

Abyssal A 521

Chapter 521 - 521: Soul Sight

Letting out a deep fatigued sigh, Alice glanced at the list and tapped her fingers.

Even though they met the 'quota' for today, if she continues at this pace, she'll have to spend the next week or so giving out cures. Waiting a week was a little too long for her liking.

Doing it one by one was too much of a hassle so she needed a way to either streamline it or apply it to multiple people at once.

Of course, small adjustments were needed for each individual, but that could be adjusted by separating them into groups.

However... These were people who are trusting their futures to her. She couldn't disregard this trust for a moment of relaxation.

*Sigh

"Bring in the next person." Alice let out a sigh.

"Yo~ Seems like you're pretty busy here." Selen poked her head through with a grin on her face.

"You don't say. I'm going to die of old age before I finish treating everyone in that queue." Alice chuckled as both Selen and Egil stepped through.

"So what brings you here? Surely you're not so free to visit me while the two of you were on a date." Alice asked with a laugh, gesturing for Caera to handle the next patient for now.

"Well, we were just thinking that a certain someone might be feeling pretty bored and overworking herself to treat the people here. Therefore, out of the graciousness of my heart, I brought along some

snacks for you. Sadly no mead since I doubt they'd want to see a drunk person operating on them." Selen held up a bag of snacks.

In the other bag, Alice spotted spicy skewers and understood they were for Alyss.

"How thoughtful of you. Now the real question is do I have to pay for them?"

Rolling her eyes, Selen gave Alice the bag while placing the skewers on the side.

Joking around for a little longer, Alice took this chance to have another break.

"How long do you think that'll take? The line's pretty long and I'll be honest, it's not getting any smaller. Even the civilians are contemplating about helping out now. After all, there's even a chance that they could become a strong warrior if they're able to use Bloodline Release." Selen folded her arms.

"Don't worry, that won't be happening. After all, the entire process needs three sources of strength to stabilize. Sigils, the soul and the curse. If any of them is missing, it'll become a major issue. During the attack, I've already purged the curse from the bodies of the civilians albeit with some minor side effects.

"So even if they have the talent for Bloodline Release, they won't be able to use it until they get Sigils." Alice explained with a shrug before switching out with Alyss so that she could enjoy the skewers.

"To put it another way, it's like giving a person a sword. An expert can make the most out of the sword while a civilian can only swing it randomly. If they're unlucky, they might even hurt themselves while swinging the sword around. In that kind of situation, twinnie wouldn't want to give them something they can't handle." Alyss explained.

"I see... That makes sense." Selen nodded in understanding.

Meanwhile, Egil was looking at some of the notes that Alice left out. He could see that she was adjusting the formula for each individual, taking into consideration of their resistances and unique variables that may affect the operation.

She wasn't taking any shortcuts when it came to treating the people here.

Despite not being a northerner and these people being complete strangers to her, Alice was giving everything she's got.

For Egil, this made him extremely proud to have Alice as a friend.

"Pst, Selen." Alyss whispered over as Selen tilted her head.

"What is it? So secretive."

"For giving me the skewers, I wanna give you something in return. Plus, we both know me and twinnie won't be putting this to use." Alyss winked as she reached into the pouch.

Gesturing for Selen to open her hand, Alyss placed a small vial into it before closing, not allowing Alice or herself to see it.

"What is it?" Selen was still confused.

"Don't worry about it, just take a look when you're alone." Alyss grinned.

Alice was also curious but Alyss waved it off, saying it was something that they didn't need.

Waving goodbye to Selen and Egil, Alyss allowed Alice to take over again and resume her job.

Meanwhile, Selen took a glance at the bottle and immediately shoved it into her pouch with a heavy blush on her face.

"Did Alyss give you something weird?" Egil blinked his eyes in confusion while Selen coughed awkwardly.

Her smile twitched and she shook her head.

"Don't worry about it."

Out of all the things she could've given her, the gift that Alyss gave her was the Aphrodisiac that Alice bought without knowing!

###

Ignoring Selen and Egil who were leaving, Albert and Eryn stood near the tent.

"Don't enter. If you enter, there's no guarantee that the device can hide our presence." Eryn whispered over.

On top of that, there was a strange aura inside the tent. She didn't notice it earlier but only found out now. An abnormality that didn't feel like any of the three major power sources. An outsider to this system that doesn't belong to the Abyss, Void or Holy.

However, Albert didn't respond. He stood rooted in place as he saw the face of his 'sister' for the first time in many months.

The way she styled her hair was different now. It was also split in two halves, one side being white and the other being black. Her bangs hid her right eye but when she was laughing, he noticed a scar over it.

The way she smiled, laughed, joked around with her friends, her voice... All of it repeated in his mind.

If...

If the incident never happened, what would Alice look like now? Would she also be smiling like this?

Closing his eyes, he remembered the picnics they would have with their mother, their walks around a lake.

The way she called out to him, stumbling on her step but laughing it off.

Clenching his fist, Albert gritted his teeth as his veins bulged in anger.

"Don't do anything hasty." Eryn warned.

She could see the resemblance between Alice and Albert and understood they must be related. She was probably the goal of his mission.

However, right now they were deep in enemy territory with abnormal variables around them.

Just as he was about to make a move, Eryn grabbed him by the waist and jumped off to the side.

*BANG!!!

A singularity appeared where they were standing a moment ago as Alice stepped out with a frown.

Her sudden attack surprised the people in the queue as they weren't sure why she suddenly attacked.

"Ah sorry about that, I thought I felt something weird." Alice apologised before gesturing for the next person to enter.

Once Alice entered the tent again, Eryn let out a sigh.

"I thought I told you not to do anything hasty. You revealed your killing intent." Eryn frowned.

It was brief but that split moment allowed Alice to sense them despite the device hiding their presence. If she hadn't reacted in time and dragged Albert away, he would be on the ground missing his legs.

Albert wanted to say something but seeing the stern gaze of his master, he took a few deep breaths and nodded his head.

"Is she your sibling?" Eryn asked curiously.

"No. She's just a beast wearing my sister's skin. She was killed 10 years ago." Albert spat out coldly.

"Is that so?" Closing her eyes, Eryn activated one of her Sigils as it manifested around her eyes.

The colours of her pupils shifted to a radiant gold.

"There's three souls in that tent right now. A patient, the girl just now and someone else within the same body- no. there's three souls in one body. One of them is... wounded and weakened. Perhaps sealed. And as for the person next to them... She doesn't have a soul. Or rather, her soul doesn't belong to herself now. She must've given it to someone or something as an exchange." Eryn muttered.

However, Albert focused on one fact and one fact alone.

"There's three souls in Alice's body?!"

"Yes. One is... Young. Doesn't seem to have existed for long so probably the 'beast' you talked about that 'killed' your sister 10 years ago. The other one seems more mature. As for the weakened one, I can't tell exactly but I know it's much older than me. If you're wondering whether or not your Sister is in there, it's probably the second soul if I had to guess." Eryn answered before closing her eyes.

A bit of blood appeared around her eyes but she quickly wiped it away without care.

Hearing this news, Albert collapsed backwards as his pupils trembled in shock.

His sister was still alive in there!

There's still hope! He can get her back!

"Master, can you help me?" Albert asked as he stood up and dusted his clothes.

"Perhaps." Eryn shrugged.

"I want to save my sister. If she's still in there, I don't want to give up on her." Albert bit his lips as his hope was finally rekindled after so many years.

"Depends. I might be able to see souls but that's only so that I can eliminate it. I have no power when it comes to manipulating which soul controls the body." Eryn shook her head.

"And what if you eliminate the one in control right now? The beast?"

"I don't suggest using such an... extreme method immediately. Just because I eliminate one soul doesn't mean the other will take over successfully. In fact, it could even become the catalyst of the 'body's' death." Eryn warned.

Gritting his teeth, Albert glanced back at the tent before turning around.

"Alright."

'Wait for me sis, I'll get you out of there.' Albert vowed as he and Eryn left the area.

Meanwhile, inside the tent, Caera narrowed her gaze towards their general direction and her lips curved up into a creepy smile.

Chapter 522 - 522: Albert's Plan

Leaving the city, Albert gave it one last glance before walking away. He noticed the Doctor waiting for him.

"Welcome back young master, seems like you had a rather fruitful scouting. Was there any information I should know about?" The Doctor asked with a slight gleam in his eyes.

Giving the Doctor a glance, Albert shook his head.

"I haven't found that monster yet. Though there seems to be a strange person living in the capital whose power doesn't belong to any of the main three. She doesn't have a soul either. We'll continue scouting tomorrow." Albert replied before continuing towards the camp.

Eryn was a little surprised that he didn't share anything with the Doctor but held her silence.

"I see, that matches what I found at the site of the battle. Two Lord level beings were taken care of by this person."

"Alright, keep me posted on what you find." Albert nodded, not wanting to spend more time around the Doctor.

Upon arriving back in his tent, Albert noticed Eryn blocking the sound from leaving the space, allowing the two of them to talk in private. Her skills revolve around the perception of space after all. Whether that be the space the 'soul' inhabits or a room, she could control it to a certain extent.

"I thought the two of you were looking for this monster of yours. I'm guessing you'd rather not let her fall into the Doctor's hands now that your sister is still in there." Eryn asked, sitting down on a chair.

"It's as you say master. The Doctor is someone who only cares about results and experimentation. Out of everyone who... dealt with the monster, he was always the most eager. But if my sister is still in there, I can't let him know that we've found her." Albert frowned.

If the Doctor was to find out that his sister's soul still lives, there's no doubt that he'd want to find out more. Meaning, Alice will undergo even more rigorous testing than in the past.

If it's the monster, he doesn't care. But if the target was his sister, then he couldn't let that slide.

"I didn't want to involve myself too much in this. But I have to ask, what kind of monster is she? Setting aside the curious case of having three souls in one body, her soul was... abnormal.

"Young in age but abnormal in strength and everything else. It's a completely different breed or type of soul from the usual. Artificial in nature yet capable of growth and adaptation. It's the first time I've come across something like this." Eryn closed her eyes and recalled the shape of Alice's soul.

Even though she's a Lord level being, it still sent a chill down in her spine.

She'd seen Artificial 'souls' before but none of them were capable of growth to this extent. Whoever the creator of this 'soul' is, they're trying to make something that'll surpass the limit of mortals.

"I don't know. That thing appeared out of nowhere during my sister's birthday and ate her. It took over the body and wore her skin, absorbed her memories and tried to act as though nothing was wrong. But there's always this bloodthirst around her that she can't hide.

"Her desires of blood and flesh are clearly that of a monster. We... tried to figure out her origins but failed. The only thing we found out was the unique properties of her blood." Albert explained, hesitating at certain points and decided not to reveal everything.

The best lies are ones that have some truth sprinkled in them.

"I'm guessing that Doctor will want to find out more rather than caring about your sister." Eryn sighed.

"Mnm."

Silence filled the tent but soon, Eryn opened her mouth.

"I'll do you a favour. Not because I'm your master or because I owe your family a big debt. But as someone who also lost a sibling and never got a chance to get them back. See if you can lure her out of the city. I'll isolate a space and we can proceed from there."

Hearing this, Albert widened his eyes before nodding his head in excitement. If his master was giving him a hand then it'll be much easier to pull this off!

All that he needs to do now is to find a way to lure Alice out of there. Considering what they've done to her during the 10 years they locked her up, it won't be too difficult.

###

"So you're saying Albert is beginning to show more signs of hesitation?" A woman's voice could be heard as the Doctor nodded his head.

He was currently standing in front of a mirror and a veiled woman could be seen in the reflection.

"During the scouting, he was clearly disturbed by something yet he never mentioned it. I believe he may have come across dear Alice and thought his sister was still in there." He reported with a light chuckle.

The woman in the reflection waved her fan back and forth for a moment before clapping it shut.

"Let him do what he wants. The more they think they're in control, the easier it is to predict what he wants to do. However, I am rather interested in this... strange being that both of you found traces of. Take some samples back with you." She ordered as the Doctor nodded his head.

The surface of the mirror rippled momentarily before turning back to normal.

Walking over and sitting on his seat, the Doctor curved his lips up into a grin.

Albert definitely came across Alice. If he didn't, there wouldn't be the sign of hesitation in his eyes. The habits of the young master was clear to him.

The way he would play with his fingers, how he would try to show more confidence than usual all in a futile attempt to disguise what he found.

But the fact that Albert chose to hide this meant that there was more to it than it seemed. If it was just the beast, he wouldn't even turn his head to look at her.

'If he's hiding it then... it must mean he believes his sister might still be in there, somewhere.' The Doctor rubbed his chin.

If that was indeed the case then this brings in the topic of souls and consciousness. How did the original Alice survive? How long has she been in there? Was she ever in control?

He recalled the countless experiments he's done on young Alice. The anger, the killing intent, the raw hatred in her eyes and the bloodthirst. There's been moments where she would fight back, moments where she would break down and cry as though the fighting spirit never existed inside her.

But if the original Alice still lives...

It would make sense that the two were switching out at certain moments.

And if that was the truth, was the young lady ever present when Albert was around? If so, what kind of hatred would she feel for her brother that ordered them to continue with a cold look in his eyes? The disgust he felt towards a monster that was actually his sister?

"Pft! AHAHAHAH!!!" Letting out a laugh, the Doctor couldn't wait to see this reunion. A small entertainment before recapturing Alice for more experiments.

However, there was one thing that he wished more than anything. And that was for the young master to show traitorous actions against the family that puts it in harms way. If he does, then it gives him the permission to treat Albert as an outsider.

Once that happens... What kind of beast could he turn Albert into? The members of the Zenia main family have all been reinforced and enhanced by the best Abyss Bloods they could get their hands on. To reinforce their physical bodies to the limit.

If he was to turn that kind of being into beast, how far could he push it? Could HE be the one to make a being similar to Alice?

Ah~ he wanted to find out immediately.

###

After the first day of giving out cures, Alice had found a rhythm to things. Muscle memory in essence.

She was able to go through the motions quickly without even thinking much and give the correct responses and procedure. Compared to the first day, everything was going at twice the pace now.

Even Caera was surprised as she noticed Alice's improvement when it came to controlling her energy and Sigils.

The efficiency increased and same with the speed.

A flow state of sorts where everything was given a boost simply due to her focus.

Even the people outside were surprised as they expected to wait a long time but that was not the case at all.

Upon entering the tent, they would see the focus gaze of Alice telling them to sit down in front of her.

In one swift motion and one instance of pain, she would be able tell you your options. Whether that be Bloodline Release or Berserker.

Once you answer, the operation begins and finishes before you even know what happened and she'll call in the next person.

Caera would then give them a sheet detailing what they need to focus on and the risks of their new form for them to read.

The atmosphere was akin to a perfect working machine.

Once lunch time hit, Alice called for a break as she wiped away the sweat.

Now that she had gotten used to things, the process should be done within half a week maybe even more.

Letting Caera know that she was going to get something to eat, Alice left the tent and made her way to the marketplace.

Since Alyss enjoyed the skewers yesterday, Alice had made sure to ask Selen where she bought them last night and made her way to the store.

While she was queuing up, a figure appeared in her peripherals. A face that she couldn't forget, a conductor of her torture and someone whom she used to look for seeking help only to receive cold disdain.

Albert Zenia!

Chapter 523 - 523: Alice Vs Albert

*BANG!!!

Jumping from her spot, Alice landed where Albert was earlier and scanned her eyes around.

Veins bulged around her neck as killing intent surged out in waves. Those who were weak willed found themselves passing out while Warriors felt a chill they had never felt before.

It was as though a demon had just appeared in their midst and was now standing in the middle of the market.

They dare not look towards Alice's direction in fear of invoking her ire.

'Where!? Where is he?!' Alice gritted her teeth.

There was no way it was a figment of her imagination. That appearance, the way he glanced at her, it was him!

She knew that the Zenias would find her out sooner or later but this was far earlier than what she had expected. More than that, it was her damn brother that was here!

'Alice, don't let him leave.' Alyss narrowed her gaze coldly as Alice agreed wholeheartedly.

Since he decided to deliver himself to her, there was no way she'd let him off the hook so easily!

Clasping her hands together, she slammed it into the ground as the earth began to tremble.

Her aura surged as spider lilies began to blossom. From the sky, motes of blood converged and scattered.

Her pupil shifted to match her power as she activated the partial variant of her bloodline release to extract more power. She didn't need the full version for now.

Wearing a white dress with red patterns, an image of the entire capital appeared in her mind.

This was similar to what she did underground with Ria when they were trying to find the members of the Eclipse. To map things out with her blood.

Only this time, she enhanced it further by getting information about the person. Their silhouettes and the energy that flowed through their body.

Even if they had a disguise skill, as long as her spider lily attaches to them, they'd never escape her gaze.

"I found you."

###

Running through the capital, Albert could feel cold sweat rolling down his back.

One gaze.

One gaze was enough for him to sense the brief instance of overwhelming killing intent that was simmering within Alice. Rather than a fight or flight response, his will to live screamed at him to run!

Glancing up, he could see blood motes forming before exploding. He figured that this was probably her way of trying to track him down.

'I need to get out of the city first. If master makes a move in here, that'll only attract the attention of the other Lords.' Albert gritted his teeth.

Activating his Sigil which manifested on his ankle, he narrowed his gaze and sped towards the exit, turning into a blur.

At that moment, he felt danger from above and glanced up.

He saw Alice's partial bloodline release form as she aimed a single orb of destructive energy towards his feet.

'I need to block this!'

Instinctively, he knew that if he was to let this succeed, he wouldn't be able to leave the capital!

Gritting his teeth, he activated his second Sigil.

*BANG!!!!

Summoning a longsword, he grabbed it with both hands and parried upwards, cleaving the attack in half as the edge of his blade flickered with crimson energy.

Flinching from the weight of the attack, Albert continued to run but Alice wasn't about to let him have the easy way out.

A portal opened up beneath his feet and his balance was disrupted.

Appearing in front of Albert, Alice came face to face with one of the people she hated the most in the world.

Her anger reached levels she couldn't even imagine as she grabbed him by the neck and slammed him into the ground.

*CRACK!!!

The ground fractured beneath her but Albert was unaffected. His body crumbled apart as it was a clone. He switched out the moment he lost his footing!

Switching out with Alyss, Alice focused on tracking his location while Alyss focused on chasing him down.

"Do you think you can run from me? Dream on!" Alyss cried out as her shadow twisted and twitched.

Having Alice create a spear for her, Alyss twisted her body and launched it towards her brother.

The shadow of the spear transformed as a single darkened hand reached out to Albert.

"Tsk!"

Pivoting on one foot, Albert cleaved the hand in half before resuming his run but Alyss was faster.

Grabbing the back of his head, she slammed his head into the ground and tried to stomp down on his spine only to see that it was another clone.

Veins bulged on the back of her hand.

"Slippery f*cker! Twinnie, I'm switching out the first for inversion." Alyss clicked her tongue as Alice agreed.

Switching out the first Sigil to one that they hadn't used in a while, Alyss narrowed her gaze towards Albert.

Abyss Lord of Duality – Inversion!

Mid step, Albert felt a pair of invisible hands latch onto his body, shifting his controls. His limbs didn't listen to him and the energy within was in turmoil!

Stumbling on the ground, he glanced back and saw Alyss approaching with relaxed footsteps.

He wanted to figure out the controls of his body but all he accomplished was squirming around on the floor.

Taking a deep breath, he activated his resonance!

*BANG!!!

Silver aura erupted from his body, cleansing him of all debilitating effects and statuses. White plated armour wrapped around him with blue energy pulsing through the gaps. On his helmet, a single blue flame acted as a plume.

Knowing that it was going to be hard to run outside of the capital without exposing himself, Albert needed to create an opportunity to flee!

"That's more like it. It wouldn't be fun if you didn't make it interesting. I'll teach you the depths of my hatred with that body of yours." Alyss cracked her knuckles as a pair of gauntlets appeared on her hand.

Ruinous Void – Gauntlet Form!

Stomping down, Alyss appeared in front of Albert in an instant thanks to Alice's blood mirror and slammed her fist into his chest.

There was only one ability for the gauntlet forms. And that's to detonate the Void wherever she hits!

*BANG!!!

Feeling a sudden explosion of force crash into his chest, Albert's body was thrown back before he could even counter.

Sliding across the ground, he stabbed his blade down to stop himself and prepared for the next hit.

"Common! Fight back!" Alyss roared, wanting to grab him by the neck.

Parrying her grab, Albert calmed his mind and slammed his shoulder into Alice, forcing her to step back.

After two quick swipes of his blade that was blocked by her gauntlet, he stomped his foot down and activated another Sigil.

Alyss felt her body locking into place as blue energy gathered around his blade and unleashed a single powerful slash.

Alice took over.

The powers of the Void wrapped around her body as violet flames burst around her, dispelling the spatial lock.

Using the gauntlets along with the Void acting as defence, Alice caught the blade between her palms and lifted herself up into a handstand.

Twisting her body, she unleashed a kick against Albert's head as he slid back by a few steps.

But since he was so trusting of his armour to the point he didn't even want to try and dodge that kick, Alice narrowed her gaze.

Creating a single blood blade, she slashed upwards.

Void Flux – Cleave!

A wave of destructive energy slashed towards Albert.

***BANG!!!**

"!!!" Widening her eyes, Alice glanced at her arm that was now missing from her shoulder.

In that instant, her attack was thrown back at her.

She could see a blue flame appearing from his eye as he had a similar stance to her when she unleashed the attack. The blade in his hands cracked away and sizzled with energy as blood seeped from his gauntlets.

Not only did he parry the Void Flux, he also copied it and threw it back at her!

But if he thinks the fight was over just because she lost an arm, he was sorely mistaken!

Blood converged towards her arm as flesh and bone reconstructed itself. Regenerating her arm, Alice dashed into close quarters combat.

Since he's using a longsword with both hands, it'll be difficult for him to handle extremely closed ranged fighting.

Just as she wanted to grab his wrist, his figure flickered backways and raised his blade.

Widening her eyes, Alice reacted immediately and twisted her body. She launched a spinning kick against the face of the blade, pushing it to the side before firing a Void Flux at point blank.

*BANG!!!

The attack was parried upwards once more as Alice took a deep breath to calm her mind. She's getting impatient. A Hunter should lay down traps for her prey rather than fight them head on.

Even though she knew this... Even though she knew she should be patient...

The images of their torture flashed through her mind and her anger burst out.

Activating her fourth Sigil, Alice jumped back and unleashed another Void Flux - Cleave.

Seeing that Alice was trying the same futile attack, Albert frowned and activated his own Sigil in preparation for parrying and countering.

However, right before his blade could hit the attack, it phased into the Void!

"!!!"

He could see the attack reappearing in front of him. With it phasing through his guard, it was too late for him to use his Sigils.

In this situation, he could only rely on his Personal artifact!

*BANG!!!!

Before the cleave could clash against his body, a pair of angelic wings blocked the attack, dissipating it as Albert's wounds began to heal up.

Seeing that her attack didn't work, Alice bit her lip and tried to follow up. But without knowing, she had already reached the outskirts of the capital and was near the exit.

Stabbing his sword down, Albert launched Alice with an illusionary blade that forced her out of the capital!

The space distorted as Eryn made her move!

Chapter 524 - 524: Discovering The Truth

Upon being thrown out of the capital, Alice felt a sense of weightlessness overwhelm her mind. Glancing back, she could see a tall woman with a single longsword looking at her with strange eyes.

It felt as though she was looking through her, seeing all of her secrets.

But more than that, Alice saw the turbulent energy around her.

A Lord!

Widening her eyes, she wanted to brace herself for an attack but it was already too late.

In the blink of an eye, she was dragged into an unfamiliar world.

A cosmic sea illuminated by numerous vibrant blue hues shimmering with the light of countless stars. Above, a raging storm roared with purple lightning crackling through the clouds. Around Alice, the space fractured as though it was a piece of glass.

She could see that she was alone.

Furrowing her brows, Alice traced her fingers along the cracks and noticed she couldn't touch it directly.

"Are you a retainer of the Zenia family?" Alice called out, knowing that the owner was here with her, somewhere.

"To a certain extent."

"Don't you think it's a bit too much? A Lord bullying a measly five Sigil Hunter." She forced a smile while scanning her eyes across the realm.

The flow of energy was chaotic and fractured with strands linking up in ways she hadn't seen before. It was hard to make heads or tails of this place.

'The only way out would be to use Ruinous Void. But she's keeping an eye on me right now. If I make any hasty moves, she'll be able to stop me before I can do anything about it.'

Against a Lord, she was helpless. And this time, she couldn't drink the blood of one to push herself up into the realm of Lord forcefully.

"I'm not bullying. Merely helping out." Eryn shrugged. She was just here to give Albert a helping hand.

Seeing that the Lord had no intentions of leaving things be, Alice realised she was wasting time trying to look for a chance. Therefore, there's only one option left for her. Break out forcefully!

Just as she was about to summon her Personal Artifact, the space in front of her shifted momentarily before revealing Albert.

*BANG!!!!

Out of instinct, Alice had already created a blade and swung it towards his head, only to be blocked by the cracks in space around him.

"You really are a monster, no different from the time you were stuck in that prison." Albert frowned. His wounds have healed up now thanks to a healing vial and he had to admit that Alice's power was more than what he originally expected.

If it wasn't for the fact that she was trying to keep him alive for a little longer, he might not have gotten the chance to push her out of the city.

"Hah! Do you even hear yourself?" Alice let out a sarcastic laugh before glaring at her brother.

"Who wouldn't want to tear that f*cking head of yours from your shoulder when you're the one who backed up the people that tore me apart? Should I be on my knees thanking you for using my blood? My body?"

Albert's eye twitched as he took a deep breath to calm himself.

"You're the one who's wearing my sister's skin and using it against us."

"I may be wearing her skin but I'm not the one who ordered scholars to tear it apart from the inside out." Alice snapped back as violet flames burst out from her arm. The cracks around Albert faltered momentarily as he took a step back.

Unfortunately, the flames didn't reach him.

Eryn was surprised by the power Alice was showing despite the power gap as logically, she shouldn't even be able to move right now.

"Where is she? I know my sister is still in there." Albert gritted his teeth, not wanting to talk to Alice anymore.

Blinking her eyes, Alice tilted her head before letting out a laugh.

"You want to see her? Sure, I'll let you see her." Alice grinned. Between the two of them, Alyss and Alice, there was no doubt that Alyss held the most hatred for her brother.

After all, she was the one who was experimented on the most.

Closing her eyes, golden chains manifested around her body.

Unsure of what's happening, Albert glanced back as Eryn swept her gaze over Alyss.

"Your sister should've taken over now."

Getting confirmation from Eryn, Albert smiled in excitement as he wanted to walk forward and give her a hug.

*BANG!!!!

Punching the space in front of her, Alyss clicked her tongue in annoyance. She glared at Albert with cold anger filled eyes.

"What's with that look? Don't recognise your own sister?" Alyss gave him a mocking smirk.

"Or did you expect something else?"

"Big brother! You finally found me! I'm so happy! Blerg, f*cking disgusting." She acted in a sickly sweet tone before pretending to throw up.

Taking a step back in confusion, Albert couldn't wrap his head around the drastic change.

"No, you're not her. This... This must be a mistake." Albert frowned. Turning around, he wanted Eryn to say that this was the monster talking.

"This is the second soul. The main one has taken a step back."

Eryn's words felt like a hammer against his head as Albert glanced back at Alyss.

No longer was there the sister that clung onto her brother's hand and in her place, stood a woman filled to the brim with anger and hatred. He knew that if it wasn't for Eryn protecting him with this space right now, she would've tried to tear him apart.

"No... No! You shouldn't be like this?! What happened to you? Is it the monster? Is that thing the one who twisted your mind?"

Hearing his slander towards Alice, Alyss narrowed her gaze as his shadow twitched. Darkened hands shot out but Eryn's figure flickered behind Albert and cut it off before disappearing.

"Tsk. Monster? What monster? Doesn't that apply to me as well? The other 'me' has done more for me than the Zenia's ever had. She's done more for me than you ever did. Where were you when I cried out for you huh? Remember that first experiment?" Alyss began to talk as she clenched her fist to the point it bled.

"The first one is always the hardest to forget. You were there with br- no, I can't even call him brother now. You and Agarin were both there with Luthor. Both of you glared at me like I did something wrong.

"How many times do you think I called out for you? Begging you to stop? Crying out that it hurt while you watched on. You watched as they stabbed needle after needle into me until I wasn't even recognisable. If you had stopped there, I might've forgiven you to some extent you know?" Alyss gave a mocking smile.

"But you made sure every experiment was more painful than the last. You wanted me to suffer. After all that, do you still think I can be the same sister that walked with you around the lake?" Alyss asked as Albert stumbled back.

Eryn was silent but she continued to listen.

Little by little, she began to piece together what had happened.

"I... I didn't know..." Albert muttered. He couldn't avert his eyes and mind from the truth. He couldn't convince himself that the monster twisted her mind when everything she said indeed happened.

Every time she called out for him, begging him, he only convinced himself that it was the monster talking. That the monster wanted to take advantage of his love for his sister.

"If everything can be resolved by 'I didn't know', then the world would be a better place wouldn't it? Twinnie didn't know what she was doing either at the time of her 'birth', but look at what you did to her. So I think we've talked enough now." Alyss glared at Albert before closing her eyes.

'Go for it twinnie, let's end this.'

'Roger.'

Taking over, Alice slammed her hand down as Ruinous Void manifested around her hand.

Ruinous Void – Fractured Form!

*CRACK SHATTER!!!

Widening her eyes in shock, Eryn didn't expect Alice to have something that could break apart the personal realm of Lords! It wasn't done by brute force either, it was done by injecting the chaotic nature of the Void and the power it holds in disturbing space!

"Sh*t!"

She could see Alice activating her bloodline release as her soul form manifested behind her.

Flames coiled around her hand as a singularity spun to life.

One hit, one hit is all she needed. As long as she can be faster than Eryn, Albert dies here!

*KRK!!!!

Just as she pushed her hand towards him, Alice saw a flash rush past her.

"ARGGG!!!" Stumbling back, she glared at Eryn who had cut off her arm. The rampant energy of her attack was redirected into the sky before exploding and Eryn was untouched.

Regenerating her arm, Alice glared at Eryn as fighting a Lord was impossible for her right now.

But since they were now out of the personal realm, the others could be here as backup!

*Clap Clap Clap

"Marvelous! Simply Marvelous! I was wondering what might've happened but it seems like my worries are unfounded. Ah~ Simply remarkable that you are actually able to escape the personal realm of a Lord. And that attack, a fusion of three different powers. You've grown dear Alice and glad I am to see it." A joyful voice rang out as Alice felt a chill down her spine.

Subconsciously, she reached for her own neck as her eyes slowly turned towards the source of this sickening voice.

A figure that caused Alice to take a step back, fearing the consequences of capture.

Giving Alice a small wave, the Doctor licked his lips in joy seeing how life had returned to her eyes.

It'll only make the enjoyment of breaking her a second time better than the first. To rip the hope from her hands that she desperately clung onto.

This time, he will not let her slip out of his grasp once he recovers her.

Chapter 525 - 525: Alice's Full Power

Alice's gaze trembled as she laid her eyes on the Doctor. Her breathing began to speed up as she felt as though she could feel the cold metal of the collar burning against her neck.

Sweat gathered in her palms as she gritted her teeth.

Fight! She should fight! Take this chance to kill him!

She should use everything at her disposal to get rid of this man in front of her right now!

But... But there was no opening!?

No matter what she tried, her mind couldn't find a proper angle of attack.

'No! I have to kill him now!'

Unable to hold herself back, Alice activated her bloodline release as the image of her soul manifested behind her.

Artificial Resonance!

Resonance!

All Sigils Active!

*BANG!!!

The sudden burst of aura even took Eryn by surprise as her pupils constricted at the amount of power showcased by a girl with five Sigils. If she dropped her guard and allowed Alice to attack her like this, she wouldn't come out of that attack unscathed!

Realising the danger, Eryn immediately stood in front of Albert who was still shell shocked by the fact that the one taking the brunt of the experiment was his sister all along. Then all the things that he did... All the things that he ordered... it was all done to her...

A crimson halo shimmered above Alice's head.

Her fifth Sigil had two abilities that Alice didn't want to use often since it had a chance to exile her from this realm!

But for the goal of killing this man in front of her, nothing could be spared!

Halo of Ruin!

Halo of ruin allowed her to siphon her enemy's energy capacity until they only had 10% left. Their capacity is then transferred to her as a second container and in turn, makes her resistant to her attacks!

Crimson Immolation!

She enters a berserker state where all of her abilities are raised to the next level. In this state, she burns through her timer much faster in exchange so she has to end the fight quickly!

Behind her, spectral wings began to unfurl as the Void Seraphin's power was raised to the next level. Three pairs of crimson wings and a spinning halo above her head made Alice look like the manifestation of a wrathful angel hellbent on slaughter!

Dashing forward, Alice created two blades. One shimmered with the deep purple of the infinite Void, sparkling with a cosmic light. The other roared with the flames of her second Sigil.

In this state, Alice felt her mind open up to all of the skills she'd mastered and even made herself.

In this state, she'll display everything she's got!

Void Steps!

She didn't care if her body was flung forward. One target, one chance.

*BANG!!!!

Appearing behind the Doctor, Alice raised the twin blades above her head as she had Alyss swap out her third Sigil for Allura's power!

She didn't need the Blood Coil's ability right now. What she needed was the power to kill!

From her blade, the violet flames and a silver aura began to merge to form a new aura.

*RUMBLE!!!

The entire world recognised her power as a storm gathered above them. The crackling of lightning and the trembling of the realm.

A maelstrom of calamity surged from Alice's blade as she twisted her body and cleaved down towards the man she hated with all of her heart and soul.

She didn't care about torturing him, she didn't care about prolonging his suffering!

The faster she can exterminate him from this world the better!

In reaction to her desires and her burning vengeance, a golden marking appeared around her chest.

Marking of Ayr!

The Crown of the Abyss shattered before reforming with the crimson halo above her head.

Energy flooded in from all directions, enhancing Alice's strike.

A pillar of flames exploded out from her blade, cleaving the sky in half while briar thorns and spider lilies erupted around her.

A strike with everything she has on the line!

This was no longer a Void Flux – Cleave. No, this was the culmination of all of Alice's experiences. The knowledge she gained from trying to craft a new skill, her masteries and the Sigils at her disposal.

Everything for one strike!

As the blades crashed down, their contrasting energies began to mix as the space in front of her was cut apart. A convergence of multiple abilities pulsated through the realm itself as the powers of the Void locked the Doctor where he stood.

He could not dodge- No! Alice would not let him dodge!

"ARGGG!!!!" With a roar filled with all her anguish and suffering, Alice cleaved her blades through the Doctor's body.

As her blades struck his body, the entire realm cried out in pain as crimson lights dyed the northern sky red, an omen of calamity.

The activation of Alice's Halo of Ruin when bolstered by her Crimson Immolation targeted not just her opponent but the surroundings around her!

The sudden disappearance of energy caused a vortex of chaos as the realm sought to repair 'gap' that suddenly appeared. The defences of the Capital roared out in defiance but the walls began to break and shatter.

Flung back by the explosion of her own attack, Alice glared at the roaring tower of inferno that consumed everything within the designated space.

Unlike the attack that she unleashed in Kvía, this was not one that was designed to destroy a large area. Rather, this was an attack designed to kill one target and one target alone!

Deactivating her Crimson Immolation before she's expelled from this realm, Alice couldn't help but cough up a mouthful of blood as the backlash of channelling a myriad of abilities through her body crashed into her. On top of that, she had also forcefully raised it to a level beyond her normal control!

Gritting her teeth, Alice suppressed the feeling of pain as she watched the towering inferno rage on.

Surely this was enough...

Surely she was free from his shadow...

Surely... surely she can forget about the hell they had to suffer through...

***BANG!!!!**

From within the inferno, a pulse of energy exploded out as Alice's pupils constricted in shock and horror.

There were remnants of the Doctor's body scattered within, still burning with the mixture of Alice's abilities that was designated to kill him.

But floating in the centre was a single blackened crystal and the flesh began to converge towards it once more. Bones were remade and the flesh wrapped around it.

Shadowy energy gathered to form his attire once more as he adjusted his sleeves.

Seeing this, Alice collapsed on her knees.

That attack was everything she had. All the powers at her disposal. Every activation and combination that she could've imagined. The optimal power and speed compensated by Allura's Sigil.

"HOW?!?!" Alice roared, on the verge of tears.

"Rudimentary my dear Alice. But let's focus on you, shall we? The word impressive cannot do you justice. Your powers, extraordinary. Surpassing even the greatest samples that I have come across.

"As expected, there is no other like you. And for that, I must reclaim what is rightfully mine. You make an excellent specimen young Alice. I will make sure of it. This time, I will ensure that no part of you goes to waste. I will not allow you to escape again." The Doctor curved his lips up into a sadistic grin.

Gritting her teeth, she forced herself to stand up and grabbed her blade once more.

She felt pain flashing through her body but she refused to heed its warning. She had to kill this man in front of her no matter what!

Void Steps!

Appearing in front of him, Alice cleaved up with her blade as flames and the power of the Void coated the surface. But before her blade could land, a hand grabbed her by the back of her shirt and threw her back.

*BANG!!!

Where Alice was standing, a strange portal appeared with a mass of darkness forming what seemed to be a hand.

If Alice hadn't been thrown away, she would've been captured at that moment.

Glancing up, Alice saw that Eryn was the one who threw her away. If it wasn't for her...

Alice didn't even want to think about it as her entire body trembled in fear.

But the two should be on the same side so why was she helping?

"Albert, I suggest you focus on taking the two of you away from here. The Doctor is strange." Eryn frowned, unsheathing her blade as violet energy crackled across her body. The scars on her arm lit up with a purple hue as she entered an offensive stance.

"Why must you interfere?" The Doctor asked with a sigh. He wasn't concerned at all.

"What kind of dark pact did you make to get that power?" Eryn didn't answer and asked a question of her own.

Standing still, the Doctor eyed her up and down before smiling.

*BANG!!!

A flash of lightning appeared in front of Eryn as an invisible attack was cut apart, surprising the Doctor. Even though he knew that Eryn was strong, he hadn't seen her battle before. In fact, in the long history of Eryn acting as a guard and Master for Albert, she had never gone all out!

As the two were staring each other down, Albert landed next to Alice and grabbed her.

"Don't touch me! I can walk." Alice slapped his hand away as she gritted her teeth and forced herself to stand up.

"Don't be stubborn!" Albert frowned but feeling Alice's glare, he bit his lip before looking away.

Guilt filled his eyes but it was too late to undo the past.

"Master will delay the doc. If you land in his hands again, you're never escaping his grasp. Is that what you want?" Albert asked, grabbing Alice once more as he glanced back at his Master who was parrying the Doctor's attack without any issue.

Gritting her teeth, Alice suppressed the sense of disgust in her body and followed Albert for now.

Between the two, there was no doubt that the Doctor was the most dangerous!

Chapter 526 - 526: Eryn Vs The Doctor

Running away from the battle with the help of Albert, Alice could hear the constant crackling of lightning.

Even from this far away, she could feel her hairs stand on end. If Eryn decided to fight her seriously, she might not even be able to react to one attack.

Once they were far enough, Alice tried to step away from Albert but he held on tight.

A vein bulged on Alice's neck as she aimed her finger at his head and energy converged into a single Void Flux. She might be injured after using everything she's got in that attack but one Void Flux was still possible.

"Don't push your luck." Alice spat out as Albert frowned.

"I'm not doing it for you. I'm doing it for her."

"And what makes you think that she'd want your help after you abandoned her?" Alice clicked her tongue, pushing him away.

"That- I didn't- Tsk forget it." Albert gritted his teeth and looked down since there was nothing he could say to refute her.

"What about you then? Why did the chains appear when she took over? Are you keeping her locked up?" He accused.

However, Alice ignored him since she wanted nothing to do with Albert and the same goes for Alyss.

The reason why he was still breathing right now was because his master saved her from the Doctor.

This was her repaying her debt.

In the distance, she could see Selen and Egil rushing over.

On top of the building next to her, Caera sat while observing Albert.

She could see the resemblance he had with Alice despite the difference in hair colour. And judging from their brief conversation, she came to the conclusion that they were indeed related.

The key point being Albert focusing on the one inside Alice rather than Alice herself.

"Caera, you saw what happened didn't you?" Alice glanced up, surprising Caera as she thought that she'd been suppressing her presence. Though perhaps she gazed a little too intently for too long, thus exposing her.

"Indeed. It was a magnificent strike that you unleashed dear successor. However, it baffles even me how that man survived. I didn't see the entire fight but I certainly saw the strange crystal that lay in the centre of his being." Caera jumped down, surprising Albert as he didn't sense anything.

"Alice! Are you alright?" Selen rushed over, examining Alice's wounds.

However, the moment she saw Albert behind her, her pupils constricted as she conjured a blade and tried to lung forward but Alice stopped her.

"Alice! He's-!"

"A Zenia I know. Albert Zenia, first born son. Technically my brother." Alice gave Albert a side eye but he showed a face of disgust.

"I'm not your brother. I'm Alice's brother."

But his reply only confused Selen who thought Alice hated her entire family.

"Be that as it may, me and Alyss share the same body and my body is her body. My things are her things. And in reverse, her things are my things, same with connections. Don't worry, the fact that we even share a bloodline makes me want to drain out my blood and replace it with something else but that's not something I can achieve now is it?" Alice glared at Albert before turning to Selen.

There's only one thing she needs to say for Selen to understand why Albert was still allowed to breathe in her presence.

"The Doctor is here."

"!!!"

Selen's face paled as she stumbled back. Egil caught her, confused but understood that this must be part of their past connections coming to haunt them.

"Albert's master is keeping him occupied but I don't know for how long. I used everything I got to try and kill him but he regenerated from a weird crystal in his chest. I don't think I can stay here for another day. Selen, you should keep yourself hidden too. The Doctor doesn't like it when his subjects escape his grasp, no matter how small they are." Alice scratched her hair.

"If he finds out that you used to be part of the experiments, he'll track you down to the ends of the earth."

Hearing this, Selen bit her lip and nodded her head in agreement.

However, her concern was still on Albert.

He's a main member of the Zenia family, saying all of this while he was here... Selen didn't understand why. What if this was a ploy for him to gain Alice's trust?

"Caera, I'll let you resolve the agreement I have with the Queen. You're already familiar enough with the procedure to help with those infected by the curse. All you need is my blood now right?" Alice asked as Caera nodded her head.

Taking out a vial from her pouch, Alice made a cut on her arm and drained several vials worth of blood for Caera.

Even though her Sigil could create her blood using energy, it was still better to use the blood within her body rather than energy. Especially when it came to healing those infected.

"I'll make use of this with care. I suppose you'll be departing for your journey now, right?" Caera asked, receiving the vials.

"Mnm. I can't expose myself to more danger than this." Alice nodded.

"In that case then what about the lad behind you? Should I deal with him?" Caera asked as killing intent seeped out but Alice glared at her.

"His life is mine and Alyss's to take. Not you."

"Understood." Caera bowed before taking a step back.

"Now what to do with you." Alice narrowed her eyes at Albert.

###

Taking several deep breaths, Eryn had a frown on her face as the Doctor was truly a strange foe.

His attacks were invisible and he could recover from any strike she landed on him.

It's as though he didn't care what happened to this body since nothing would truly harm him in the first place.

"Why must you be like this? Has the family not treated you well all these years? We even helped your brother did we not?" The Doctor asked as Eryn didn't reveal a single bit of emotion in her expression.

Instead, she took a single step back as the scars on her arm seemed to come to life. The pattern began to shift before transforming into a dragon that coiled around her arm and up her neck.

Raiko!

*BANG!!!

Before the Doctor could even react, Eryn had already appeared behind him as steam was exhaled from her mouth. Lightning crackled around her body as the realm seemed to be cut in half. The Doctor's head flew from his shoulders but strange tendrils jumped out from his body, grabbing his neck and pulled the head back on.

"Tsk!" Clicking her tongue in annoyance, Eryn flickered for a moment before returning to her earlier spot.

"This kind of physical attack can't stop me. Why do you keep up the futility? And you still haven't answered my question yet either. Has the family not treated you well? We saved your brother, gave him everything he wanted and extended his life by five more years.

"When you brought him to us, he was nothing but a husk and you know that. But our technology saved him. What do you think is the foundation of that technology? It's the girl." The Doctor explained.

"Without dear Alice, we would've never made such huge leaps in progress and development. Without her, your brother would never have lived as long as he did. Shouldn't you be helping me recover her instead?" The Doctor asked but Eryn let out a deep breath while veins bulged on her neck.

"Keep my brother out of your filthy mouth. If you stayed on the path of right, I would agree. I stayed out of your business because I care not for it. My brother was my everything. He's far more kind hearted than I. I stayed out of it because I can overlook such actions since the Zenia family indeed saved my brother.

"That was my gratitude to the family. But, if you decide to reveal such heinous acts in front of me and even show no repentance, my brother would only hate me if I didn't make a move."

Hearing this, the Doctor's smile faded as he showed an expression of boredom.

"Alright. If that's the case, I'll take you back as a sample as well. I wonder what kind of specimen you'll turn out to be." The Doctor curved his lips into a grin.

Closing her eyes, Eryn took a deep breath before snapping them open. Her right eye now burned with a blue energy as cuts appeared all around them.

Rend!

*BANG!!!!

Sheathing her blade, everything within the space was cut as the Doctor's body was shredded apart, except the crystal. She had tried to target it with her attack but it was far more resilient than expected.

"You can't kill me like this." The Doctor was relaxed as everything was under his control.

"No. But I marked down your coordinates now. I may be a swordswoman but my powers focus on space." Eryn gave him a side glance before walking away.

"By the time you return to the north, we'll be long gone. Farewell."

Tapping her sword against the ground, an array expanded beneath the Doctor as he realized what had happened.

Just as he wanted to do something, the scenery around him flickered and he found himself deep in the layers of the Abyss.

A frown appeared on his face as the growls of beasts rang out around him. A vein bulged on his neck before disappearing.

"I'll relent to you this time. Dear Alice still lives and there's plenty of chances to track her down now that I know what she looks like." The Doctor sighed as a beast lunged out from behind only for an inky maw to jump up and consume the beast.

Being annoyed with the current situation brought him no benefit. Instead, he should think about how to best utilize the Zenia assets to track down dear Alice.

He'll be the shadow in the back of her mind, always watching, always waiting for the right moment.

And when her guard drops... He'll put the cage around the bird that's grown used to freedom.

Chapter 527 - 527: Departure From The Capital

Taking several deep ragged breaths, Eryn collapsed on her knee as blood dripped from her eye. Covering it with her hand, she gritted her teeth and pulled out a healing vial before drinking it.

She could feel the cursed blood flowing through her veins, the allure of the Abyss creeping deep within her but soon, that feeling faded as she regained control over her own body. The wound healed and she soon up looking serious as usual.

Glancing towards the city, she furrowed her brows after noticing Albert not moving from his spot.

Tapping her foot against the ground for a moment, she disappeared and reappeared near him.

She could see him sitting on a stack of boxes while looking at the ground, contemplating in silence.

"Where did your sister go?" Eryn asked curiously. Even though the danger was over, it's still best to keep a note of where she was.

After all, the Zenia family's goal is her.

"She left. She had her assistant finish what she needs to do in the north." Albert shook his head as he leaned back and glanced up at the sky.

"Is that so? Honestly, I thought she would've tried to kill you. I even planted a safety net just in case." Eryn folded her arms as she leaned next to him.

That hatred the girl showed upon seeing Albert... It was no ordinary hatred.

Eryn has seen it many times before and that was the eyes of someone who's willing to dedicate their entire lives on revenge. The curse of madness.

Had it not been for the Doctor, she would've fought tooth and nail to kill Albert.

"I know." Albert sighed.

His life was only saved because Eryn helped Alice. If it wasn't for that... He would be a corpse right now.

She even forced him to sign a Law of Agreement because she couldn't trust him.

"Do... Do you think she's in the right Master?" Albert asked after a moment of hesitation.

"Which part?"

Hearing this, Albert wanted to reply but recalled everything that he'd done to her. How he turned her away when she needed help the most. Her older brother, the person she sought out for help, turned her away coldly and watched as scholars tore her apart.

It's no wonder his loving sister would hate him. Even he would hate himself.

He had convinced himself that everything he did to her was revenge for his sister, that the beast was using her visage against him.

But to think that the two were actually living together in one body, treating each other as twins and relying on one another to survive this harsh world where her family abandoned her...

Albert gritted his teeth as regret filled his heart.

"All of it. Everything that you heard... Dammit! I should've listened to her! Why didn't I?!?!" Albert jumped up as he threw the box against the ground and breaking it. Gritting his teeth, he wanted to punch something, anything to vent the regret and anger in his heart.

All these years... He's been the one hurting Alice all along!

He was not as stubborn as to not see his mistake, to try and find the easy way out by denying the truth.

But everything was clear as day.

"Honestly... I agree with both of you. I don't let those that harmed me off easily either. This life is kill or be killed and my path has been decorated by the corpses of many for me to live this long. So as for why the girl wants to kill you, I entirely agree." Eryn let out a sigh as she glanced at her reflection in the ice.

She could see a flash of her younger self, covered from head to toe in blood. Her first kill.

"But on the other hand, I don't blame you for losing yourself in your anger and mourning. To you, your sister was killed and her body puppeteer by a beast. Granted, rather than torturing them and making use of their body, I would make it a swift death. After all... They still have the visage of my sibling.

"I'd... rather not torture someone who looks like my brother, regardless of their identity." Eryn paused before putting her thoughts into words.

Naturally, she couldn't predict what she might've done if she went through the same as Albert. After all, human emotion is quite the chaotic thing. But right now, she doesn't think she would go as far as torture.

"I see..." Albert took a deep breath and calmed his mind down. He was still feeling bitter and regretful but he couldn't change the past.

"So what's your plan now? I don't believe your family takes kindly to acts of betrayal. Even if it is their young master. What if your father steps in?" Eryn asked curiously.

With the entire family focused on retrieving Alice, the fact that Albert stood in the way of that was the same as declaring himself an enemy.

Going back down would be no different from suicide.

Staying silent, Albert hesitated for a moment before closing his eyes.

"I... Think I'll leave the family." He revealed a bitter smile.

He knew that Alice wouldn't forgive him but he still wanted to make amends in his own way. No matter how futile it may be.

"All the horrors that the family has done, I want to put an end to it. The grief of losing my sister has affected my father and little brother as well, even if I go back and tell them the truth now, I doubt they'll listen. I'm not strong enough yet."

"Hou? And how do you plan on achieving that?" Eryn asked as there was a small smile on her lips. Albert may not have sensed it or noticed the change, but Eryn certainly did as someone who's been observing Albert for a few years.

There was a new sense of clarity in his eyes that he's never had before, a sense of purpose and a goal. The disturbance in his heart disappeared and he understood what he must do in this life of his.

"Please Master, train me as you have done before. Not because the Zenia family asked you but because I'm asking you. I want to be like Master, able to hold my own. To make up for the wrongs I did even though it doesn't change the past. So that when the day my sister comes to claim this life of mine...

"I can confidently say that I did some good and be the same brother in her memories before the incident occurred." Albert took a deep breath as there was a small bitter smile on his face. His relationship with Alice was forever damaged but that didn't mean he couldn't put out an effort.

That way, even if he died, he wouldn't regret the things that he could've done and didn't do.

"Not bad. At least your hearts in the right place now. I won't comment on the things that you did or the things you still haven't told me, there's plenty of time for that. Anyways, let's pack up here and leave. The Queen and her retainers are in a pretty bad mood considering the fact that they're watching us." Eryn chuckled before glancing up at the empty space.

"The Doctor shouldn't be able to enter this city even if he comes again. I've exiled him from this space. But that doesn't stop him from pulling any other underhanded tactics. So be warned." Eryn called out before grabbing Albert by the shoulder.

They flickered on the spot momentarily then disappeared from the Capital.

Sitting in the throne room, Verona sat with a gold glint in her eyes.

The Zenia family...

From what Caera had told her, it seems like this was going to be rather troublesome. They're targeting Alice but she had already left. With them being the source of the ambush, she wanted to crush them with her own hand.

But because it's the Zenia family, it wasn't going to be easy.

"Let's support Selen and Egil, the two who decided to remain in the North. Alice took extra care when it came to adjusting them and the Selen girl even fought against the weird Hybrids all by herself." Sigurd suggested.

Frida was silent.

"I agree~ They'll definitely help out if the north is to come under attack again. This is Egil's home after all." Caera nodded her head while sitting above the throne.

Glancing up at the girl who was swirling a vial of blood that seemed to shimmer with an ethereal texture, Verona furrowed her brows.

"Are you leaving once you dealt with the rest of the Warriors?"

"Nope~ Dear successor wanted me to stay in the north. With the Zenia family being much closer than anticipated, she couldn't rest easy. She wanted me to help out if it does get out of hand." Caera explained.

"And you agreed?"

"Naturally, it's an order from my Master after all." Caera shrugged.

With Caera around willing to lend a hand, Verona felt a little relieved but also wary. There's a strangeness around Caera that she had never seen before and it sent a chill down her spine. She was eccentric to begin with so Verona couldn't put her full trust into Caera.

Regardless, the North will be going through quite a turbulent period of time with the Zenias now setting their eyes on them.

###

Sitting in a carriage, Alice glanced back at the capital with conflicting emotions. It was a bit of a hasty departure compared to what she had originally wanted but it was outside of her control. No matter what, she couldn't remain in the north for any longer.

She had to head to the east as soon as possible and her next destination was the port. She'll travel east via sea.

Chapter 528 - 528: Ebonfrost Warden

Sitting in the carriage that was making its way to a port city leading to the east, Alice glanced up at the sky and let out a long, deep sigh.

After bidding farewell to Selen and Egil hurriedly, Alice caught a ride on a small caravan heading to the port. There was a small party of guards assigned to it with 3 carriages in total and Alice sat with the cargo.

[Feeling regretful?] Cayla asked as both Alyss and Alice nodded their heads.

'What a waste...' Alice complained.

'If the Doctor didn't appear out of nowhere, it would've been a perfect kill.' Alyss followed up.

*SIGHHHH~

As they both let out another sigh, Cayla closed her book.

[You still could've killed him at the end.]

'I know...' Alice agreed. If she decided to kill Albert then and there, it would've been easy. Eryn was preoccupied with the Doctor and she could've gotten Caera to help her out.

But...

After being saved by Eryn and Albert of all people from the clutches of the Doctor, it simply didn't feel right with her.

Alyss refrained from answering as her mind lingered on his expression. The conflict in his eyes.

Even though like Alice, she decided not to think of the Zenias as her family, she still had to admit that maybe there was still an ember of hope in her heart. A weakness she didn't even know of herself. She still hated her brother, hated him for the fact that he turned her away when she needed it the most.

But countless what-ifs ran through her mind.

What if he wants to redeem himself? What if he truly feels guilt? What if he wanted to help her know that he knows she's alive?

Alice also noticed this turmoil within Alyss and didn't comment. This was for Alyss to resolve for herself, to make a decision.

Regardless of what Alyss chose, Alice won't deny it.

She hated the Zenia family for everything they did. But during the tortures, Alyss took the brunt of it.

She felt the biggest betrayals.

'The Swordswoman did save us. It didn't sit quite right with me if we killed him there. I didn't save him because he's Albert, I let him go because our life was saved.' Alice clarified.

'But on the topic of the Doctor, I need to reevaluate my powers. That attack with everything on the line, it didn't even scratch him.' Alice frowned as the Doctor was too strange.

She didn't know what he did to his own body but that thing could no longer be called a human.

[I can't help you here. I'd already looked through the records of anything that might even resemble what he did but nothing came up as a match. This is something completely new in the history of the Abyss and the surface.] Cayla shook her head, tossing her book overhead and manifesting another one.

Playing with her hair, Alice closed her eyes as she recalled that instance.

The moment when everything harmonized within her body.

All of her Sigils, her techniques, the fusion of her powers and the resonance of her equipment with herself. Everything was at peak condition minus Cayla and Void Fang.

But even with that in mind, the explosiveness of her power wouldn't have changed much.

Her power may be strong in the physical aspect but it lacked the final push to kill the Doctor.

Allura was able to isolate and sever the connection people had to their spiritual heart, making them effectively useless when it came to surviving her attack.

She needed something similar.

Something to decrease their defences and nullify their backup plans.

Her first initial thought would be to rely on her blood but knowing that her opponent is the Doctor and Nyer in the future, she couldn't put all her eggs into one basket.

There's no doubt that they'll prepare their own defences against her, the Doctor specifically.

He'll go out of his way to find something that could neutralize her if she was to try to use her blood. All so that he could watch her struggle in vain.

That's the kind of person he is.

*BANG!!!

Feeling the carriage shake, Alice furrowed her brows as she poked her head out of the side and saw a beast fighting against one of the guards protecting the caravan.

The beast was covered in white fur and strange garments with a cross pattern around the arms and waist. Two large horns crowned his head as a pair of beady green eyes stared unblinkingly.

Its arms hung down to the ground as it was far bigger and more muscular than the rest of its body.

Twisting its body, it swung its arm against the shield of the vanguard, kicking up the snow and dirt while the vanguard struggled.

Despite being in his resonance form, Alice could see blood dripping from his mouth.

Behind the beast, an archer appeared on a tree branch and pulled back his bow. A convergence of energy spiralled into an arrow before firing towards the back of the beast.

*CLANG!!!

Protecting itself with its giant arms, the beast swatted the arrow aside. Just as it wanted to counterattack, a swordsman appeared beneath the beast. Activating his resonance, the energy of the wind gathered around his sword as he unleashed a devastating cleave against the beast's ankles.

However, noticing the danger, the beast jumped away to safety as its speed was shocking when taking into account of its size.

Pulling out the book that Alice got from the Governor, she flipped through the pages and quickly found what kind of beast the guards were dealing with.

Ebonfrost Warden, a six star beast known for its powerful arms that can block most attacks and aggressive speed. However, the defensives are entirely focused around the arms, leaving the rest of the body rather exposed.

As long as Hunters can restrain it or deal with the speed, cutting off the arms from the elbow would greatly reduce the beast's offensive power.

'Seen as how the swordsman aimed for the ankles, they probably don't have a way of restraining the beast. They want to deal with its speed first then take care of the arms.' Alice thought to herself.

There were five members to the guard party. A vanguard, swordsman, archer, scout and healer.

The scout was looking for a good chance to intervene but with poor defences, one wrong move and he'll be killed in one go by the beast.

[Are you going to help?] Cayla asked curiously but Alice shook her head.

'It's not my job to intervene. Plus, they're the ones hired for the job. Intervening will be akin to stealing their pay. Who knows if the employer would later say they won't get paid since technically, they didn't protect the cargo. Instead, someone random intervened because they couldn't handle it.' Alice explained.

Of course, if their life is in danger, she'll probably help. But from the way she saw things, they have it handled.

From above, a rain of arrows descended as the beast raised one of its arms to block it, causing it to bounce to the side while the vanguard rushed in with his shield. Upper cutting the arm with his shield, he broke the guard momentarily as the swordsman rushed in once more.

Noticing the danger, the beast wanted to jump away but the archer intervened.

Snapping his fingers, the arrows that bounced off the arm detonated the ground beneath it, breaking the earth and causing the beast to lose its footing.

With the sudden disruption, the beast found itself unable to move away in time as the swordsman and scout jumped into action.

Twisting his body, the swordsman cut through the beast's right leg while the scout severed the left tendons.

*BANG!!!

Collapsing on its knees, the beast found itself unable to leverage its speed.

With the issue of speed now dealt with, the rest of the fight became a test of patience and attrition.

It was a slow methodical breakdown of everything the beast was strong at and they slowly carved away at its life until the beast died.

Watching all of this, Alice felt a little bored as she could've handled the beast quickly with Selen and Egil. Egil would rush in with the help of Selen's acceleration.

If the beast tries to run, she'll cast deceleration and Egil would retrain it.

As the one focused on offensive power, two Void Flux cleaves would handle the arms due to Egil retraining it. Once the arm is one, she'll fire a point blank Void Flux down its throat and kill it from the inside out.

10 seconds. That's the maximum amount of time she'll need to kill this beast.

In fact, if she were to go all out like what she did with the Doctor, 2 seconds is all she needed.

To overwhelm the beast through brute force.

Think of this, Alice glanced down at her boots.

The Void Steps.

She wasn't sure what went through her mind at that point but she was able to pull it off twice. The only thing she could think about was to use everything she had to kill the Doctor. The Void Steps were more... instinctual than anything.

But why?

It wasn't as though she hadn't tried to use it instinctually before so why did it work this time? Why didn't it throw her forward and make her lose control?

'Guess I'll spend the journey experimenting with Void Steps again.' Alice thought to herself as she'll slowly replicate the variables during the time of the cast to see what allowed her to succeed.

[Just don't run into the carriage and break it. We don't have the money to pay for damages.] Cayla warned as Alice coughed awkwardly and nodded her head.

Since she had to leave hastily, she barely had enough to pay for the travels.

In short, she was flat broke again.

Chapter 529 - 529: Soul, Memories and Identity

After the initial ambush by the beast, the caravan resumed its journey rather uneventfully as they approached the first camping site.

All of the food and tents were already prepared and Alice ate her food in silence.

The others were a little curious about her as all they could see was her eye since she changed her outfit before joining.

In case the Zenia family was still around, she wanted to hide her appearance.

Rather than opting for the Jester Sigil since she already replaced her Sigil twice today and any more would hinder her fighting potential, she chose an outfit that covered her hair and body.

She wore a large white hooded robe with silver highlights, a turtle neck white shirt, a pair of grey gloves, a skirt, tights and long boots that reached her knees.

Even though she wanted to hide herself, she still needed to look fashionable to some extent after all.

The only thing that the others could see were strands of white and black hair along with a single visible eye.

Nothing else.

Receiving the food that was assigned to her along with her tent, Alice watched as they sat around a fire and joked about the previous fight. Normally, she would've sat around and listened to them, to hear about their experiences and take parts which she may find useful for herself.

But not right now.

'Still contemplating? At this rate, I might mistake you for a philosopher.' Alice asked with a smirk as she took a seat next to Alyss's throne.

'F*ck off.' Alyss rolled her eyes but there was a small smile on her face.

'I've been thinking...' Alyss began.

'Which you don't do much of.'

'...' Glaring at her twin, Alyss rolled her eyes seeing Alice give her a grin and urged her to continue.

'As I was saying. I've been thinking about Albert. About the family. And... about what he said when we confronted him. At that moment, I was too angry to listen to him. The feeling when he turned me... well, us, at the time is still pretty fresh in my mind.

'But I can also see his guilt now. He... really didn't expect it to be me in there. Maybe if he knew, things might've been different.' Alyss hugged her knees while playing with a strand of her hair.

Glancing at her twin, Alice leaned back for a moment.

They both had the habit of hugging their knees when their emotions overwhelmed them.

Alice recently when Selen showed signs of drifting away due to her rapid improvement.

And now, Alyss as she is facing a decision of what she should do when it comes to her brother.

Alyss was always the more 'stable' one between the two when it came to emotions. She was straightforward and rarely found herself doubting what she should do. A strong front for all the years of hardship.

However, seeing Albert was like being hit by a hammer. Her strong exterior shell broke apart and revealed the fragile 'Alice' underneath. The one who loved her family and felt betrayed when they turned her away. The fragile Alyss who built a wall together with Alice as the two relied on each other to face the Zenia family.

The two of them were different yet also the same. They hold the same memories, went through the same torture and felt the same betrayals. But where they differ was that Alice understood she was not the original.

She's the byproduct of Nyer's intervention.

Even though the Original Alice is now called 'Alyss', it should be the other way around. Alyss was only given that name at the time because they weren't quite sure of their roles yet. Who was the hijacker and who was the 'prisoner'.

After their roles became clear, it was far easier for Alice to separate herself from the Zenia family as she did so during the banquet in the Inverted World.

There are only feelings of anger and hatred for the family.

If Alyss was to ask her if she would forgive Albert, Alice would reply with a quick no. The two of them were essentially strangers.

To Alice, there is only someone who wanted to harm her, and she who felt the brunt of his hatred.

But Alyss was different.

As she is the original, she still felt a connection with her family that was hard to forget. A bitter connection.

Should she love or should she hate? It was complicated and Alyss was in turmoil.

She thought it would've been so easy to just forget the past and hate. But after seeing Albert's mournful gaze, his panic realising what he had done, his bitterness and regret that cut his heart in two, Alyss felt doubt sprout in her mind.

Should she see things from his perspective? To understand his reasoning and why he did what he did?

Was it really true that he only went that far because he perceived them as his mortal foe? The one who ate his sister and wore her skin? Or was it all a lie?

A delicate lie that the Doctor and Albert constructed together to fool her.

To make her bring down the walls that she's built up so that they could stab her in the heart again.

'Say... Twinnie... What do you think I should do? Is it right that I asked you to let him go for now?' Alyss asked.

The final point that sealed the deal for Alice letting Albert go was Alyss's suggestion. No matter how Eryn saved her life, if Alyss wanted Albert dead, Alice would've agreed. But she didn't and so she let him go.

'Hmm... Dunno. Only time will tell. Maybe he stabs us in the back again, maybe he doesn't. It's not like we have a Sigil to read his mind.' Alice shrugged.

It really didn't matter to her. Now that the decision was made, she'll live with the choice and embrace the consequences. If he decides to stab them in the back, hell will swing wide its gates for his arrival.

But if he doesn't... Well, Alice will let Alyss decide when the time comes.

He's not her brother after all, even if Alice has the 'memories' of them being together. She could separate her memories and split it into Alice and Alyss.

From the time of her 'birth', to the time when Kaden freed her, to her new family with Allura protecting her.

It was a strange situation. She was both the original due to the memories yet also not due to her soul being 'artificial'. At this point, Alice had to wonder. Was it the memories that made the identity or was it the soul?

If it was the soul... should the person lose their memories then are they the same person? They think differently and have different habits yet the soul is the same.

And if it was the memories... If someone were to die and another takes over, inheriting the memories, are they then the same person as the one who died? And if they are, then are the crimes of the original theirs to bear?

She could go back and forth with this for hours on end and it's something she had never quite figured out.

It's why they decided to call each other twins.

Two sides of the same coin, sharing the same body. It's a simple solution that ultimately leaves the questions unanswered.

Hearing Alice's answer, Alyss was silent. She stared at her own feet and kicked her legs back and forth.

'Don't think about it too much. Just follow your heart when the decision arrives again. I'm always here for you just like how you are here for me. We're twins after all, we have to rely on one another.' Alice gave Alyss's arm a gentle hit, causing Alyss to chuckle before nodding.

'That's right, we're twins. Since that's the case then my mistakes are also your mistakes. If he stabs us in the back we'll just have to deal with it by giving him the most brutal send off we can imagine.' Alyss cracked her knuckles with a forced grin.

Alice understood that her twin was trying to reassure her despite her uncertainty and she wasn't about to pop that bubble.

'Sure, when the time comes I'll let you choose how we should send him off. But that's future talk, let's think about now. I need to figure out how the hell I'm supposed to use Void Steps since I succeeded in doing it against the Doctor.' Alice stood up and gave her body a stretch.

'True. That might've been luck but we need to turn that luck into consistency. Only then, can it be another tool for us to rely on.' Alyss nodded before pausing.

'Thinking back, it was pretty f*cking reckless of you to use it against the Doctor of all bloody people. If you threw your body at him haphazardly we might be cut open on an operation table right now.' Alyss's smile twitched, understanding exactly what Alice did back there.

Realising her mistake, Alice coughed and tried to run but Alyss had already grabbed onto her jacket.

'Deperate times desperate measures! I just needed something to close that gap ya know?!' Alice cried out, trying to escape.

She was akin to a baby kitten grabbed by the back of her neck, flailing her limbs and trying to break free but to no avail.

'As if! You had other methods to use if that was the case! That reckless brain of yours wanted to experiment with the skill because you were in the flow you damn maniac!' Alyss lectured, pushing her finger against Alice's forehead.

While the twins were arguing, Cayla only gave them a side glance before returning back to her books.

'Idiots.'

But despite this, there was a smile on her face. They may be idiots but Cayla enjoyed her time with them.

Chapter 530 - 530: The Key To Void Steps

After the long lecture from Alyss about how reckless she was, Alice used this time to excuse herself from the caravan momentarily.

She found a small clearing in the forest next to them as she closed her eyes and visualized the fight against the Doctor.

During that moment, her focus reached the absolute peak. Everything she obtained in her journey for power was displayed all for the sake of killing the Doctor.

However, it wasn't just her focus. She could still remember the strange sensation she felt when using the Void Steps. It was a little different from what it felt like usually.

To verify her thoughts, Alice imagined the tree in front of her to be the Doctor and activated Void Steps.

*BANG!!!

". . .Ouch." Alice muttered as she found herself crashing into the tree and landing upside down.

The usual sensation for using the Void Steps returned. It felt as though she had the rug pulled from under her and she couldn't keep her balance.

But against the Doctor, she felt as though she had a stable platform to stand on.

Like walking up a series of steps, she was able to determine where to stop her Void Steps with ease.

'Was it because of what I activated?' Alice questioned as she decided to activate her Artificial Resonance.

Trying out the Void Steps once more, she slammed into the tree, this time with more power and directly breaking it in half.

"Okay, so using Artificial Resonance turns me into a bullet." Alice murmured while dusting the piece of the tree off her cloak.

If it wasn't the Artificial Resonance then it might be her Bloodline Release since she activated that before the resonance.

Manifesting the figure of her soul behind her, Alice tried for a third time.

*BANG!!!!

Not only did another tree get destroyed, but the force also broke Alice's arm as she pushed it back into place and regenerated the wound.

"Well..." Alice crossed her arms with a frown. Three attempts and two trees already got destroyed. If she was to keep on going, they might think a beast was wandering nearby.

Closing her eyes, she tried to think of anything else that might've affected how the Void Steps worked.

She tried her Resonance before to no avail, activating all of her Sigils, especially her fifth one might be the key to it all.

However, Feris, the owner of the Void, mentioned that she could teach her how to use Void Steps properly in the past. Meaning, it wasn't something affected by her fifth Sigil. It's entirely based on control and her understanding of the Void.

With this in mind, Alice had to figure out what else she was missing otherwise she'll never master this ability.

She had to limit her options.

'Was it your fourth Sigil? You were using the Seraphim's ability to enhance your Void stuff during the fight against the Doctor.' Alyss asked.

"Hmm..."

Activating her fourth Sigil, Alice closed her eyes and began to control the Void around her.

The Void Steps should be instantaneous, the collision between two realms that forces her to 'blink' forwards. Having this long of a set up wasn't exactly great nor was it accurate to the skill.

Most importantly, even with the Seraphim's power, she was struggling to make the same 'foothold' as the one she felt. Not only did it take longer but she also didn't take this long during the fight.

Something was still missing.

[Perhaps it was not something you did during the fight with the Doctor but rather something before hand? Right before facing the Doctor, you broke out of the personal realm of that Swordswoman, didn't you? Maybe using Ruinous Void was the key.] Cayla theorised.

If nothing she did against the Doctor worked to activate the Void Steps then it must be something outside of it.

Ruinous Void – Fractured Form, disturbs the space around them and injects pieces of the Void into reality, making it practically impossible for a Personal Realm to be established.

Cayla's theory was that perhaps it was this interference that allowed Alice to activate the Void Steps successfully.

After all, the interference doesn't disappear immediately. There are still lingering aftereffects in the space.

Maybe this fracturing was what allowed Alice to get a stable foothold.

Tilting her head for a moment, Alice decided to give it a go.

Summoning Ruinous Void, Alice slammed it into the ground and activated Fractured Form.

The space around her began to crack as she narrowed her gaze and activated Void Steps.

Even without being launched forward, her eyes widened as excitement surged in her heart.

This!

This was the feeling!

The feeling of being able to step on a stable platform!

Her figure immediately blinked forward as she landed on a tree branch without issue.

Activating her Void Steps a few more times, she began to get the hang of it as her figure continued to blink through the area as though she was a ghost.

Landing in the middle of the clearing, Alice was panting for breath but there was a wide smile on her face.

'The energy consumption isn't that bad but it isn't great either.' Alice analysed. The main issue was that she needed Ruinous Void in order to successfully activate Void Steps.

Fractured Void was simply an extension of the way she could manipulate the Void. A tool to make the task easier and make up for her own lack of technique.

If she could master it and activate it on her own, it would make Void Steps far easier to use and less predictable.

After all, Fractured Form sets up a boundary that the opponent could observe. She could sense the disturbance of the Void as she reached her targeted location.

Similar to dropping a stone in water, the ripple across the fractures will expose her location.

It might work the first few times but there's no doubt that this signal will be noticed later.

However, if she were to master this technique then this signal would be eliminated and transform the skill into the same Void Steps that Feris used.

Or at least how Alice perceived it to be used.

"What the hell happened here?" A voice called out as Alice glanced down and saw the scout from the earlier party looking at the destruction of the trees.

He looked up at Alice who was standing on the branch.

"Sorry, I was just practising my skill. It kind of turns me into a bullet if I don't do it right." Alice explained as she hopped off the branch and landed next to him without any issues.

"Are you going to practice some more or are you done?" He asked curiously while glancing at the broken trees.

If what she said was true then how tough was her body? These trees weren't easy to break. But she was telling him her skill that accidentally turned her into a bullet caused all of this? How is she alive?

"I'm done for now. I achieved what I wanted." Alice shrugged before pausing.

"Say, you're a scout right?" Alice asked while glancing back.

"Yes, what about it?"

"So you have good eyesight and reaction right?" Alice continued as he nodded.

"Can you do me a favour then? I want to see how useful my skill is towards someone with high perception."

It wasn't a difficult favour and he was also curious as to what might've caused this damage.

"Sure." Taking a few steps back, he crouched down and pressed his fingers against the ground.

Narrowing his gaze on Alice, he focused his concentration on her.

Seeing this, Alice smiled from behind her turtle neck collar as this kind of opponent would've been perfect for Selen.

Her perception manipulation would practically eat him alive as she was the worst type for him to go against.

Activating Ruinous Void, Alice pushed it down and the space around them fractured.

###

A strange girl stood in front of me.

Right as we were about to leave towards the port city, this girl showed up asking if she could tag along and even paid a sizable sum with the help of another.

She didn't do much during the journey and simply observed our actions, judging us almost. Even during the fight against the sudden ambush by the strange beast, she watched with a slight hint of dissatisfaction.

It was as though she felt like she could do better.

Obviously, the others noticed this as well but they didn't want to verbalise it. It was simply a little annoying.

She asked me for a favour to help her test out her skill and it was perfect for me as well. I wanted to see where she got her confidence from.

It must've been an attack skill that broke these trees rather than using her own body. After all, if she indeed used her own body then how was she standing in front of me?

As I made my preparations to detect her movements, she pulled out a strange object and activated it, fracturing the space around us.

My detection skill focuses on movement and people travelling around me. It allowed me to sense invisible opponents and even those with absurd speeds.

Once they trigger this skill, I'll be able to react instinctively.

Since she asked me about my perception and eyesight, it must mean she wants to test out a movement based skill. I won't let her out of my sight.

"Hm... Seems like it's working as intended."

!!!

When?! How?! What?!

I glanced back and saw her standing behind me with a relaxed gaze.

When did she get there?? What did she do?!

She recalled her object and began to walk away while I could feel a chill down my spine.

Holding my throat, I couldn't imagine what would've happened if she was an enemy who wanted to take my life.