

Abyssal A 511

Chapter 511 - 511: Recovery

Having Caera go and arrange a meeting with the Queen, Alice took this time to familiarise herself a bit more regarding the solution.

Aside from the... moral implications of making those who accept into berserkers, Alice had to admit that it was a good solution.

Not only does it resolve the issue of having the curse in their body to some extent, but it also gives them the option to keep fighting if they want.

Naturally, they can choose to get this cure and not fight. But...

'They'll still suffer the effects of the curse. They need to 'expel' the curse often enough to maintain a balance once they go through with this.'

The moment they accept this operation, their fates will be sealed.

Either die on the battlefield or become a berserker.

They can run and deny it but there will come a time when they'll be forced to activate the berserker state and this will continue until they lose their minds.

If it was Alice in their positions, she didn't know if she would accept this or not. The trade off was simply... too high.

What if she didn't achieve her revenge in time and lost her mind?

There's also the small possibility that one use could be the limit for some people. If they cannot bring themselves back from being berserk, they'll be stuck in that state.

"Urg..."

Hearing a groan, Alice placed the sheets of research down as she glanced over and saw Selen sitting up while clutching her head.

After becoming a hybrid, even though her scars have disappeared, new 'scars' have appeared across her body.

The most prominent scar was the black feather peaking out from her hair, above her ear.

"You've been knocked out for almost two days. Must've been quite stressful fighting 7 hybrids huh?" Alice smiled, feeling glad that Selen woke up without any issues.

"Almost two days huh? Honestly, I don't mind that. I really thought it was over for me." Selen let out a chuckle as the fight was one that truly pushed her beyond her limit.

Had it not been for her momentary awakening and turning herself into a hybrid, she would've died after fighting the two defence focused hybrids.

"But you survived and that's all that matters."

"Right! What happened to Egil? What's with the black armour?" Selen asked as Alice gestured with her head.

Looking to her right, Selen noticed Egil sleeping next to her.

"ARG!!!" Letting out a yelp in surprise, Selen rolled out of the bed with a blush.

"What's wrong with you? Caera didn't have a spare bed so we just threw you two on it to observe any lingering side effects. I had to teach Egil how to manifest his soul in order to form a balance with the curse.

"Though... his manifestation is a bit different." Alice shrugged.

Activating her own bloodline release, her soul state hovered behind her.

"Egil's soul state is his armour. It's merged with the curse due to the damage he took but it does bring out quite a bit of his power." Alice explained, waving her hand and dismissing the bloodline release.

Coughing awkwardly, Selen adjusted herself.

"And what about the one that escaped?"

"No clue. She's probably gone back to report about my existence. Since I was focused on you and Egil, I wasn't able to track her down properly. And even if I did, I was in no state to fight at full power after linking myself with everyone who got cursed." Alice shrugged.

"Then the Zenias are probably coming to the north right?" Selen frowned.

"Most likely. In fact, if they trust the words of that hybrid, it goes from likely to certainty. Which is why I want to do something for the north before leaving. Take a look at this and tell me what you think." Alice grabbed the research and handed it to Selen.

Giving it a read, Selen's frown only deepened as this was quite risky in her opinion.

This operation might let them fight in the short term but it dooms anyone who says yes.

Reckless and completely unlike the research that Alice would usually do.

"You didn't make this did you?" Selen asked, knowing Alice's habits.

"No I did not. I asked a friend to give me a hand and this is what they came up with. The way she sees human life is a little... disagreeable. But you can't deny her genius." Alice sighed as she was still hesitating a little on this approach.

Though if there was no better alternative, then they could only choose this method.

"I see... What about those without Sigils? Do you think you can cure them? Like... Egil's mother for example."

"Of course I can." Alice nodded her head.

Glancing at Egil for a moment, Selen curled her lips up into a smile.

"Then let's give him a surprise."

Raising her eyebrow, Alice shrugged and went along with it.

###

Egil felt like he was drifting in the Void.

The words of his father ring out in his ears, calling him a fake, a cheater.

A disgrace.

He could remember the glares of disdain, the chills he felt and the fear that dominated his mind.

Then came the anger.

The period of his life when only violence was his answer.

'Am I dead?' He couldn't help but wonder.

After asking Alice to help him, he was able to reach Selen in time to stop her from being killed.

But everything after that was blurry.

He could vaguely remember the fight but most of it was him acting on instinct.

When using the 'armour', his consciousness drifted. He became a rampaging beast.

Looking around him, he understood that this was no void but rather the maw of a giant beast and what he was floating in was blood.

Trying to sit up, black chains latched onto his body, carving into his flesh. Pieces of armour ripped apart his skin, fusing with his flesh.

However... Egil didn't feel pain.

In fact, it felt soothing. Like this is how it should've been from the beginning.

Maybe... Maybe he should just float in this blood river forever.

Maybe he should just let the armour take over.

What was he fighting for again?

Ah he can't remember...

At that moment, Egil felt a gentle hand touch his head. A touch he hasn't felt in a long... long time.

A sense of nostalgia overwhelmed him and memories flooded his mind.

Little by little, he opened his eyes and tears began to form.

"No matter how many years that pass, you're still my baby on the inside." Egil's mother stroked his hair slowly and wiped the tears from his eyes.

Without saying anything, Egil sat up and hugged his mom. Despite his large stature, he looked like a small child in his mother's arms. His shoulders trembled and he tried to hold back his tears but they continued to flow without stopping.

Revealing a small smile, Egil's mom patted his back while Alice and Selen gave the two some space.

"Seems like he likes his gift." Selen revealed a warm smile while glancing back at the room.

"Yep. Though I do think it might be a little stressful on her body since she has just woken up from her own coma." Alice shrugged. The way she looked at Egil and the way she comforted him made Alice a little jealous. She wanted to see Allura again.

To jump into her chest and hug her with everything she's got.

To talk about her journey so far, the troubles she ran into, the new friends she made and how she's feeling happy about her life.

"Well the moment you mentioned Egil, she forgot about recovering and immediately asked us to bring her to him." Selen chuckled.

"Fair point. I think a short walk should be enough time for them to talk about what's happened right?"

"Might need to go for a longer walk with everything Egil's been bottling up."

Selen wanted Egil to enjoy this moment to its fullest. Even if you run out of words, sometimes just being in their presence is enough to heal someone.

The mutual understanding and enjoyment of each other's company. For a mother and son, this was the moment he could feel peace without any distractions.

"Alright." Nodding her head, Alice joined Selen for a long walk around the city to give Egil plenty of time.

###

Walking through the throne room with a slight skip to her step, Caera could see Verona talking with Frida.

"Hope I'm not interrupting anything." Caera called out as Frida glanced over.

Giving Verona a bow, Frida left the room.

"Seems like I did after all." Caera chuckled, leaning against the throne.

"Not exactly. Though I'm surprised you made a move. I thought you were more of an observer." Verona shrugged before giving her a side glance.

"Situations change. And in that moment I figured it was appropriate for me to save your assistant."

"I doubt that's the case. Is that girl what you've been working towards?" Verona asked curiously but Caera shook her head.

"Nope. It's honestly a coincidence."

"So are you leaving the north then?" Verona nodded her head.

Caera wasn't someone to beat around the bush so if she says it's a coincidence then it was a coincidence.

"Depends on what Alice says. I still have research I need to do and seems to me like she doesn't want to rush into things. I've already offered her my everything so I will do what she commands." Caera twirled her hair.

It wasn't like she was part of the northern defences in the first place.

"But that's not what I'm here to talk about. She wants a meeting with you. To talk about a... proposal for helping those affected by the curse. The side effects are a little devastating so it's best you understand the full picture before we do anything."

Staying silent, Verona contemplated before nodding her head.

"Alright. But after the meeting, can you help me out? I think it's about time we start thinking about the next stage. I can't just sit here doing nothing while my nation is attacked."

Hearing this, Caera curled her lips into a wide grin.

"Of course."

Chapter 512 - 512: Egil's 'Rematch'

After taking a long walk around the place, they came back to the room and saw Egil sitting by the bed while his mother was sleeping.

"I wanted to take her somewhere to eat since she's been stuck in a bed for so long. But her body couldn't take it so she's resting now." Egil spoke up with a smile on his face.

He continued to hold her hand as she slept and watched over his mother.

"It's to be expected. The cure I gave her helped remove a lot of the curse from her system but there'll be lingering side effects. Healing blood won't be as effective and using Sigil powers to heal her will also have reduced effectiveness. She'll have to rely on her own recovery most of the time." Alice nodded, pulling a chair next to him.

"Thank you." Egil smiled.

"You're welcome."

Hesitating for a moment, Selen also pulled up a chair next to Egil but turned her head and looked at the wall.

Alice found it a little strange but shrugged.

"With your mother now recovered, I assume you're going to look after her in the capital right?"

"Yeah. She only has me to look after her. Now that she's recovered from the curse, I want to make sure she's feeling better before I do anything." Egil nodded.

"Then I find it necessary to warn you about a possible fight. The Zenias are probably going to launch a stronger attack than last time since they now know I'm here. I don't plan on staying for long because the longer I stay, the more they'll target the north." Alice explained while getting some dried salted peanuts from her pouch. A snack to have with her mead that one of the workers introduced to her.

Hearing this, Egil furrowed his brows.

One surprise attack by this family and the capital was already in a big mess. If they decide to send their main forces, what would it look like?

Egil didn't want to know nor did he want to find out.

"What do you think are the odds of this capital surviving unscathed?" He asked.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know. But the chances of people surviving aren't high, even if I'm here. I don't know why the Queen didn't make a move but the Lords are not going to cut it."

Opening her flask of mead, she took a drink and narrowed her gaze.

Those strange living shadows... They had access to her blood so if the Zenia's have more of them, Sigurd and Frida will no doubt die. Caera would be fine but Alice understood one thing after interacting with Caera.

This was not the same person she knew in the Inverted World. More than that, she only moves based on her own self interest. Everything else is of not value to her.

A dangerous quality to have with someone close to her but Alice couldn't deny her usefulness right now.

The only thing she could really do is try her best to make sure Caera doesn't cross any lines she shouldn't do.

But even if that were to happen, it's not like she can do anything to harm Caera in the first place. If anything, it might even work against her.

'Even though she said she'll give you her everything, you still can't trust her huh?' Alyss smirked while sitting on her throne.

'Of course not. Trust isn't something you can get with just words. I'll have to keep an eye on her.' Alice sighed.

"Do... Do you think it's possible to keep my mum safe with the power I have now? If the Zenias attack." Egil asked after a pause.

Blinking her eyes, Alice tapped her chin.

"If it's just one person, yes, yes you can. But that's assuming you can leave. With you having my blood now flowing through your body, I don't know if the Zenias will be able to track you down or not. In a direct confrontation, there are still things to improve on but it should be feasible."

With the new abilities that Egil unlocked, he'll be stronger than most people. While she didn't know his full capabilities, she's at least certain that he'll be a pain in the ass to kill.

'That kind of tenacity should help him escape with his mother if danger arrives. But...'

"Egil, let's have a spar. It's been a while and I want to see what your armour is capable of. If it matches what I think, you should be fine. And come to think of it, technically our fight ended as a draw during the Warrior's Honour. Let's call this a rematch." Alice offered with a grin.

Egil wanted to accept but hesitated since his mother was still recovering.

"Just go, I'll look after her while you're gone." Selen spoke up.

"Alright." Nodding his head with a smile, he gave Selen a hug before standing up and following Alice.

###

Standing in the arena that was empty, Alice gave her body a stretch while Egil did the same.

Everyone was being treated for the curse so no one was here to interrupt them. They could go a little crazy.

"The main drawback that I've noticed when you go into that armour is a berserked state. Your mind is only focused on one thing. We need to deal with that if you want to use it to the full extent.

"Since I didn't fight you, let's see what you can do." Alice gestured as Egil nodded his head.

Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath as the Sigils across his body started to flicker.

His energy capacity isn't enough to activate them so he needed an alternative source.

Bloodline Release!

From his shadow, a great armoured beast jumped out, looming over him like a guillotine.

Even though this is the second time that Alice had seen it, she had to admire its aura of destruction. Just standing in the presence of this mutated soul was enough to trigger her fighting instincts.

Its flesh was constructed from the same dark jagged armour that ate away at Egil's body. Beneath the helmet, a blood red mane of hair fluttered in the wind while a pair of crimson eyes glared at Alice, exuding a thick wave of killing intent.

On the crown was a pair of curved jagged horns.

Cracks could be seen forming across the body of the beast as it shrank in size, wrapping around Egil's body.

"ARGGGG!!!!" Letting out a shout of pain with the armour growing teeth and digging into his flesh, Egil slammed his arms down, creating a dust cloud.

*BANG!!!

Bursting out from the cloud, Egil could be seen trying to stab Alice with his claw.

"Control your mind Egil. This state is powerful but your killing intent is too strong. It's easy to tell what you're aiming for." Alice bent her body back and dodged his strike effortlessly.

Twisting her body, she punched him in the ribs but he didn't move at all.

"I get that you're a berserker in this state but brute forcing things are a stupid move." Alice rolled her eyes.

***BOOM!!!**

A void flux detonated where Alice punched and launched Egil tumbling backwards.

While the explosion was able to send Egil flying, Alice noticed the lack of substantial damage.

There was a constant moving barrier around Egil's body, deflecting and negating any abilities thrown at him.

"That's gonna be useful. But only if you have the brain to put it to work." Alice flicked her hand as she could see the bestial glare that Egil was giving her.

***BANG!!!**

His speed had increased tremendously but with his killing intent being so clear, Alice could predict where he would be.

Once again, she dodged his strike with ease and grabbed his wrist.

Using his power against him, Alice tossed Egil into a portal and slammed him down from above.

Crashing into the ground, Egil was about to attack again when a singularity appeared in front of his face.

*BOOM!!!

"Hou~ You managed to get away in time. At least your instincts of self preservation isn't fried. If it was me a few months back I would've just ran into that singularity head first." Alice chuckled.

Reaching out with her hand, Alice activated her Sigils as blood and metal converged towards her palm, forming a spear.

A bit of practice was all she needed to modify the forging method of Sigurd, to make it more efficient for her own use. Repurposing and removing some parts to shorten the forging time.

She didn't need a masterpiece that won't disappear. What she needs is a tool that can do its job in that moment.

"I'm gonna have to be a bit rough now. I was too preoccupied with helping people the other night that I didn't even get a chance to fight! Can you believe that? So I'll need you to help me out a bit alright?" Alice narrowed her eyes with a grin.

Egil summoned his own spear and lunged at Alice.

*CLANG!!!

Their spears clashed as Alice directed it into the ground and used it as a vaulting stick.

Landing two kicks against Egil's chest, she spun her body around and fired a point blank Void Flux that was deflected by his innate barrier.

Grabbing his spear, Egil wanted to take advantage of Alice being in the air but it was already seen through. A portal opened behind Alice, teleporting her behind Egil and landing another kick to the back of his head.

Stumbling forward, Egil hastily slashed his spear backwards but missing his target.

*BANG!!!

A spear slammed into the side of his head, forcing him to collapse on the ground. But what awaited him wasn't the floor of the arena but rather a portal.

"And here comes the finishing hit." Alice smirked, teleporting Egil above her.

Enveloping her hand in a spiral of violet flames, she punched, up, shattering the barrier around Egil's armour and punching a hole through it.

Throwing Egil to the ground, Alice leaned over him with her spear over her shoulders.

"Too early to rest ya know? We're just getting started." Alice giggled as Egil felt a chill.

Chapter 513 - 513: Evaluating Egil's New Power

Looking at Egil who was twitching and writhing on the ground with barely any strength to stand up, Alice stabbed her spear into the ground and leaned against it.

"There are four issues we need to immediately resolve. If we don't resolve it, you'll only be stronger in strength than the old you but you'll be weaker overall." Alice spoke as Egil glanced up, listening closely.

"First, linear movement. With the increase in physical power, you're not used to it. You can't make adjustments in your movements as you did before and all of your attacks are in a straight line.

"Second, open killing intent. With you becoming a half hybrid using my blood and the bloodline release, your killing intent is far too potent. It's too obvious. Your opponents can easily detect where you're looking or what you plan to do. Unless you resolve this, it'll be hard for you to take people by surprise or even hit them despite your physical power.

"Third, mental state. With the armour, you're too... How do I put it. Reckless? You can't rely on your physical defence as you once did with your own body. While it may have heightened your speed and power, your defence definitely took a hit. More so with that armour constantly eating away at you the longer you keep it on. Any hit you take will hurt more than usual and do more damage.

"The last one is the worst one it's not something we can change easily. Stamina. The armour eats away at your stamina at a ridiculous pace and uses your own blood to keep itself running. Even if you increase your stamina, you'll die of blood loss." Alice crossed her arms.

With this kind of drawback, it'll be hard for Egil to fight for a long time.

"I... I don't think that fourth one is accurate." Egil forced himself to stand up before collapsing on his knees.

"If I was limited by stamina and blood, I wouldn't have been able to fight the weird winged hybrid for as long as I did."

Hearing this, Alice raised her eyebrows in curiosity. If the armour needed his blood to remain activated, then it wouldn't be strange for him to extend the duration by absorbing the blood of others.

"Put the armour on again, I want to test that theory."

Nodding his head, Egil forced himself to activate the armour but it was barely able to form. Seeing the armour struggle to wrap itself around Egil's body, Alice snapped her finger and conjured a storm of blood around them.

Directing the blood to enter the armour, she watched as it began to regain its vigour and latched onto Egil's body.

Strangely, the more Alice fed the armour her blood, the calmer Egil was. It was completely opposite to the berserker state he was in earlier.

But while Egil was calm, his armour began to react differently. The way it twitched and lashed out to consume blood, it's as though it had a mind of its own.

"Urg!!! It's not listening to me!" Egil gritted his teeth, trying his best to wrangle the armour under his control but it refused to settle down.

Snapping her fingers, Alice dismissed the blood and folded her arms.

"Hmm... When consuming blood, you maintain your sanity but the armour is hard to control. Without consuming blood, the armour harms you and puts you into a berserker state so that you can get blood for it to feed on. Maybe the duration was short because you couldn't land a good hit on me." Alice theorised as the armour slowly disappeared, leaving Egil exhausted on the floor.

"What can I do then?"

"What else? You just have to get better at hand to hand combat so you can actually draw blood. But I'm more of a caster so I'm not suitable in teaching you." Alice sighed.

"So there's nothing we can do." Egil sighed as well but Alice shook her head.

"When did I ever say that? I'm going to tag out for a bit. Someone else is more suited to teach you than me."

Closing her eyes, golden chains manifested as her aura shifted.

"Yo berserker boy~ Shall we start punching?" Alyss grinned.

###

'Thoughts?' Alice asked while looking at the twitching Egil.

'Not great. He's basically fighting a war on two fronts. His armour is telling him to go left when he wants to go right, it's messing with his rhythm and habits. He can't fight how he usually fights on top of being very predictable thanks to the killing intent.' Alyss folded her arms with a frown.

The consensus the two have reached was that this was more of a downgrade for Egil rather than a upgrade.

Of course, that's only at the start. Once he learns how to control the impulses and how to use his strength properly, it'll become a powerful weapon rather than a downgrade.

"Let's stop here for today. I don't want to go overboard after you just recovered." Alice helped Egil up.

"You call this not going overboard?" Egil's smile twitched.

"Of course. If I was remotely focused you would've been blasted to kingdom come the moment the fight started."

Recalling Alice's power, Egil let out a sigh.

"Fair point."

"Now let's head back, I'm sure Selen is feeling pretty lonely with us two going away for so long." Alice chuckled.

There was something else they had to discuss.

Travel plans.

Even though the Zenias might be attacking, Alice had no plans of staying in the north. She just wanted to make sure they could tide over this difficult time before she left. Ultimately, it was partially her fault that they're focusing on the north now.

But once she dealt with this, she wanted to travel south east to visit Sikha and broaden her horizons. She wanted to explore the surface a little before heading back down to the Abyss.

Once she's done with the north, she'll have to go separate ways to Egil. The time they spent together was short but a sweet one. She trusted him with her back and if he was ever in trouble, she wouldn't hesitate to help.

Which is why it was important for her to make sure he could survive whatever was coming to the best of her abilities.

So that he could keep his mother safe.

###

"Master, you don't have to come to the north with me. It's a mission given to me by my father." A young man sighed while sitting in a wagon with his mentor. He had short brown hair tied into a rat tail and golden brown eyes.

A person that Alice used to consider her brother.

Albert Zenia.

"The north isn't a place you young bloods can just survive on your own. I don't know what your family is doing sending you to a dangerous place like that nor do I care. I just don't like you going alone with that crazed mad scientist as your ally." An woman could be seen speaking with a blade of grass in her mouth.

She looked to be in her mid 20's yet her way of speaking was similar to that of old people.

"Plus, with your heart in constant turmoil and unable to calm down, how am I supposed to keep teaching you? Just focus on reflecting on yourself rather than some mission given by the family." She waved her hand dismissively.

However, Albert revealed a slightly bitter smile.

He wished he could but it's not something he could ignore.

"I'm sorry."

"Bah! Hearing you say sorry all the time is making my ears itch. But you know... Nevermind. Forget it, go a meditate." She narrowed her gaze and scanned her surroundings.

Nodding his head, Albert closed his eyes and did as his master told.

There was a part of him that felt guilty. Guilty for the things he's had to do, guilty at the fact that his master didn't know anything yet still taught him with everything she's got. He wanted to tell everything to her if possible.

If he was to do so. . .

Letting his thoughts wander, Albert felt a sword pommel tap his head.

"You're distracted again. Focus up."

"Sorry."

Looking at the face of her disciple, the woman scratched her hair before spitting out her blade of grass.

She wasn't sure what's going on in the Zenia family recently but it felt... Dangerous. Like the raging currents beneath a calm water surface.

To the outside world, the Zenias were taking their time with their next Abyss Blood discovery.

But she knew that something was going on. Many of the scholars were annoyed recently and now even Albert was being sent to the north.

There was no one in the world without skeletons in the closet. But the Zenias might not be hiding just one or two.

Especially that new wife of Luthor. She didn't know why but that woman gave her the creeps despite not being a fighter.

There was an aura around her that just... felt wrong.

Shaking her head, she decided to not look into things too deeply. Those who are too nosy dies first. She only had one job and that was to teach Albert.

Once she pays back the favour she owes the Zenias, she'll go her separate way. No matter how many skeletons they hide, she'll simply follow along for now.

'What a pain.' She groaned inwardly.

This was why she never wanted to get involved with noble families.

###

"You what?" Alice blinked her eyes.

"I erm... I think I want to stay in the north for a bit." Selen scratched her cheek.

Chapter 514 - 514: Staying In The North

"I erm... I think I want to stay in the north for a bit." Selen scratched her cheek.

Blinking her eyes, Alice's brain stopped working for a moment as she glanced to her left, towards Egil who was looking after his mother.

"Is that so?" Alice muttered as she began to put together the pieces.

Feeling a shiver down her spine, Selen glanced at Alice's expression and saw a smug grin.

"Hou hou~ So you want to stay in the north huh? I wonder if it's because of a certain somebody? You were pretty worried about everything that he was doing after all~" Alice shifted closer before nudging Selen with her elbow.

"Erm... We're kinda... ya know. Erm... dating." Selen admitted as Alice froze up.

She wanted to tease Selen a little longer but if they're already dating then it's no fun.

"If that's the case then it's only natural that you stay in the north. Plus, you know about the Zenia family so having someone like that here will help out a lot." Alice chuckled.

"You're not annoyed?" Selen raised an eyebrow.

"Why would I be? Honestly I wouldn't have been surprised if you left me to die after being expelled from the Inverted World. The fact that you've looked after me for this long is more than enough already." Alice smiled.

"So if you want to stay in the north then be my guest. It's not like we're completely cutting off our connection. You can still send letters to me and vice versa." Alice patted her shoulder.

"Will you be alright on your own though?"

With Alice planning on journeying to the south east, having a travel companion would make things far better and split up the responsibilities.

"Pft, don't worry I'm never on my own. I got the voices in my head no?" Alice grinned, pointing at her head.

'The f*ck you're calling a voice in your head. I'm your damn twin!' Alyss rolled her eyes.

"So don't worry about me. If anything, having you here gives me a way to keep track of the things happening in the north. Especially since the Zenias might target this place even if I'm gone ya know?"

Thinking about it for a moment, Selen nodded her head.

"Alright. But if you go to the south east, make sure you find a reliable healer okay? With how reckless you are, if you don't have someone with some degree of medical knowledge next to you you'll break your body beyond repair."

"I'll see what I can find." Alice agreed.

Her close encounter during the battle by the port was a reminder for her that she couldn't completely trust her regeneration. The fact that she almost died when her regeneration wasn't working was a wake up slap to the face.

Just as she was about to say something else, Alice noticed the doors opening and saw Caera walking in with a swagger to her steps that wasn't there before.

There was a grin on her face as she threw her jacket onto the coat hanger and threw herself into her chair.

"Seems like you're in a good mood." Alice chuckled.

Spinning on her chair and sliding across the room, Caera nodded her head.

"I am indeed. You got your meeting with the Queen and I got a greenlight for the next step of my experiment."

"Speaking of the Queen, do you know why she didn't make a move during the attack?" Alice asked curiously.

"Of course I do. I'm the one who made her that way after all." Caera nodded while playing with a strand of her hair.

"But I can't help but notice there's someone else in here. This is a Lab my dear master, not an Inn." She peaked her head over Selen's shoulders and glanced at Egil's mother who was sleeping on the bed.

"Sorry about that." Alice scratched her chin.

"No need for apologies, I'm not blaming youahaha. But back to what you asked, yes, I do know. When it comes to cultivating divinity, I'm still a novice at it and the Queen is the first target of this experiment. She couldn't make a move as she's in the delicate process of making a cocoon for herself.

"In order for her to attain a stable divinity, she needs to break out of her mortal shell first. But if she was to make a move and exert her power, this cocoon that she's building will break apart and her divinity will fail. In essence, if she was to make a move, she'll only be a demi god rather than a full god." Caera explained.

"The second reason is the other Gods. I don't believe I need to explain how petty the three gods are so you can imagine their reaction the moment they sense a divinity that doesn't belong to any of them in the north. The moment the Queen makes any kind of move, her cultivated divinity will leak out. It becomes a beacon that lets the gods know a new god is appearing."

Hearing this, Alice furrowed her brows.

If this was indeed the case then it was no surprise that Verona didn't want to make a move.

If she did, she fails to become a god and remains as a demi god. In that state, she'll be unable to fend off the three gods from repeating what happened to Ayr.

"So what you're telling me is, she's in our debt because we helped her survive the attack without her making a move?" Alice grinned.

"Pretty much." Caera shrugged.

"Interesting, how very interesting indeed."

Seeing Alice like this, Selen already knew that she was planning on scamming the Queen.

"So when do I meet the Queen?" Alice asked.

"We can go now if you wish."

Tapping her fingers, Alice nodded her head.

She didn't want to prolong her stay in the north. The sooner she sorts out this new cure for those that are fighting, the better it is for her. That way, she can leave the north and there's a higher chance of the Zenias leaving the north alone.

Standing up, she had Caera show her the way.

###

"Distraction again. What are you thinking about so deeply?" The woman tapped her pommel against Albert's head.

"Sorry." Albert sighed.

"I've heard sorry too many times now, tell me something else." The woman rolled her eyes and leaned back in her seat.

"Have you... Ever wondered about what my family does?" Albert asked after a brief pause.

"I have. But it's not part of my pay check to find out. Once I finish teaching you, my connection with the family ends there." She replied honestly while grabbing a blade of grass and placing it in her mouth.

Albert was the only connection she had with the family and she'd rather keep it that way.

"I understand. But in the future, if you were... to find yourself disagreeing with my family, what will you do?"

"Boy, do you want me to fight this family of yours or something? After dealing with you, I'm going back home. There's no reason for me to keep sticking around. But in the event that I do find myself disagreeing with your family... Well depending on what happens I'll probably let my sword talk rather than me." The woman raised an eyebrow before shrugging.

She's noticed that recently, Albert has been more and more concerned with this family of his. Maybe it's the source of the unrest in his heart, maybe it's something else. Regardless, if he asks for her opinion, she'll answer him truthfully. That's how she's been and she won't change that.

"Anyways, stop thinking about it too deeply. There's a reason why I'm not investigating or finding out about your family." She suggested as Albert nodded his head.

Letting Albert resume his mediation, the woman closed her eyes as well.

The scientist that is supposed to tag along with Albert for the next mission.

He was... a strange person. Someone that only saw others as specimens and she couldn't figure out his morals. The way he looked at her felt as though he wanted to just cut her open and see what's inside.

To see what makes her body strong and so on.

'I should probably distance myself from this family sooner rather than later.'

The bad feelings she's been getting from this family has increased over the past few months. And it all began with an incident at the prison when it was broken into.

She didn't know what was hidden there but clearly it was the beginning of everything.

Shaking her head, she cleared her mind. They'll be arriving at the meet up point soon and after that, they'll enter the north. Their goal is to infiltrate the capital. She didn't know the details of the mission but her only goal was to keep Albert safe.

The woman caressed the sheath of her blade and imagined herself fighting against the Lords of the north.

Sigurd, Frida and Urigar. Out of the three, only Urigar stands as a slight annoyance.

Even for Lords who have the same number of Sigils, the quality of the Sigils differ based on what they've done leading up to this point. Urigar inherited his title so his power was limited.

While Sigurd and Frida may have gotten a title approved by the Abyss, it wasn't a 'new' title so their powers were rather predictable.

In summery, it'll be a one sided slaughter in her favour.

So long as it was only against these three.

Then there was the issue of the Queen and any unknown variables.

However, she'll cross that bridge when it appears.

###

Approaching the throne room, Alice watched as Caera pushed open the doors before standing off to the side.

She could see a woman sitting on the throne and her aura around her body. The clear sign of divinity.

Queen Verona, the one who is aiming to become a God.

Chapter 515 - 515: Reward For Saving The Capital

Standing before the Queen, Alice couldn't help but stay silent and observe the woman in front of her.

She's had two situations where she's met the 'rulers' of a nation. First was Velouria. The second is Verona.

When she first met Velouria, it was when she was sitting amongst a sea of energy strands. The smile on her face as she joked about her own fated demise. In that aspect, Velouria didn't feel like a ruler but rather a neighbour. She felt like a normal girl you could meet on the street.

Yet strangely at the same time, it felt as though there was a veil between them. As though Velouria was living in her own world, knowing things that only she knew. Seeing sights that only she saw.

A rose in a glass case. Slowly withering but no one could help.

Verona on the other hand felt completely different.

The way she composed herself on the throne, how her gaze observed Alice, judging her internally. It was the complete opposite of Velouria. On top of that, there was a cold air around her as she was scrutinising Alice.

To Verona, Alice's appearance was too... coincidental and useful to the point it was suspicious.

An outbreak that only her blood could hold off and heal, allies that pushed back the strange human beast hybrids, a contract with Sigurd that lets him use strange fires that negate Abyss abilities and finally, Caera's acknowledgement that Alice was someone she had been looking for.

Far too many events occurred around her and it was only natural that Verona was suspicious of her origins.

Did the enemy send her as a spy? To earn merit and rewards? Information on her current state? She didn't know.

Was the 'favours' she's done for the nation truly favours or did she have a hidden intention?

"Aiya~ Hostile glares already when you two have only just met. Common~ Relax a bit okay?" Caera spoke up. She couldn't handle the silence and decided to jump in after all. Even though her original intention was to just wait outside.

Jumping next to Verona, she gave her shoulder a pat.

"Alice has been wanting to organise a... 'curing event' for the people who fought during the attack. The curse placed on them basically stops them from continuing as Warriors but with this method, they can fight for a little longer." Caera explained, handing a stack of paper to her.

Reading through the contents, a frown appeared on her face.

"This is definitely your doing isn't it?" Verona gave Caera a glare.

"Why do you say that?"

"Who else treats life like this that can make a report of such quality?" Verona sighed.

The benefits of this cure were plain to see. It'll help her defend her nation if another attack was to occur and in fact, might even make her defences stronger.

But the drawbacks...

She's essentially dooming everyone who says yes to the procedure.

Turning away from Caera, she looked at Alice who was distracting herself by looking around the throne room.

"Alice, is there no way for them to live without the side effects of becoming mindless beasts?" She asked as Alice glanced over.

"There is. But they'll have to give up the fight and become normal civilians. The curse decreases their combat potential to an absurd level. Either keep fighting until you lose your mind and die or live normally. It's a choice between the two. I don't recommend the cure honestly since I've already stabilized their bodies when I used my lilies." Alice shrugged.

However, she understands that some would rather control their own fate with their own hands. They would rather fight on the frontlines and try to make a difference rather than waiting at home.

This was the reason she didn't fully reject Caera's proposal.

Hearing Alice's reply, Verona was silent. She could see some of Alice's notes on these sheets and it was clear that she tried to eliminate the side effects as much as possible. But in order to retain their fighting prowess, some compromises had to be made.

"Do we know how many... 'transformations' it'll take before they lose their mind?"

"Nope. It's entirely dependent on the person. You can kick the bucket after one go or you can go on for tens maybe even hundreds. The moment you go down this path, you won't be able to stop." Caera spoke up.

Flipping the sheets, she tapped her finger on one of Alice's notes.

After the first transformation, they'll keep accumulating this 'curse' within their bodies. Only through the transformation can they discharge it and maintain a balance. If they don't...

"And about this second method then. To use our enemy's weapon against them." Verona asked as she noticed that there were notes regarding Alice's ideas on making hybrids.

Notes saying that Caera risked the mind while her method risked the body.

"Can you explain that a little more for me?"

Scratching her hair, Alice nodded her head.

She began to explain the method of bloodline release, to manifest the soul and turn it into an anchor.

By forming a balance between the Sigils, curse and the user's soul, they'll be able to achieve a fake hybrid state.

However, the duration of this state is entirely dependent on how long they can maintain their bloodline release. Those who can't maintain it for long can't fight for long. Of course, there might be hidden conditions that she doesn't know about.

In Egil's case, he requires blood to keep fighting.

And of course, the biggest risk of this procedure is that even if they have the talent for bloodline release, they still need to be able to withstand the corruption of her blood. It was a fine delicate balance that had to be achieved.

Compared to Caera's cure, Alice's had a much higher chance of death.

Massaging her forehead, Verona contemplated the choices.

"Is there any way to reduce the chance of death?"

"None that I've found so far." Alice replied truthfully.

It was entirely up to Verona and her warriors on what they wanted.

"I see..."

In the end, Verona had one request for Alice.

If the Warriors agree to keep fighting, Verona wanted Alice to test if they have any potential to become a hybrid first. If they do, she'll give them the option to undergo the operation.

With this, they'll be given three paths. First, live normally. Second, live as a berserker and lastly, live as a hybrid.

The ideal scenario would be for them to live as a hybrid or as a normal civilian.

After all, berserkers are fated to lose their minds with no way out. There might be a solution in the future but for now, it was impossible.

"Alright. I'll test them for the potential of being a hybrid first."

With the main talk out of the way, it was time for rewards.

Licking her lips, Alice revealed a smile.

Verona knew what was coming as well and let out a sigh.

"Is there any particular reward that you wish to have? I'll try my best to supply it if it's within my control." She offered.

After everything Alice had done for the North, choosing a reward for her wasn't exactly fitting considering the fact that she didn't have anything worth the lives of all of her subjects. The best thing she could do in this situation is to just let Alice have her pick.

The North wasn't exactly wealthy either and in terms of a reward for a fighter, Sigurd's weapons are probably the best choice.

"How good are the mead makers in the north?" Alice asked with a smile.

Her question baffled both Verona and Caera as they thought she would've wanted to get a weapon, armour or even medicine.

But her question was... on how good mead makers are in the north?

"Mead making has never been a priority in the north, but if you wish to hire some mead makers, I believe their skills are on par with those from the other nations." Verona replied, unsure as to what Alice was aiming for.

"My request is a simple one then. I want them to replicate a certain type of mead for me. One that is lost to time and cannot be made by anyone anymore. I want them to reverse engineer it and supply it only to me."

"And what mead is that?" Verona raised an eyebrow.

What kind of mead was good enough for Alice to choose it as a reward for saving the capital of a nation?

"I believe Caera is familiar with it. Here, catch." Alice chuckled.

Grabbing a bottle from her pouch, she pushed it through a portal for Caera.

Tilting her head in confusion, she saw the familiar label on the bottle and froze up. Her fingers trembled as she opened the bottle and breathed in the scent of Ayrian mead.

Taking a sip, a small tear rolled down her cheek as she was reminded of her home.

"Yes, indeed this kind of mead is lost to time and cannot be made by anyone. Deploying an entire nation to figure out the recipe and reverse engineer it might not even be enough." Caera chuckled.

"If that's what you wish then so be it. I'll have it arranged but I believe we need samples to recreate such a drink." Verona sighed and waved her hand.

Caera was already eccentric with her demands and now there was another one.

"I can spare three bottles but what I have is limited in quantity. I hope they can figure it out with just these three." Alice handed over three bottles as Verona nodded her head.

They discussed the requirements of her reward. Once the Ayrian mead is done, it is only to be supplied to Alice. It cannot be sold elsewhere without Alice's knowledge and if it is to be discovered, Verona will dispatch warriors to figure out the culprit.

Anyone involved with the production once the recipe is done will be placed under a Law of Agreement.

The final and most important requirement for Alice was a limitless supply of Ayrian mead for free once it was done.

While this was happening, Cayla was speechless.

This was the first time in her life that she had seen anyone mobilize an entire nation just for... mead???

Who the hell does that???

Chapter 516 - 516: Eryn

With everything now sorted, Verona had Caera prepare tents so Warriors could go for the treatment if they wish.

They'll give the soldiers a briefing and they can begin around dinner time.

Watching Alice leave with Caera, Verona couldn't help but sigh.

"What's your opinion of that girl?" Verona asked as Frida materialised next to her.

"Strange... probably doesn't do it justice. Everything she's done points at her being a spy. Her senses are a little absurd to be just a random Hunter. But her choice of reward is... Peculiar." Frida replied honestly.

To her, Alice was like a jumble of weird quirks and absurd powers. It didn't make sense at all.

"I don't think she's a spy seeing as how she genuinely wants to help those affected by the curse. Perhaps choosing the mead is a sign of goodwill." Verona massaged her temples while rereading the notes again.

"Ah actually I have something else to report on that. Sigurd has... made a contract with her. An exchange. She gave him part of her power and in return, Sigurd promised five pieces of equipment."

Hearing this, Verona's smile twitched for a moment.

"For free?"

"No, for a price with a 40% discount."

". . ." Verona wanted to throw the research away right now and smack Sigurd on the head. Thankfully, it wasn't for free. However, even if you have the money for materials, you might not be able to buy them.

So whenever Sigurd is making equipment for Alice, that's one less rare material for their nation.

"I've already lectured him on his decision. But I will admit that his new power is... Rather unique." Frida's eyelids trembled as she recalled the brief experiment they had done together.

With Sigurd controlling the violet flames, no matter how she tried to use her ice to put it out, it only burned with greater intensity and even decreased her control over her powers.

"I see... Seems like I'll have to take a look at it in due time. For now, can you make these arrangements?"

Receiving a note of things to do, Frida nodded her head and disappeared in a cloud of cold mist.

###

"Ah young master! How nice of you to join me in the North." The scholar smiled and gave Albert a small bow.

He wore a black top hat, a golden monocle, a large flowing black cloak tattered on the ends and a thin layer of snow on the shoulders. Beneath the cloak, he wore a stylish black suit with golden accessories and a pair of gloves. Sturdy black leather boots crushed the snow beneath his step as he had a walking stick in his hands.

"And for Miss Eryn to join us as well, always a pleasure to see you."

Eryn, an Abyss Lord unaffiliated with the Zenia family aside from being Albert's master. A woman of unmatched swordsmanship and a physicality that makes him question the limits of human strength every time he sees her.

She has long flowing silver hair tinted reaching down to her lower back. The tips of her hair trimmed neatly to form a line. A pair of crimson violet eyes that seemed to cut everything she stared at.

Despite the cold, she wore a rather revealing outfit consisting of black straps wrapping around her body. Connected to the straps were pieces of black fabric that covered her waist.

Her left arm was left completely exposed, revealing a scar that ran all the way up to her shoulder. Her right arm was replaced by a prosthetic made from black metal. A pair of black boots and on her waist was her blade that was almost taller than her.

A left handed swordswoman.

"As always, your gaze disgusts me, doctor." Eryn spat in annoyance, holding back the urge to unsheathe her blade.

"A compliment for a man of my occupation." The Doctor grinned before turning around.

"Allow me to escort you to our temporary residence. I will give you the information we have later tonight young master, for now, please make yourself comfortable." He chuckled.

Following behind the Doctor until they reached the camp, Albert was expressionless as he saw the northern people being dragged to the camp.

He knew the fate of those people while Eryn had a frown on her face.

"Is this the first time you saw this kind of scene master?" Albert revealed a bitter expression.

Eryn's grip around her blade tightened for a moment before loosening up.

"No." She shook her head.

She's seen scenes like this plenty of times before. It wasn't anything new.

"But I thought you already have information on what you want to find." Eryn asked but the Doctor shook his head.

"Oh this isn't for information Miss Eryn. You see, before we received the retrieval mission, we had lost quite a few of our forces in the north. I'm merely replenishing our ranks." He chuckled but Eryn raised an eyebrow.

Who would dare use the enemy civilians as soldiers? Setting aside their lack of power, it's clear that they'll run away or betray you the first chance they get.

"Are you concerned about their loyalty to the northern nation? If so you do not need to worry Miss Eryn. I have my ways and they will not be an issue whatsoever." He reassured as Eryn nodded her head.

"I'll rest in my tent. Do whatever you need to do. I'm just here as a guard so don't involve me in anything." Eryn turned around.

"As you wish." The Doctor bowed.

Watching Eryn walk away, he turned to Albert.

"Young master, I believe Miss Eryn should start being aware of our glorious objective if she is to continue being your master/bodyguard. Having to dance around topics and certain keywords is rather bothersome."

"I know. Father hasn't mentioned anything yet. But she'll know in time." Albert glanced down at the floor and kicked the snow aside.

"If that's what you desire then so be it. I will let my assistants know to be more careful with what they say and what they show."

"Good. So how reliable is the news around Al- the monster? Is she really in the north? Did someone see her?" Albert asked.

"It has a high chance of being reliable, young master. Though... there's a slight possibility that the subject may flee the north considering our previous failed assault. There is no doubt that she's aware of our existence that's approaching the north." The Doctor replied, gesturing for Albert to enter his tent.

Stepping through, Albert frowned seeing Ayla squirming on the floor while muttering something incoherent.

Tears could be seen in the corner of her eyes as her body twitched from the pain.

The fact that this failed product resembled his sister and the monster annoyed him as he looked away.

"I apologise for the disgusting decoration. I had not expected you and Miss Eryn to be so fast so I was unable to clean things up. I'm merely punishing her for the losses that occurred because she was preoccupied with two people."

"Don't mind it." Albert shook his head and sat down away from Ayla.

Every time he saw the failed product and the monster that used to be in the prison, he was reminded of his sister's cries. Her cries as the monster consumed her and wore her skin. The hatred that burned in his heart couldn't be quenched.

But what's worse is that it wore her appearance as a shield and used her memories as a weapon.

How dare a monster call her brother, how dare she look at him with those betrayed eyes as though she didn't eat his sister.

"So the plan?"

"We are planning to scout out the situation a little first. According to the failed product, the Queen didn't see fit to intervene at all, leaving the work to her subordinates. The initial chemical attack failed to achieve the effect we had initially expected so there are unknown variables to their combat power.

"Lord Zenia only tasked me with one objective and that is to retrieve the subject. If we can avoid a fight that would be ideal. However, it also allows us to observe and judge the state of the capital and whether or not it is suitable to become another breeding ground." The Doctor explained as Albert listened silently.

"Despite her... shortcomings, the failed product is still the most optimal subject when it comes to stopping the Queen. There are pieces of her designed with the sole intention of fighting the Queen hence her overall strength may be lacking a little. So I would have to ask young master to avoid damaging the failed product too much if you wish to take out your anger."

"I'm not that foolish to the point you have to tell me. I'm assuming stepmother has given you a task for me as well seeing as how you're dragging this one." Albert narrowed his gaze.

After his mother died to the monster, this strange woman had approached his father. He didn't know why but eventually, his father married her and used the resources she provided.

Regardless, she was now his stepmother and occasionally, there were tasks that she wanted him to help out with.

"Perceptive as always young master. And yes, the mistress has indeed given you a task to complete. Though rather than a task, it's more of a letter. She has instructed me to let the young master know that you should relax and enjoy the northern sights. If you do come face to face with the monster, remember that we still need her blood." The Doctor nodded as Albert frowned.

After a short pause, he sighed and nodded.

"Alright."

For now, he'll wait for the Doctor to complete his preparations then they can scout out the capital.

Chapter 517 - 517: Precautions Against The Third Source

"I'm back~" Alice called out, returning to Caera's lab alone.

With so many things needing to be prepared, Caera excused herself and had Alice head back first.

Originally, Alice wanted to help out but Caera rejected the idea. After all, she'll be busy providing the cure to every Warrior that's been infected.

This would no doubt exhaust her so she wanted Alice to get as much rest as she could now.

"Welcome back, how was it?" Selen asked, leaning back on her chair and glancing towards Alice.

"It was pretty good. Got a great reward and had some discussions on what we could do to help those who want to fight." Alice explained as she grabbed a chair for herself and slumped over it.

"Unfortunately, there wasn't much choice aside from what me and Caera already mentioned so the risk of them staying as berserkers remains. Though I've gotten the green light to see if I can make them into semi hybrids similar to Egil with the bloodline release. But that entirely depends on their talents." She shrugged.

Thinking about Hybrids, Selen couldn't help but wonder about her own state. Her hand gently caressed the feather just above her ear.

"So what was the great reward? I don't think I've ever seen you with such a skip in your steps." Selen shook her head and asked with a smile.

This was the first time she'd seen Alice being this happy while sober.

"Hehe~ You know the rare mead that I told you about? Ayrian mead that can't be made anymore?"

"What about it? Did the Queen have access to it?" Selen tilted her head.

"Nope~ But I made her mobilize pretty much the entire nation in order to reverse engineer the mead. Not only that but they signed a few contracts where they'll only provide it to me and not sell it

elsewhere without my knowledge. Oh I also get it supplied to me for free~" Alice rubbed her hands together with a grin.

Hearing this, Selen's smile twitched before letting out a sigh.

"Isn't that a bit of a waste though? This is your reward for saving the capital. Using on mead is... Well, I wouldn't say wasteful since it's you who's asking for it but wouldn't most people request good equipment or something?"

"Oh if you're wondering about equipment, I've already sorted it out. I made another contract with Sigurd. In exchange for being able to use my blood as fuel for the fire he's given me a 40% discount for five pieces of equipment. Naturally, they're going to be high quality." Alice waved her hand with a grin while pulling out a bottle of mead.

Since she now has the entire nation mobilising to recreate Ayrian mead, Alice decided to indulge herself a little and had a drink of the precious mead.

Enjoying the taste of Ayr, Alice leaned back and relaxed her entire body.

Opposite her, Selen's brain short circuited.

Meeting Lord Sigurd was already a difficult task not to mention getting an equipment from him. But Alice has requested five! Five high tier equipment at a 40% discount no less!

"Ah! Wait what about the blood? Wouldn't that put him in danger?" Selen questioned. With the Zenias approaching the capital, Sigurd's possession of another source of Alice's blood will definitely make him a target.

"Don't worry about that, I've already taken the precautions. Whenever my blood is summoned, it'll be detonated as fuel immediately. There is not a single chance that they can make use of it. Plus, you gotta remember that if the contract is somehow broken, he'll lose access to my blood." Alice shrugged.

"I see... Seems like there's nothing I need to worry about." Selen smiled.

She could still recall the times when she had to do everything for Alice since her body was injured.

Keeping her safe, fending off wild beasts, feeding her and dressing her wounds.

She was a little hesitant when it came to her decision to stay in the north but now that she was sure Alice wouldn't have any issues, her worries were dispelled.

All of them except for one last worry.

"Say Alice, have you ever been to the east before? It's very different from the north, Extalia, and even the Abyss." Selen asked.

"I've been locked up for 10 years then thrown into the bowls of the Abyss. Of course I haven't." Alice rolled her eyes.

"Just asking smart ass. In the east, to travel the desert, you need a kind of compass unique to the eastern kingdom. These compasses stop you from getting lost since the deserts there hold a unique property. Even with the power of the Void, I don't think you'll be able to travel easily since the space there distorts. You should also keep most of your body covered when travelling in the desert no matter how hot you feel.

"Exposing yourself to the 'sun' of the desert will poison your body." Selen warned.

Hearing this, Alice paused and sat up with a raised eyebrow.

"Poison my body?"

"How do I explain it... Honestly, I'm not that familiar since I've only visited the East once. But even for us experiments of the Zenia family, we can't look down on the desert." Selen scratched her hair.

Now that Alice was visiting the East, she wished she had paid more attention when they were explaining these things in the past.

"Things might've changed since I last visited but these two are the main things you need to remember."

Nodding her head, Alice made a mental note of it before thanking Selen.

"Actually, I need to check something. Can you lay down for me and take off your clothes?" Alice spoke up after a brief pause.

"!?!?!?" Selen widened her eyes in shock while Egil choked on his saliva.

"You want me to WHAT now???"

"I need to check the effects of the hybrid blood in your body. You drank it, didn't you? You reached the state of being a hybrid through unconventional means so we don't know the full effects on your body yet. If I don't check it, how do I know you're in the clear? I wanted to do it before but considering you were unconscious, it wouldn't be good." Alice clarified as Selen coughed awkwardly.

The tips of her ears were red as Egil took this chance to leave the room. Creating a makeshift bed since Egil's mother was resting in the only bed they have, Alice had Selen take off her shirt, exposing her back.

Sitting next to her, Alice placed her palm against Selen's back and closed her eyes.

A layer of red appeared on Alice's arm as spider lilies began to blossom.

She could sense the concentration of blood within Selen's body.

Previously, Selen only had a small diluted portion of Alice's blood. But now? That small portion had grown tremendously in size. In fact, one could say that it was now around a third of Selen's blood. It was quite a miracle that she was actually able to survive without any major issues.

'Was it the environment? I scattered my blood through the capital and she might've unconsciously absorbed more than expected.' Alice thought to herself as she continued to scan Selen's body.

But despite the increase in concentration, Selen's body was holding on well. Her constitution was adapting well to the changes and even formed a balance similar to Egil.

'Now the question is what is acting as that third anchor.' Alice furrowed her brows.

Egil had his Sigils, bloodline release and Alice's blood.

But Selen? She had her own Sigils, Alice's blood and the third unknown factor.

[Do you think it's Miralith?] Cayla spoke up.

'What makes you think that?'

[The prototypes, ones before the Hybrids, have been given a portion of a Lord's power to act as a balancer. If the sealed Lords were to... intervene, they could theoretically act as an anchor point.

[With that in mind, it wouldn't be surprising for Selen to be unaffected right?]

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice agreed. But if that was truly the case then she wanted to make some back up plans. Having a sealed Lord acting as an anchor for Selen without her knowing didn't put her in a great position.

It essentially gives the control of Selen's life over to the Lord.

Since that was the case, then Alice needed to ensure that such a thing didn't happen.

"Selen, it might hurt a little but bear with it okay? Your body has formed a resonance type balance with an unknown source, possibly the sealed Lord Miralith. I'm going to imbue my blood in your body with a

certain... power that should keep it at bay and cut it off if it gets dangerous." Alice spoke up as Selen nodded.

She still remembered Miralith whispering in her ear about a contract, to give up part of her body and that's not what she wanted.

Taking a deep breath, Alice had Alyss replace her first Sigil with Allura's Sigil!

The spider lilies around them trembled as the blood began to shimmer with a silver light.

Gritting her teeth, Selen clenched the bed cover as Sigils lit up across her body. Spikes and feathers started to manifest across her body, forcefully entering her into the hybrid state.

###

"!!!" Rearing her head up, Miralith's pupils constricted in anger.

She could sense a foul power, a familiar one from ages past. The reminder of an old order that should've been destroyed. The one who helped defeat the old Lords and subsequently seal them away.

"ALLURAAA!!!" Miralith roared, thrashing around in her seal as she wanted to break out but the chains held strong.

The connection between her and Selen had strengthened thanks to Tiamat breaking out of her seal was now weakened again thanks to Allura!

Selen would've been her chance to break out but Allura intervened again! When?! When did the girl come into contact with Allura?!

Questions flooded Miralith's mind as she could only cry out in anger and indignation, sealed away in a place where the sun couldn't reach.

Chapter 518 - 518: Preparations Before Leaving

Giving Selen a light slap on the back, Alice stood up and stretched her body.

"Alright, it should be sorted now. If Miralith or whatever that third source starts to pull some weird sh*t, just use what I planted in your body. It'll cut off the connection and return you to normal. Though it's just a one time thing." Alice scratched her hair.

"Thank you." Selen smiled, putting her shirt back on.

"Don't mention it. I gotta leave a gift behind if I'm heading to another nation after all." Alice grinned. So far, she's given Egil hints on how he could use his power better and installed a safety net for Selen.

She wasn't worried about whether or not Selen could harness her full potential since she's smart. All she needed to do was be a little more free thinking like she did when she fought the hybrids. If she could achieve that state often, very few people could actually match her in combat.

"If you say it like that, I'll have to give you a farewell gift as well you know? And we both know we're broke so." Selen shrugged with a laugh.

Joking around with Selen for a bit before calling Egil back in, Alice gave them a rough run down on how they should use the hybrid forms and the limitations.

By having a group discussion now, it'll make it easier and save time for Selen and Egil.

Egil needed blood to keep fighting and struggled with maintaining his focus. Meanwhile, Selen didn't have this kind of limitation since she drank hybrid blood.

For Selen, her limitation was entirely based on whether or not she could hold back Miralith if she decided to pull anything.

Thankfully, that shouldn't be too much of an issue.

The dynamic between the two would be that Egil takes the frontline and Selen uses her powers to distract her opponents. That way, Egil can get his blood supply and not worry about his simple attack patterns.

During this, Selen had also explained the new skills that she developed during the fight against the hybrids.

Upon hearing about her skill to reverse her own time and heal wounds, Alice blinked her eyes in sheer confusion as she didn't even think something like that was possible.

Selen's explanation didn't help either since it was mostly instinctual for her. A feeling rather than words.

Regardless, Alice was curious if she could use it on anyone else but that didn't seem to be the case. The reversal was entirely limited to her.

While talking, Alice couldn't help but feel a little hesitant when it came to leaving. The time she spent with Selen and Egil was enjoyable and she's learned valuable lessons with them in the north.

###

Deep in the Abyss, a woman could be seen walking without care. The beasts around her trembled in fear and dare not raise their heads.

"Well aren't you just a sh*t stain that won't disappear. Care to go back into your cage or do you need me to drag you back there?" Another woman could be seen, lighting a cigarette with her finger as killing intent seeped out from her body.

"Bold words old woman. You can't bluff against me when your body is in such a mess. The old Allura would've acted first before talking." Tiamat narrowed her gaze as she curled her lips up into a grin, revealing a row of sharp teeth.

"I might be old and my body might be a mess, but still more than enough to deal with a sh*tty lizard like you." Allura warned.

"I don't know how but you managed to get out to the surface, what brings you back here?"

She couldn't figure out Tiamat's goal. She clearly had access to the surface and could do whatever she wanted to do yet she was back in the Abyss? Something was up.

"I'm the sentimental kind. Can't I have a look what what's happened to my old home?" Tiamat asked with a shrug of her shoulders.

Flicking her wrist, the colour of the world drained as the space near Allura was torn apart.

"And I didn't think you'd bring another walking corpse with you. What's this? A cemetery?" Tiamat asked, dragged Gin out from the Void.

"We both know you're not the sentimental kind. Speak up while I'm still being civil with you." Allura warned.

"Tsk ts, still flapping your mouth instead of acting. I'm disappointed Allura, I thought you would've made a move by now. Honestly, I thought you kicked the bucket when I saw a kid with your power. Turns out she was a weirdo that had the Queen's power and hints of my own. Curious little thing isn't she?" Tiamat snapped her finger and created a throne for herself.

Sitting down, she crossed her legs and smiled at Allura who furrowed her brows.

'She came into contact with Alice? When? How?'

"Ohya? Seems like you do know of her. If I visit her again, I wonder if you'll make a move."

Right as Tiamat finished her sentence, Allura had already appeared in front of her wearing silver armour. Her blade was pressing against Tiamat's neck but it was stopped by her finger.

"What did I say? You've grown weak. To think you can't even cut my neck after I stuck it out for you. And I'm still injured too, this was probably your best chance." Tiamat let out a yawn.

*BANG!!!

The space around her erupted as Allura was flung back from the explosion.

Adjusting herself in mid air, she widened her eyes as Tiamat was about to grab her head with her hand.

*KRKK!!!!

Parrying the grab with her blade, Allura furrowed her brows.

"Your body might be a mess but at least your instincts are still pretty good." Tiamat smiled before relaxing.

Turning around, she continued to walk through the Abyss.

"Where are you going?" Allura questioned.

Tiamat was too much of an unknown variable to be left alone. If she doesn't keep track of her, who knows what she might do.

"You can relax, I'm not going to spout some bullsh*t like 'the time for revenge has come.' There's too much weird sh*t happening in the world for that." Tiamat glanced back.

She could tell that if she didn't give Allura a small hint of what she's going to do, they'll probably have to fight seriously. As much as she enjoyed entertainment, there were bigger concerns.

"Some of the sealed Lords have died and their corpses harvested. Some are even kept alive as batteries. I'm going to check who is still alive in the Abyss."

Taking a step, Tiamat disappeared from her spot as flames flickered where she stood.

Hearing what Tiamat said, Allura frowned.

She dismissed her armour and blade before pulling out another cigarette.

"I'm starting to think I should probably retire now." Gin groaned.

"Don't worry about it. Tiamat is not someone I could take lightly even when I was in my prime. And while I'm weakened, she's already had three of her seals undone. Two more and I would've needed to resolve myself to die if I wanted to take her down with me. And even then, there's no guarantee." Allura offered Gin a cigarette as her mind lingered on what Tiamat said.

Sealed Lords have died and their corpses harvested.

Some are even kept as batteries.

She had a person in mind but just using the corpses and sealed Lords as batteries didn't make sense. There must be something else going on.

Then there was also the concern about them somehow being able to birth a new Lord from the body of the sealed ones.

White Death being the first one they discovered.

Even though it was a newborn, it showed an absurd degree of adaptability. If they didn't find it early and had Gin kill it asap, it would've become a monster even for Allura's standards.

But despite all of this turmoil, a smile could be seen on her face.

After all, she got some news regarding Alice.

From what Tiamat mentioned, it sounded like Alice had gotten much stronger. Not only did Tiamat recognise the power of the Queen inside her but also hints of her own power? Now that was something Allura was interested in.

'When did Alice get a hold of my Sigil? I don't believe I fed her my blood.' Allura couldn't help but wonder.

Thinking about her, a smile appeared on Allura's face.

"Say Gin, let's finish up the things we need to do quickly. I want to see Alice again." Allura suggested.

"Only if you stop going on random detours." Gin sighed.

"I'm a busy woman and the world lacks capable people. Can't blame me now can you?"

"I can and I will, I haven't even gotten a letter from my granddaughter yet. She's probably spending time with that brat right now." Gin spat out in annoyance, recalling that the last time they met, Alice and Ria were going to look for Luke.

"Don't be a party pooper now. Let the young'uns experience youth." Allura patted Gin on the shoulder.

"Uhuh, so you say. And if someone was to try and woo Alice?" Gin asked as Allura 'smiled.

"Who dares? They gotta meet the standard first ya know?"

Hearing this, Gin rolled his eyes.

'And you say let the young'uns experience youth.'

###

*ACHOO!!!

"Are you alright?" Caera raised an eyebrow as Alice nodded her head.

'Did you catch a cold?' Alyss was confused.

'Not sure. Maybe dust got in my nose.'

Shrugging her shoulders, Alice glanced out at the queue that was forming from the Warriors who wanted the cure.

Once she was done with handing out the cure, it would be time for her to leave.

Chapter 519 - 519: Fluffy Tail and Ears

Surprisingly, the first one in the queue was actually the governor or the capital. Alice could see the familiar fluffy ears and the sharp gaze.

Considering she was part of what Alice assumed to be a group called 'Hounds', it was no surprise that she'd be here first. She was practically the first to respond to the danger after all.

"Governor." Alice greeted with a smile.

Seeing Alice, the governor nodded her head.

"I believe you know the details of this 'cure' right? I will be conducting two tests. One to see if you're compatible with a certain blood sample, the other is to see if you have the talent to activate something called the Bloodline Release." Alice explained as she gestured for the governor to sit on the chair in front of her.

"I've been briefed. If I have an affinity for Bloodline Release, I'll be turned to a hybrid where I can achieve equal or greater power using this new technique. But if I don't have an affinity, I'll be given two choices. One is a berserker and the other is to remain how I am now." The Governor replied in a serious tone.

"Indeed. And you know that if you become a berserker, your fate is essentially sealed right?"

"I'm aware."

With the Governor aware of the dangers, Alice nodded her head and had her turn around.

Even though she was tempted to touch the ears and the tail, Alice held herself back as it wouldn't be appropriate at this time.

First, she needed to see the capacity of the Governor to determine the ratio they needed to implement. Different people had different resistances to the curse so she couldn't use the same formula for everyone.

Furrowing her brows, the Governor could feel a strange energy worming its way through her body, scanning her from head to toe. It wasn't painful but it wasn't exactly soothing either.

"Caera, she's lost around 35% of her capacity." Alice glanced back as Caera began to adjust the formulas.

Getting the Governor to lay down on the bed without her shirt, Alice pressed a single drop of her blood against her back.

The instant her blood came into contact, the Governor's ears and tail jumped up in shock as she gripped the bed cover.

Biting her lip, she refused to let out a single peep of sound.

Alice wanted to reassure her but the pain wasn't going to disappear. The only thing she could do was to speed up the process.

Closing her eyes, Alice began to overwrite the curse within the Governor's body with her own blood. There were already traces of her blood inside her body since the Governor was exposed to the spider lilies and this made the adaption process much easier.

'She's showing a lot of resilience.' Alyss noticed as the Governor's body had already 'quarantined' the curse and Alice's blood to some extent.

A way for her body to protect her against the side effects.

With this being the case, Alice would be able to inject a bit more of her blood than originally anticipated.

But before that, she needed to see if she was compatible with Bloodline Release.

"Try and follow the flow of energy." Alice instructed, pressing her palm against her back.

Little by little, the energy around the Governor began to shift as a light blue mist was exuded from her body.

Above her, a figure was slowly forming and had a resemblance to how the Governor looked. The only difference being that her body was made from a strange black material leaving only the glowing eyes visible. The ends of her hair now had a cold ice blue and her wolf features were still there.

With the Governor being compatible with Bloodline Release, Alice nodded with a smile.

"Congratulations Governor, you're compatible. I'll inject a bit more of the blood into you so that you'll be able to unleash more power in the future. This blood will also give you a certain resistance to Sigil abilities."

With the initial steps done, the rest of the process was rather simple and soon, Alice had the Governor putting her clothes back on.

Clenching her fists, the Governor had a strange look on her face since she wasn't used to the feeling.

The feeling of being able to sense two alternative sources of energy within her body. It felt as though she had three beating hearts.

One was her original capacity, one was the blood, and the other was the Bloodline Release.

These three formed a link and even without activating the power, her body was being passively enhanced.

"You'll need some time to get used to the new power. And as a reminder, you'll only be able to fight as long as your Bloodline Release lasts. Once it runs out, you'll have to rely on own power." Alice warned as the Governor nodded and stood up.

"Thank you. If there's anything I can do for you, please let me know."

Hearing this, Alice paused for a moment before folding her arms.

With that kind of response, of course Alice will become tempted. After all, she'll be leaving the north once she was done with this.

"Can I... Touch your ear and tail?" Alice asked after a brief pause.

"Eh?" Blinking her eyes, the Governor's expression was that of surprise and embarrassment as a blush could be seen on her face.

"W-why would you want to touch my ears and tail?" She tried to compose herself but failed.

"Why not? They're fluffy. Of course, if you won't want me to, that's fine too." Alice shrugged. She wasn't too bothered if she couldn't touch them. But if she could, that'll be one less thing that she'll be curious about.

Hesitating for a moment, the Governor sat down and nodded her head.

She turned around, showing Alice her tail as her ears twitched.

With the Governor's consent, Alice gently patted the tail.

'HOLY MOTHER OF FLUFF!'

'Sh*t! No fair! Let me cop a feel too dammit!' Alyss protested but Alice was too distracted by the fluffiness of the tail.

Despite its size, most of it was fur! The volume, the lushness, Alice could tell that the Governor took great care of her tail.

'F*CK! Lemme out!' Alyss raged.

Pouting slightly, Alice sighed and nodded her head.

It wouldn't be fair if she was the only one being able to enjoy this sensation.

Closing her eyes, she swapped places with Alyss.

"Holy sh*t twinnie wasn't wrong..." Alyss muttered. Running her fingers through the tail, her expression relaxed as she planted her face into it.

"Hyah!!" The Governor let out a cry as she didn't expect Alice to plant her face into the tail.

'Alright tag out already, I still need to touch the ears!'

'A little longer, this feels much better than a pillow hehe~' Alyss grinned.

However, Alice took over forcefully, hijacking the tail pillow.

'Hah! Mine now!'

'F*ck! I call tyranny! Dictator!' Alyss cursed while Alice only stuck out her tongue.

Enjoying the tail pillow, Alice sat up and reached for the ears. Caressing them gentling, she noticed the Governor's shoulders trembling as she leaned forward and saw her expression.

Compared to the usual serious expression that she had, she was now a blushing maiden trying to not make a peep.

A single thought appeared in Alice's mind.

'I wanna bully her!'

She felt the urge to tease the usually serious governor and reached out for the other ear.

"Ahem. Dear master, there is still a queue outside." Caera interrupted as Alice pouted.

"Fine~" Alice sighed as the Governor quickly stood up and ran out of the tent.

The people outside who the Governor run out felt a chill down their spine.

How painful was the operation if it made their serious Governor look like she was about to collapse on the ground??? The leader of the Hounds, the Wolf of Verona, reduced to looking like this?

The next in line paled as Alice called him in.

###

"There is a barrier put in place by the Queen. So if we want to enter, we'll need some way of evading her sight." The Doctor smiled while playing around with a stopwatch in his hands.

"I believe you have the solution prepared already?" Albert glanced over as he nodded his head.

"This device will make people 'ignore' your existence unless looking at you directly. It's the same thing we used for the initial attack. Please carry it on you at all times and don't make a scene. We're only here for scouting purposes." The Doctor reminded.

Nodding his head, Albert received the stopwatch as Eryn did the same.

With the device activated, the three of them entered the capital with the help of Eryn.

Seeing as how the barrier didn't react nor did a flock of guards run to their location, the three split into two groups as the Doctor wanted to investigate the scene of the battle.

But most importantly, it was to keep an eye on Albert. On the off chance that Alice was indeed here, he's been ordered to observe his reaction.

There's been... concerns that Albert was beginning to hesitate. Having Albert see the results of the Hybrid's attack and the victims would be a good way to judge whether or not Albert's stance on the family's actions.

A mission given to him by the mistress.

###

"He's keeping an eye on you." Eryn warned as Albert nodded his head.

"I know. It's not exactly surprising with the questions I've been raising." Albert shrugged.

Landing on the roof, he glanced at the map to see where he wanted to scout out first.

Chapter 520 - 520: Albert's Doubts

"Questions that you've been raising? Seems like you don't approve of your family's actions. Not that I know what they are." Eryn shrugged.

Sweeping her eyes across the capital, she could sense the presence of two Lords and one strange aura near the large tree in the centre. No doubt the Queen.

None of them were aware of her existence right now and she intends to leave it as such.

"It's not that I don't approve. But I don't fully approve of them either. It's... weird." Albert sighed.

He wasn't sure when he began to have these hesitations. In the past, he thought it was only natural for sacrifices to be made for the advancement of human kind.

In all of history, there has been no advancement without sacrifice.

Something was always being used as a cost.

Whether that be human lives or something else, the cost cannot be avoided.

In order for the people to enjoy reliable Abyss Blood, healing vials and more, trial runs had to be done.

As much as he disliked the monster they hid in their prison, she had her uses. The only being so far to have shown a perfect resistance against the effects of the Abyss, allowing her to recover from any kind of side effects.

It was the perfect target to test out any unstable Abyss Blood samples before giving out to the public. If it wasn't for her, a vast majority of their products wouldn't have even gotten past the testing stage.

Of course, the burden couldn't be solely placed on the monster. Due to her constitution, they couldn't test for long term effects even if they seemed safe. That's where others had to step in.

He knew that and understood it. Which is why he never found fault in his family's actions. They were simply born higher on the pecking order, no more no less.

In another life, he could've been one of the people who were taken for testing rather than being an observer.

But since when? Since when has their path diverged from helping people? While the 'main' experiments were still conducted in the name of advancement and progress, their experiments performed in the shadows made Albert question the goal behind it.

One of which being the Hybrid protocol.

With Alice's sudden disappearance, the Doctor sped up the process of the experiment, pumping the subjects with growth agents and sped up the development of their body.

Despite looking like adults and having the body to withstand the operation, they were still in essence, child soldiers.

Their fate was already set in stone before they were born. The mother is injected with Alice's blood so that it would trigger a reaction in the body of the mother. Once they become pregnant with a specimen they deem worthy to create the perfect combination, they then inject beast blood into the womb.

If the egg survives this kind of environment while developing, they'll be given on more dose of Alice's diluted blood before they are born.

A majority of the children die at this stage. Even after adapting to beast blood in the womb, they couldn't adjust to Alice's blood.

But for those that survive, they are pushed to the next stage.

'All of the Hybrids have been in development for five years. Losing so many subjects with a limited amount of blood left means we can't make many more of them without risking huge losses.' Albert thought to himself.

He failed to see the usefulness of the Hybrids other than weapons. How were they supposed to help humankind?

If they were given beast blood that granted abilities to heal and so on, he'd be able to understand it.

But most of the hybrids were given the power to kill, to become the perfect weapons of war.

Shaking his head, he took a deep breath and calmed himself.

Their goal is to find Alice. To scout out the capital and see what happened after the attack.

"Let's visit the market." Albert suggested.

After a tough battle, most people will look for a way to relax. They'll go through each of the leisure spots one by one.

Nodding her head, Eryn said nothing and stood behind Albert, escorting him and keeping an eye on any potential dangers that might approach them.

###

"Urg..." Letting out a groan, Alice collapsed on her chair as sweat drenched her clothes.

This was far more exhausting than she had originally expected even with people deciding not to undergo the operation at all.

After all, it's not like being infected stopped them from fighting. It simply decreased their capacity and made it so that they couldn't fight the way they could before.

If the warrior possessed low cost Sigils that didn't drain a lot of energy, they should largely function the same.

Choosing the route of the berserker was a last resort.

Despite that, there were still quite a few who chose to become a berserker even after Alice warned them of the dangers.

As for Bloodline Release, after the Governor, there were only 6 others that showed promise but none as much as her.

Looking out of the tent, Alice let out a sigh of fatigue since the queue felt never ending.

"Perhaps it's fine for you to get a break." Caera suggested but Alice shook her head.

The sooner she finishes this, the better.

Snapping her finger, she created a set of blood curtains around her and changed out of her sweaty outfit.

"Send in the next person, let's just hope the path of the berserker becomes less popular with the people remaining." Alice dismissed the curtains. Ideally, it should be a split between Bloodline Release or no operation at all with maybe a few exceptions for berserker.

But currently, berserker was the most popular option which only served to annoy Alice.

She wasn't sure why they were so keen on sealing their fate as people who could lose their minds forever. All for the goal of protecting the capital. Was there something she didn't understand? Was it simply a difference of viewpoints?

Regardless, Alice was simply here to help them out. If that's what they want to do then so be it.

"Should I give it a try?" Caera suddenly spoke up as Alice tilted her head.

"What do you mean?"

"Give me a sample of your blood. I'll see if I can perform the berserker operation. I don't think I can help with Bloodline release but if it's just the berserker operation, I should be able to replicate it to some extent." Caera clarified as Alice folded her arms.

She didn't mind Caera giving it a try since she was the one who thought of it in the first place. But the catalyst that's required for the operation is ultimately her blood.

Entrusting her blood to someone else... Someone she barely knew, even if it was Caera, didn't quite sit right with Alice.

"It'll be fine, don't worry about it. Once I get used to the operation, it shouldn't be difficult." Alice dismissed with a smile as the next person entered the tent.

Nodding her head in silence, Caera gave Alice another glance before focusing back on her work.

###

After exploring the markets and the other leisure spots in the capital, Albert couldn't help but frown as there wasn't a single trace of Alice.

Mostly talks of the battle, murmurings of someone crazy for mead and the rebuilding process.

"Should we take a look at the battle locations?" Eryn suggested. If they wanted clues, it was better to see it where the battle was fought. After all, there will always be traces of powers used.

"Not yet. If we go there now, there's a rather high risk of them spotting us even with this device. Let's just take our time with it for now." Albert suggested with a shake of his head.

Right when he was about to plan his next spot, he overheard a conversation.

"Do you think Alice will take a break or overwork herself again? There was quite the queue there after all." Selen asked while holding Egil's hand.

"Knowing her, she'll probably overwork herself. Should we bring some food and mead over?" He gave a light chuckle.

"We can look for some spicy skewers too for Alyss. Though... maybe we can skip out on mead. I'd rather not see a drunk partying Alice while operating on people." Selen scratched her cheek.

Whenever Alice got herself drunk, all of her filters just disappear and she becomes a party animal. Drinking mead like it's no tomorrow, jumping on tables and even making bets.

If that kind of Alice was to appear during an operation... Yeah Selen didn't even need to think about it.

Discussing which stores they should visit for food, the two left while Albert furrowed his brows.

He was rather doubtful when he heard Ayla mention that Alice seemed to have kept her old name. Even now, he was still doubtful but it was worth it to take a look.

"Seems like this Alice girl is who you're looking for. Anything I should be careful about?" Eryn asked, noticing Albert's change in demeanour.

"Whatever you do, do not let her blood enter your body. That's all." Albert replied as they began to follow Egil and Selen.

They were taking a bit of a detour to visit shops but Albert didn't mind. After all, this was the first clue that they've gotten when it came to Alice's whereabouts.

###

Standing over the place where the living shadows had died, the Doctor kneeled down and rubbed his finger against the dirt. Narrowing his eyes, he tried to determine the origin of such power as images of the battle flashed in his mind.

It was brief but he managed to catch a glimpse of the instance that they died. A one hit one kill.

And this power... It didn't feel Abyssal or Holy.

'So its not the Abyss or the three Gods... Void? No, that doesn't feel right either. It's something outside of these three sources of power...' Curling his lips up into a grin, the Doctor began to piece together a theory on where this power came from.