

Abyssal A 541

Chapter 541 - 541: Traces Of Duality

After her little experiment by the beach, Alice immediately evacuated the place with a satisfied smile on her face while making sure she wasn't caught.

She was happy that her experiment worked and with its successes, she's now gained some ideas on how to further evolve her own personal skill.

Meanwhile, Cayla gave up and went to sleep with Alyss following closely behind. She was already exhausted by dealing with the aftermath of Alice's first experiment and she didn't want to be around to deal with another.

With Cayla and Alyss sleeping, Alice decided to continue her theory crafting for a little longer.

But the moment she touched the bed, the adrenaline disappeared and she passed out.

While the culprit was now sleeping soundlessly, Tristan landed on the beach with a frown and saw the other Hunters staring at one another while surrounding the glass bed that was formed on the sand.

None of them talked to one another as they were all on guard but one thing was for sure, they were worried about the strange girl that appeared!

But unlike the others, Tristan was here for another matter outside of that.

He could clearly sense the remnants of an energy similar to the one used by the members of the Moon Church. The hints of lunar blessings embedded within the Sigil.

'Was another member here? But if she was indeed a fellow believer, why did she unleash such an attack towards the sea? Is it a mission I'm not aware of?' Tristan frowned.

Despite being a Cardinal, he was still a very new member of the Church. Had it not been for the Goddess's orders, he would've needed to spend years at the bottom before even getting this kind of opportunity.

Therefore, he was still naïve on the matters concerning the church.

He didn't know if this was indeed a secret mission, a traitor or perhaps even an imposter.

Keeping an eye on the others, he walked up to the glass remains and picked up a chunk before turning around and leaving the area.

If this was back at the church, communion would be much easier. But since this was where his sister was going to live, he didn't want to bring his work with him. Reinforcing the Inn was already pushing it since his sister found it a little uncomfortable.

However, it was needed. He is a cardinal of the Moon. He'll make enemies in the future and there are people who dislikes him simply for the fact that he's a member of the Moon. Hell, even those within the same Church dislike him since he skipped several ranks and was promoted straight to Cardinal by the goddess's orders.

It was only because the Goddess had said so that they accepted the decision.

Rather than going back to the Inn, Tristan looked around for the highest point in the city and made his way over.

Kneeling down on the roof, he pulled out an insignia from his inner pocket while silver energy began to form a pattern around his hands.

Motes of light began to shimmer around him as lunar light slowly coalesced into the silhouette of a woman.

"How rare it is for you to call upon me my dear Tristan, are you feeling lonely at night?" The woman asked with a small smile.

She floated around him while wrapping her arms around his shoulders.

"Please don't tease me Goddess." Tristan revealed a helpless smile.

"Aw~ It's no fun if you don't play around now? How have you been enjoying your holiday? I hope your sister likes the new Inn." Lumiria spun around Tristan while gently caressing his chin with her finger.

"Yes, she's been enjoying everything so far. Though she's not very happy about the fact that I set up quite a few defensive barriers around the place." Trista chuckled as the Goddess watched him with a smile.

"Well that's only to be expected. As one of my dear Cardinals, enemies will no doubt appear now or in the future. Making sure your sister is protected is your priority." She nodded in agreement.

"But knowing you, I doubt you contacted me to tell me about how you've been. Unless~ You want me to know?" Lumiria teased but Tristan apologised.

"Sigh~ you're going to break a woman's heart like that Tristan. Alright, what did you contact me for?" Lumiria pouted.

Pulling out the glass shard, Tristan was about to speak when Lumiria held it up with a frown.

"Where did you find this?" She asked.

Her tone was now far more serious than before.

"There was a strange figure at the beach. I felt a familiar aura belonging to the Church so I thought it was one of our members. However, she fired a rather... large attack out to sea and caused a bit of commotion. Is it perhaps a secret mission I'm unaware of?" Tristan asked curiously but Lumiria shook her head with a frown.

"This glass shard has traces of Duality, the power of one of my Abyss Lords. Leave it with me, I'll investigate it. Simply enjoy your holiday with your sister, okay?" Lumiria smiled as Tristan nodded his head.

Since this was a rather hasty communion, Lumiria understood that she couldn't stay around for long so she kept the conversation brief.

"You can contact me whenever okay? Don't be shy about it my dear Tristan." She teased before fading away.

Hearing this, Tristan scratched his cheek before letting out a helpless sigh. Once the Goddess was gone, he stood up and made his way back to the Inn.

###

Sitting lazily on her seat, Lumiria opened her eyes slowly and looked at the glass piece that was manifested on her palm.

There was no doubt that this is the power of Duality but it was... strange. There's no sign of her blessings, only that it holds energy that resembled it. This meant that the source, the power of Duality, was one that received her blessings in the past and left traces behind.

'Did Esse lend her power to someone else?' Lumiria wondered.

She was already having a headache after the meeting with Solaris last time, spouting some stuff about the remnants of Ayr and that they hold Velouria's power.

Not only that, but this strange woman even stole one of Solaris' followers!

She had told Tristan to back off before in fear of having him stolen from her too and now, there's the issue of someone running around with Esse's power.

"Griselda." Lumiria called out as a puppet appeared next to her. Her joints rattled as she stood in silence with her eyes closed.

"Send this down and have Esse take a look at it. See if she recognises the power on this shard and why it's all the way in the North." Lumiria ordered as Griselda, the Apostle of Spirituality bowed and received the shard.

###

Waking up in the morning with a soft groan, Alice blinked her eyes a few times and glanced out the window.

Seeing as how the sun was practically overhead, she understood that she slept for much longer than usual.

Letting out a yawn, Alice put on some casual clothes for now. A simple one piece black dress with long sleeves and white frills, a pair of thighs and simple shoes. Her hair was a little messy but she didn't bother with it too much for now.

Making her way down, she paused upon reaching the first floor, noticing the change on the door.

"Good morning, though I suppose it should be good afternoon instead." Tristan waved with a smile.

"Mnm... Afternoon... Did you finish the repairs?" Alice yawned. Compared to how she was normally, she was now far less energetic.

"It took a little longer since an incident happened last night by the beach."

"What kind of incident?... Oh and is it too late to ask for some breakfast?" Alice asked, plopping herself down on the seat in front of the counter and resting her head on the cool wooden surface.

Tristan could see the scars over her right eye peeking through the gaps of her hair.

"Just someone firing a rather devastating attack out to sea. The beaches are now off limits while the authorities are investigating exactly what happened." Tristan noted down a few things on his notepad and passed it to Arwen who brought it with her to the kitchen.

Soon, sounds of cooking could be heard as Arwen was responsible for the food.

"You're not cooking? I thought that you were a man of many talents." Alice asked with a chuckle.

With how Tristan was attending the bar, repairing the Inn and even being a high ranking member of the Moon, she thought that he too would be responsible for the cooking.

"I do know how to cook, but Arwen wants to learn for herself. I won't be around all the time so she's learning skills to run this Inn by herself when the time comes."

"Wouldn't that be tiring?" Alice asked while tracing her fingers along the grains on the table.

"It would, which is why she's going to hire some helping hands once I have to leave to go back to work." Tristan shrugged his shoulders.

As her brother, he would rather Arwen hire females rather than males. But if a capable guy is around to help relieve the burden, he'll begrudgingly accept so long as he behaves himself.

"Sounds like you have everything planned out rather carefully." Alice smiled, wondering what kind of plans she had for herself.

Right now, rather than 'plans' on how to live, she simply had goals she wanted to achieve. To reach the realm of Lord, to reach Godhood and succeed Velouria, to rebuild Ayr for Allura, to help resolve Allura's curse with Kaden, to help Ria get revenge on the Eclipse.

To get revenge on the Zenia family.

When everything was done, what did she want to do with her life?

Chapter 542 - 542: Isolated Locations

After talking with Tristan, Alice spent the rest of her day just wandering around the city while looking for another suitable spot to experiment with her new findings. She wanted to see what else she could create with an inverse Sigil.

Since it was a new day, her Sigils had gone back to normal and she had a new theory in mind.

Continuing from her previous experiment regarding fusion using Duality, Alice couldn't help but wonder if this process could help her achieve what she desired using her first Sigil.

For Duality to act as a catalyst to assist with the merging process and prevent her limbs from blowing up.

And naturally, with the beach being cut off, there was only one person Alice could approach regarding a new spot for her experiments.

"Hi~ Lorien did you miss me?~ I'm here for another agreement between us. A new chance at business~" Alice greeted with a grin as she disguised herself as Calista again.

This time, she replaced her fifth Sigil with Jester and the fourth with Duality, leaving her first three Sigils untouched.

Alice had used her blood to locate where Lorien was as he glanced back at the strange girl hanging from above his window.

She was currently upside down and giving him a wave while showing off her sharp teeth.

"Our business begins tomorrow. I don't believe we have any other agreements aside from that. And are you sure you should be showing yourself out in the open like this? Quite a few high profile members are looking for you.

"It's gotten to the point where I might even have to rethink our collaboration tomorrow." Lorien adjusted his sleeves as he stood up and faced Alice.

He had heard of what occurred the previous night and even saw the aftermath of her attack.

Just some rough clues on what the girl looked like were enough for him to know who was behind it.

"Aw don't be like that. I'm actually here to talk about that. For you see, that was me attempting a little... experimentation with my Sigils. I wanted to make sure some of my ideas are accurate after all." Alice flipped herself upright before jumping into Lorien's room and sat on the sofa.

However, her reply only caused him to frown.

That attack... Was an experiment? To make sure her ideas are accurate?

The attack that even shocked the key figures protecting this city was a mere experiment to this girl?

Lorien began to question whether or not it was a good choice to make a contract with her. A strange woman with unknown abilities who seemed to transcend what is possible within the boundary of six Sigils.

If she was around for longer, Darrow would need to pass on his title as strongest beneath Lord over to her!

"Why the sudden silence? Are you... afraid now?" Alice's sickly sweet voice rang out as Lorien felt a chill down his spine. He could see the calculating grin on her face as he could no longer treat her simply as a 'strong' Hunter that appeared.

Right now, she was practically a ticking time bomb waiting to go off!

Closing his eyes for a moment, he sat down on his chair and let out a sigh.

"Alright then, let's talk business. What are you looking for?" Lorien understood that he had already lost the upper hand in this discussion simply from the fact that he stayed silent.

"I'm glad we're back on track now. Until the job begins, I simply require an isolated spot where I can experiment without care. With my own powers of course and one that you don't mind being accidentally destroyed if it does come down to it." Alice waved her hand as Lorien thought about it for a moment.

"I don't believe we have anything that can... Withstand the level of power that you showed before."

"Don't worry about that, I won't be doing anything on that level. The only worry I have is if my skill were to suddenly explode or if I need somewhere to discharge my attacks. So I need somewhere isolated and a place that you don't mind being destroyed if it does come down to it." She clarified.

With Alice's clarification, Lorien reached for the table drawer and pulled out a map.

"I have some locations available for you to access. However, they're not private places owned by me. They're open places that rarely get used since a few beasts frequent the area. Knowing your power, you should be able to handle them with ease right? If so, you should be relatively isolated there." Lorien explained as he marked down a few locations on the map.

"Just make sure you're here for the job tomorrow."

Receiving the map, Alice gave it a quick glance before nodding her head with a smile.

"Of course, I wouldn't want to miss out on some platina after all." She reassured before leaving the same way she entered, through the window.

Watching Alice disappear with a burst of speed once she's out of the room, Lorien let out a fatigued sigh. He wondered whether or not it was the right decision to work with someone like this.

But the cargo was simply too precious and he needed someone strong to protect it.

There was a silver lining and that's the fact that Calista accepted a Law of Agreement to protect the shipment from anyone trying to intercept it. Naturally, this meant that if the Pirate Queen wanted to stop him, she'd have to go through Calista first.

Hiring someone of this calibre for just a measly 25 Platina in the grand scheme of things was a bargain.

###

On the map that Lorien gave, there were four main locations that she could potentially access. One was above ground while the remaining three were in the sea.

The first was definitely a no go. It was the least isolated out of the four, located between Pirate Bay and the beach. Even if it's off to the side, if she were to cause a light show, it'll easily attract the attention of others and she'll have to leave the place.

As for the last three, they were in different locations within the same cave network that Lorien had discovered underground.

Originally, it seemed like he was planning on developing these caves into a smuggling route but territorial beasts frequent this place often. Even if he clears out one, another would appear soon.

The cost was too high for the rewards and so he simply left it be.

'Seems like he wants to make use of my power to act as a deterrent for these beasts.' Alice theorised with a smile.

Since she classified her stunt as an experiment, she guessed that Lorien probably thought that she was planning something on the same scale. Even if she said she wasn't.

Therefore, it was the perfect deterrent for territorial beasts. They'll sense the power in the area and leave it be.

That way, after Alice leaves, he'll be able to use the routes for his own goals.

Unfortunately, this is one of those times where Alice isn't going to go too overboard with her experiments. While the inverted Tiamat Sigil had amazing effects, it completely exhausted her. By expelling her energy outwards to funnel this attack rather than gathering energy, it left her in a state where she could barely activate anything else.

Doing that while isolated and so close to the home base of the Pirates was practically inviting them to find her with her guard down.

However, there was another issue.

How was she supposed to go undersea?

There were special tools that were sold around the market. Mouth guards with what seemed to be... organic gills by the side.

Alice had seen people buying these and diving into the sea but considering her current financial situation, she couldn't afford it.

On top of that, she couldn't rent a boat either so she'll have to swim.

Then came the third issue.

She didn't have a swimsuit.

Standing by one of the piers that was closest to the first underwater spot, Alice glanced out at the sea.

"Well sh*t..." She muttered.

'Isn't it just a bit of water? What are you scared about?' Alyss raised her eyebrow.

'It's not about whether or not it's just a bit of water. My outfit will get wet.' Alice pouted.

'You're joking.'

'Nope.' Alice shook her head.

'... There are times when I just want to smack you on that empty head of yours. Switch with me, you don't care if my clothes get wet too right?' Alyss rolled her eyes.

'Ehhh... I'll still have to dry them out later though...'

Alyss needed to have Cayla hold her back as she wanted to smack her twin on the head.

In the end, Alice decided on another experiment.

Compression of her blood using the third Sigil and have it search for the cave!

By compressing her blood more than usual, she stops it from dissipating in the sea and infecting it. She'll turn it into a fishing line of sorts and navigate it to the entrance where she will then use her personal Artifact to open up a gateway.

The hardest part was actually compressing the blood but she had an idea for this. Stretching her blood into thin strands, she hardened it before braiding it with two more strands. Repeating this three times, she then braided it together for a final time.

Looking at this streak of blood that seems no different from usual unless you were to look at it closely, Alice carefully dipped it into the sea and observed the reaction.

She wanted to make sure her blood wouldn't contaminate the sea. Once she was sure the blood wasn't dissipating nor was the water around the rope being contaminated, Alice controlled it to search for the caves and soon, she found her target.

Chapter 543 - 543: Physical Resonance

Scratching her hair, Alice stepped out of the portal and glanced at the cavern around her.

Seeing her surroundings, she couldn't help but whistle in admiration. There was a strange seal around the place that kept the water out, turning them into strange windows that connected to the rest of the sea.

Occasionally, this seal would open up slightly and allow oxygen to flow out as bubbles.

Located in the centre of this cave was a bed of iridescent coral that stretched towards the top of the cavern. Its surface shimmered with the hues of violet, blues and gold while strange neon blue liquid flowed from its gaps, lighting up the cavern.

Pillars of rock and coral acted as support for the ceiling and she noticed a single beast coiled up around the base of the coral. Despite noticing her presence, the beast simply glared at Alice, warning her not to approach.

A strange beast with the upper body of a crab and the lower body of a serpent. It glowed with a strange orange on the underbelly while its shell shimmered the same colour as the corals.

Entering a staring contest with the beast, Alice scratched her ear for a moment before curving her lips up into a grin.

Killing intent surged out as she activated her Lord level Sigil.

"Stay there and be a good boy. Don't force me to clean up your corpse."

!!!

Slithering back, the beast trembled at Alice's killing intent as it knew it was outmatched.

Seeing as how the beast was now being obedient, Alice smirked and withdrew her killing intent.

She didn't need to kill whatever was living here. All she needed to do was to make sure it didn't bother her while she experimented.

That way, even if she left, Lorien wouldn't be able to make use of this place.

Finding a spot a little further away from the beast, Alice couldn't help but glance at the glowing blue liquid flowing from the coral.

She could sense a faint flow of energy but it wasn't anything substantial.

'Cayla, do you have any idea what this might be?' Alice asked curiously.

[Hmm... I don't have any records of it. Seems like it's something unique to the surface or it's something that appeared in recent years.] Cayla analysed.

Just the energy it was emanating right now wasn't enough to get a full understanding of what it is or what it could do.

[If you didn't ask Kaden to seal me, maybe I could find out. But what a shame, isn't that right?]

Coughing awkwardly, Alice contemplated the idea of touching it directly to see if anything was to happen.

However, if not even Cayla had any information on it then it was too big of a risk right now. It wasn't her goal either.

Finding a good spot, Alice took a deep breath and calmed her mind.

Right now, what she wanted to do was figure out how to infuse her blood with energy from her other Sigils using Duality. If she could successfully merge it during the activation of the first Sigil, she could unlock a new set of abilities that she didn't think was possible before.

First Sigil + Duality!

Activating the Sigil of Duality, Alice closed her eyes and focused her mind. She needed to prioritise the aspect of fusion and link both the first Sigil and the third Sigil together.

To merge the two before her limbs are blown apart.

Sweat and blood began to pour out from her body as she gritted her teeth.

Even with Duality acting as a catalyst, her body was still struggling under the pressure caused by her blood now being filled with energy.

If she had to put it into perspective, her blood was now charged to the point where it wouldn't be surprising for her to just randomly detonate into a pool of blood and flesh.

However, as she felt her body reaching a limit, a resonance effect occurred within her body.

The flow of the first Sigil, the power of the third and the harmonization of Duality.

"!!!" Snapping her eye open, Alice could feel a burning sensation across the surface of her skin. It wasn't unlike the feeling of having a fresh Sigil carved into her body.

Scars formed across her body, forming a pattern similar to that of a Sigil but different in nature.

Glancing down at her hands, Alice's smile trembled with excitement.

'Say, Cayla, I don't suppose you heard of anything like this right?' Alice asked.

She could sense what her body could do, how it functioned.

As for Cayla, she was silent. Her gaze focused on Alice's body and she wanted to reply but no words came out of her mouth.

She didn't think that the first Sigil had this kind of potential.

If more people knew about this, they would scramble to obtain this kind of power. But the foundations needed for this were simply too absurd!

Reaching out with her hand, Alice narrowed her eye as the patterns around her began to shimmer with a red light.

At that moment, her arm burst apart! Her bones and flesh melted together to form a body of blood that remained connected to her main body.

The power she unlocked through the resonance of her first, third and Duality was the modification of her physical body!

With her current state, she can transform any part of her body into blood to avoid the damage taken if she so desires. However, the defensive properties weren't what got Alice excited.

In fact, that was the least exciting thing about the new skill.

What's truly made her joyful was the fact that this physical modification was akin to a Resonance transformation!

Meaning, she could stack her true Resonance, Artificial Resonance and Physical Resonance!

A triple harmonization between three types of Resonances. Alice couldn't wait to find out the capabilities.

And to expand it further, this physical Resonance could be modified by the type of Sigil she slots into the third slot.

What would happen if she was to use her fourth Sigil? To turn her body into something Void based?

Or what if she was to slot in Allura's Sigil? Would she gain a body holding the power of Severance?

What about Tiamat's Sigil?

With this, her first Sigil was no longer just a Sigil for poison and a slight physical boost.

Her first Sigil was now the key to Physical Resonance!

Of course, to activate this, she still needed the power of Duality. It was an unavoidable part of the foundation so she had to choose carefully what Sigil to swap out in the middle of a fight.

If she switches out her fourth Sigil, she loses access to a lot of her Void based abilities, even with her personal Artifact trying its best to make up for the loss.

If she switches out her third, she loses blood generation, forcing her out of her usual blood based attacks.

Switching out her fifth makes her miss out on one of her strongest trump cards right now. The ability to forcefully 'level up' her other skills.

The second can't be switched out and there's no need to even discuss the first.

So while this experiment has opened a new door for her, it wasn't without its own drawbacks.

Deactivating her first Sigil, her body returned back to normal as Alice gave it a quick massage.

Feeling that nothing was wrong with her body, she curved her lips up into a smile and switched out her third Sigil.

With this, she loses her blood generation but gains the power of Tiamat.

There were two states that she could enter using Tiamat.

First was the normal use of absorbing ambient energy. The second was to expel the energy from within.

Alice wanted to see if she could access both states or just one when attempting the Physical Resonance.

If she could access both... then it meant that each Sigil could potentially have two Physical Resonance states that she could access.

As she activated the first state, Alice felt her vision shift. The world lost its usual colour and was instead replaced with a... energy based vision. She could see what has the most energy in the area and the ambient energy.

Rather than the strands that Cayla could see, it was more akin to... Aura. She could see the aura around a being signifying the amount of energy they hold.

When it came to the ambient energy, it was more akin to walking in a fog.

As for her body, the pattern across her body seemed to have formed scale patterns while a red hint could be seen in her hair.

Ability wise, Alice felt that if someone were to attack her, she could absorb their energy pretty effortlessly since she was practically a walking conductor right now.

And as for the second state...

All she needed to do was trigger it with the power of Duality.

At that moment, a 'switch' was flipped inside Alice as her Vision shifted back to normal but her form was now expelling energy from within.

It was reinforcing her physical body and amplifying any attacks that she would throw out at this moment. If she was to absorb energy using the first state then activating the second to expel it, the physical capabilities of this form would be off the charts.

But as nice as everything was, the huge drawback was still going to be that Alice would need to switch out two Sigils to make this happen.

However, as she was thinking about this, Alice paused. Her pupils shrank as she came to a realisation.

If she could take the Souls of those she consumed and turn it into Sigils then...

'Cayla.'

[Hm? What is it?]

'Are you able to designate the Lord of Duality as the target for a Sigil?'

Chapter 544 - 544: Designating A Lord as Prey

'Are you able to designate the Lord of Duality as the target for a Sigil?'

Hearing this question, Cayla's mind short circuited.

[It's... possible? I think? Considering a Lord level being is beyond humanity and practically half beast already. But there's never been a case of designating another 'human' as a target for these Sigils. There are Lord level beasts that's for sure. But... Actual Lords? Ones favoured by the Abyss?] Cayla muttered as she tried to make sense of Alice's request.

All logic points to the fact that it's possible!

Especially since she has the ability to manually designate targets of their desire.

'Well the theory is simple alright? When I kill beasts, I take one of their abilities as a Sigil and permanently engrave on my body. But when I take someone's soul, I don't have any guides on what they can do.

"It's a case of me remotely choosing their abilities and slotting it into my Sigil. However, their... ability as a Lord. It's something the Abyss granted no? The power of their titles. Duality for example.

'If I'm able to unlock this much through my soul siphoning, it proves that it can be taken as a Sigil. So through logic, it means that I can have you designate the Lord as my target right?' Alice clarified as Cayla furrowed her brows and began to frantically flip through her notes.

Never in her life had she heard anyone even mention this or attempt it. Plus, even with the technology of Ayr, no one there was insane enough to designate a Lord as their Target.

Beasts were far easier to hunt than Humans, even if they were intelligent.

[Setting aside whether or not this is possible, there's still the case of the Goddess you need to worry about. Killing the Lord is one thing but turning them into a Sigil is another, especially for Lumiria.

[She'll take this as an insult and hunt you down with her Apostles. This isn't the Inverted World. The danger is many times greater than in the memory.] Cayla warned.

'I know but just think about it.' Alice grinned.

[Just because you can, doesn't mean you should. Honestly, it's far better for you to just pick something else and switch it out if needed. You already have access to her powers.] Cayla tried her best to convince Alice.

However, before Alice could respond, Alyss spoke up.

'What do you think will happen if you ate the entirety of her Soul? We know that the Abyss retains a fragment of it due to the contract we make whenever we take a Sigil. But what if you took all of it? Would your power of Duality increase?'

". . ."

[". . ."]

Cayla needed Alice to hold her back as she wanted to smack Alyss on the head.

She had almost succeeded in stopping Alice from going after a Lord belonging to Lumiria but before that thought could even grace Alice's mind for more than a second, Alyss had to go and ruin that.

But now that the idea was in Alice's mind, she too was curious about how that would work.

Example being Tiamat's Sigil.

She only consumed a small fragment and even gave back what she could. But with just this small fragment, she was able to replicate her power to its current level. Would consuming all of her soul give her full control over everything that Tiamat has achieved in her life?

And if that was successful, if she was to take the full soul of an Abyss Lord such as that of Esse, would she become the second Abyss Lord of Duality? Even though she's not at seven Sigils?

To push it further, what if she ate multiple? Would she gain multiple titles? Would her abilities expand to house all of their Sigils too?

Alice didn't know exactly what the hell Nyer wanted to achieve through giving her this kind of body. But one thing was for sure and that was he made something completely outrageous!

She could negate Abyss abilities, consume souls and attach them to her own Spiritual Heart. She could replicate abilities and even regenerate from most wounds so long as she's not killed instantly.

Alice wouldn't even know where to begin if she was to try and make something of a similar nature.

Just what has Nyer researched since the fall of Ayr?

In the end, with Cayla begging earnestly, Alice decided to reel her ideas in a little and focus on what she could do here and now.

There was only one task and that was to familiarise herself with this new ability.

###

Waiting by the docks of the Underworld, Lorien had his arms folded while looking at the time.

He had clearly told Calista not to be late yet it was almost the promised time and there wasn't even a shadow of her in sight.

While she wasn't the only guard that he hired, she was by far the strongest available.

Should the Pirate Queen intercept, the biggest chance of success would be to rely on Calista.

"Where the hell is she?" Lorien muttered, tapping his foot in annoyance.

Looking back, he could see the countless workers preparing to set off as they made the final checks on the ships. In order to receive this new batch of shipments, he had to go out to sea to reach the drop off point.

Once at the drop off point, they'll exchange cargo before going their separate ways.

As the organiser, he wasn't planning on going since that would put himself in too much danger. Especially with the looming threat of the Pirate Queen.

But that was only if it was the usual cargo.

With the... delicate nature of this batch, he had to go in person to make sure there were no issues.

Which is all the more annoying for him seeing as how Calista was nowhere in sight!

"THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE WATER!!!" One of the workers shouted out in a panic as people began to run.

Turning around in confusion, he could see a portion of the sea begin to bulge up before a crab like beast burst out from the sea!

*KRRRRK!!!!

Letting out a rattling cry, the beast towered over the port!

Guards prepared to attack but they noticed red threads tied to the claws and the rest of the body.

"Hi~ Hope I'm not too late!" A woman's voice could be heard as Lorien paused.

On the beast's back, Calista could be seen hanging on using the threads.

She was using it as a set of reins before flicking her wrist and recalling the threads.

Twisting her body, she hopped off the beast in one swift motion before narrowing her eyes and warning it with her killing intent.

At first, the beast wanted to fight back but seeing as how the girl was merely warning it, it gave off one last hiss before diving down into the sea and leaving the area.

Landing next to Lorien, Alice gave her outfit one last check as she had surrounded herself using the Void to avoid getting wet.

Once she was sure that she was dry, Alice glanced up at Lorien who couldn't believe what he saw.

"Told you I wouldn't be late. I'm guessing those are the ships that I'll be protecting once you load it with cargo?" Alice asked as Lorien furrowed his brows before adjusting his sleeves.

Ordering the workers to resume what they were doing, he turned to Alice.

"Yes, they are. There are three ships today that you need to protect, three tomorrow, and four on the last day. But that's not important, what was that just now?" Lorien asked as Alice glanced at him briefly before shrugging her shoulders.

"It's an acrobatic move called a front flip. Should be pretty easy to pull off if you try hard enough." She gave him a peace sign.

"You know that's not what I'm talking about. Are you a tamer? Why was that beast listening to you?" Lorien asked again as Alice tapped her chin.

"Ohh, that's what you meant. Well... It's simple really. You just have to be much stronger than that beast for it to listen to you." Alice narrowed her gaze with a grin.

She simply threatened it a little when she realised she overslept. In return for leaving it be and not killing it, Alice wanted to hitch a ride.

As a high level beast, it was clearly intelligent but lacked a method of communication. Therefore, Alice made it easy for the beast to understand. Her methods were a little rough but they achieved the result she wanted. She arrived on time and the beast got to live another day.

A win win situation.

"Fine then, keep your secrets." Lorien clicked his tongue.

The girl in front of him was extremely stubborn when it comes to any information about herself. No matter how he wanted to pry or investigate, she was simply a bundle of mystery that couldn't be unravelled.

Even after checking the people who'd arrived in the city, she was nowhere to be seen.

It's almost as if she simply popped out of nowhere.

"So what's the prediction today? Anyone interfering with the cargo? Targets I should keep an eye on?" Alice asked, playing around with her hair.

"There's only one person you need to be concerned about since I doubt the others will make a move. Pirate Queen Minerva. She'll probably seek to intercept us. Make sure none of the ships are damaged and you'll be paid as promised."

"Hou~ Pirate Queen Minerva huh?" Alice muttered.

If she could claim this kind of title, surely she should have a decent amount of strength to back it up.

As her for her next experiment, Alice wanted to see how her new discoveries would fair into someone like Minerva.

Chapter 545 - 545: Information On Minerva

Once everything was loaded up onto the ships, Alice made her way to the main boat as the crew looked at her with confused eyes.

Her outfit was extremely eye catching and her presence was a little confusing.

This was a secret smuggling operation after all, eye catching is the last thing they wanted. However, seeing as how Lorien was standing next to her without saying anything, they ignored it and carried on.

Currently, Alice was leaning by the helm of the ship.

"Since we're expecting the Pirate Queen to intercept, any useful information you can give me? I hope you don't expect me to fight blindly." Alice asked with a soft chuckle.

"We've only ever seen her use four Sigils at most so we don't know what else she's got up her sleeve. However, we know that she can summon a phantom fleet just like Darrow." Lorien frowned as Alice raised an eyebrow.

"Phantom Fleet?"

"Yes. She hunted the same beast as Darrow and got the same power. Just like him, she's able to summon a fleet of ghost ships and surround whoever she wants to fight at sea. Of course, this skill loses most of its effectiveness on land but at sea, it's extremely potent.

"From our previous scouting reports, we've seen her summon up to 10 additional ships but we're unsure if that's the full number of what she's capable of."

Hearing this, Alice stared at him with a blank expression.

"And you're only bringing three ships to fight someone who can summon up to 10?" She questioned, wondering if he was dropped on the head as a child.

Ignoring her insult, Lorien nodded his head.

"The phantom fleet has one glaring weakness and that's requiring the caster to focus. We've seen it a few times but whenever the Pirate Queen uses this skill, she has people defending her so that she can focus on commanding the fleet remotely. I'm sure you can deal with her if she were to use this skill right?" Lorien asked as Alice contemplated for a moment.

"Sure, I can do that. But allocating me to focus on her leaves the ships exposed, doesn't it? How will you take responsibility if my pay is deducted because you wanted me to keep her occupied?" Alice rubbed her fingers together, reminding him that he was paying her quite a bit to protect the shipment.

"Don't worry about that. If you can occupy her ships, I'll take responsibility for the shipment if a mistake appears on my end." Lorien reassured.

"Don't go back on your word now~ Anything else I need to focus on aside from her phantom fleet? Any Sigils to help her in one on one situations?"

Alice wanted to make a mental note of things since overconfidence would no doubt lead to her death.

No matter who her opponent was, she had to get as much information as she could.

"We know that she fights primarily with a cutlass. As for her Sigils... Aside from the phantom fleet, there have been instances where a strange pink energy appears on her blade and in her eyes. But we don't have much information regarding that since she mainly finishes fights using her phantom fleet."

Tapping her fingers on the wood, Alice thought about it for a moment before nodding her head.

Lorien didn't seem like he was withholding information so Alice didn't push for more.

"I'll be sitting by the pointy thing in front, let me know if anything pops up okay?~" She waved her hand, making her way over to the bowsprit of the ship.

Compared to the dark murky waters deep in the Abyss, seeing a clear sea like this was rather relaxing. The faint shimmering of the sun's reflection upon the waves, the gentle breeze that brushed through her hair, the clear blue sky with white clouds.

This was what freedom felt like. Free of burdens, free of responsibilities. In this moment, Alice enjoyed the sea to its fullest.

###

"Have they left their port?" Minerva asked while standing on the main deck.

Besides her, a man could be seen calling in a bird that landed on his arm. It transformed into an eye and he slotted it back into his skull.

"They have. But a new... person appeared at the last moment. She was seen riding a Chitonis Serpent into the port." The man replied with a frown.

Hearing this, Minerva furrowed her brows.

"A tamer?"

"Doesn't seem likely. The beast immediately left and even seemed to show hostility towards her. I think she simply scared it into submission." He shook his head.

"Hmm... Prepare some wards in the off chance that she is indeed a tamer. I'd rather not take that chance. Do we know anything else about her?"

"She was seen to be making a scene in the underworld a day or so ago. Killed quite a few slaves and even one of the traders before talking business with Lorien."

"So another scum, great." Minerva clicked her tongue in annoyance.

These cockroaches seemed to be appearing left right and centre. Every time they kill one, five more appear out of the woodwork.

While she wasn't exactly excited by the prospect of having another variable that she needed to watch out for, nothing could be done about it right now.

Even though Darrow warned her, she couldn't leave this be. If they allow this shipment to enter Caethis, that's practically announcing to the world that everyone can do whatever they want in this city.

Minerva refused that kind of fate. She refused to allow the world to think they were weak just because they are an independent city.

"Ready all men! We'll intercept them when they're transferring the cargo! If they turn on us, prepare to sink them!" Minerva shouted as her subordinates cheered back. Everyone got to work and soon, five ships set off from the main port.

Watching everything from Pirate Bay, Darrow sighed after seeing Minerva's impatience.

"Should we prepare our own ships Sir?"

"Send one to observe the situation in case it gets out of hand. Try not to interfere too much. Minerva needs to experience a setback or two otherwise she won't be able to take over once I step down." Darrow let out a soft chuckle while walking away from the beach.

"Don't say that sir, I'm sure you'll succeed this time." The man behind him frowned but Darrow shook his head.

"When you approach the realm of Lord, you can usually tell if the Abyss will show you its favour. How many times have I approached a shaman now? How many times have I tried to connect through a communion point? Yet every single time, without fail, the Abyss shows me nothing.

"No beasts to hunt, no method to reach the realm of Lord. It has not given me a path out therefore I can only hope that Minerva is ready to take up my role.

"I've made many enemies, Virn. Each of them more eager than the last to take my head. The only goal I have left is to hope the Abyss will show favour to Minerva and give her a chance to reach the realm of Lord." Darrow glanced back with a smile.

Seeing Darrow give up in such a manner brought a sadness to Virn's heart. However, it was an undeniable fact that the Abyss had closed off the path forward for Darrow.

As his enemies began to catch up in strength, Darrow was growing weaker. If one of them were to attain the rank of Lord, then the freedom of Caethis would disappear. They could seek help from the Northern Queendom of Verona but doing so was essentially saying they were incapable of defending themselves.

A lose lose situation unless someone in this city reaches the rank of Lord.

And currently, the one with the highest chance to achieve this was Minerva.

"Should I tell them to step in if things get dangerous?" Virn asked as Darrow nodded his head.

"She needs to experience a setback but not one that causes her death. I have my own meeting to attend so I can't go even if I want to." Darrow sighed.

The people who live underwater were beginning to get a little out of hand, demanding more and more from the port and Pirate Bay. Even though they weren't in a good situation themselves, they continued to believe they were the superior force in this city and that their arrogance was justified.

Therefore, in the next meeting, Darrow needed to let them understand exactly where they sat on the table.

He may be growing old and weak but he was no pushover. Peace was a luxury that people had died for.

Even the people of the Underworld weren't as rowdy as them. The Underworld operates within its own boundaries, not wishing to step out. They may be planning something now, but so long as he can stall out this period of peace, he is satisfied. It gave them more time to prepare Minerva for her ascension into a Lord if the Abyss allowed for it.

But if these underwater parasites wished to take advantage of this peace that they've achieved, then Darrow wouldn't mind letting the Underworld take over their spot as the third power to keep this city in balance.

After all, they mistook his mercy and leniency for weakness.

###

In the distance, Alice could see a group of ships approaching. Even from this distance, she could sense their auras and estimated that all of them had six Sigils!

If it wasn't for the fact that Lorien was trading with them, Alice would be rather tempted to fight them herself.

Once they got close enough, Alice noticed that all of the members hid their appearances with a strange cloak. This cloak obscured what they looked like beneath, making it seem as though all of them were nothing but a tangle of shadows.

And on the side of their ship, an emblem was engraved. Three eyes hovering within a flame.

Chapter 546 - 546: Strange Organization

'Cayla, do you know that emblem?' Alice asked curiously as she's never seen that kind of icon before. Three eyes within a fire.

[I've seen emblems with fire, emblems with eyes but never three eyes in a fire. I'm afraid this is probably a new organization that didn't exist before.] Cayla shook her head.

'Hmm... Alright.'

"So, these fine gentlemen the people you're trading with?" Alice asked as Lorien nodded his head.

Making his way to the main deck with Alice following behind him, he calmed his mind and adjusted his sleeve.

"I believe it should be Lazarus, correct?" Lorien asked as one of the shrouded people stepped up and stood silently.

Reaching out with his hand, he clenched his fist and a red ring appeared around his wrist.

At the same time, Lorien flinched and the ring appeared on his wrist as well.

"Confirmed." A strange voice rang out. It was neither male nor female and sounded like several voices merged together into one. Waving his hand, the other shadowed figures began to collect the shipment from below.

"Secretive people aren't they? Can't see what they look like, don't know what they sound like. Who knows if their height is accurate since they're all the same." Alice leaned back against the railings until she was almost about to fall overboard.

"That's just the kind of people they are." Lorien ignored Alice while instructing the others to prepare to receive the shipment.

"Oh? Now I'm curious about what's inside. What made you make a deal with these guys." Alice narrowed her gaze but Lorien frowned.

"Don't. Curiosity killed the cat. Just do what you're paid to do."

Raising her hands, Alice revealed a smirk but didn't say anything.

Once the first box arrived, she couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.

The material of the box was neither wood nor metal. It was this... strange material with a matt finish.

But what's strangest of all, was the fact that it was blocking out energy from entering or exiting. A perfect seal that didn't let Alice see what was inside even with her unique property of being able to see energy strands.

'Well if you show this kind of thing in front of a gal, of course she'll get curious.' Alice pursed her lips while making a small prick on her finger.

Gathering her blood into a tiny drop, she condensed it into a tiny bead before stretching her body.

During this motion, she flicked the bead onto the other boat.

One of the shrouded people glanced over at Alice but she gave them a wave before blowing them a kiss.

Alice could clearly tell the other party was annoyed but paid it no heed as she simply glanced at the boxes being carried onto their ship.

The first shipment consisted of ten boxes, each roughly the size of a small room.

During this time, the other two acted as lookouts in case Minerva was to suddenly attack but the sea was strangely calm.

There were no boats out on the horizon and not even a single sign of Minerva potentially approaching.

Even Lorien was a little on edge and confused as he paced around the deck, checking the horizon to make sure no one was approaching.

Once the first ship had finished loading, the second ship came in and the first ship was now out lookout duty.

"Isn't it a good thing if the Pirate Queen doesn't attack?" Alice asked with a smile.

"Yes, but this only makes me more confused. What exactly is she aiming for? I received news saying that she clearly wasn't happy about this operation. So for someone of her personality to not do anything, it's too strange." Lorien frowned as Alice glanced up at the sky.

"Or maybe she's being careful. I did appear at the last moment after all." She shrugged but Lorien shook his head.

"Minerva wouldn't stop at something like that. She'll just consider you as another obstacle to get through." Lorien adjusted his sleeves once more as Alice noticed that it was a habit of his whenever he gets a little restless.

Just as she was about to dismiss his claims, her gaze snapped upwards as her pupils constricted.

Right above their heads, a flaming cannon shot came into view and Alice jumped into action.

Activating Tiamat's Sigil, energy converged into an orb above her palm as she fired it towards the cannon shot.

Void Flux!

*BANG!!!

The sudden explosion caught everyone's attention as a sea of sparks rained down but the ship avoided destruction.

"Minerva!" Lorien shouted out as ships began to burst out from the sea around them. Spectral ships with a crew of ghost like beings roared out in unison as they began to surround Lorien's ships along with the ones from overseas.

"Lorien! I thought I warned you about pulling this kind of sh*t! Seems like I'll have to take care of you for good today!" Minerva's voice rang out.

Bursting out from outside the entrapment of the phantom fleet were five large ships surrounded by a protective barrier.

As they crashed down on the sea, a wave of water rushed towards Lorien's ships but he had his crew block it with a barrier of their own.

Compared to Lorien's ships, Minerva's ship was far larger and majestic than the rest. A beauty of wood and gold plates decorated the body while a mermaid decorated the bowsprit. The masts unfurled themselves as the ships revealed their full glory.

Even Alice was rather amazed and curious as to how this kind of vehicle was even created in the first place.

But that was not her focus. Her focus was on keeping Minerva distracted so that her job would be considered complete. Of course, this didn't include killing.

"I take it that I should keep her occupied?" Alice asked, giving her body a light stretch.

"Yes! Make sure she can't maintain the Phantom Fleet." Lorien hurriedly nodded before shouting out orders to the rest of the crew.

The people they were trading with seemed less inclined to fight as they activated barriers around their ships and didn't make another move.

Giving them one last glance, Alice made her way to the edge of the main deck and measured out the distance between them.

Once she was done calculating the distance in her mind, she crouched down and jumped.

*BANG!!!

Her body shot through the air as the crew on the ship stumbled over from the sudden force punching down on the ship.

Lorien couldn't keep his footing either as he glanced up and widened his eyes.

He could see a maelstrom of energy gathering towards Alice as she activated Tiamat's Sigil once more, ready to unleash a devastating attack!

The seas churched and the clear sky overhead was now covered by stormy clouds.

*RUMBLE!!!

Lightning crackled as though welcoming the dawn of the apocalypse.

"Hi!~ Dear Minerva, show me you can at least handle firepower of this level!" Alice's laughter rang out as lightning crashed around. It wasn't a manifestation of her power but rather a natural phenomenon in reaction to the amount of energy gathering towards Alice at this moment.

A maelstrom converging with Alice in the centre.

Glaring up at the spiral of energy, Minerva gritted her teeth as she raised her hand.

All the cannons on the phantom fleet aimed upwards as she could instinctively tell that this was a dangerous attack!

"All hands on deck! Leave her to me! Focus on erasing Lorien!" Minerva commanded as the cannons lit up with a neon blue glow.

At that moment, runic symbols appeared around her as she clenched her fist.

*BANG!!!

A wave of cannons shot upwards as Alice couldn't hold back her grin!

"HAH! THAT'S THE SPIRIT!"

Twisting her body, she adjusted the attack she was preparing and released a horizontal slash!

As the slash collided with the cannon shots, a display of fireworks erupted as she dove into the ash and smoke.

In her hands, blood converged into a single blade.

Since she switched out her third Sigil, this blood was blood from inside her body and lacked the proper reinforcement of metal.

But after learning the forging method that Sigurd used, it was far stronger than before!

'Twinnie, I'll let you have some fun.' Alice chuckled as Alyss cracked her knuckles.

Golden chains snapped around her neck and limbs as her aura shifted to that of Alyss!

"Let's see what you got!" Alyss rushed in from below as Minerva was shocked at her speed.

Immediately, she pulled out her cutlass and aimed for a diagonal swing but Alyss parried it with ease.

She flicked the cutlass away using the handle of the blade before going in for a poke but Minerva punched up against Alyss's wrist, pushing her poke off target.

Sliding into Minerva's range, not bothered by the fact that her attack missed, Alyss slammed her shoulder into her chest before stomping down against her foot in an attempt to force Minerva to lose her balance.

However, Minerva used this opportunity to adjust her grip on the cutlass and have it cut upwards towards Alyss's neck.

"Not bad! Not bad at all lassie!" Alyss laughed, adjusting her body and caught the blade between her fingers, preventing it from reaching her neck.

Flicking the blade away, Alyss attempted to knee Minerva in the chest but she caught it with her hand and pushed down.

Utilizing the momentum, Alyss swung her body and crashed down with her heel instead.

*BANG!!!

Minerva was barely able to block it with her arm as she flinched lightly from the pain.

Seeing as how Minerva was even able to react to this, Alyss stabbed her sword into the ground and used it as a momentary platform to support her body weight.

She twisted her waist and unleashed two devastating kicks in quick succession, forcing Minerva to slide back.

Pulling out her sword, Alyss licked her lips before rushing forward once more!

This was the kind of fight that really made her blood pump with excitement!

Chapter 547 - 547: Alice Vs Minerva

At first, the people around Minerva wanted to jump in and help her but the onslaught of blade attacks and close quarters combat made it hard for them to intervene.

If they cast skills, they risk harming Minerva as Alyss was keeping herself close for that exact reason.

However, they couldn't go in for close combat either as the skill level of Alyss and Minerva was far beyond their level!

"Forget about me! I'll deal with her!" Minerva gritted her teeth.

Rather than having her subordinates do nothing while watching this fight, she'd rather them go and help out the attack!

"Confident are we? A little rude don't you think?" Alyss narrowed her gaze.

While she may not be as good as Alice, using these gloves was still simple enough!

Flicking her wrist, threats shot out and latched onto Minerva's body as she widened her eyes.

She wanted to separate herself but it was already too late as Alyss lunged forward and gave her a punch across the face.

Twisting her body and using her full weight to drag Minerva back, she slammed her heels into Minerva's stomach before letting go and allowing her body to slam into the walls.

With Alyss now separated from Minerva, the people around her jumped into action, not wanting Minerva to fight this alone.

'Back to you twinnie, my fun lies in hand to hand.' Alyss laughed as the chains shattered apart.

With Alice now back in control, she slammed her hand down and focused her control of energy.

Sigil of Duality + Zone!

While her Zone wasn't as stable as when she had Cayla, it was now usable!

At that moment, Minerva's subordinates felt as though the world was flipped on its head. When they wanted to use their hands, their legs moved. When they wanted to move their legs, their mouth opened.

All of them stumbled over as Alice activated her personal artifact and harnessed the forces of the Void.

Slamming her hand down, a force of repulsion pushed out, flinging their bodies away from Alice.

Just as Alice was about to attack Minerva again, she felt danger through the rubble and immediately twisted her body.

*BANG!!!

Dodging at the last moment, Alice watched as a bullet tore into her shoulder.

She could feel her flesh twisted from the rotational force as it ripped through her bone before exploding with a burst of pink energy.

The explosion caused her arm to fly off as her disguise showed signs of being dispelled.

Reacting quickly, Alice shielded her face and hair with a blood veil while her arm regenerated quickly.

Using this blood, she created a plain mask with a single eye hole. As for her hair, she had a thin layer of blood coating the strands, effectively dying her hair a deep crimson.

"Tch, I was aiming for the head too." Minerva muttered in annoyance as she pulled herself free from the rubble.

In her right, she held a flintlock pistole while her left held a cutlass.

Spitting out some blood, she glared at Alice now revealed herself to be a red haired woman with a mask.

"Seems like you're hiding your real identity. Can't take a hit?" Minerva narrowed her gaze before focusing on the regenerated arm.

The regeneration was much faster than she had originally expected. It was to the point she even wondered if the person in front of her was human or not.

"The world isn't a safe place, can't go around showing my face to anyone and everyone." Alice replied as that pistol was bad news. One hit was already enough to tear off her entire arm. She didn't even want to think about what would happen if she were to allow a bullet to strike her head or neck.

"Then let me help you take off that mask!"

*BANG!!!

Creating bullets using the strange pink energy, Minerva fired two shots before going in for a strike with her cutlass.

However, Alice was now prepared and dodged the first bullet while intercepting the second using her personal Artifact.

A singularity spun to life in front of the bullet, swallowing it whole before it could detonate.

Once the bullets were dealt with, Alice leaned back, dodging the cutlass strike.

"Naïve!" Minerva pressed the barrel of her pistol against Alice's chest and fired.

But before the shot could escape, Alice smacked Minerva's hand from the left, forcing it off target at the last moment.

Minerva quickly followed up with a stab using her cutlass but Alice parried with a blood dagger.

She leaned in and gave Minerva a backhand using the same hand that smacked the gun away.

Dropping down, she tried to sweep Minerva using her leg but the Pirate Queen took a step back and aimed the pistol at Alice's head.

"Tsk!" Clicking her tongue, Alice leaned her head to the side and quickly closed the gap, making it difficult for Minerva to take the shot.

She flicked her fingers, throwing the dagger towards Minerva who was then forced to focus on dodging, giving Alice the upper hand.

Bringing her fingers in front of Minerva's face, Alice snapped a small Void Flux into existence before detonating it.

The tiny explosion made Minerva flinch as Alice took advantage of this and kneed her in the stomach.

Wrapping threads around her body, Alice pulled the Pirate Queen in for an elbow to the nose, causing blood to pour down her face.

But she was far from done.

Wrapping her hand around the back of the head, Alice brought Minerva's head down into a knee followed up with an uppercut.

Gritting her teeth in anger, Minerva tried to aim at Alice but she was too fast.

Ducking down out of view, Alice created a staff using her own blood and slammed it up into Minerva's back.

"ARG!!!" Letting out a cry of pain, the Pirate Queen crashed against the ground as Alice transformed the staff into a sword and prepared to slash downwards.

*CLANG!!!

A spear intercepted her sword as she curled her lips up into a smile.

"Finally feel like interrupting? Can't say I'm very happy about someone peaking without paying money." Alice skipped back a few steps while twirling her sword between her hands.

"I apologize but I must ask you to step back for now."

A tall male could be seen wearing a set of dark clothing, hood, belts and pouches. He reached for the spear and stood in front of Minerva, protecting her.

"Kolin... I can handle this." Minerva groaned, forcing herself to stand up.

"Boss's orders. I think you've done enough today, we're heading back." Kolin didn't look back but focused his gaze on Alice.

Alice didn't say anything either as the two stared each other down.

To Alice, Kolin felt 'weaker' than Minerva in terms of power. However, despite that, he felt more dangerous.

'He's probably well versed in killing humans rather than brute force.' Alyss theorized as Alice agreed.

Meanwhile, Kolin was also observing Alice.

This feeling he was getting, this chill down the spine. The goosebumps on his skin and the sweat on his palms.

He's never felt this way while looking at a human.

Never.

No matter how strong they were, how powerful they may be, he never had this kind of reason.

Everything in his body was telling him that whatever he was looking at was not natural.

'It' was not human.

He knew that if he made the wrong move, his head might just fly off his shoulders before he understood what was happening.

After all, the girl never used her full power against Minerva.

She was toying with her prey.

Silence followed as Minerva didn't dare speak a single word. She knew that she was outmatched but didn't want to admit it.

In the end, Alice flicked her wrist and dismissed the sword.

A shimmering effect flickered across her body as she reactivated her Jester Sigil and disguised herself once more.

She dismissed the blood mask and fake dye.

"As long as you don't interfere, I don't plan on killing anyone. Deal?" Alice offered.

After all, she wasn't planning on sticking with Lorien the whole way through. In fact, she was even tempted to 'jump ship' just now since her curiosity about what was inside those boxes burned bright. But even if she was to jump ship right now, Alice doubted the Pirates would trust her.

"Deal. We'll call off the ships and leave you be." Kolin nodded his head as she stored away his spear.

Receiving a glance from Kolin, Minerva bit her lip before pulling out a flare gun from within her jacket.

She aimed it at the sky and pulled the trigger, releasing a red flare.

Soon, the sounds of battle ceased as her ships began to pull away.

Seeing as how Minerva complied with her side of the deal, Alice made her way to the main deck while ignoring the glares she was getting.

"That wasn't a bad fight, good luck next time~." Alice grinned while giving Minerva a wave.

Taking a few steps back, Alice gave it a short run up before launching herself back towards Lorien's main ship.

Watching her leave, Minerva gritted her teeth in anger and punched the debris around her.

"Kolin, is Darrow still going to do nothing?!" Minerva asked in frustration.

Contemplating for a moment, Kolin opened his mouth.

"I'll report what I've seen today. Whether or not Darrow decides to make a move is up to him. For now, just reflect on what Darrow said before." Kolin suggested, giving the enemy ships one last glance.

He had zero confidence in assassinating Alice.

No matter how he tried to hide himself during the fight, Alice would always be able to find him.

It felt as though a pair of eyes was always staring down at him from above, keeping a note of where he was.

For this kind of enemy, Kolin never wanted to fight them! It was simply too troublesome and almost a guaranteed suicide run if he dared to try.

The fact that Alice chose to back off was a blessing in itself as he had zero confidence in keeping himself safe never mind needing to protect Minerva.

Glancing down at his hand, he could see it trembling even now as he took a deep breath and calmed his mind.

He'll escort Minerva back as ordered and let Darrow figure out the next steps.

Chapter 548 - 548: Returning To the Port

Crashing down on the ship with Lorien, Alice massaged her shoulders as she could see the enemy fleet retreating back into the sea.

"You're back." Lorien sighed as Alice nodded her head.

She could see that he suffered a few light injuries but overall, was doing just fine.

"I held up my end of the bargain and even got them to retreat. Now please tell me that the shipment was unharmed." Alice leaned against the railings with a confident smile.

Her outfit was torn apart thanks to Minerva landing a hit with her flintlock but she covered it for now with a spare jacket she had in her pouch.

"Don't worry, your pay won't get deducted at all. A promised two platina per ship." Lorien adjusted his sleeves before calling for the crew to get ready to return back to the port.

The ship was still mostly functional as the damage it suffered was patched up using Sigils for the moment.

With them now making their way back, Alice walked over to the bowsprit and sat down.

She watched the fleet departing as her eye focused on the men hidden by their robes.

'I want one.' Alice narrowed her eye.

'So that's why you put a tracker on them. And here I thought you were simply interested in their identities.' Alyss raised an eyebrow.

'I'm interested in that as well. But where else have you seen a robe that can hide your energy and appearance like that? If I can get my hands on a few of them, I might even be able to commission Sigurd to make some once he figures out what they're made of.' Alice grinned.

If she could get her hands on a robe like that, it'd make having a disguise so much easier than using the Jester Sigil.

While the Jester Sigil was extremely helpful, one wound is all it takes for it to dispel.

And trying to reapply the disguise once it's been broken was difficult and takes too long. It's why she had to make do by hiding her face and hair using blood.

[I'm pretty sure he's already feeling a little scammed by promising five pieces of numbered equipment. Adding this strange cloak into the mix might make him flip.] Cayla chuckled.

###

Sitting on her chair while they made their way back to the port in defeat, Minerva was in a bad mood while Kolin didn't plan on cheering her up.

"You should've been more careful when approaching unforeseen situations."

"I KNOW!" Minerva snapped back in annoyance.

She was already annoyed that she lost the one vs one and she didn't need Kolin to lecture her about it.

Minerva noticed two main issues when fighting someone like Alice.

The first was the most obvious and that was the insane regenerations.

But it wasn't without its faults.

If she could somehow sneak poison or even foreign objects into the wound before it could regenerate, it'd be stuck inside her body, leaving her distracted. Of course, this was more of an assumption than an actual fault regarding the regeneration.

The second issue that was hard to bypass was that instinct of hers.

Despite waiting for the perfect chance for a one hit one kill using her flintlock, Alice was able to dodge at the last second, making it so that the bullet hit the shoulder instead.

This sense of danger was absurdly keen to the point where Minerva didn't know how to combat it.

How was she supposed to bypass this kind of natural defense outside of brute forcing it with superior physical power?

Unless she could solve these two issues, there's no way she could do anything to Alice.

However, maybe she doesn't have to.

"Kolin, are you able to help me with the next shipments?" Minerva asked as Kolin frowned.

"Just so that you're clear, I have no confidence in landing a sneak attack on that girl. She was tracking my position the entire time she was fighting with you." Kolin warned, surprising Minerva as she didn't expect Alice's senses to be that keen.

Thankfully, she wasn't looking to fight.

"We don't need to fight her since it seems like her focus is on keeping the Phantom Fleet away. As long as I can delay her, you can take care of those looking after the shipment right?" Minerva asked.

Folding his arms, Kolin stood in silence before opening his mouth.

"I was tasked to make sure you don't die from your recklessness. Not support it." Kolin rejected.

Just as Minerva wanted to reply, he gave her a glare.

"If I wasn't around, what do you think would've happened when that girl swung down the sword? She wasn't intent on killing you before. In fact, she was even playing around. But the moment you hit her with that flintlock, she didn't mind taking you out.

"Had I not stepped in, I would be seeing you separated at the waist, laying lifelessly on the deck of your ship." He reminded while Minerva bit her lips.

"So what? Are you just here to make sure I don't die? Am I a baby bird that can't do anything without mommy bird's protection?!" She glared back.

"Darrow doesn't wish for you to die here." Kolin shook his head.

However, his reply only made Minerva angrier. But before she could do anything, Kolin has already left the room.

He didn't leave any last words or notes for her. He simply left, not wanting to talk more.

A vein bulged on Minerva's neck as her anger reached its peak.

***BANG!!!**

Punching down on her table, she snapped it in half while taking rapid breaths to try and calm herself down.

She may have failed today but she won't give up.

###

Arriving back at the port, Alice gave the shipments a glance before turning to Lorien.

She was extremely curious right now but it wasn't the right time yet.

Walking up to Lorien, she didn't say anything and simply opened her hand with a grin.

Understanding what she was aiming for, Lorien sighed before opening his pouch and handing over six Platina pieces. Two for each ship.

"Good work today."

"Thank you~ Am I to assume I'll be handling the Phantom Fleet again if she were to attack next time?" Alice asked, receiving the pieces and putting them into her pouch immediately.

It's as though she was afraid they'll fly away which caused Lorien to chuckle before nodding his head.

"As long as the Phantom Fleet is occupied, we can deal with the rest. No one else can handle Minerva after all." Lorien admitted.

The guards he hired could handle a standard crew with a bit of struggle. But Minerva was something else entirely and it required someone like Alice to handle her.

He could stall Minerva to a certain extent but she's never alone. With his capabilities, he wouldn't last a minute against a group of people along with Minerva trying to kill him.

"Ohou~ If you tell me that I might want to charge extra to keep her occupied. I took a pretty nasty hit from her too." Alice pointed out her damaged dress.

"You already took six Platina from me." Lorien's smile twitched but Alice shrugged.

"My dresses are as important as my time."

". . ."

In the end, Lorien begrudgingly forked over 10 gold pieces for her to buy a replacement outfit before shooving Alice away.

The more he stayed around her, the more he felt like it was a mistake to get into a contract. However, he had to admit that her methods were effective.

During the fight, he had glanced over to see how she was faring against Minerva and there was only one thing on his mind.

Never fight her!

It was just a short period of hand to hand combat but it was enough to send a chill down his spine.

That speed, that reaction...

If he allowed her to get close, death was basically guaranteed.

Against someone like this, even if he had to fork over more gold than he wanted, it was worth it!

###

Undoing his collar, Darrow slumped down into his chair as he let out a sigh of exhaustion.

Opening his drawer, he pulled out an expensive cigarettes and held it up.

Beside him, Kolin appeared and lit it up with a lighter.

"Seems like it was pretty rough if the fight spooked you to this extent." Darrow muttered, taking a deep breath of his cigarette before puffing out a large cloud of smoke.

Opening the windows, Kolin nodded his head.

"The girl that Minerva fought against, I cannot kill her. I can't even hide from her senses." Kolin admitted as Darrow raised an eyebrow.

"Quite a troublesome opponent for you then. Is Minerva still being stubborn? Or is she going to take a step back and observe things?"

Furrowing his brows, Kolin thought about what to say but Darrow only laughed.

"Your silence already tells me what I need to know. With Minerva's personality, she probably asked you to deal with the shipment while she keeps the girl occupied right?"

"Indeed, it's as you say." Kolin nodded.

Puffing out another cloud of smoke, Darrow smiled and tapped his finger against the table.

"Listen to her for now and see how she plans on handling this with the tools she's been given. And while you're at it, give me information on who Lorien is trading with." Darrow ordered as Kolin nodded before leaving the room.

With how many risks that Lorien was taking to trade with these guys, Darrow theorized that whatever he's receiving is something worth this risk.

Something that'll let him forget the fear Lorien felt towards him.

With this kind of confidence backing him up, it's only natural that Darrow took an interest in this as well.

Chapter 549 - 549: Transformation Of The Inn

Once Alice got her money from Lorien, she made her way back to the Inn with a skip in her steps.

Although it was a shame that her current outfit got damaged, getting some compensation was always good.

She wanted to go shopping for new clothes immediately but decided to wait till her job was over.

'There are still two more days to go. Tomorrow will be three shipments again then on the last day, it'll be four.' Alice mused to herself.

'Do you think that Minerva girl will set out a trap for you?' Alyss asked curiously.

'Of course she will. Didn't you see that glare she was giving me? She's practically wanting to kill me with that glare.'

'So are you going to reply in kind?'

'Who do you think I am? I might be patient but I'm not patient enough to let someone who tried to kill me live. Granted, I'm working with smugglers right now but if Minerva crosses the line then I'll take care of her.' Alice shrugged.

She'll admit that when Minerva landed that shot against her shoulder, her first instinct was to kill!

But once her attack was blocked, she regained her calm and took a step back.

The only reason why Minerva was attacking to kill was because she believes that 'Calista' was part of the Underworld and smuggling illegal goods to disrupt peace.

If this wasn't the case, Alice doubted the Pirate Queen, one of the forces on Pirate Bay would attack like this.

They had to keep the peace and uphold a certain image after all.

'Either way, we'll probably see her again tomorrow so I'll leave it to tomorrow. If she decides to try and kill even after I spared her life, then there will be no more Pirate Queen Minerva tomorrow.'

As she made her way back to the Inn, Alice couldn't help but pause mid step. Her smile twitched upon noticing a... significant difference in the size of the Inn relative to its surroundings.

Not only did it look far better in maintenance, but now it was twice the size of the buildings around it, making full use of the land they'd been given.

Previously, they only had two floors but now, it was a staggering four floor building with an attached bathhouse in the back!

'I thought they wanted to be low key about it!' Alice shouted in her mind.

Tristan was so worried about the other Inns that he denied the idea of advertising in the arena. Instead, he made something look far more impressive than the other Inns.

Hell, Alice's question was how in Gods name did he achieve this in the time she was gone!

It was still normal this morning!

Entering through the front door, she could see Arwen angrily hitting Tristan on the arm while pouting.

"Ow ow! Look I'm sorry okay? Stop hitting me please." Tristan showed an apologetic smile while Arwen huffed angrily.

Seeing Alice returning, Arwen gave Alice a smile and a wave before hitting Tristan one more time then made her way to the back in a huff.

"Seems like you really annoyed her this time." Alice raised an eyebrow, taking a seat by the bar.

"Seems so." Tristan sighed.

"Can I have what you gave me last time?" Alice asked, handing over a gold piece.

Receiving the payment, Tristan nodded his head and grabbed the tools he needed to make the drink.

"So care to tell me what the hell happened to the Inn while I was gone? I'll admit, I was not expecting to come back to a four story tall building with a bathhouse in the back." Alice asked while enjoying the performance he was giving while making the drink.

The way he put the ingredients in the cups and mixed them, throwing the cup through the air then catching it.

For this drink, the performance was part of the process.

"While I was making some final repairs this morning, I overheard a few merchants talking about the Inn. Let's just say... they're the type to judge the book's cover rather than the content. And perhaps, I may have gotten a 'little' carried away with making sure the cover of this Inn looks just as good as on the inside." Tristan admitted with an awkward smile.

"And by that you mean adding two more floors and a bathhouse in the back?" Alice chuckled.

Nodding his head, Tristan prepared a slice of fruit and dressed up the glass.

"It's no wonder that your sister will get annoyed. This is practically announcing that you'll become enemies with the Inns near the center ya know? Even if you're not as convenient as them because of the placement, you're challenging their aesthetics with this cover of yours." Alice brought the glass up to her mouth and took a sip.

Tasting the fruity taste once more followed up by a hint of alcohol, Alice smiled in satisfaction.

Indeed, this was a drink that she could easily get addicted to but in the end, she still prefers her mead.

Had she discovered this first, then maybe she'd prefer this over mead.

"Yep. I was already bringing her a lot of attention with how I decorated the inside. But now that I messed with the outside, more people are bound to check this place out.

"And the bigger inns will probably be scared that I'll steal their customers and interfere with things." Tristan sighed while washing up the tools.

"What about you? Seems like your job went pretty well for you to be buying a drink now." He asked with a smile.

"Oh yeah it went very well. A little... mishap that ruined my outfit a bit but I got compensated so I'm happy." Alice pointed at the tears on her right shoulder.

She was wearing a jacket right now so it wasn't noticeable but once someone took a closer look, they'll be able to see that beneath the jacket, she's missing an entire right sleeve of her outfit.

"We're you fighting? With that curse of yours?" Tristan frowned.

If he remembers correctly, the curse that was placed upon her was one that siphoned energy continuously.

With that kind of binding, it was hard to imagine her being able to fight for prolonged periods of time.

"Don't worry, even with this curse, I can still fight. It just hinders me a little and makes it so that I can't use my full power ya know?" Alice waved her hand dismissively.

Honestly, after having only one eye to use for a long time, she's gotten used to the change in vision.

The same goes for her Zone stance.

The range wasn't as far but it was stable enough to be used.

"I see... If you don't mind, can I take another look at it?"

"Go for it." Alice shrugged.

It wasn't like she was afraid that he'll break the curse since it's something that Kaden placed down.

Brushing her hair back, she revealed the full scar as Tristan brought out an emblem with the Moon Church on it.

Hovering his right hand over her eye, silver lights began to converge around his emblem as cold sweat dripped down his face.

Alice could see the tendrils of energy clashing against the curse in an attempt to neutralize its energy but it stood firm.

The lunar energy was akin to metal trying to form a key to open a door. But the curse was a wall with no door.

No matter how he pried, it refused to budge.

After a moment, he let out a sigh and shook his head.

Even after turning the Inn into a mini sanctuary of sorts, he couldn't make the curse loosen up at all.

"Sorry." He apologized but Alice shook her head.

"Why are you apologizing? It's not like I was hiring you to undo my curse in the first place." Alice laughed.

"Is it not painful though? It siphons your energy pretty quickly." He furrowed his brows but Alice shook her head.

"Nope. Seems like I'm a gal with a big energy reserve." Finishing her drink, Alice conversed for a little longer before deciding to use the bathhouse that Tristan had made.

She had worked up quite the sweat today so it was a perfect chance.

Meanwhile, Tristan glanced down at his hand.

The Moon Church specialises in healing. While he may not have been in the church for long, he has memorized most of their techniques and energy control methods when it came to undoing curses and ailments.

But with everything that he tried, none of it seemed to work on the curse.

With things as they are, he'll probably need to ask the Goddess about how to dispel this kind of curse.

However, he decided to wait for now since he had just established a communion with her not long ago.

If he were to contact her too often, the Goddess may get the wrong idea since she was already teasing him a lot.

Letting out a sigh, Tristan wiped the table clean.

###

Standing inside the bathhouse, Alice was beginning to understand Arwen's annoyance.

This bathhouse was less of a bathhouse and more of a swimming pool!

Hell! It was even better than the bathhouses she saw in Ayr!

If the other Inns saw this, Alice wouldn't be surprised if they tried to claim this building for themselves instead. And more importantly, how did Tristan even build all of this within a day???

Regardless, now that it was here, she might as well make full use of it.

Relaxing herself in the bath, Alice felt as though her entire body was melting away in comfort and let out a deep sigh of satisfaction.

Tomorrow was going to be a busy day again so she needed to take this chance to relax as much as possible.

Chapter 550 - 550: A New Contract

Standing against the railings of the ship, Alice tilted her hat up and looked at the sky with a grin.

Before meeting up with Lorien for the second day, Alice used some of her money to buy a pirate attire.

After all, it would be quite a waste if she didn't take advantage of this chance.

Her newly bought pirate outfit consisted of a black tricorn hat embellished with gold on the edges along with a white feather tucked into the folds.

A loose white blouse with rolled up sleeves, a silver necklace, red belts and sashes to contrast the white and black that reached down to her calves. A pair of rugged trousers and leather boots.

She even had Lorien give her a flintlock even though they weren't very practical unless you had a Sigil that could synergize with it.

Alice wanted it to get into the feeling of being a pirate. Plus, she was a little curious at how these things worked considering Minerva was able to take her by surprise using one.

When it came to sensing danger, Alice relied on two methods.

First, was sensing the killing intent emanated by her opponents. Whenever her opponents release killing intent, it was akin to black paint on a white canvas. Their malice was clear as day to her and she instinctively turns to comprehend this intent. To see what they wanted to do to her.

The second method was 'self preservation'. Whenever something dangerous is approaching her body, especially something with a lot of energy and speed, there would be a tingle on her skin. A prickle, warning her of the incoming danger.

In other words, a small compressed 'zone' that was permanently around her body. A layer that passively outputs a small flow of energy that when colliding with an incoming object, bounces back to the body and warns Alice of the danger.

There were... drawbacks to both methods which is why Alice relied on both of them to keep herself safe.

When Minerva shot her bullet, Alice had sensed the killing intent but wasn't sure where it would land on her body. The distance made it hard for her to pinpoint the exact location accurately.

By the time she noticed the bullet, it was already breaching her zone and she had to dodge by sacrificing her shoulder.

Objects don't emit killing intent.

So the bullet, even if it's created by energy, could only be sensed by the second method of protection that Alice had in place.

Therefore, she wanted to give it a try herself.

She wanted to see if she could integrate it into her fighting style. If she could, she might even find a way to fire a Void Flux at someone using the same method.

Narrowing her gaze, Alice could sense the bead of blood she left behind approaching them from the distance.

And soon, the ships came into view.

'Seems like they're using the same ship as last time. Makes sense considering they didn't take any damage.' Alice thought to herself before stepping away from the railings.

Making her way to the back of the ship, Alice patted Lorien on the shoulder.

"I'm dealing with the Phantom Fleet right?" Alice asked as he nodded his head.

"Yes, nothing has changed. You'll deal with the Phantom Fleet once it appears." Lorien nodded.

Hearing this, Alice grinned and pulled out a cutlass that she had borrowed.

"Then don't forget the shipments are your responsibility now. My only goal is to ward off the Phantom Fleet." Standing on the railings, Alice brought her cutlass behind her before revealing a grin.

*KRK!!!!

Energy crackled from the blade as she activated Tiamat's Sigil.

Colour drained from the world before gathering at the blade and she released a swing.

*BANG!!!!

The instant she released a wave of energy, a cannon shot came into view as it was cut in half immediately, narrowly missing the ship.

Lorien widened his eyes in shock as he didn't expect Minerva to attack so soon. He thought she would've at least waited till they were loading the shipment.

"Hi~ Did you miss me that much? Bit of an early shot don't you think?" Alice shouted out with a grin as the camouflage dispelled, revealing the fleet of ships that Minerva brought with her.

Several ships detached from the fleet as they slowly circled around Lorien's ships while one remained in place. Around the main ship, the Phantom Fleet manifested and all of them aimed cannons towards Alice.

*Sigh...

"If you wanted to welcome me to your ship, you don't need to have such an extravagant welcoming party." Alice shrugged her shoulders.

"Remember now, the shipment is your responsibility. Not mine. If you dare deduct my pay because of mistakes from the crew I'll be disappointed, okay?" Alice gave Lorien a silent warning before launching herself through the air.

Phantom Fleet followed her movements but made no signs of attacking.

Once Alice landed on the deck of Minerva's ship, she rested her cutlass on her shoulder and raised an eyebrow.

She could see Minerva standing with her arms crossed with the cutlass and flintlock clearly on her waist.

"What's the hold up? That ass beatin' you got yesterday got you quaking in yer boots?" Alice grinned.

Her taunting clearly worked as she could see Minerva's eye twitch in annoyance.

"Are you sure you should be leaving them be like this? Thought you had to protect the ships." Minerva gestured to the ships with her chin.

However, Alice didn't turn around and simply shrugged.

"My only job is to keep your phantom fleet occupied. What happens outside of that is not covered by my contract."

Hearing this, Minerva narrowed her eyes.

"So you're a merc."

"Well if you put it like that, it makes me sound cheap." Alice leaned against the railings of the quarter deck.

Since Minerva was using this time to talk rather than fight, it seemed like it was going to be pretty easy for Alice to deal with. Especially since the Phantom Fleet wasn't going anywhere.

"What were you offered, I can match his price." Minerva offered, causing Alice to laugh.

"You know, sometimes money isn't the answer to everything."

"So you won't move for money?" Minerva frowned.

"The f*ck I ain't. If you'd let me finish, I was going to say sometimes money isn't the answer to everything, but it sure as hell a universal answer to most things." Alice interrupted before continuing.

"He's paying me two platina per ship full of cargo. In total, there are another three ships today and four ships tomorrow. If I help him with all of them, he'll give me an extra five platina on top of everything. Think you can match his offer?"

Hearing the exorbitant price that he was paying to hire this woman, Minerva furrowed her brows.

Even if they were smuggling, this kind of contract for a fighter was much higher than what would be considered standard.

Of course, the receiver of this contract is someone far from ordinary.

'Lorien is taking quite a loss with this kind of price. But he still went for it... Seems like whatever he's smuggling over is just that important.'

"Is there anything that's stopping you from breaking your contract?" Minerva asked.

The fact that Alice had questioned whether or not she could match Lorien's offer told her everything she needed to know.

"Now you're talking my language. The only that's stopping me is getting paid. Plus, this is pretty simple so far considering the fact that he's tasking me to keep you busy instead." Alice shrugged.

She'll let Minerva think up a price that's worth her services.

After a moment of silence, Minerva opened her mouth.

"If you help me, I'll raise it by 1 platina per shipment. And double the completion price."

"Hou? I didn't think you'd have such deep pockets." Alice scratched her chin while grinning.

Truly, life should be about earning money so they don't need to worry about financial issues. If she had money, she wouldn't need to worry about whether or not she had enough to pay for the Inn or stop herself from clothes shopping.

"Alright, I can work with something like this. Three platina per shipment right?" Alice asked as Minerva nodded.

"Let's see if Lorien can come up with a better counteroffer then. How much do you think he'll offer knowing that you want to buy me to your side?" Alice asked as a vein bulged on Minerva's forehead.

"How much do you want then?" Minerva asked with gritted teeth.

"Aiya~ You make me sound like a bad person if you say like that. I'm not extorting you here, simply talking business and making a profit." Alice waved her hand with a laugh.

Taking deep breaths to calm her mind, Minerva bit her lip and opened her mouth once more.

She hesitated back and forth before relenting.

"Four platina per shipment. 15 platina on completion."

"Ohya? So generous. 28 platina for today and tomorrow then another 15 on top? Jeez if you wanted to win my heart you should've just said so." Alice pretended to blush and act bashful.

"Who the hell wants to win your heart?!?!?" Minerva lost her temper, causing Alice to laugh.

"Alright alright, let's sign this contract now shall we?" Alice grinned.

Once the contract was signed, Alice gave her body a stretch before making her way to the railings.

"Where are you going?" Minerva frowned.

"Back to my old employer of course. I kept you busy for long enough haven't I?" Alice smiled.

"I thought you signed a contract with me."

"I have and I aim to complete it to perfection. However, I never said I would break my old one now did I? Once he smuggled everything to the port, I'll give you a hand as promised. I've already marked

everything. For now, just keep up the act alright? I'll see you later dear captain~" Alice laughed before running away.

Stunned by her response, Minerva realized that Alice was never intending on fully siding with Lorien in the first place. She was just trying to get money!

"M*THERF*CKER!!!!"