

Abyssal A 561

Chapter 561 - 561: Transporting The Outer God's Minion

*BANG!!!

With all the threads now connected, Alice immediately activated her makeshift skill as the realm began to cry out in pain.

Tears in space formed around the threads and linked up with one another.

Opening a giant portal all at once was impossible for her current self.

But opening countless small portals towards the location and organising coordinates was possible!

The beast wasn't sure of what was happening but knew the cage was a bad sign.

Slamming his arms down, water began to surge but it was futile!

No matter how much it tried to crash into the 'barrier' to break it, nothing happened. All of the water was being transported elsewhere!

A maelstrom lashed out with the opening of the portals but Alice maintained her focus.

She needed to displace the beast in its entirety and send it into the Void!

Holding out her hands, Alice framed the beast between her fingers with one palm above and the other below.

It mimicked the outline of the cage as the singularity in her eye glowed with a violet hue.

Licking her lips, Alice curved her lips into a grin. She could feel the flood of energy from the crew. With this, she'll cut off his connection to the sea!

Displacement!

*BOOM!!!!

The cage collapsed on itself as the space was 'erased' in an instant. A gaping cavity opened up in the sea as the waves rushed to fill in the gap.

Darrow stumbled over on his ship as cold sweat rolled down his face.

"Oi oi, are you serious?" He muttered, wondering if Alice had just erased the beast with one attack.

But that was wrong. Simply displacing the beast into the Void didn't mean it died.

"It's not over! We're going to finish it off!!!" Alice roared out as she jumped off the ship and into a portal.

The blood next to Darrow and Tristan swirled into a mirror as the two did the same and dove into it.

Crimson filled their vision momentarily before fading away, revealing the infinite expanse of the Void.

Within this expanse, the Outer God's Beast could be seen crashing into a floating island with no water around it to help.

Locking its gaze onto the three figures that just appeared in the Void with it, a thick surging tide of Killing Intent crashed into them.

From its back, three pairs of luminescent wings broke out of the shell as eyes split open on the features.

Sensing the convergence of foreign energy, Alice didn't hesitate to slam her hand down and drag the three of them away from the area.

As they crashed onto an island, they turned their gaze towards the location where they were a moment ago and paused.

The space in its entirety was erased!

"Please tell me it's not another gimmick where the attack is delayed." Alice's smile twitched as she glanced at Darrow but he shook his head with a forced smile.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't see it either."

"And you?" Alcie turned to Tristan who frowned and shook his head.

"Well sh*t, guess we're stuck with my instincts." Alice took a deep breath and glared at the beast.

She wasn't sure exactly what was happening but a crack had opened up on its back, releasing a wave of strange organic juices into the Void. It was akin to a cocoon, breaking apart and revealing the strange flesh hidden within.

A constant flickering of colour, similar to oil and fish scales.

"I'll take the charge! It shouldn't be able to regenerate anymore!" Darrow activated his Sigils as the Phantom Fleet was summoned once more.

Nodding his head, Tristan raised his blade momentarily, uttering a silent prayer but the Lunar light was absent.

Furrowing his brows, he glanced up for a moment before shaking his head and following behind Tristan.

Even without the full buff provided by the False Moon, it should be more than enough to kill this beast considering its weak defences. It was only hard to kill due to the regeneration.

Jumping up, Tristan pulled his arm back and prepared to slash.

"!!!"

His pupils constricted in shock as he saw his own reflection inside a featureless face.

From the body of the beast, a pure white humanoid had clawed itself out and arced up before any of them could react.

All three of them felt their senses freeze up as a crack appeared on the white humanoid, revealing a set of pristine white teeth.

Cuts ripped open the face, forming countless golden eyes that stared down at Tristan.

Tristan wanted to say something, anything. But his body refused to obey. He was locked in place and subjected to the creatures whim's.

From the strange white skin of the being, flesh bulged out into tendrils that tried to grab Tristan but the Void in front of it froze up.

"Oi, Alice. You've got a lot to explain. My realm is not a garbage dump for you to throw whatever you want into it." An annoyed voice echoed out as the Void tore apart, revealing a tall woman who stepped through.

Her face was twisted with anger as Alice wanted to greet her with a joke but her glare stopped Alice in her tracks.

"Yes ma'am." Alice coughed awkwardly.

"And for the record, I'm taking back the favour I owe you. This m*therf*cker that you dumped here is far more troublesome than fixing your skill." Feris snapped as she tapped her smoking pipe against the space in front of her.

In an instant, the beast was teleported far away with purple spikes piercing through its body, holding it in place.

{ "£\$%^&!"£^*"} (Ahh... Feris. Seems like the Void is still under your control.)

A strange language echoed out from the beast. It was spoken verbally yet strangely resonated in their minds. An array of sounds constantly overlapping one another, fusing, separating, changing in tone and pitch.

Yet despite the jumbled mess of noises that the beast was speaking, they knew the translation.

Feris didn't reply and only glared at the beast.

{"T&£"&&*£^&"£\$%} (You can't stop it Feris. The collapse of the barriers has already begun. Why don't you come over to this side, we'll welcome you with open arms.)

"And do what? Disturb my beloved peace more than you already have? Do you even know how painful it was to separate the Void from reality properly?

"Back then, any Tom Dick and Harry could just wander in here like it's their back garden and the f*cking Abyss giving out Void abilities to any random b*stard that wants it. The hoops I had to jump through to get the peace I have today... And you want me to give it up?!?!" Feris snapped back while glaring at Alice when mentioning the Abyss handing out Void abilities.

"Point is, if I take your offer, you're just going to use it as an excuse to use my realm as a transport route." Feris narrowed her gaze.

The white figure paused and tilted its head. It stared at Feris before widening its lips into a twisted grin.

{ "%\$^&\$£%^" ^£%& } (Of course, why else would we welcome you with open arms? Using this realm, we'll access reality and the Abyss to plant our seeds. However, isn't it more beneficial for you to come to our side?)

{ "£^%" "&\$£*!" £ } (Trying to stay neutral will only get you killed. I'm sure nothing disturbs your peace and leisure more than death.)

Hearing the warning, a vein bulged on Feris's neck.

"Oh yeah? Honestly between picking a pasty white piece of turd like you that squeezed itself out from the clenched buttocks of the carcass over there, and an annoying pain in the ass that keeps dumping random crap into my realm... F*ck... I don't want to pick either of you annoying b*stards." Feris made a face of disgust before snapping her finger.

A barrier manifested around her as invisible claws slowly revealed itself.

While they were talking, the beast had tried to ambush Feris!

*Sigh

"Rude as ever. If you're going to try and ambush me in my own realm, at least dissociate with the space first. Even if the eyes can't see you, the space you occupy still exists." Feris sighed before tapping her finger against the claws.

*BANG!!!

Sending the claw back, her figure disappeared momentarily and appeared next to the best.

Giving a flick, she destroyed a portion of the body and sent it tumbling through the Void.

"You... know her?" Darrow asked with a trembling smile.

Even though her anger wasn't directed at them, he could still feel the overwhelming power that was contained within her body.

Her entire essence weaved deeply with this realm.

More than that, the strange creature had even mentioned that this realm was controlled by her!

Doesn't that essentially make her 'Godlike'? A different kind of authority to the Gods that govern the three main religions yet just as powerful in his eyes.

"Knowing her is well... I suppose you can put it like that." Alice swallowed her saliva awkwardly.

She could sense Feris keeping an eye on their current space, preventing them from trying to sneak away.

['She's royally pissed.'] Both Alyss and Cayla spoke up.

'No sh*t!'

{""!£\$£\$%£"%\$"!} (Stop this futile resistance. Even if you take care of one juvenile scout, the rest will follow. Doing this simply makes you our enemy.)

"Urghhhh~ Would you can it already? Haven't I made it clear? Your ass isn't even on my list of allies that I'd want to recruit. There is no world, no timeline in which I will side with you. So do me a favour and die silently like the worm you are." Feris scratched her ear before staring at the beast through her index and thumb.

At that moment, Alice felt a great chill as Feris pressed her fingers together.

The realm folded in on itself, collapsing into a spiral of destruction, wiping out the beast before it could speak another word.

Blowing the dust off her fingers, Feris turned around and glared at Alice.

"And now, do deal with the second annoying sack of sh*t."

Chapter 562 - 562: Four Powers

Seeing Feris approaching, Alice swallowed her saliva nervously.

"Ahahaha~... Hi Feris, how have you been?" Alice laughed awkwardly while sitting on her knees.

Folding her arms, Feris gave Alice a glare before smoking her pipe.

"Are you really asking that now?" She asked, her voice as cold as ice.

Both Darrow and Tristan took a step back, allowing the two to resolve things. After all, they weren't involved with this at all.

"Picture this for me. You're having a nice, long, relaxing nap. Then all of a sudden, someone breaks open your window and seawater starts to pour in. Not only that, but spells and attacks that can destroy a mountain start to fly everywhere.

"You think to yourself, am I getting attacked? Then you see a strange m*therf*cker perched on your window, ready to jump in. And after all that, some small garbage dumping prick goes and asks you how have you been. How would you react?" Feris asked while crouching in front of Alice with a glare.

*Cough...

"Sorry..." Alice apologized as Feris held out her hand.

Tilting her head in confusion, Alice placed her hand on top of Feris's hand, causing her to slap her on the head.

"What are you? A dog? I'm not asking for your paw. Hand over the tablet, I'm counting this as the favour repaid."

"Right." Alice nodded, feeling wronged. She could've just said so, why did she have to smack her on the head?

'It is a little unfair. If she hits you too hard, your last working brain cell will fly out your ear.' Alyss mocked while Cayla nodded her head by the side.

Pouting in annoyance, Alice ignored the two bullying her and handed Feris the tablet.

Snapping her finger, Feris destroyed the tablet and yawned.

"Try not to get involved with the Outer Gods more than you have to. Though it's not exactly avoidable with the barrier weakening." Feris sighed.

"Any tips on how to kill them then? All of the people tied to the Outer Gods can't be harmed by me." Alice frowned.

However, upon hearing this, Feris turned her gaze back as her pupils trembled in shock.

Gritting her teeth, she snapped her finger and sent the other two away before walking up to Alice.

"Explain! What do you mean you can't harm them?!" Feris shouted.

Surprised by her reaction, Alice blinked her eyes before manifesting her flames.

"It doesn't matter what I use, the damage done to them is limited. When I use these flames, the damage is zero. Tiamat's power only damaged them slightly." Alice explained while manifesting Tiamat's power in her other hand.

"That's... That should be impossible... No... What? How?" Feris frowned while observing the flames.

Pacing back and forth, Feris had a worried look on her face.

"I'm asking you again and I want you to answer me truthfully. What the f*ck are you?" Feris gritted her teeth while staring at Alice.

###

Tumbling through space, Tristan and Darrow quickly orientated themselves as they landed heavily on the ship.

Glancing up with a frown, Tristan wanted to run back but the exit had already been sealed.

As for Darrow, he understood that there was nothing else he could do at this moment and began to recall the fleet.

The monster was dealt with, the shipments taken away and the traders killed.

Peace was extended momentarily and he wasn't going to waste this time. He needed to get more information on the traders, the cargo they were dealing with and the person behind it.

"Are you going to keep staring or are you going to leave? Alice seems to know the other person so I don't think she should be in any danger." Darrow asked as Tristan paused before nodding his head.

On the way back, Tristan could sense his Goddess trying to establish a connection once more.

The current situation didn't favour a communion so he had to wait.

Parting ways with Darrow, Tristan took a detour and made a temporary shrine.

"Are you avoiding me now? I tried to contact you so many times and it's only now that you think about contacting me back." Lumiria lamented while floating around Tristan.

"My apologies. I was in a bit of an awkward situation that didn't allow for a communion." Tristan showed an apologetic smile as Lumiria tapped him on the cheek.

"Fine~ I forgive you. So what made you use my blessing? It was quite a high output at that and I even lost track of where you were for a moment. I was about to send my Apostles out." She wrapped her arms around his neck.

Listening to his report, Lumiria tapped her chin.

"No wonder. Even though Feris isn't a Goddess in the traditional sense like me or Solaris, the Void is still her realm. It's only natural that you'll struggle to maintain a proper connection without the right preparation.

"If anything, I'm surprised she agreed to give you a hand. Don't tell me she got her eyes on you?!" Lumiria frowned but Tristan shook his head.

"She seemed more annoyed by the fact that something breached her realm."

"Good. And it sounds like her anyway. I doubt the shut in has any desire for companionship. The only companionship she needs is a blanket and pillow." Lumiria sighed.

Her figure started to flicker as the Goddess clicked her tongue in annoyance.

"Seems like time is out again. See you soon my dear Tristan." She gave him a wave and a smile.

Watching her figure disappear in Lunar lights, Tristan wavered.

He didn't tell Lumiria about Alice.

He didn't tell her that Alice was the source of this power of Duality.

'Did I make the right choice?' Tristan questioned himself as he made his way back to the Inn.

Alice had... offered to help his sister. Even though she understood the risks, she still told him to seek out Calista. Of course, by hiding her identity it was a way to protect herself.

But what if she harboured ulterior motives?

She was at the port during their first meeting. The same port that was taken over after the battle with countless lost and buildings blown up.

However, she promised to talk and he wanted to hold her to that promise. If she doesn't then... They can only be enemies the next time they meet.

###

Stepping out of the Void, Alice glanced up at the sky and sighed.

The information she just received from Feris was... heavy to say the least.

Neither Alyss nor Cayla had the mood to crack a joke or say something to change the subject. All three were silent.

Feris had explained the physiology of the Outer Gods and their minions clearly. They're something foreign and one of the four types of powers that exist in this world.

First, the most common is Abyssal. Energy given by the Abyss that condenses into Sigils through contracts.

The second, Holy. Blessings given by Gods and their divinity, a power fuelled by the faith the God accumulates. It's also the main source of energy used by the Apostles.

Blending both Holy and Abyssal together is the strongest type of energy as of yet.

The third is the Void. To say it's compatible with the other sources is true but at the same time, it's false. The Void in itself doesn't act as a source but rather a state.

It cannot offer contracts or blessings but merely changes the state of your energy. To manipulate it so that you can modify the space you occupy.

And the fourth and last one, Eldritch.

It's the energy that belonged to the foreign entities that sat outside the borders of their realm. It is innately incompatible with the first three, causing them to cancel each other out to some extent.

If one was to fuse Eldritch and Holy together in one body, the byproduct will be a twisted amalgamation of corrupted divinity, changing the initial intentions of the God's blessing.

Should you fuse Eldritch and Abyssal, you'll massively speed up the progress of any side effects and transform you into a zombie type creature that's entirely under the control of the Outer Gods.

If the Void and Eldritch were to fuse... Well... The space becomes 'dead'. It becomes a parasitic zone that leaches essence from the realm they're in, siphoning everything and expanding the affected area.

Following this logic, fighting the Outer God's minions would only leave death and destruction in its wake. Permanently altering the place they reside in.

Due to Tristan's nature as a Cardinal, his blessing was stronger than average and thus allowed him to eliminate the Eldritch power that resided within the fodder.

When the strange beast entered the Void, Feris had to permanently erase that part of the Void to prevent future troubles from occurring.

Never one in any of these situations did Abyssal, Holy or Void have 'no effect'.

Tiamat for example, was only weakened since it was a fragment of the original.

If Alice's flames had no effect on the strange black mist then it could only mean one thing.

She had hints of Eldritch power within her body!

That was the only logical conclusion that Feris could come up with. Eldritch power behaved differently to the aforementioned three sources. Eldritch doesn't exactly harm another Eldritch source. Rather, it assimilates.

The weaker source is swallowed into something greater.

And the last thing that Feris said dwelled in Alice's mind.

"By all rights, I should kill you right now. To eliminate all sources of Eldritch power. However, it's also true that your body is somehow keeping all four sources in check. I should've figured it out sooner. Everything you did was Eldritch in nature."

This was the last clue that Alice needed.

Her soul siphoning power, the replication of holy power and relics, her adaptation to the Void.

She's been utilizing a portion of Eldritch power this entire time.

Chapter 563 - 563: Helping Arwen

Abyssal, Eldritch, Holy, Void. All four major powers were resting within her body.

However, at the same time, they weren't exactly the same. Her control of Abyssal power wasn't like most people, her Eldritch wasn't corrupting everything she touched, her Holy was still in the making.

Out of everything, Void was the closest thing to the original but that's only because it's the only power that she obtained for herself.

What was Nyer trying to do to create a body like this? Why hasn't he done anything else to her?

Or was it the same as in the Inverted World? Was he trying to create a new vessel for Velouria? A perfect vessel containing all of the powers.

Then what about the Will of the Abyss? The Will was still keeping an eye on her.

Glancing down at her hands, Alice could see that it was trembling ever so slightly.

It felt like the labs once more.

She was placed under scrutiny by those far more powerful than her and she couldn't do anything about it. A caged bird, waiting for the owner to decide her fate.

Biting her lip, Alice clenched her fist and took a deep breath.

Understand yourself, understand the enemy.

She needed a better understanding of her own body. What Nyer did to create this, what he intends to do and what she could do to keep herself safe.

Abyssal, Void and Holy are easy enough to deal with. But Eldritch was different. She needed a method to stop herself from being absorbed and assimilated. Not only that, but she also needed a method to go against the soul.

Her weakness was made abundantly clear when she thought back to her fight with the Doctor and the Outer God's minions.

Tristan's attack was extra effective on them since it targeted the soul and by extension, the link between these beings and the Outer Gods.

'My sixth Sigil is clear now. I need something to target the soul.' Alice concluded as Cayla nodded her head in agreement.

[What kind of ability do you want? I can filter out some potential targets.] Cayla asked curiously.

'Hmm... Probably something that'll enhance my abilities like my fourth Sigil. If it's just a single target skill that can't synergise with the other abilities, it would be a waste after all.' Alice folded her arms.

[Alright, I'll see what I can do.]

With Cayla working on finding out a good target for Alice to go for, Alice started to make her way back to the port and by extension the Inn.

She wanted to rest her body first before claiming the rest of her money tomorrow. Once she does, she'll go to the arena then leave for the east. There was no other reason to stay in this city longer after all.

###

"Took you quite some time to come back, care for a drink?" Tristan asked as he gestured to the table with a serious expression.

"Right... the talk." Alice sighed, closing the door behind her.

Walking over to the counter, she drank the beverage without hesitation.

"You don't think I might've poisoned it?" Tristan raised his eyebrow.

"I don't believe you're that kind of person. So what did you want to talk about dear Cardinal? Why do I have the power of Duality, why did I ask you to look for me?" Alice asked with a smile, gesturing for a refill.

"And if I ask, you'll answer truthfully?"

"Depends on whether or not you'll tell that Goddess of yours. I doubt Lumiria will be pleased to see that the power of Duality is partially under my control." Alice shrugged.

She understood that the souls of the followers were important to the God. So the fact that her power stems from stealing a portion of Esse's soul in the Inverted World will probably cause a crusade against her.

Hesitating for a moment, Tristan glanced up before sighing.

"Depends. You told me to look for 'Calista' because you have a way to help Arwen right?" Tristan asked as Alice nodded her head before pausing.

"It's a possibility. Side effects are similar to contracts that intertwine themselves deeply with the soul. Using the methods of the moon requires you to eliminate the infected part and potentially replace/supplement it with other souls. I assume that's not what you want for Arwen." Alice traced her finger along the glass rim.

"The method I have... can offset this adjustment to the soul. It'll make it more... I suppose controllable and potentially even eliminate it in its entirety. But this is entirely based on sensory rather than a direct manipulation of the soul. What I do is burn away the infected parts while leaving the main soul untouched."

"And you have confidence in this?" Tristan asked but Alice shook her head.

"No, I don't. I was going to give it a try. If it doesn't work, I'll leave Arwen be and not force any changes. Overall, I'd say the success is about 60%." Alice calculated. After her experience with the infected, her control has gotten better when it comes to eliminating the Abyssal influence.

Placing a second drink in front of Alice, Tristan leaned back and contemplated in silence.

"Are you able to prove this healing method of yours first? You mentioned before that you could regenerate limbs by eating the medicine." He asked.

Blinking her eyes, Alice let out a laugh.

"Oh that was a lie. I don't need medicine to heal, see?" Alice held up her arm and severed it with a blade without hesitation.

Bone and flesh began to reconstruct itself and the old hand was transformed into blood to go back into her body.

Seeing this, Tristan blinked his eyes in confusion, wondering if he saw it wrong. But it was not a trick but rather reality. She was indeed regenerating her body like it was nothing.

Pausing momentarily, he opened his mouth.

"I won't ask about why you have the power of Duality and I have already omitted your existence to my Goddess earlier today. So... please help Arwen." He spoke slowly as Alice could see a hint of desperation in his eyes.

He so desperately wanted Arwen to have a normal life while remaining as herself.

"If you're desperate, you should try and hide it. Some people like to abuse that fact and exploit you. But you're lucky I'm not like that." Alice smiled, drinking the beverage in one go.

"Plus, it would be a shame if I can't drink this type of alcohol later."

Standing up, she gave her body a stretch.

"Where is she? We can begin immediately." Alice asked as Tristan let her up to their room. Alice could see Arwen resting on the bed.

Giving her a light nudge, Arwen was about to say something when she noticed Alice standing behind Tristan.

She immediately covered her mouth and looked at Tristan for an answer.

"We think we might have a way to... treat your side effect. She's just going to give you an examination alright?" Tristan patted her head as Arwen hesitated. She knew full well how hard it was to resolve her issue.

If the Church couldn't handle it then what makes her any different?

Seeing the distrust in Arwen's eyes, Alice thought about it for a moment before an idea appeared in her mind.

"If you doubt me, you can say something and see if I get charmed or not. Then you'll understand." Alice suggested as Tristan looked at her in surprise. But seeing her confidence, he hesitantly nodded his head as Arwen slowly opened her mouth.

"Did... My brother promise to do anything?" Arwen asked.

Immediately, Alice felt as though something was stirring deep in her soul. Like the gentle warmth of a mother, the kindness of family charming her mind.

Snapping her finger, violet flames flickered around her body as she shrugged.

"He only promised to keep my identity a secret from his Goddess. You see, I'd rather not have a target on my back." Alice gave Arwen a reassuring wink.

Seeing that she was unphased, Arwen's eyes lit up with an excited light.

"Are these flames the reason why you think you can cure Arwen?" Tristan asked curiously.

"Partially. These flames are... somewhat unique to me. At least to my knowledge. They repel Abyssal energy and keeps the user safe." Alice replied. She didn't know if Nyer was able to replicate this elsewhere. At least for now, she was the only known user.

"Anyways, can you lay down on the bed for me Arwen?" Alice asked with a gentle smile.

Nodding her head cheerfully, Arwen rested on the bed as Alice placed her hands over her.

When she was removing the curse of the infected, she did so through the concept of resonance and bloodline release.

However, for Arwen, that wasn't exactly the case. There is the presence of the Abyss within her soul, the side effect.

With only one source within her body, Alice needed to balance it out with two additional sources for it to be repelled. But her goal was to remove the side effect completely.

In order to remove the side effects, she has to target the cause rather than the symptom. The cause of which is Arwen's ingestion of Abyss Blood.

'To cure her, I'll have to cut the connection she has with the Abyss before purifying her Blood.'

Naturally, it was far easier said than done but Alice had an idea.

"This might hurt a little but hold strong okay?" Alice warned as Arwen nodded her head hesitantly.

Looking over to her brother, she reached out as Tristan held her hand.

"I'm here." Tristan reassured as Alice glanced at the two with emotionless eyes.

If only she and Alyss had gotten this kind of brotherly support.

But now was not the time to think of such things.

Taking a deep breath, Alice dropped a single droplet of her blood onto Arwen.

Chapter 564 - 564: Revoking The Contract

As the droplet of blood touched her body, a flame engulfed Arwen as she flinched in fear.

Tristan grabbed her hand tightly, hoping that nothing would go wrong.

Focusing her mind, Alice sensed the turbulent energy within Arwen that was trying to fight back against her flames.

If she were to simply burn away the side effects, her soul wouldn't heal properly.

Instead, she needed to ease something into where the side effect used to be. To replace it and hold the soul stable.

Alternatively, there's also the choice of giving her more control over the side effect. To allow her to activate it whenever she wanted as though it's a Sigil effect.

"Arwen, do you want to get rid of the side effect or control it?" Alice asked as Arwen thought about it for a moment before shaking her head.

"I don't want it."

No matter what, the ability to charm people didn't feel right for her. Taking over someone else's will felt like a violation of the individual and Arwen didn't want this power.

"Alright."

With Arwen making her choice, Alice only had one path laid out in front of her.

It was easy in theory but difficult to execute. To put it bluntly, Arwen was going to be her first test subject. If she succeeds here, she'll be able to start removing side effects from other people.

The first step was to understand the fundamentals of side effects and Abyss Blood.

When a user consumes the blood, a contract is formed. They offer a portion of their soul in exchange for the power that dwells within the vial of blood. For Alice, this contract is temporary and the effect soon disappears.

The more they drink the vial, the more potent the contract becomes and their body naturally reflects this change in the soul. From the soul, the power is funnelled through the Spiritual Heart and shown on the body.

Originally, Alice thought that cutting off the connection would be fine but the damage done to the body would be beyond repair. The worst choice possible.

Instead, there's an alternative method that Alice wanted to try. The exact inverse of the original contract that took place.

She has the Crown, the Heart and the Eye. With that in mind, along with the countless souls linked to her Spiritual Heart, she's akin to a second Abyss. Albeit a small one.

The contract she wanted to give to Arwen was to take on the side effects in her place. To accept it into her body, her soul.

The Abyss gave her power and healing in exchange for her soul. By inverting it, Alice takes back the power and healing and returns the soul through her connection to the Abyss itself.

What the Abyss gives out, she retrieves.

In other words, Alice acts as the refund.

Black shards shimmered above Alice's head, forming a crown while the heart beat against her chest.

The eye tried to exert its power but under Kaden's seal, it struggled in futility.

[Don't worry about it, I'll handle it. Even though Kaden's sealed me, my soul is deeply intertwined with yours now. And if you haven't noticed it, your current eye is already being turned into the second Eye of the Abyss.] Cayla reassured.

Nodding her head, Alice focused her own power to act as the third node for this resonance.

Opening her eye, the pattern within changed back to the red spider lily that was present in her Resonance.

*Badum!!!

The power of the Abyss surged out as Tristan glanced over in surprise. But in fear of distracting Alice, he didn't say anything.

Spectral strands of energy appeared from Alice's body as it linked to Arwen's body. Motes of energy started to flicker to life around them, slowly transforming into ritualistic symbols that formed a natural circle. As the symbols begin to link up, sweat rolled down Alice's face.

She felt the connection forming between her and the Abyss.

The expanse of the realm and the countless layers that were present. The howls of beasts trapped in Terminus, the ruins of Ayr, the ruined battlefield that she saw in the Inverted World.

A surge of information flooded Alice's mind but Cayla stepped in and isolated the knowledge, preventing Alice from being overwhelmed.

As the pain of the forceful transfer subsided, Alice momentarily felt as though something was staring at her. She wanted to find the source but only a faceless smile appeared in her mind and she understood what it meant.

The Will noticed her forming a connection yet did nothing.

It simply observed.

Ignoring this pest, Alice focused on the task at hand.

To revoke the contract that the Abyss formed with Arwen!

Red spider lilies blossomed on Arwen's body as she began to writhe in pain. Tristan held Arwen's hand, desperately praying for this to succeed.

Alice formed a resonance between the Abyss, Arwen and herself. She had already located the modified portion of Arwen's soul but it refused to budge.

All she needed to do was one more push...

'I wouldn't do that if I was you.'" A familiar voice rang out in Alice's mind as her body froze up.

'What do you want.' Alice glanced back and saw the Will observing her while in a languid pose.

'I'm simply watching what you plan to do. But if your plan is to preserve that girl's life then I wouldn't force it if I was you.' The Will chuckled.

It seemed as though neither Alyss nor Cayla noticed the presence.

'What do you even get out of coming and watching me randomly? The last time you appeared was when I was in the Void. You called me incomplete. A vessel. If you wanted to take over my body what use is it for you to wait this long?' Alice fired off question after question but the Will simply shrugged.

'What use do I have to take over something that's not finished? It's an inevitability that you'll complete the vessel without me interfering. You'll seek out power all the same because if you don't, you won't survive and you won't be able to help Allura.

'But let's just say that I'm feeling helpful. For a lost child that doesn't understand the power of the Abyss, my power. If you forcefully go through with what you want to do, you'll kill her. But I like your idea and spirit. Next time, get a power that helps you interact with the soul better before you try something like this again.' The Will grinned as he appeared next to Alice and gave her head a pat.

Just as Alice was about to strike out against him, he disappeared.

'I've revoked her contract. Take care now my dear incomplete vessel.' His voice echoed out as Alice's mind was brought back to reality.

The spider lilies slowly disappeared with a burst of luminescent blue lights that floated around the room.

Alice could feel the Siren's power flowing into her body. If she wanted to, she could replace one of her Sigils whenever she wanted for this power.

As the flames faded away, Arwen relaxed her body.

"Did it succeed?" Tristan asked.

Being reminded of the fact that the Will stepped in out of pity, Alice felt a bit annoyed. However, it was a good ending. If he didn't step in, Arwen would've been in more danger than before.

"Yes, her contract is revoked. She should be fine now." Alice nodded before stepping out of the room.

Even though the Will told her to go for a Sigil that interacted with the Soul, she felt it clearly.

The method he used to revoke the contract.

Similar to how she and Alyss would scour through the souls connected to her Spiritual Heart for a replacement, the Will did the same.

Using the analogy that Velouria mentioned in the past, the Will was the librarian and the Abyss is the library. He simply searched through the books to find the right one before burning it away.

If Alice could tap into this library, she'd be able to achieve the same. There was no need for a Sigil that interacted with the soul. Of course, it'll make it far easier and it's also something she needed to get.

But just knowing the right technique was enough.

Making her way down to the bar, Alice grabbed a glass and poured in some mead.

[The Will stepped in right?] Cayla asked out of nowhere.

'How did you know?'

[I was about to warn you not to continue when you suddenly stopped and the contract was revoked. The... process was too sudden. If it wasn't the Will then I don't know.] Cayla shrugged as Alice took a sip of mead.

'You're right. He stepped in out of boredom, mocked me before disappearing. He told me to get a Sigil that lets me interact better with the soul before trying something like this again.' Alice sighed.

There were too many things at play and she couldn't get the full picture. The movement of the Outer Gods, Nyer's plans, the Will's expectations, whatever the Zenia's were trying to do with the Doctor and even the strange cult that Allura discovered when she first started her journey as a Hunter.

The White Death that was born from the corpse of a Sealed Lord. An impossible situation since not even Allura or Kaden had a method to kill the Sealed Lords.

Not to mention the recent recovery of Tiamat.

Taking another drink, Alice let out a frustrated sigh.

The best way to prepare for all of this was to get stronger. Strong enough so that she could directly interfere with whatever was going on in the background!

She had a clear path laid out in front of her.

Visit the East, get her sixth Sigil, meet up with Ria again and progress towards becoming a Lord.

Chapter 565 - 565: Possibilities Of Duality

After a while, Tristan made his way down and there was a relieved smile on his face.

It's as though a huge burden was lifted off his shoulders and his smile seemed more genuine.

"Did she go to sleep?" Alice asked as Tristan nodded his head.

"We did wake her up while she was sleeping after all. But I don't know how to thank you." He chuckled, making his way over to the bar and making her a new beverage. This time, the drink took on a pink colour with a glittering effect.

"Be glad that your drinks are good. Otherwise, I might not have offered." Alice smirked, drinking the beverage with a relaxed smile.

"Plus, you did a great favour for me by not mentioning me to your Goddess. I wouldn't be surprised if a crusade was to storm into this city if she knew."

Hearing this, Tristan folded his arms awkwardly.

"Yeah about that, why do you even have the power of Duality in the first place? It should be something unique to the Abyss Lord no? The Goddess didn't seem too happy after she saw remnants of it on the beach." Tristan asked as she could still remember the silent fury in his Goddess's eyes.

"I ate a portion of her soul that was kept by the Abyss and gained it." Alice replied. The answer sounded absurd but that was indeed a piece of the truth.

With her consuming Esse's 'information' in the Inverted World, Alice wasn't sure if the Abyss could recreate her again.

After all, whenever someone makes a contract, they fork over a portion of their souls. And that's the exact thing that Alice 'ate'.

Alternatively, it could also not be the entire portion that the Abyss stole which'll allow it to make more 'Esse's' in the future.

"I see..." Tristan's smile twitched as he didn't quite believe it. However, Alice also did seem like she was joking so it might hold some truth.

"Setting that aside, you mentioned that you can only invert Duality right? I haven't seen Miss Esse fight often but I do know that Inversion is the simplest form of utilizing her power." Tristan began to explain.

He wanted to repay Alice's help of healing Arwen and the only way he could think of right now would be to help her with Duality.

"Duality is a conceptual power. In all the training sessions, I've seen Miss Esse demonstrate Inversion, synchronisation and certain restrictions. Of course, there are more, but these are just the main ones that I've observed.

"Inversion can be further broken down into different types. Synchronisation is the coexistence of two contrasting powers or concepts. The link between mind and soul, which the Church focuses on is one aspect of Synchronisation.

"Restriction can be considered a type of contract. You establish an area of restricted rules imposed on both you and the opponent. In certain spars, Miss Esse uses this power to restrict herself to not use power greater than six Sigils for example.

"And with this restriction, comes the reward of freedom in other aspects. It's hard to put into words without seeing it for yourself. But think of it as an exchange. By limiting yourself, you get benefits elsewhere." Tristan listed out the details he knew of the power while Alice listened carefully.

"Without seeing it for myself, I can't exactly emulate the power you're talking about. I only ever saw Inversion so I can only really do that for now." Alice shrugged.

This was the main weakness of her stealing the power from others. Without seeing it and understanding what they're doing, she can't exactly replicate it.

It's like gaining a tail but not knowing how to use it. She'll naturally struggle. But if she sees others use it and understands the flow of energy, the 'feeling', she can grasp the same concept.

"In that case, there are still other parts of Inversion that you should be able to access. Just flipping the properties of certain attacks is a very rudimentary and a bit of a waste if you have access to Miss Esse's power." Tristan chuckled, helping Alice refill her glass.

"Is that so?" Alice muttered, activating the Sigil of Duality and creating an orb above her hand.

"What kind of Inversion are we talking about? You mentioned other types right? So it's not just limited to making a skill go from sending out energy to absorbing it."

"There's the inversion of reality. Making things go from a physical state to a soul state, inversion of injuries, healing. There's... Also inversion of the human psyche. Though it might be temporary, I'm not sure exactly how long Miss Esse can hold it for since it's not a power she uses often." Tristan hesitated when mentioning the last power. He's only ever seen it once and it was through coincidence.

It wasn't a pleasant power to see as it essentially strips away a person's freedom and manipulates their mind. No different from certain illusion skills but regardless, Tristan didn't like it.

After all, this was a direct manipulation of the mind.

Hearing the last part, Alice paused briefly.

It's as he said, if the power of Inversion was more conceptual in nature then inverting the morals of a person could be within the scope of its power. To make a criminal into a hero, to make an angry disbeliever into a fantastic follower and so on. Naturally, it can also be used to target good people and turn them evil, to slander and manipulate.

There were probably limitations to this kind of power that Alice wasn't aware about but she didn't want anything to do with it.

Instead, she wanted to focus on the first two that Tristan mentioned. Inversion of reality and the inversion of injuries.

While she doesn't need to think much about healing considering her own regeneration, it was still an amazing option to have if it was possible.

And if she could access the soul state using the Duality Sigil, it could also give her more options once she obtains her Sixth Sigil.

"How would Esse heal? I don't believe a simple inversion would be able to repair wounds." Alice asked, wanting to get some hints about this.

Furrowing his brows, Tristan struggled momentarily before shaking his head with a sigh.

"I'm not too sure. Miss Esse keeps a lot of her skills under wraps. Even when I ask, most of the time she simply chooses to ignore me." Tristan admitted.

He could still remember her warning the first time he became a Cardinal.

"Just because the Goddess has shown you temporary favour, don't believe that everyone would bend to your whims. Keep yourself in line and don't push your luck."

It was clear that she held a high regard for the Goddess and having her show favour to an unknown person rubbed her the wrong way. But as a faithful servant, she didn't question the decision and accepted it.

"Hmm..." Rubbing her finger along the rim of the glass, Alice asked for one more glass before finishing it in one go and licking her lips in satisfaction.

"Let's leave it here for now. You've given me a lot of good hints." Alice stood up.

"I'm not sure if the Goddess will be sending any inquisitors to the city so it's best you be careful. If they're around and discover the power of Duality on you, they might start asking questions you wouldn't want to answer." Tristan warned.

"Don't worry, they won't sense anything once I wake up tomorrow. Wake me up early tomorrow if you can, I got a debt to settle with Darrow." Alice gave him a wink before making her way upstairs.

Seeing her confidence, Tristan couldn't help but chuckle and grabbed the empty glass.

The fact that he had hidden her existence from Lumiria will no doubt earn her ire and might even cause him to lose her favour. However, it was a small price to pay when it came to healing his sister.

To him, his sister meant everything. The last remaining family member that stuck with him through thick and thin. He wanted to give her the world, to give her the happiness she deserved.

That was his desire as an older brother.

No matter what the world throws at her, he'll be her immovable shield.

###

"Wake up~ breakfast is ready."

"Hng... give me 12 more hours..." Alice groaned while hiding within the blankets.

"Any longer and the food will get cold! Big brother said that you had things to do today and that I should wake you up early." A pair of small hands grabbed Alice's blanket and shook her.

"I don't wannaa~" Alice complained like a baby, wrapping herself in the blanket until she turned into a worm.

"Big sis! The sun is going to burn your butt if you keep sleeping."

"So be it, let Solaris come. I'll send him packing like I did before." Alice buried herself in her pillow, relaxing her body.

However, mid relaxation, her mind paused and comprehended the current situation.

There were three possibilities.

Possibility A, somehow Selen found her and is waking her up. If so, her voice has gone up quite a bit during the time she was gone. But the voice mentioned big brother so that can't be it.

Possibility B, Tristan had a sex change overnight. But that still wouldn't explain the big brother ordeal.

Which meant that it could only be possibility C, it was Arwen.

Poking her head out slowly, Alice could see a cheerful smiling Arwen standing by her bed.

"Are you going to get up now?" Arwen asked with a sparkle in her eyes.

Chapter 566 - 566: Arwen

Staring at Arwen momentarily, Alice let out a fatigued sigh and nodded her head.

*Yawn~

"Seems like you're already putting your voice to work." Alice rubbed her eyes tiredly.

"Of course! Big sis gave me this opportunity so I need to make the most out of it." Arwen grinned and gave Alice a peace sign.

"Right... On that, why are you calling me big sis?" Alice asked curiously while picking out an outfit for today. Since Darrow knew her true appearance, there was no need for her to dress up as Calista anymore.

Instead, she wanted to wear something she liked. However, she also felt pretty lazy today so she decided to go with something simple instead.

"Hmm... because big sis is big sis! You saved me and you're bigger than me." Arwen thought about it for a moment before answering.

"Quite the literal way to look at it huh..." Alice raised her eyebrow before looking through her pouch for an outfit.

Flipping through her closet, she found an outfit that fit what she wanted.

A white beret with a pair of fake round glasses for fashion, an off shoulder white sweater with straps on her shoulders, a pair of shorts with black tights and boots.

Adjusting her hat, Alice looked at her reflection in the mirror and nodded in satisfaction while Arwen cheered on in the background while clapping her hands.

Rolling her eye, Alice couldn't suppress the smile on her face and gave Arwen a pat on the head before making her way down.

She could see that breakfast was already prepared with Tristan washing the dishes in the back.

"Good morning, did you have a nice rest?" Tristan poked his head out before pausing in surprise. He didn't expect Alice to dress like this considering her outfit yesterday.

"It was good. I assume you're going to look for some workers soon considering Arwen's voice is back. Plus some advertisement since I don't see any other customer aside from me." Alice replied, taking a seat.

"That's because big brother is bad at doing adverts. He doesn't want to annoy the bigger inns so we're not getting any customers despite how the outside looks. They don't even know if we're open yet." Arwen pouted in annoyance, clearly still annoyed by the extravagant outer appearance.

"Look, I already said sorry for that okay?" Tristan scratched his cheek as Arwen folded her arms.

"Oh! I know! Big sis, if you were to wear a maid outfit I'm sure we'll get plenty of customers!" Arwen ran over to Alice as her eyes shimmered with expectation.

Tristan was distracted by the fact that Arwen called Alice big sis.

As for Alice, she tapped her chin and contemplated the idea.

"Sure I don't see why not. Once I get my money from Darrow, I'll visit the arena and do advertisements for a bit." Alice smiled before eating her breakfast while Arwen sat next to her with a happy smile.

Naturally, Alice wasn't used to this but she couldn't exactly say no to those puppy eyes and smile.

"Wait, Arwen, when did you get a maid outfit?" Tristan paused as he realised what exactly Arwen had asked for.

Curling her lips into a grin, Arwen rested her hands on her hips.

"Fufufu~ I prepared plenty big brother. I got suits for butlers and maid outfits for maids. You were too busy so you didn't see my wardrobe. I got all the sizes prepared." Arwen declared proudly while Tristan face palmed. He was wondering why the bill for some of her purchases was a little higher than usual but to think this was where it went to.

Giving Alice a quick scan, Arwen ran upstairs before coming down with a maid outfit in hand.

"Big sis, do you want to try it on now?" Arwen asked but Alice shook her head.

"Not yet. I need to go collect a debt. I doubt it'll look good if I went looking like a maid." Alice chuckled.

Arwen was a little disappointed but she got over it quickly and nodded her head.

After talking to Arwen and Tristan for a little longer, Alice left the inn and made her way towards the port. Darrow owed her quite a bit of money from yesterday and she'll be crazy to miss out on it.

She needed to take a ship to Pirate Bay in order to find him. However, that was only when she took into account the normal way. Instead, she had a different idea.

Just thinking about it caused her to grin in excitement.

###

"Why aren't you taking this chance to completely demolish the Underworld?! Lorien's dead, the Underworld is in chaos and they're running around like headless chickens. It's the perfect chance is it not?!" Minerva slammed her hands on the table as Darrow didn't budge.

"We're not cleaning them out." Darrow was firm on the matter.

"Why!? Explain it!"

She had lost so many of her crew yesterday with Lorien turning into a giant monster. If she didn't wipe out the Underworld today, she wouldn't know how she could face her crew.

"Just taking out the Underworld won't solve our issues. It's merely a symptom of the cause. Rather than taking them out with brute force, think of why they exist in the first place. If anything, I'd rather you put this effort of yours into helping me figure out who these guys are first." Darrow spoke patiently as he tapped his finger on the sheet in front of him.

It had a drawing of the three eyes within a flame that Alice had seen on the ship.

Minerva wanted to argue but a firm stare from Darrow caused her to shirk back. However, she truly didn't want to back down this time since too many of her crew died.

The others were looking to her, waiting for her to act.

Naturally, Darrow noticed this and took out a cigarette.

"If you follow other's expectations for your entire life, you'll lose sight of yourself. Know when to accept the suggestions and when to stand firm. If I buckled under your pressure every time you brought something up, don't you think that Caethis would be under a sea of flames by now?"

Darrow didn't need to hear Minerva's answer since he already knew what she was thinking. Even though she might be too embarrassed to admit it, Minerva also knew that some of her rash decisions in the past were wrong and it was always up to Darrow to stop her.

Therefore, Minerva took a deep breath and sighed out.

"Fine, but the crew still want an answer."

"I'll sort it out. The monster is dead anyway and it's something outside of our scale of work. Hopefully, the crew can be grateful that it didn't reach the city." Darrow shrugged.

He could still remember the demonstration of power that Feris performed, wiping out that kind of existence with a wave of her hand. Even if he were to reach the realm of Lord, he still wouldn't be able to compete with someone like that.

Which only begs the question of how Alice knew someone like Feris.

According to the monster, she was the ruler of the Void.

"What even happened to Lorien? I've never seen anything like that." Minerva asked with a frown, recalling the strange beast that he turned into.

This wasn't her asking for the crew but simply out of her own curiosity.

"If I'm being honest, I'm not sure. But I think Alice might have a clue on it." Darrow scratched his chin. But upon hearing the name, Minerva simply tilted her head in confusion.

"Alice? Who's that?"

"Hi~ that would be me~"

"!^\$^"%T^\$!!!!" Minerva yelped in shock as her first instinct was to draw her firearm but red thread bound her arm in place.

Above them, a portal opened up as Alice could be seen dropping down and sitting on the table.

"Alice would be me." Alice grinned, satisfied with the shock on Minerva's face. Though it wasn't as smooth as how Allura would pull off her stunts.

After all, Allura never needed a portal. She was able to eliminate her presence and wait behind you until the very moment you spoke her name.

Seeing Minerva's confusion and shock, Alice realised that Minerva never saw her without the disguise and sighed.

Waving her hand, blood gathered around her hair and dyed it red as she finally recognised Alice.

"Calista!"

"Yep, that'll be me. Now then, I believe both of you owe me a bit of money right? Care to pay up?" Alice crossed her legs and rubbed her fingers together in the motion for coin.

Without hesitation, Darrow opened the drawer next to him and placed a heavy pouch on the table.

"I'm way ahead of you. Though next time if you wanted to eavesdrop, maybe don't make yourself so obvious and come through the front door." Darrow chuckled.

He had already noticed her presence earlier but it seemed like she was waiting for something. Turns out it was something so childish that it honestly gave him a small chuckle.

"Tsk, no fun. Let's see..." Opening the mouth, Alice could see the sparkling lights of Platina coins and a grin appeared on her face.

With this, she has now earned just over 100 Platina coins during her holiday in Caethis. Indeed, if one should meet new people, it's best to meet the rich ones first.

Confirming the amount owed, Alice threw it into her pouch with a satisfied smile.

"Since you were so kind as to prepare the money so diligently, I suppose it's only fair for me to give you some information too." Alice pretended to be generous but it was actually part of her goals.

She didn't have the network or time to investigate a strange set of traders like the three eyes in a flame.

Therefore, it's best to give this kind of task to someone else! And who better than the person in front of her?

Chapter 567 - 567: Hua

"Whatever the traders were bringing over, it allowed Lorien to become a minion of the Outer Gods. The traders are also minions which is why they look all f*cked up." Alice began to explain.

She told Minerva and Darrow most of what she knew except the fact that she had Eldritch energy in her body.

The more he listened, the more serious Darrow's expression became.

Especially the fact that Eldritch energy twists the existing powers in horrendous ways.

If there were truly traders trying to spread this kind of parasite throughout their world, then it's best he get others to help track them down as well.

"That's pretty much everything I know. How is it? Pretty good gift no?" Alice spun the pouch around her finger while releasing Minerva from her bindings.

"I wouldn't say it's a good gift considering the nature of the contents, but it's indeed important information." Darrow nodded with a sigh.

"I'm going to be travelling east in a few days. Since the traders came from overseas, I believe I should be able to get some information on them. Do you have a method of communication? Maybe through a Void Hawk or something?"

Leaning back, Darrow thought for a moment before opening his mouth.

"So you want to exchange information?" He asked as Alice stuck out her tongue.

"Was it that obvious?"

"I could see it from a mile away. But alright, I can do that. I do owe your friend my life after all. Without her, I don't think any of us would be leaving the Void." Darrow chuckled.

"Leave something I can track you down with and I'll have the Void Hawk find you when I have new information. And if you have any information for me, just tie it to the Void Hawk once you wrote it down and I'll receive it when it gets back."

Nodding her head, Alice snapped her finger and made an orb of blood.

"Don't eat it, it's basically extra potent poison that'll kill you. Use this to track me down."

Accepting the orb, Darrow handed Alice a strange silver coin from his drawer.

"Use this when you travel east. Find the fastest route and this'll give you a free ride."

"Don't mind if I do then." Picking up the silver coin, Alice prepared to leave when she felt Minerva's stare on her back.

"Something you wanna say, G.G?" Alice glanced back.

"G.G?" Minerva furrowed her brows.

"Yeah, gun girl. Well? I haven't got all day." Alice tapped her fingers impatiently. She still needed to go sign up for the arena and get Arwen's maid outfit.

Clicking her tongue, Minerva shook her head as Alice made another portal and left the room without saying anything.

"Are you sure you don't want to ask her?" Darrow asked with a knowing smile.

"And do what with it? It's not like she'll go out of her way to help me. We barely know each other after all." Minerva folded her arms in annoyance.

"My my~ Clearly you don't understand me very well G.G. With the right coin, I can help out with a lot of things." Alice dropped down from the ceiling, wrapping her arms around Minerva's shoulder with a grin.

"F*CK!!! If you're gonna leave, leave!" Minerva cried out in shock and annoyance as she wasn't prepared for Alice to reappear.

"So what's this about then?" Alice asked, turning her gaze to Darrow while jumping away from Minerva.

"She's looking for a friend of hers from a few years back who journeyed east. But something happened and they lost contact." Darrow was about to continue explaining when Minerva shook her head.

"Tsk, I'll say it since it's my request. Her name's Hua, we met a few years back when she came over and became friends. Knowing her, she wouldn't drop contact without warning. I... I don't know if she died or whatever but apparently she became quite famous in the East before disappearing. Can you look for her for me?" Minerva asked as Alice scratched her chin.

"Do you have anything else other than a name? I'm not sure how common or uncommon the name Hua is over there."

"Ah! Give me a moment." Without explaining further, Minerva ran out of the room while Alice and Darrow blinked their eyes before shrugging.

Seeing each other do the same action, the two couldn't help but laugh.

Chatting for a bit, Alice eventually recommended him to visit Tristan's Inn since he has good alcohol.

Thinking back, Alice couldn't help but be a little reluctant since travelling east meant that he couldn't drink his beverages anymore. But it wasn't like Alice could follow him around.

Especially since he's the Cardinal of the Church of the Moon. Being near him, while he's on duty, would simply be inviting danger.

A situation that Alice wanted to avoid at all cost at least right now. She had no way to deal with the Apostles of Lumiria not to mention the Goddess herself.

Darrow was a little surprised to hear that the Cardinal had opened his own Inn but it wouldn't hurt to give the drinks a try.

"You might want to give him a heads up when it comes to maintaining that Inn though. The Inn owners around the port don't exactly play fair with newcomers. Each of them had to compete with one another to get to where they are today." He warned as Alice waved her hand dismissively.

"He already knows. Hell, I'm even helping him do advertisements later."

"Advertisements?" Darrow raised an eyebrow.

"Yep. I won't spoil it since you'll probably hear about it later." Alice grinned.

Since Arwen wanted her to wear the maid outfit in the arena, she might as well broadcast information about the Inn when she wins. It's not like the arena owners can stop her from saying stuff during the fight after all.

If anything, it's a testament to her strength that she has the liberty to shout adverts in a duel.

"Sorry for the wait!" Minerva burst into the room as Alice glanced over.

"Took you long enough G.G. I was thinking if I should leave or not since I'm a busy woman. This delay is gonna cost ya extra." Alice winked as Minerva rolled her eyes before pulling out a strange small red rope that was tied into a knot.

The knot had a single jade coin attached to it with a strange character on the surface.

"She used to wear two of these in a twin tail. But after she gave me this one, she changed her hairstyle to a ponytail. It's a unique ornament that her parents gave her so she should still have it.

"It's been a while so her appearance might've changed since I last saw her." Minerva explained as she traced her finger over the knot.

With the Abyss Blood being able to modify appearances through side effects, it was hard to say that someone would look exactly the same after a few months.

"But if it does help, she had dark red hair and red eyes. She was about... half a head smaller than me?" Minerva tapped her chin, trying to recall Hua's height.

"So about the same size as me then? Seems easy enough." Alice leaned forward and observed the knot.

Aside from the jade coin with a character engraved on it, there wasn't exactly anything special about the ornament. If anything, it looked like something you could buy down the road. But if Minerva said that it should be unique then so be it.

"Now then, shall we talk about payment?" Alice grinned.

At the end of the day, she was giving Minerva a hand for more coin.

100 Platina might be a lot but to fund her shopping spree, mead requirements and other necessities? It was far from enough.

Seeing the familiar glint in Alice's eyes, Minerva recalled the contract she had made with Alice before and felt a bad feeling rising in her chest.

###

With some new funds queued up for the future, Alice left Pirate Bay happily as it was now time for her to sign up for the arena.

She still wanted to take this chance and experience the mixture of martial arts and Sigil powers for herself before travelling east.

That way, she'll be able to prepare herself to a certain extent.

Cayla didn't have up to date information about this either since not many people could show off their powers before Kaden simply killed them through brute force or cursed them to death.

And in the situation where he didn't need to do either, you'll be lucky if he even entertained the idea of giving you a spar.

After getting the maid outfit, Alice quickly signed up for the highlight fight of the arena tonight since her opponent was apparently a strong fighter hailing from the east.

While she wasn't sure about how well they'll be able to demonstrate the martial arts, Alice hoped that she wouldn't be disappointed.

And with that in mind, the best person to take over the close quarters battle to draw out the techniques would be Alyss.

Of course, Alyss was rather embarrassed about the maid outfit and refused to fight in it. However, when Alice mentioned that if Alyss didn't want to wear it while fighting them she'll have to tell Arwen personally.

Thinking it would be an easy task, Alyss tried to say no to Arwen but was instead hit with the lethal combination of puppy dog eyes and pleading.

It was super effective and now Alyss stood in the arena while wearing the maid outfit.

'See? The spectators love it.' Alice grinned.

'F*ck you.'

Chapter 568 - 568: Jianyu

Trying her best to suppress the embarrassment of having to wear this outfit in front of all the spectators, Alyss took deep breaths to calm her mind.

Since she was the 'challenger', she had to wait for the main show to arrive.

As the gates opened, an armoured figure stepped in with two spears in hand.

He wore black and red clothing with eastern ornaments attached to the waist belt. The outfit itself had long sleeves and the 'skirt' reached his ankles. Plating around the arms and legs but that was it.

The fighter had long black hair tied into a high ponytail and a pair of brown eyes.

"A maid?" He muttered, clearly annoyed.

With his opponent being a maid, he couldn't help but feel like he was a circus attraction. Far from the treatment provided to strong warriors.

"Got an issue with that?" Alyss folded her arms in annoyance as killing intent surged out.

She hated looking like a maid. But what she hated more was being looked down on.

"Depends, will you give me a worthy challenge?" He asked, pointing his spear at Alyss.

"Right back at you. I hope you don't fold too early." Alyss narrowed her gaze as blood surged into a pair of fingerless gauntlets.

As the announcer finished his final introductions, the cheers started to get louder as Jianyu, Alyss's opponent, turned around and began to wave at everyone.

Seeing this action, a vein bulged on Alyss's neck.

'I'm going to kill this f*cker.'

"BEGIN!!!"

*BANG!!!!

Right as the announcer shouted out the word begin, an explosion occurred as Jianyu was thrown against the walls.

In his place, Alyss could be seen with her fist outstretched.

"Hou~ Not bad at all. Honestly, if you took things seriously like this from the start I wouldn't be as annoyed as I am now." Alyss narrowed her gaze as her lips curved up into a smile.

As the smoke settled, Jianyu could be seen with his spears in front of him. There was a cavity in the wall behind him but he was pretty much unharmed.

"I will admit that I was being rude, judging you before we even fought. But to attack me right as the announcer finished? You clearly don't have a spirit for showbiz do you?" Jianyu massaged his shoulders and stepped out of the crevice.

The screaming of the crowd was deafening but Alyss ignored it.

After all, despite his arrogance, that hit wasn't an easy one to shrug off. Clearly, he had some strength behind that confidence.

"What use is the spirit for showbiz when enemies don't give you that leeway in a fight?" Alyss shrugged.

But just as she was about to continue, she seemed to pause mid step.

"No, I'm not going to do that. Hell no! It's embarrassing! I'm already wearing crap like this so why are you asking for more? If you want to do it then you should take over!"

After saying this, Alyss seemed to fall silent as particles of gold disappeared around her limbs.

"Hi hi~ Seems like everyone is having a great time! But you know what's better? A cheap high quality Inn where you can drink some of the finest beverages ever concocted! Now, I know we're not familiar with one another which is why I'll do a quick demonstration to prove my honesty." Alice grinned, broadcasting her words using blood letters above her.

"To prove my honesty, I will end this fight in 5 minutes! If you don't believe me, I will bet one gold on it! If I fail, come to the Inn and redeem the gold! And to make sure I keep my word, I'm going for an open Law of Agreement!"

Raising her hand, a ritualistic circle expanded beneath her, distracting the audience and the announcer.

"The clauses are simple! If I fail, 1 gold to anyone who accepts. If I win, come to the Inn and give the drink a try! That's it, easy right?" Alice laughed, throwing up several Platina coins before catching it.

She could feel the contract being formed between her and the people in the audience as it was a simple bet.

They don't exactly lose anything and if Alice was to fail, it's a free gold piece for them. Who wouldn't want to accept?

'Over to you twinnie, good luck~ That's your skewer money by the way.' Alice winked, leaving a trail of chaos behind her.

Jianyu is visibly annoyed again seeing Alice shout an advert, the announcer didn't seem pleased either but decided to entertain the spectators by creating a timer in the sky and the spectators were shouting for the timer to begin.

Taking over the body once more, Alyss's smile twitched before letting out a sigh of annoyance.

"Well you heard it, bring it on big boy, see if you can last the whole five minutes." Alyss taunted as a vein bulged on Jianyu's face.

Narrowing his gaze, he crouched down and rushed forward. Emerald energy coiled around his body as he wanted to stab the spear towards Alyss but she was faster!

Breaching his guard, Alyss grabbed his wrist using her left arm and jabbed his throat using her right. Twisting her body, she threw him overhead before gathering energy into her fist and punched down!

*BANG!!! CRACK!!!

Dodging the punch that shattered the ground beneath him, Jianyu spun his body and tried to kick Alyss on the way up but she ducked under it easily.

Seeing a sudden opening towards the most precious treasures a man could own, Alyss didn't hesitate to throw a punch.

"!!!"

Feeling his lineage on the line, Jianyu rolled out of the way and threw a spear at Alyss who parried using her gauntlets.

"Oi! Woman! Have you no honour?!?!" Jianyu roared out in fear and anger.

Meanwhile, Alyss simply stared at him and shrugged. Why throw such a wide kick if you're scared of being hit between the legs? Can't blame her for taking an opportunity when it shows itself.

Seeing Alyss hold no remorse for the atrocity that she was about to commit, Jianyu felt that it was on him to get vengeance for all the male watchers in the spectator stand.

###

"Big brother, why are you pale?" Arwen asked curiously while watching from the spectator stands.

"This... Don't worry about it. Just know that Alice was about to do something that might've annoyed a lot of spectators." Tristan's smile twitched. While he was happy that Alice had such a bold idea for adverts, in the form of a bet, trying to destroy someone's crown jewels didn't give them a good outlook!

###

*CLANG!!!!

Clashing spear against fist, Jianyu furrowed his brows and stabbed his spare spear into the ground. Throwing the first spear, he then picked up the second and kicked it towards her.

Emerald energy coiled around the spear, forming the shape of a dragon as Alice wrapped her hands in violet flames and punched down, destroying the spectral beast.

The second spear came close to hitting but she ducked out the way and tried to grab it.

To her surprise, the spear rejected her touch and whipped against her wrist.

With Alyss's attention taken by the spear, Jianyu made his move.

Resonance!

A burst of energy erupted out from his body as the roar of a dragon could be heard. Raising his hand, emerald energy converged as he punched the ground, summoning a graveyard of spears.

Seeing this, Alyss wasn't impressed.

She joined this fight hoping to see martial arts in action. Instead, she was left disappointed. This was simply standard Sigil usage but the man fighting wore an eastern outfit instead.

"Is this it?" Alyss asked, punching the spears that tried to pierce her.

"What do you mean?" Jianyu frowned.

"Is this all there is to it? I have heard great rumours that martial arts enhance the Sigil abilities of a Hunter. But this is no different from what I saw in the Abyss. So I give you this chance in hopes that you don't disappoint me. Hit me with your best shot." Alyss asked, folding her arms in boredom.

Hearing this, a vein popped on Jianyu's forehead as he gritted his teeth.

"Fine! You want my best? I'll show you my best! This'll teach you to look down on me!"

Stomping his foot down, a giant array expanded beneath him as the spears started to tremble. From the ground, energy floated up, forming the body of a large eastern dragon flying up into the sky.

Jumping after the spectral beast, Jianyu called forth his spear as clouds formed in the sky above the arena. Through the gaps, a flashing emerald light could be seen converging into a giant spear.

While spectators gasped in shock, Alyss was nonchalant.

To her, this spear was all spectacle and no power. Compared to everything they've faced and everything they've seen, it couldn't even make her sweat!

'Twinnie is working on her own skill. But what about me? I'm a physical fighter but I still need an attack that'll help me break through. I can't use the casting skills as well as Alice since they were taken with her in mind. So what can I do?' Alyss asked herself as the silhouette of Allura appeared in her mind.

The Nova Core was a casting based skill that Kaden helped Allura develop. Outside of that, Allura was a physical fighter.

'I saw how she fought in the Inverted World... If Alice can copy something that Kaden made for Allura since they're casters, I can copy Allura's physical side!'

Closing her eyes, flames erupted around Alyss's body as she activated her own resonance.

It was the first 'Incomplete' resonance that Alice awakened in the past before her current spider lily form.

Little by little, a graveyard seemed to manifest around her with countless darkened limbs clawing themselves out of her shadow.

The flames around her began to lose colour before transforming into a strange pale blue fire.

Alyss was there for every lesson that Alice received. Alice's theories and her thought processes, Alyss knew them all. It was rare she was given the chance to perform like this so she didn't want to waste this opportunity.

'Condence, converge, focus the power into one strike!'

*BANG!!!

A spark of energy broke apart and wrapped around Alyss's arm. The air around her started to crackle and boil before cooling down rapidly. The roaring flames soon turned into a hiss as Alyss's outfit fluttered in the wind.

The spectators felt as though the cold hands of the reaper had just wrapped its boney fingers around their necks.

Looking at the falling spear, Alyss pulled her arm back for a punch.

Chapter 569 - 569: Alyss's New Skill

Pulling her arm back, Alyss could see the spear crashing toward the arena.

If she punches too early, not enough power would gather. If she punches too late, the energy would disperse in every direction.

She had to time it just right so the energy was fully focused in one direction with the sole goal of destroying that spear.

Alyss wasn't sure if it was her focus reaching a level far beyond the usual but it felt as though time was slowing down.

The reactions of the crowd, the falling of the spear, everything was slow.

She could see the structure of the spear, the way the energy flowed through its form. How it maintains its shape and the connection between it and the caster.

She could see it all.

But it was different to Alice's energy sight. The strands of energy were blurry and hard to make out clearly. Instead, what she could see was the structural integrity of whatever she wanted to hit.

She could see exactly where the pressure was distributed, where she should hit.

A pulse of red flashed through the spear and Alyss understood that this was the weak spot. A single attack at this point would shatter the attack.

The hissing of flames erupted as the air began to emit crackling sounds around her fist.

Taking a single heavy step forward, Alyss held her breath and punched.

***BANG!!!**

It was a simple motion.

Just a standard punch coated by an optimal amount of energy focusing on one spot and direction.

But as the punch collided with the spear, a blinding light erupted from the contact point. Cracks ripped through the spectral weapon, shattering its durability as a pulse of energy followed up, breaking it apart.

The destruction of the spear was so fast that neither Tristan nor Jianyu could comprehend what had just happened before an overwhelming force crashed against his body, sending a shock through his entire system and rendering him unconscious.

To outsiders who were perceiving time normally, it simply looked like Alyss threw out a punch that broke the spear and knocked Jianyu out.

Watching his body slam into the arena floor, a deep silence filled the spectator stands. Confused murmurs echoed out as Alyss glanced down at her fist and massaged her shoulder.

She needed more time to understand this perception of hers. To observe the structural integrity of an object and exploit it for her own benefit.

If she can master this power, she'll be able to break any equipment that someone has.

Resonance? Numbered equipment? She'll destroy them all. Hell, maybe she might even be able to break apart the equipment of Gods, the culmination of their myth and legends.

If she could replicate it like Enris's favourite weapon, she can break it.

A smile appeared on Alyss's face as she understood that this was the next path she should embark on.

Alice can resolve any energy based attacks while she'll resolve the physical. As long as they can improve their coordination when switching out the control of their body, they'll be able to counter anything their opponents throw at them.

'I'll leave the rest to you.' Alyss smiled, feeling satisfied and wanting to theorise more about this new power.

Getting control back, Alice blinked as she wasn't sure what she should say. However, she was still in the middle of the arena and the timer didn't run out. It was her victory in the bet.

"Since you lot lost the bet, remember to visit the Crystal Drop Inn okay? Here's the location~" Alice quickly recovered and made a blood map in the air above her before making her way out.

With her sudden advertisement, the announcer also recovered and began to talk about the next fight.

Meanwhile, Alice took this chance to evacuate and get her earnings from the fight.

###

"You look like you're in a good mood." Tristan smiled helplessly as he and Arwen found Alice waiting outside the arena for them.

Arwen didn't hesitate to run up and hug Alice while Alice simply shrugged.

"Why wouldn't a girl be happy if she just earned a bunch of money? What about you? After the advertisement, it's safe to say that the other Inn owners know about you now. Plus, you'll be pretty busy tonight once everyone gets a taste of your beverages.

"Are you going to teach a part timer how to make the same drink?" Alice asked curiously since Tristan couldn't stay with Arwen all the time.

"The Church is sending over someone to help me look after Arwen when I'm not around. They'll be the new part timer so I'll teach them the recipes." Tristan replied as the three of them made their way back to the inn.

"Are you sure that's a good idea? With... you know, me in the picture." Alice raised an eyebrow.

Since he hid her existence from the Goddess, if she was to become vengeful, Arwen could be held as a hostage.

Naturally, Tristan understood where Alice was coming from. It wasn't an attempt to change his faith but rather out of concern.

Should the truth come to light, there's no doubt that Tristan will be punished.

"It's fine, the Goddess favours me and she knows that Arwen is important. And to put it bluntly, she's already a hostage." Tristan shook his head with a bitter smile.

With how important Arwen was to Tristan, the Goddess keeps an extra eye on her to make sure she's 'safe'. This could be both interpreted as goodwill and caution in the future.

"But I don't regret what I did and I never will. You helped Arwen get her voice back after all." Tristan stood proudly. The weight of his past was no longer crushing his spirit and Arwen was happier than ever.

"If you say so." Alice shrugged, finding him a little strange.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice hesitated before letting out a small smile.

"If you ever need help with leaving this Church of yours, just give me the word. I'm pretty experienced in stopping divine beings. Remember when Solaris appeared at the port and disappeared right after?" She asked as he nodded.

Without saying anything, Alice simply made a shush motion with her finger over her lip as Tristan understood what she was insinuating.

"I'll keep your offer in mind." Tristan smiled.

He knows that Alice wouldn't give an offer like this without thinking it through.

As they made their way back, Arwen rolled up her sleeves with an excited look on her face.

"Alright! Listen up the two of you!" She stood on a table and grinned.

"After big sis Alice's performance at the arena, I'm sure that the Inn will get busy tonight! This is technically our first opening night since only big sis stumbled here so we have to be serious about it.

"Big brother will be doing the bar since he's the main attraction. I'll be taking care of the kitchen while big sis will be responsible for service!" Arwen declared as Alice pointed at herself.

"Huh? I'm involved?" Alice blinked her eyes in confusion.

"Of course! Fufu~ I think that a lot of them will be coming here to see big sis rather than the drinks." Arwen folded her arms with a nod.

"Ehhhh... but I was thinking of fighting more then le-"

"We'll give you free drinks for the entirety of tonight." Arwen interrupted.

She knew that giving Alice coins wouldn't work since Alice had plenty of Platina.

But the one thing that she learned with Alice staying over at their inn was the fact that Alice loves her alcohol.

So much so that it was practically irresistible for her!

Hearing the offer, Alice couldn't help but swallow a mouthful of saliva.

Even if it wasn't free drinks, Alice still wanted to drink the beverages that Tristan made. But free on top of everything? Hell the f*ck yes.

Wiping away her drool, Alice nodded her head.

"Alright. I'll help with service as long as I get free drinks while I'm on the job." Alice made a counteroffer.

"If you can still service customers while drinking then go for it big sis."

With an agreement made, they shook each other's hand as Tristan sighed and massaged his eyes.

However, it would be nice to have Alice helping since he was going to be busy at the bar. They needed an extra pair of hands for now.

As they prepared for each of their roles, the first customer soon came in as Alice greeted them with a smile.

"Welcome to Crystal Drop Inn, how may I help you today? Would you like some drinks from our bar, some food? Or maybe a room for the night?"

The duo that entered the inn were a pair of middle aged men who both had rough stubbles and loose casual outfits.

"Of course it's for a drink. Young lass, after you made a contract at the arena, how can we not come here to fulfil our side of the bargain?" One of them grinned as the other nodded his head in agreement.

"I see I see, a pair of gentlemen that honour their word. Please make your way to the bar." Alice nodded her head with smile.

Watching them sit down while Tristan handed them the menu, Alice welcomed the next few customers.

A few of them didn't think this was an Inn considering how extravagant the outside looked. In fact, they didn't even think it was going to be 'cheap'.

However, Alice reassured them that it was simply the owner's hobby to make the outside look this extravagant.

The sound of laughter and talking soon filled the Inn as Alice continued to work her shift... Then she got her hands on a drink.

Chapter 570 - 570: Leaving Caethis

There wasn't much that needed to be said about Alice's night as she couldn't remember any of it herself. All she knew was that Arwen introduced a new rule for her.

When on shift, 3 drinks maximum.

By the time she woke up, customers and furniture were strewn all over the place. There were broken planks and even a chair embedded into the ceiling.

Arwen seemed fearful of what might happen after the third drink while Tristan seemed tired.

Their new schedule consisted of going to the Arena to have Alice make a bet with all the spectators and working at the Inn.

The organisers of the Arena were a little annoyed but her stunt had actually increased how many people were buying tickets so they allowed it.

As for Alyss, she was disappointed by the quality of fighters that she was seeing. None of them could really match up to what she had in mind and she used this time to try and refine her technique.

However, she wasn't able to enter the same mindset as before.

This continued for four days, a day or so longer than Alice had wanted but Arwen wanted her to stay one more day so Alice reluctantly agreed.

###

'Are you sure you don't want to give her a proper goodbye?' Alyss asked curiously as Alice leaned against the ship's railings.

'Nah, if I do, do you think we'll be on the ship right now' Alice rolled her eye.

'Can't bear to part ways?'

'You try and say no when she does damn puppy eyes of hers.' Alice clicked her tongue. Truly she was afraid of Arwen asking her to stay another day.

'Fair point.' Alyss shivered when recalling the persuasive abilities behind those eyes.

Naturally, Alice wasn't idle for the extra day she stayed behind in either. She was gathering some information on Sikha from the travellers coming from overseas and managed to get a decent understanding of the nation.

Sikha was split into two major parts. The north east and the south east. The north east favoured culture and exchanges across nations while the south east preferred war.

And with them preferring war, it's only natural that the major religion in the south east would be the Cult of the Eclipse. Unfortunately, not much information leaves the east so that was about all Alice could gather.

The north east on the other hand was interesting in its own right since it was split into three minor regions. Each region has its own traditions and culture but when the outside world is involved, they band together as one.

The region that Alice was visiting now was the northern most region, the region of Jejin. It could be considered the most peaceful of the three as it frequently trades with other nations and even has its own passage way to the Abyss.

Either way, she looked forward to seeing what the east has to offer.

###

"I'm already missing big sis Alice..." Arwen lamented as she played around with the no more than 3 drinks sign.

"There there, you know she can't stay with you all the time." Tristan patted Arwen's head as he helped with the clean up.

Just as he was about to set up the tables again, he felt a stir and understood the Goddess was trying to establish the connection again.

Excusing himself, he made his way to the shrine that he prepared in his room as lunar light soon filled his room.

"Tristan~ Have you missed me? Were you lonely?" The goddess smiled, wrapping around Tristan as he chuckled and nodded his head.

"*Sigh~ I've been so busy recently that I haven't even gotten the chance to have a proper rest. What about you my dear cardinal?" She asked, leaning against his back.

"I'm been helping Arwen with running the Inn. We managed to solve her voice issue recently so she's been greeting the guests and enjoying herself." Tristan smiled.

The Goddess understood that Arwen's health was his priority. So if she were to learn this kind of event from someone instead of him directly, it might give her some second thoughts.

"Eh? How did you solve it?" Lumiria blinked her eyes in surprise.

She knew that Tristan wouldn't accept a method that would harm Arwen. It's why he rejected her offer of modifying the soul.

"I'm not quite sure of the inner workings. But I didn't sense any danger to Arwen's soul nor did I sense any malicious changes. It's like... the side effect simply disappeared." Tristan admitted truthfully.

Furrowing her brows, Lumiria was silent as she wondered what could've happened.

However, there was something else that weighed on her mind.

"Speaking of which, is there something you want to tell me?" Lumiria asked as she sat opposite him.

"Pardon?"

"I sent Esse to investigate this secondary source of Duality that you mentioned before. There were signs of use all over the city and even out at sea. But at some points, the traces just... vanished. It's like the power never existed at all and disappeared. But strangely, there were hints of it leading towards this Inn." Lumiria asked as Tristan paused.

"Not only that, but you also came across the source out at sea. I believe it was during the battle with the outer god's minion. Do you recall anything now? Why didn't you tell me when I contacted you then?" She continued to question.

Hesitating for a moment, Tristan opened his mouth.

"I wasn't sure if it was the right choice. The... person with the power said that they were able to help Arwen. They seemed to want to hide their involvement so I respected that choice once they gave Arwen the help she needed."

The Goddess can naturally tell when he lies so he told the truth. But he also didn't want to implicate Alice so he hid parts of their interaction and details. Enough truth so it wasn't a lie but also enough lies so it was hard to track her down.

Lumiria seemed disappointed as she glanced down and tapped her finger.

"If you say so, I'll leave it at that for now."

Before Tristan could reply, Lumiria ended the connection early.

Letting out a sigh, Tristan knew that he disappointed her. But he would be violating his bottom line if he were to give her the information he has on Alice. Plus, it would also disappoint Arwen and that's the last thing he wanted to do.

###

Sitting on her bed, Lumiria could be seen with a cold expression. Veins bulged on her neck as she struggled to calm this raging anger within her chest.

For the first time in a long time, Tristan's faith wavered.

Tristan, her dear cardinal, someone who's claimed her favour all to himself, wavered?

Just thinking about it sent a wave of anger through Lumiria's body as she gritted her teeth.

Who was it? Who was it that was making him doubt?!

The man she'd been putting so much effort into was wavering...

"Griselda." Lumiria called out as the Apostle of Spirituality appeared in front of her.

Her puppet body creaked and twitched as she bowed respectfully.

"What do you think happened for Tristan to waver?"

"I'm... Not familiar with Tristan's personality so I'm unable to make a correct guess. But perhaps his feelings towards Arwen is... greater than his feelings towards you." Griselda theorised as Lumiria was silent.

"Perhaps. Dear Tristan has always loved his sister more than anything. Even joining the church was because we could look after his sister." Lumiria created a small orb of lunar light that reflected Arwen's appearance.

"But... It's not good enough! Where else has he seen a Divine entity show so much favour?! Does he not realise how fortunate he is? He dares to waver? In front of me?!" Lumiria snapped, crushing the orb as she closed her eyes and took deep breaths to calm herself down.

"A man's faith only grows in adversity. Once all hell breaks loose and he loses everything dear to him, I will come in and help. Only then, will he understand. I will put on a performance.

"I will break him. I will remove his walls one by one, I will stab him where it hurts and remove the obstacles in my path. Once Arwen is dealt with, there will only be me left in his life. And once there is only me in his life, he will have no choice but to give his heart to me.

"In his lowest point, I will give him my warmth, my love, my dedication. I will mould him to my desires." Lumiria grinned as Griselda showed no expression to this plan. After a moment, she opened her mouth.

"Perhaps it's not wise to commit to this plan so soo-"

***BANG!!!**

Before she could finish her word, a wave of force crashed into Griselda as she slammed into the ground.

Her puppet body started to show signs of breaking with cracks forming across the surface.

Lumiria walked up to Griselda, glaring at her from above.

"It's not wise? I'll give you one chance to explain yourself Griselda."

"The greatest joy sparks the greatest hate. He's already aware that you're displeased with him. If you act so soon he may blame you instead." Griselda explained calmly. Despite the predicament she was in, she was unphased.

After all, this wasn't the first time that Lumiria snapped like this. If anything, this was more true to her thoughts and feelings.

Leaning back slightly, Lumiria thought about it before nodding her head in agreement.

"You're not wrong... Alright, I'll let him savour this moment of peace for now." She waved her hand and the pressure around Griselda disappeared.

"I'm sorry, you know how I am sometimes. You forgive me right?" Lumiria lifted Griselda's chin as she nodded her head.

"Go get your body fixed and... bring in a patch of souls for my entertainment." Lumiria ordered with a smile.

Bowing to the best of her abilities, Griselda limped out of the room.

'This is the best I can do for you Triss...'