged around her body. Her wounds began to rapidly recover only to be torn apart once more.

"ARGGG!!!"

Letting out a cry as tears rolled down her face, Ayla squirmed on the floor, stuck in a constant cycle of recovery and destruction.

"Tears only from this much... truly a failed copy of dear Alice. Even at the tender age of 13, she could handle this much pain with ease and even try to fight back." The man shook his head before waving his hand.

The writhing of flesh stopped as Ayla was finally given a break.

Her body twitched while her vision blurred.

"This should suffice for a light slap on the hand."

Leaving behind the failed product, the man left the room with an unrestrained smile on his face.

How long has it been? How he dreamed of torturing that body again with his own hands. These new subjects simply couldn't compare to the resilience of Alice.

The way she squirmed, the way she glared at him with a defiant gaze as he broke her down bit by bit. The climax as he finally saw the light in her eyes fade along with her resilient will!

After all this time, she must've regained the will to live once more.

Meaning, he could experience the joy of breaking her apart again!

A clue had finally been found and he will not waste this opportunity! He MUST track her down!

To feel the height of his joy once more!

###

Listening to Caera's lecture on how she could create a 'cure' to the curse, Alice found herself feeling distracted.

She didn't know why but she couldn't concentrate at all today. Which was rather strange considering she never had issues with concentration.

"Perhaps we should take a break." Caera suggested as Alice nodded her head.

It wasn't that she didn't want to make the cure but something was keeping her distracted and she didn't know what. She couldn't process the information at all.

Reading yet not reading. Listening but not listening.

Alice felt out of it.

"Oh actually, you should probably go visit Sigurd. He's been... preoccupied with the contract that you've given him." Caera paused as she remembered seeing Sigurd reporting back to Verona.

"Alright." Nodding her head, Alice glanced at Egil and Selen briefly before stepping out.

Currently, they were in Caera's personal lab situated near the centre of the capital.

Taking a few slides, she made her way to Sigurd's forge.

On the way there, she could see the people trying to salvage what they could from their homes.

Families reassuring their children that it's going to be alright.

Mournful wives, husbands, mothers and fathers.

The light of despair in the eyes of children who lost their parents.

Even though the capital reacted fast with the deployment of the Hounds and guards, they couldn't avoid casualties.

Yet this was the 'better' outcome.

Had it not been for Selen dealing with the Hybrids and her holding back the curse, they wouldn't even be walking around right now. The entire capital would be submerged in despair.

But the danger isn't over yet.

Just the fact that she left a mark of her presence here meant that the Zenias must've caught wind of it.

Subconsciously, Alice reached for her own neck. She could feel a creeping itch as the desire to scratch it dominated her mind.

Taking a deep breath, she held herself back and took the lift down.

She didn't have a token like last time but Sigurd did tell her to come back after a while for her gauntlets she so used that as the reason for visiting.

Descending into the bowels of the earth, she could sense the presence of her violet flames.

The power of these flames were a little weaker than during the night they made the contract since the important catalyst of her blood was missing. During that night, the curse drifting through the air along with the cure was composed of her blood, acting as fuel for these flames.

Without it, it'll no doubt be highly taxing for Sigurd to manifest it.

"DAMMIT!"

Hearing his shouts of frustration, Alice shrugged her shoulders since it was as she expected.

Reaching the bottom, she saw Sigurd sitting on the ground with sweat across his head.

A spark of violet flame flickered in front of him but judging by his expression, this was far from what he wanted.

"Having some difficulties?" Alice called out as Sigurd glanced over.

"What the f*ck is wrong with your fire? How the hell does it take so much energy to make???" Sigurd questioned.

As a Lord, his capacity for Energy far surpasses Alice. Even if it has been reduced by a certain amount thanks to the curse, it's still something that should surpass Alice.

Yet a spark was the best he could do.

On top of the exorbitant energy cost of using this fire, maintaining it drained his reserves like crazy! Using everything he's got, maintaining this spark was his limit.

"If you don't give it the proper fuel of course it's going to drain the sh*t outta you if you try to make it." Alice remarked, making a small blood orb and flicked it into the spark.

*BANG!!!!

The moment her blood orb came into contact, the spark detonated into a maelstrom of flames that Sigurd had to quickly restrain before it burned down his forge.

"See? Right fuel and it doesn't cost that much energy now does it?" Alice smirked, finding a crystal for her to sit on.

"Can't help but feel like I got scammed now. Trading a small piece of my soul for fire that I can't even use properly." Sigurd's smile twitched.

On the night, there was no doubt regarding the fire's effectiveness. The way the living shadows reacted when these flames cancelled out their abilities. He understood that if he used this to fight his enemies, they'd struggle to use their Sigils.

He simply couldn't understand why Alice was able to use these flames effortlessly.

Was it something to do with the blood?

Furrowing his brows, he tried to use his own blood as a catalyst but it was futile. Once again, the energy cost shot up.

"I wouldn't say scammed. In fact, wasn't the contract the reason you managed to survive long enough for Caera to help you?" Alice shrugged her shoulders with a smug grin.

Sigurd's smile twitched as he wanted to smack that grin off her face this instant but he knew that light in her eye.

"Tch, tell me what you want. I'll consider it." Sigurd leaned against his forge in frustration.

"How about another contract? This time I'll offer you the fuel you need to use these flames." Alice narrowed her gaze.

Chapter 509 - 509: Fuel For The Fire

Furrowing his brows, Sigurd contemplated the possibility of another contract. He had to admit that these flames were extremely enticing for him.

He had already traded a small fraction of his soul for these flames so what else could she want?

"Don't worry, I'm not asking for the rest of your soul. One fragment is more than enough for me." Alice winked with a smile.

With the previous contract established, she was able to get access to all of Sigurd's Sigils.

As for how they work, she was unsure. But it wasn't something that she should waste this opportunity to find out.

Instead, she had a different reward in mind.

"How do you feel about making equipment whenever I ask? I have a few friends that need equipment. And as you know, good stuff is hard to find especially if you're powerful. Outside of Personal Artifacts, most of the equipment breaks after a few uses." Alice offered but Sigurd immediately shook his head.

"Do you have any idea how expensive it is to make a weapon? I still have to supply weapons for our Warriors. If I go around at your every command then that'll disrupt the flow of production."

"I'm only asking you to make a few when I need it. It's not like I have hundreds of friends either, just a few." Alice raised an eyebrow.

"Limit it to one per person and not more than 5. And as for the funds, either you give me rare materials to work with or cough up the money needed." Sigurd suggested the terms.

The fact that he had given Selen a numbered equipment for free was already insane considering how expensive these things are.

Crossing her arms, Alice furrowed her brows. If it's five, then that's Ria, Luke, Allura, Kaden and Gin.

Acceptable but then comes the issue of material costs.

"By rare materials, I don't suppose it's things that can be easily obtained. Even if I kill strong beasts." Alice asked as Sigurd nodded.

"Do you want to know how long it took to find the materials for your friend's ring? Three years. It took three years to chase for that specific type of metal and store it in my vault. I only grabbed it out because her skills were interesting enough and resonated with it." Sigurd complained as Alice's eyes sparkled for a moment.

"So what you're saying is, you already have the materials?"

"What kind of blacksmith do you think I am? Of course I've stocked up on... materials." Sigurd frowned, feeling Alice's gaze lock onto her.

"Then how about this? Rather than procuring materials for you, why don't we go down the money route? But since I saved your life, Frida's, and the lives of everyone in the capital that was infected, we get a 'little' discount." Alice smiled happily as Sigurd scratched his chin.

"What kind of discount are we talking about?"

If it was just 10% off or 20% off then it was acceptable. These were materials that he spent blood sweat and tears to get after all.

With his curse, it's been harder to get them since he can't leave his forge for long.

"80% off."

"F*CK YOUR MOTHER! 80% OFF? ARE YOU HIGH YOU DAFT GIRL?!?!!" Sigurd screamed as he didn't think Alice would be ballsy enough to ask for a whole 80% off!

If he gave her this kind of discount then it might as well be free!

"Is saving lives worth so little? Aiya I'm sure the civilians will be hurt hearing that their precious Lord thinks their life isn't worth a measly 80% off." Alice lamented as Sigurd wanted to smack the brat in front of him immediately.

"This isn't a matter of what their life is worth nor is it 'measly'. Why don't you just go and lose 80% of your body and see if it's still measly!"

"Is that a bet?" Alice narrowed her eyes and licked her lips.

For an 80% off on numbered equipment, she'll gladly blow up 80% of her body. After all, she can regenerate it all anyways.

Remembering her regeneration when he was forging, Sigurd shivered and quickly scratched the idea.

"Bottom line is I'm not doing 80% off!"

"70%" Alice changed her offer.

"20%"

"65%"

"20%" Sigurd refused to budge.

"90%"

"Why did you go higher???"

"Thought you might say yes." Alice shrugged.

"The f*ck I am. Girl are you trying to bankrupt me?"

"If I was trying to bankrupt you I would've let you die. Then I could've just wandered in here and got the stuff I want." Alice chuckled.

She had his forging method in her mind. With part of his soul also at her disposal now, all it'll take is a bit of experimentation and some trial and error before she can start forging equipment as well.

Gritting his teeth, Sigurd was frustrated. The key issue he couldn't ignore was the fact that he did indeed owe his life to her.

If it wasn't for her, Frida would've lost her avatar, he would've probably been killed and the civilians dead.

"30%. I can't go any high-"

"60%"

*PUCHI!!!

A vein bulged on Sigurd's temple as his smile twitched furiously.

"Girl, how are you even sure this 'fuel' of yours is worth this discount to begin with? Let's set aside the matter of what lives cost and what I owe. This contract is for me to get the fuel after all."

Crossing her legs, Alice thought about it for a moment.

If they do go ahead with this contract, she'll need to be careful with how she phrases it and how he obtains this power.

With the Zenias now hot on her trail, if they find out he can get her blood through the contract, it'll be pretty bad and it's likely he'll be dragged away by them.

Meaning, she has to limit the blood to be immediately detonated into the flames.

But as for whether or not this fuel is worth the discount...

"Obviously it's worth the discount. You saw how the flames negated Abyss abilities right? Even for the followers of the three Gods, they use Sigils. Just having my flames gives you an edge over them. Heck, if you experiment a bit, who knows what you can potentially forge with these. Maybe a weapon that can cut through Abyss abilities." Alice shrugged.

While she wasn't sure if Nyer has succeeded in making more beings with the same flame as her, she understands that it was entirely unique as of this moment.

The closest thing she's seen has been the hybrids but even then, they had their draw backs.

"35%. This is seriously the highest I can go." Sigurd sighed and gave his final offer.

At 35% discount, he barely breaking even.

"40%"

". . ."

###

Leaving the forge with a skip in her step, Alice had a grin on his face while ignoring the string of curses behind her.

With the contract now established, she'll get a 40% discount when asking him to forge equipment. The limit was five and in exchange, he was able to use the flames at a higher efficiency.

With the way she worded the contract and how the blood is given to him, there was no risk of people being able to extract the blood from him.

However, whether or not he could actually use these flames to forge was another question in itself.

But that wasn't her problem to figure out, it was Sigurd's.

'The gloves still need a day or so before they're ready. I guess I should do some clothes shopping but...'
Looking into her wallet, Alice shed a silent tear.

She was broke.

At this rate, she might have to cut back on the mead she has to buy.

Pausing mid step, Alice shook her head.

How could she even have such a heinous thought! It's not an issue with mead but rather she's been doing favours without being paid most of the time. She's been hoping that she'll get paid for her achievements.

Folding her arms, Alice contemplated on ways she could earn more money.

'How did Kaden and Allura not run out of money?'

[Kaden robbed people. Allura also kind of robbed people.] Cayla shrugged.

While Kaden was more of a physical robbery, breaking into their vaults and so on, Allura basically got everything for free since people owed her a lot.

Not to mention her helping out with the establishment of many organisations such as the Underground, making them owe her big time.

'So what you're saying is that I should rob people?' Alice.

[. . .Forget I said anything.]

Joking around with Cayla, Alice eventually decided to see if she could find any jobs that'll pay her. It takes a lot of money to travel after all not to mention the need to buy rations and so on.

###

Sitting in his chair, Luthor Zenia had a open letter on his table.

A report regarding a failed operation in the North.

Yet despite this failure, they managed to uncover potential hints to Alice's whereabouts.

But that was it, simply a hint.

No sightings, no confirmation, no nothing. Just a hint and a mention of her name after seeing the clone.

'After all this time, you still live.' Luthor thought to himself, caressing a pocket watch with the picture of his wife inside.

Even though they were losing resources and running out of her blood, he didn't care. If all traces of her disappears from this world then so be it.

But she lives.

"Get Albert to visit the north. Tell the doctor to be patient. If A-... if that monster has lived this long, she won't die easily. Don't expose us more than they already have. A trump card loses its value once the enemy knows what it is."

Glancing up at the sky, he let out a fatigued sigh.

Chapter 510 - 510: Caera's 'Cure'

Spending the day looking for odd jobs that could pay her well, Alice let out a sigh and settled on just helping out.

After the disaster, no one had the thought of offering jobs but rather doing all that they could to piece together what used to be their daily life.

Countless buildings were destroyed and no matter how Frida tried to erase the damages, it was impossible to forget.

"Ah Alice dear, can you help out in district 2? They're lacking a bit of manpower over there." An old lady called out with a soft smile.

Alice was currently carrying two logs of wood on her shoulders while using her blood to carry the rest.

"Got it. Can you point me in the direction? I'll drop off these logs first." Alice nodded her head.

Snapping her finger, she created portals and placed the logs next to a broken down house before following the old woman.

Listening to her instructions, Alice hopped over to district 2 and greeted the workers there.

With this district being close to the workshops, there were large beams of metal crushing houses and so on.

Many of the guards had their maximum capacity reduced so activating Sigils was quite the burden, leaving most of the heavy lifting to Abyssal Engineering contraptions. Mostly just rope and gears that'll help move heavy objects.

But at the end of the day, it couldn't beat having a warrior help out.

Marking down where all of the metal beams were, Alice tapped her foot against the ground as a pool of blood expanded beneath her.

Letting her blood latch onto the beams, she activated her fourth Sigil and used the gravity of the Void to lift them up through portals.

Once they were suspended in the air, she had them lifted away from the buildings and set aside to be repurposed at a later date.

"Anything else you need help with?" Alice asked as the workers took off their hats and shook their head with a grin.

"Nope, with you around a whole day's of work can be done in an instantahaha." One of them laughed as Alice shrugged her shoulders.

"If there's nothing else, I'll check and see if there's anywhere else that needs help."

Giving them a wave, Alice left the district before helping elsewhere.

With her being unable to focus on Caera's explanations, this kind of distraction was perfect for Alice and soon, a day went by before she knew it.

Glancing up at the setting sun, Alice wiped away the sweat and glanced at the capital that was slowly regaining its former glory.

"Alice! We're going to the tavern for a party after this, want to join us?" One of the workers called out.

Hearing the words tavern, Alice's eyes shimmered with excitement before calming down.

"I can'ttt~ I'm flat broke." Alice stuck out her tongue.

"Come anywaysahaha, you've helped us plenty today. A drink or two is the least we can do!"

Curling her lips into a grin, she jogged over.

"Well, what are you waiting for then? Common!" She'll never turn down a free drink.

###

"F*ck..." Letting out a groan, Alice sat up slowly and glanced around her.

She could see countless workers passed out on chains and she was one of them.

Last night, things got wild after the first drink.

From gambling games, arm wrestling to drunk singing. After a point, they began to shout their grievances about Extalia. After that, there was confusion and anger regarding why the beasts attacked and doubts towards the Lords and guards who failed to make a proper stand.

Even if Alice wasn't there to see if, lots of lives were lost as collateral damage and she knew it.

She could feel the connections severing after all.

Each severance meant another life lost.

As for how much she drank...

Looking at the mountain of mugs around her, she couldn't help but feel sorry for the people who had to pay for this.

Thankfully, it wasn't limited to one person otherwise they might've gone bankrupt. When they arrived at the tavern, there were others that Alice helped and they decided to split her bill amongst them, letting her drink as much as she wanted.

Letting out a yawn, the aftertaste of mead could still be tasted as Alice grabbed a coat from her pouch.

Her outfit was soaked in mead and the chilly morning air didn't help at all.

Even with the barriers that Frida put in place, it was still cold in the morning.

"Urg... my head." Alice groaned.

Making her way back to Caera's lab, Alice figured she should be able to concentrate on the lessons now that she had a break.

Perhaps it was the accumulated stress from linking herself to everyone in the capital.

Regardless, she didn't want to delay any further when it comes to making a cure.

As she entered the lab, she noticed Caera sitting with her eyes closed.

There was a dark aura simmering around her. To Alice, it felt... abnormal.

Otherworldly in fact and didn't resemble the feeling she got from the Abyss or the Void.

A third source?

'It's not divinity either...' Alice folded her arms.

Her observations were noticed by Caera who opened her eyes and greeted Alice with a smile.

"Welcome back, did you enjoy your break dear successor?"

"It was a good change of pace. What was that just now? It didn't feel like it belonged to the Abyss or the Void." Alice asked curiously as Caera tapped her chin.

"It's a small secret~ You see, I do not wish to bow down to the Abyss or the Will that controls it. Just the thought makes me want to throw up so I figured out a different way to become a Lord. Are you perhaps interested in it?"

"To an extent. But I'm still waiting for the right chance to get my sixth Sigil. It's too early to consider becoming a Lord." Alice shrugged, sitting down by her usual seat.

"Then this is something I will tell you when you're on the doorstep to becoming a Lord. On a side note, I've completed a diagram of what might work as a Cure. As I stated, the warriors that are infected will suffer from two states once the cure is activated.

"A 'berserker' state where their resistance of the Abyss is increased but so is their bloodlust. They're able to enhance their physical prowess to a rather impressive degree. I've tried to work out a formula that gets rid of this berserker state but it's kind of necessary. Without this, they won't be able to discharge the curse fast enough." Caera handed over several sheets as Alice gave it a read.

Indeed, it's as Caera said. Without the berserker state constantly burning the curse to give them physical reinforcement and resistances, the consumption won't be fast enough to balance out the scales. Once a balance is reached, however, they'll naturally exit the berserker state and be able to use their usual Sigils without worry.

On top of that, Alice was rather impressed by the methodical details that Caera had noted down. It's been short but Caera had taken into account everything that Alice had told her thus far and even made back ups in case certain methods didn't work the way they wanted or failed.

This was how a researcher should be rather than her own self taught method.

However...

"Caera, I'm sure you know as well as I do that prolonged use of this method will make it harder and harder for them to leave the berserker state. Eventually, they'll be stuck in that state, unable to regain sanity. No different from beasts wearing the skin of man." Alice narrowed her eyes as Caera stood with an unflinching smile.

"And? I don't see an issue with that. Isn't the most glaring problem the potential for a secondary attack by the unknown forces? In order to prepare for a counter offensive, this is the best they can hope for." Caera replied, not finding anything wrong with her proposal.

Furrowing her brows, Alice tapped her finger.

There were probably a better way to go about this but the reality of the situation was that she was not prepared at all. She was not prepared for the evolution of the curse nor was she prepared for the sudden attack.

The warriors were exposed too much and this was the best they could hope for outside of turning them into hybrids.

Both had their risks.

Choosing Caera's method had them risking their 'mind'.

Choosing Alice's method had them risking their 'body'.

The hybrid operation was still largely unfamiliar to Alice. She was only able to pull it off thanks to Egil's innate talent for spirits and his ability to activate the bloodline release.

Without these two factors, the operation would've never been considered, especially with her own blood that hasn't been diluted.

Even the hybrids that the Zenias are proud of had diluted blood!

Massaging her eyes, Alice let out a sigh.

In this situation, she could only choose Caera's method!

"We still need to let the queen know. Overall, the choice must be given to the individual. They need to know the risks of using this power otherwise it would not be fair to them."

It was Alice's way of giving them a way out.

They had already risked their lives to protect the capital.

"Shall I ask the queen to schedule a meeting then?" Caera asked as Alice nodded her head.

It was about time she met the queen and now was a good time.