

Abyssal A 641

Chapter 641 - 641: Grimoire Of Original Sin

Walking through the streets with his hood over his head, Kaden suddenly paused mid-step as he glanced down at his hand.

He could see a purple marking fluctuating on the back of his hand and his pupils constricted in a mix of surprise and disbelief.

"What's wrong? Did Alice cause some trouble again?" Nalem questioned curiously as Kaden wasn't one to randomly stop like this. If there was a reason, it would most likely be Alice or Allura.

"When does she not cause trouble?" Kaden gave Nalem a side glance who only shrugged since it wasn't incorrect.

"But not even I expected the brat to be able to do something like this." Kaden chuckled.

Since she was resorting to trying something like this, she probably wasn't in a good situation.

And if that's the case, it's only right as one of her guardians to give her a little push.

Clenching his fist, chains appeared on his wrist as black blood seeped from his lips. Wiping it away with nonchalance, he continued to walk.

###

Kaden's relic was... unique in the sense that while it's a personal relic, it is also something that belonged to the 'Apostle'.

The Grimoire of Original Sin belongs to the Apostle of Corruption.

Meaning, whoever is the Apostle at the time, can obtain access to this cursed grimoire. Through the paradox that is Alice's body, when paired with the fact that she had consumed a portion of Kaden's soul, it has allowed her to tap into the authority that should rightfully be dormant.

As the grimoire began to manifest in this reality, dark energy spewed out, sending shivers down even the most fearless warrior. The cries of countless, the wailing of banshees.

Even Alice's body began to shift to take on the appearance of Kaden's Apostle state as a chain appeared around her wrist.

A binding of sorts.

"!!!" Even though the grimoire wasn't fully manifested, Alice could already feel countless voices trying to invade her mind as a dark corruptive energy rampaged through her body.

'Is this what Kaden had to deal with every time he brought out this book?!'

Collapsing onto one knee, Alice couldn't help but cough up a mouthful of black blood that began to corrode away at the ground beneath her!

Her normal blood was bad enough as it is, but now? It's now layered with countless curses on top of everything!

But the job wasn't done. She couldn't stop here.

No matter how many tools she has, the power of Kazira was simply too overwhelming for her to deal with.

She needed a way to level the playing field! To stop Kazira from using her authority and end things prematurely.

'Cayla! Tell me what curses I can access!' Alice shouted as her time with this grimoire was going to be short.

Even now, it was trying to reject her summoning with her forcefully using the fact that Crimson Immolation was levelling up her skills.

Meaning right now, she was barely able to meet the minimum requirements to bring out this book!

The longer she stalls, the harder it'll be for her to use this book. Heck! Her arms were already beginning to rot with her healing failing to keep up!

[You can't just spring this on me without telling me!] Cayla began to panic as Kaden didn't use the grimoire often.

Being hailed as the Apostle of Corruption wasn't a title he enjoyed but regardless, Cayla scrambled through her memories, trying to recall useful curses that Alice could use.

Meanwhile, Kazira sensed the presence of an Authority. One that she was entirely unfamiliar with and she immediately understood she had to end things now!

Twisting her body, she slashed towards Alice as the space ruptured, revealing five other blades that were raining down on her.

[Don't think! Just do what I do! Say what I say!] Cayla didn't have the time to instruct Alice as she immediately began to demonstrate what needed to be done.

*CRACK!!!!

Cracking open the grimoire, the pages began to flip as Alice copied Cayla without hesitation.

Raising her hand, chains began to manifest from the book cover as she slammed down her palm.

Beneath her, a circle of purple ritualistic icons began to expand.

"Curse of Devouring Blight!"

A pulse of energy erupted with Alice in the centre. As the energy came into contact with the weapons, they began to crack and erode!

"!!!" Blood began to pour from Alice's eye as she felt her inner organs being attacked by a string of corruption.

With the way her body was breaking down just from holding this Grimoire, Alice estimated that she could only use two more curses at most. If she was to use a third, she'd die!

[Close in on her!]

Stomping down, Alice activated her Void Steps as she began to flicker through the realm, travelling up the corroding blade as Kazira gritted her teeth.

Rusted armour began to manifest, transforming into Soldiers that lunged at Alice.

Physical Resonance!

Avoiding their attacks, Alice slammed her hand down, activating her Link Cell as Void Fluxes manifested around them in an array.

*BANG!!!!

Resonating with each node, a singularity spun to life in the centre, shredding the armour apart!

[We need to deal with the divine authority first. Can you hold out for two curses?] Cayla asked as she found what she was looking for.

'Two curses are my limit!' Alice replied while trying to maintain her focus on the countless attacks being launched her way.

Kazira was determined not to let her advance as Alice quickly noticed the unblockable strike flying her way.

With her body as it is, she couldn't handle an attack of that scale.

'SORRY FERIS!'

Creating a blade in her hand, Alice twisted her body and activated her fourth Sigil and severance!

Void Flux Cleave! Realm Severance!

*RUMBLE!!!

The arc of energy immediately began to collapse, transforming into a narrow gateway into the Void as it swallowed the unblockable strike in its entirety. In this regard, she wasn't trying to stop its momentum, nor was she trying to stop the attack.

She was simply changing its path!

"I can see your fear! Your stance crumbles and your body will follow!" Kazira roared, raising her hand as the realm began to tremble.

It does not matter what path the blade takes. The strike will land true!

*CRACK!!!

The space began to crack as Alice could tell the attack was trying to break through.

"You owe me one. But only because this b*tch is f*cking with the Outer Gods." A voice echoed out in Alice's ear as her eyes widened in surprise before a grin appeared on her face.

In an instant, the oppressive energy of the void spewed out, collapsing on the attack that Kazira unleashed, erasing the space it resided in!

Seeing this, Kazira couldn't help but feel anger boiling in her chest.

"Realm Lord of the Void! On what grounds do you have to interfere!" She roared, pointing her blade up at the sky.

"On the grounds that you mess with forces you do not comprehend. Now fall." Feris narrowed her gaze.

Tapping her finger down, the gravity of the realm slammed into Kazira's body, forcing her to go onto one knee.

However, she couldn't do more. Any more than this and she'd have the Gods knocking at her door and that's not what she wanted. Had Kazira not accepted the help of Eldritch powers, she wouldn't have been able to interfere. Even if Alice was going to die.

With Feris helping her force Kazira onto her knees, Alice was given enough time to close the gap!

Behind her, three pairs of tattered wings unfurled as the pages of the grimoire began to turn.

However, this curse wasn't one that she could use with Kaden's power alone.

No, this one, she needed the help of Severance.

And thankfully. . .

Both powers reside in her body!

Curse of the Black Shroud!

Darkness and silver blades manifested around Kazira's body as chains began to link the blades to one another.

Curse of the Black Shroud was a curse that could only be activated with both Authorities. It is one that suppresses the Divine Authority of an Apostle and the connection they have to their God for a moment!

Of course, there are ways for an Apostle to defend against this since the curse isn't guaranteed to hit. But Kazira, restrained by Feris's attack, couldn't move at all!

And the next curse was the final nail in the coffin.

Lifting the grimoire into the air, Alice gritted her teeth and slammed her palms together.

Golden energy began to erupt from her body before coalescing into a structure behind her.

A spire splitting into a cross at the top. Platforms hanging by chains. The golden arbiter of balance.

Curse of the Shackled Scale!

A curse that forces the combatants within the sphere of influence to be forcefully brought down to the same level. But if the target is an Apostle, this has no effect.

A useless curse in the case of Kaden since he doesn't need it to even the playing field. But for Alice? This was a godsend.

By stripping away the authority, even if it's just for a moment using the Curse of the Black Shroud, she had effectively turned Kazira into a target for the Shackled Scale!

Spectral chains pierced into both the chests of Kazira and Alice as their powers were siphoned away.

The grimoire in Alice's hand disappeared, having fulfilled its purpose, while Alice quickly deactivated her skill of Crimson Ruin.

If she were to keep up the ability, she would be exiled from her realm!

Little by little, Kazira's form began to crack apart as she glanced down at her hands in disbelief.

Under the light of the Shackled Scale, both combatants were now facing each other on the ruined battlefield with Kazira's crumbling War form in the background.

Gritting her teeth, Kazira slammed her hand into the ground as a rusted greatsword was pulled out.

"This will not be War, this will not be a battle. THIS will be a slaughter."

Seeing this, Alice couldn't help but chuckle as she created her own blood blade. Her lips curved up into a smile she had not smiled in so long. The adrenaline of battle flowing through her veins.

The desire to kill and succeed.

"To me, you're just another stepping stone. But to you? I'm the wall you'll never climb. The battle you'll never win.

"So be a dear and won't you die quietly for me?"

Chapter 642 - 642: Method To Kill An Apostle

*CLANG!!!

The sound of blades clashing rang out as Alice was forced to try and parry them off to the side.

Even though Kazira's authority and power may have been decreased, she still had access to her Sigils and main abilities.

Meaning, her strike that couldn't be stopped was still being unleashed.

Taking two steps back, Alice quickly braced herself as Kazira unleashed a flurry of three strikes before following up with a downward cleave that Alice managed to dodge.

However, Kazira expected this as she kicked the face of the blade, causing it to slam into Alice and knocking her back.

She lunged forward ,low and fast.

*BANG!!!

Forcefully switching out with Alice, Alyss twisted her body, unleashing a heel stomp from above, forcing the blade to stab into the ground before sliding up the blade and unleashing a kick to her jaw.

She couldn't remain out for long since the chains were actively harming them but between her and Alice, she had to cover for the close quarters combat!

Right as she was about to slash, Alyss was forced to lean back, avoiding Kazira's backhand strike and raised her guard in anticipation for the Apostle's knee strike.

But it was a feint as she went in for a grab.

"Oh jeez, why don't you take me out to dinner first before you try and touch me." Alice joked, activating her triggered cast to create a portal in front of her.

The portal was unstable as her energy was essentially emptied out after using the Grimoire. All she could do was hope that she would stall long enough to regenerate enough energy to use her skills.

Ignoring Alice's attempt at a joke, Kazira slammed her fist down, creating a pulse that pushed the two of them away from one another.

Bringing her sword behind her, she narrowed her eyes and dashed forward!

Before Alice's Absolute Zone could even capture Kazira's movements, she had already appeared in front of her.

Slashing twice in a cross pattern, Kazira was surprised to see Alyss take over as she nimbly dodged through the gaps and tried to counter with her own attack.

Using the sword guard to block the strike, Kazira pushed it off to the side before cleaving up.

Stepping back to avoid the strike, Alyss wanted to counter when she felt a slash dig into her flesh!

"!!!"

Seeing her shock, a twisted smile appeared on Kazira's face as she twisted her body, slamming a kick into Alyss's stomach and sending her sliding back.

Using this chance to switch her weapon into that of a pair of chained blades, Kazira whipped the blades towards Alyss!

Triggered Cast!

*BANG!!!

An inferno of violet flames erupted where Kazira was standing as Alice had taken over the moment Alyss received the kick.

She knew that Kazira would immediately follow up with another strike so she refined a set of conditions for her!

The instant Kazira stepped into that specific space, she detonated the bomb Alice had left behind.

"ARG!!!" Letting out a shout of anger, Kazira spun her blades to dismiss the flames as she glared at Alice with bloodshot eyes.

'I'll be honest twinnie, I certainly hope you have a way of killing her because I'm running out of ideas. She might be weakened in terms of power but that body of hers, she's not suffering any wounds.' Alyss frowned.

Alice was tapped out of energy while she was suffering from the chains. Neither of them could fully utilise what they're good at right now and the situation didn't favour them at all.

Even though Alice may have been confident before this exchange began, it was merely false bravado to see if they could cause the Apostle to mess up.

'...'

Hearing no response, Alyss glanced over as her pupil constricted.

'Oi. You have a plan right?'

'...'

'You have a plan right????'

'I didn't think we'd get this far. The Curse of the Shattered Scale took a lot more energy out of me than expected. I wanted to one shot her with everything I got once it balanced us out...' Alice admitted while poking her fingers together with sweat dripping down her head.

Alyss felt the urge to smack this gremlin on the head.

'Conserve your energy then. Let me hold her back.' Alyss clicked her tongue.

They couldn't stay on the defensive. If they continue to defend, it lets Kazira utilise the fact that her attacks can't be stopped too much.

She needed to put on the pressure so that the momentum swings in their favour.

Taking over, Alyss didn't hold back and immediately rushed towards Kazira with her Absolute Zone concentrated in a small area around her.

She needed as much focus as possible in order to track her movements and the speed of her strikes. If she were to misread any of this, it could mean disaster for her!

*CLANG!!!

Slashing down with her sword, she watched as Kazira blocked it with her own blade while the second one pierced towards her gut.

Mirage Step!

Splitting herself into three movements, Alyss breached Kazira's guard and slashed towards the armpit, hoping to sever some tendons to prevent Kazira from using her arm even if it was just for a split moment.

However, she simply squeezed her arm towards her torso, catching Alyss's blade.

"Tch!"

Abandoning the blade without hesitation, Alyss created a second sword and tried to strike at her neck.

*CRUNCH!!!

"!!!"

Seeing Kazira bite down on the blade and breaking it, Alyss was shocked for a moment before laughing.

"Have you ever been taught to be careful about what you put into your mouth? This is made from my blood, you know?"

Just as Kazira was about to rush after Alyss, her pupils constricted as black veins began to appear across her body.

Her flesh was beginning to show signs of mutation as she couldn't help but furrow her brows.

Not letting Kazira have a moment to rest while her body was being ravaged by Alice's blood, Alyss lunged forward.

Destruction Point!

Clashing her blade against Kazira's chained blades, Alyss focused her attacks onto one point.

Gritting her teeth in anger, Kazira wanted to stop Alyss but something was trying to tear her body from the inside out.

Something vile, trying to push her on the path of the Abyss.

With no other choice, Kazira abandoned her blade and jumped back.

Before Alyss could even follow up, Kazira lifted her head and plunged her hand into her own mouth.

A burst of energy erupted from her body as she extracted the foreign blood that had invaded her body!

Seeing this, Alyss's smile twitched.

Looking at the twisting and mutating blood hovering above her hand, Kazira glared at it before crushing it with her hand.

"Do you finally understand your position, vermin? You cannot kill me, you cannot kill War. Even with my authority severed momentarily, my body has already transcended that of a mortal." Kazira taunted.

Stomping down with her foot, rusted weapons began to explode from the ground, stabbing towards Alyss who parried to the best of her abilities.

But when Kazira's attacks couldn't be stopped, she had no choice but to keep retreating.

"You bleed, you falter, you fade. But I am eternal. An everlasting being. No blade will cut my throat, no force can stop my beating heart."

Raising her hand, crimson energy began to converge around her as the Curse of the Shattered Scale was beginning to lose its effect.

To begin with, it wasn't a permanent curse since it ultimately relied on the Black Shroud to cut off the authority.

But once the Black Shroud fades, so will the Shattered Scale.

And once that happens...

Death.

'Alice, we need a plan and fast.' Alyss frowned, creating a spear and throwing it at Kazira, only for her to smack it away with rusted weapons of her own.

'She's bluffing.'

'Huh?' Alyss wasn't sure what Alice was talking about.

Bluffing? Bluffing about what?

'If War can't be killed, how come there is a replacement? Velouria killed the previous holder of that Authority using the powers of the Abyss. We're simply approaching this from the wrong angle.'

'If she truly couldn't be killed, why did she purge the blood rather than withstand it?' Alice narrowed her gaze.

Through the deception and bravado, Alice sees that her blood had truly shocked Kazira.

Shocked her enough for her to begin proclaiming about her supposed immortality.

[Alice is right. The previous owner of the Authority was killed by Velouria during the final battle after Famine attacked Allura. This happened in both the inverted world and reality.]

[The key is corruption. While I'm unsure of the full authority of War, I can say with confidence that Velouria killed the previous owner by corrupting his soul using the powers of the Abyss. Similar to what your blood did a moment ago, only much more potent.] Cayla confirmed while Alyss was busy dodging Kazira's strikes.

Her attacks were becoming faster and faster with each passing second and injuries were beginning to pile up.

So long as Alyss is in control, her body won't regenerate thanks to the chains.

'Okay so what does that mean for us??? She can just purge the blood we feed her.' Alyss frowned.

'Even Gods can die, what makes an Apostle think she's any different? She has to purge it before the blood takes root. We experienced this problem before. If the blood is too deeply entangled, it can't be purged unless you remove the entire thing.' Alice smiled, recalling some of her experiments in the past.

Since that was the case, there was only one method that she could think of to kill Kazira.

Infect her with her blood!

Chapter 643 - 643: Unease

However, infecting the Apostle of War was much easier said than done.

First, she couldn't use the blood she created with the third Sigil. If she does, the potency wouldn't be high enough to overwhelm the Apostle who's slowly getting her power back.

Second, the instant she senses the third Sigil trying to invade her body, she'll purge it like what she did with the sword.

Alice needed to be careful with how she approached this using her blood. If she makes her intentions too clear, it'll give away her plan.

Third, unfortunately, Kazira is already on guard against the blood so making her fall for the same trick twice was going to be difficult.

And lastly, the most important aspect was still the fact that she had to use her own blood within her own body. If she loses too much at once, a gap will appear in her defences.

'She doesn't know the full details of my abilities yet.' Alice calmed herself, but Alyss suddenly coughed awkwardly.

'Erm... She... Might know.'

'??? The f*ck do you mean she might know?' Alice widened her eye as this was their best chance against her.

'You see... When she ate your blood, I might've given away the fact that it's made from our blood.' Alyss glanced down as she got too excited during that moment.

Hearing this, Alice immediately face-palmed and had to scrap some of her ideas.

If Kazira understood that the key was her blood, she'd do everything in her power to avoid it.

"Bold of you to divert your attention!" Kazira shouted in annoyance upon noticing Alice's half-heartedness.

Dashing forward in a split second and breaching the boundaries of Alice's Zone, she twisted her body and unleashed a whirlwind of strikes!

"Tch!" Creating a set of dual blades using her blood, Alice redirected the strikes while allowing the blades to chip some blood into the air.

Turning it into blood mist, Alice wanted to see if she could make Kazira breathe it in.

But to her shock, the instant the mist was about to touch Kazira, it looked as though it came into contact with an invisible barrier.

Seeing this, Kazira curved her lips up into a wide grin.

"I knew it." She chuckled, seeing the panic in Alice's eye.

This battle is over, victory was hers! The girl has no other methods of killing her!

###

"What the hell is going on..." A man muttered as his smile twitched.

He hovered just outside of a city surrounded by an Eldritch barrier. A confusing tangle of multiple influences within a single zone.

And in the heart of it, the signs of Divinity.

He knew that things were bad but to this extent?

By establishing a ritual of this size, the casualties are already off the charts. In fact, he wouldn't be surprised if everyone inside was dead, yet the fact that the barrier was still intact meant the ritual wasn't over!

Someone was still fighting it on the inside.

Or at least that was his original expectation.

Upon further inspection, he couldn't help but notice that several people were actually fighting against both the Call of the Eclipse and the corruption of the Eldritch energy.

Mental Corruption wasn't something anyone could just fight against and survive. It dug the deepest, planted seeds into the recesses of your mind and fed off your negative emotions and thoughts, amplifying them in the process.

A cruel cycle that turned the body into a cultivation pot of desires.

But to 'people' like him?

It was a delicacy. A top grade meal that he could hardly resist. Swallowing his saliva, he found it hard to resist such a 'gift'.

The other Outer Gods can only manifest partially thanks to Icons and the involvement of a third party.

On the other hand, he didn't need such things. He is an artificial being, a construct of sorts, a 'natural' born Outer God of this realm.

Meaning, he can take the full benefits of this... delectable full-course meal that's been prepared in front of him.

His shadow began to stretch and writhe as he couldn't control the smile on his face.

"What do you think you're doing?" Nyer's voice rang out as the man froze up and revealed an awkward smile.

"I thought you were busy with your experiments?"

"Don't try to change the subject. I believe I told you that if you ever let the Eldritch side of you overwhelm you, I'll dispose of you myself." Nyer glanced at him coldly before looking at the barrier holding the city hostage.

Closing his eyes, he observed the situation within the barrier and a smirk appeared on his face.

There were clear traces of tampering by the Will of the Abyss.

Nothing has changed, still the nosy being it once was and still is. To set the Apostle of all things as a target to be killed...

It's akin to waging War against Enris.

That being said, he doubted Enris would care. In fact, she'll even welcome it. After Velouria died, Enris had lost a lot of her enjoyment and found the years monotonous.

She tried to cause chaos against Solaris and Lumiria, but they didn't react the same way Velouria did.

"Know your limitations. My specimen has things handled; the only job you need to do is to take care of the remaining garbage." Nyer turned around and left.

With a warning like this in play, the juvenile Outer God won't step out of line.

Scratching his hair, the man clicked his tongue and gave the barrier another look.

What if...

What if he was to consume it all now? Would he gain enough power to overturn the control Nyer has over him?

A quick bite before Nyer could do anyth-

"!!!"

He realised that his body couldn't move.

Space Lock!

Two blades hovered around his neck as he understood it was a clear warning.

His smile twitched before letting out a sigh.

Nyer understood his instincts too well. He was practically reading him like an open book and there was nothing he could do about it.

Thankfully, the silver lining was that Nyer allowed him to deal with the other Outer Gods that collaborated.

"To think he'd call them garbage. Though I suppose he's not wrong. A truly strong Outer God wouldn't need to band together like this. Just the descent of one would be enough to end things." He chuckled as his body slowly broke down into a dark energy.

###

Something's wrong.

Kazira couldn't quite put her finger to it.

No matter the martial techniques that she unleashed, no matter the countless experiences of battle that she utilized, the girl in front of her was like a cockroach.

She could tell that the girl was using the principles of Zone that was primarily used by the Apostles under the Sun.

Her proficiency and method followed the old methods, the traditional method rather than the new one.

Was she part of the Sun after all?

But that was impossible since she showcased the authority of the Abyss.

She's part of the dead religion.

Shifting her centre of gravity, Kazira cleaved towards Alice. But once again, this cleave failed to kill her target.

Why?

How was she this resilient? How is she able to last this long?

It was clear that her window of victory had disappeared yet she was still holding on?! How?!

Her strikes cannot be blocked, her physicality should be beyond what's perceptible by the average person.

Even if her opponent is a Lord, that shouldn't change.

But Alice wasn't a Lord. She didn't feel like a true Lord despite the powers she wielded and Kazira was confident of that.

Something was boosting her powers up, allowing her to keep pace, but that still didn't explain her power.

This perception, this adaptability, this... savageness.

Kazira felt like she's fighting a wild beast rather than a human.

The maniacal smile on Alice's face as she weaves past the cleave, throwing her entire body to land just one attack.

No matter if it succeeds or fails, she's always ready to follow up.

"Beast!" Kazira cursed as she twisted her body, kicking up at Alice in hopes of pushing her away.

However, Alice abandoned her weapon and grabbed hold of Kazira's leg. Opening her mouth, she bit down!

Gritting her teeth, Kazira cleaved down with her blade, but Alice was faster.

Her silhouette flickered as she used Phantom Shift to retreat.

Something was wrong.

Kazira understood this eerie feeling deeply. This fight should've been long over, yet it continued.

She was sure that she could sense the Shattered Scales returning her power so what's going on?

She should've recovered her authority by now and ended the fight in one go.

'I kept the blood out of my body, made preparations against it being airborne. So what the hell is triggering this sense of unease? I am feeling unease? ME?!' Kazira felt disgust just for humouring the idea.

She couldn't believe that she was experiencing such emotions against a mortal like Alice.

Before she could contemplate the truth of this feeling, Alice lunged forward once more.

Her martial arts were breaking down, no sign of technique only savageness.

She was acting on pure instinct.

*BANG!!!

Stomping her foot against the ground, Kazira was about to unleash her strike when the feeling struck once more.

Something was off.

"!!!"

Allowing Alice to land her strike, Kazira grabbed her by the head and slammed her into the ground.

The body twitched momentarily before fading away.

Her surroundings began to shift and she saw the purple veins on her arm.

Her pupils constricted as she saw the bloodied and wounded Alice not far away from her.

Those wounds... they were indeed inflicted by her.

BUT.

That's only if the attacks landed yet they didn't.

Or did they?

"Oi. What the hell is going on?!" Kazira shouted as Alice couldn't help but swing her head back and laugh.

Kazira felt her control slipping little by little. The flow of the battle shifting away to favour Alice.

Once again, she could only think of one thing.

Something was off.

Chapter 644 - 644: Alice's Deception

To say that affecting Kazira with the first Sigil was a ludicrous dream was not an exaggeration. It felt like an impossibility.

How do you infect and cause an Apostle to hallucinate? She's created a barrier around her body that prevented blood mist from approaching.

Therefore, the standard method wouldn't work.

Not only that, but Alice needed to use her own blood as well, not the blood made from the third Sigil.

To disguise her wounds and trick Kazira into lowering her guard.

Right now, she believes that without being able to use the blood mist, Alice had run out of options. While that was partially true, it's also something that Alice wanted Kazira to believe.

'Alyss, switch out my third for the jester Sigil.' Alice narrowed her gaze while trying to dodge Kazira's strikes.

Furrowing her brows, Alyss wasn't sure what this'll achieve considering the fact that the jester Sigil couldn't be used in battle.

But seeing the confidence in Alice's eyes, she decided to do as she said.

After switching out the Sigils, Alice rushed forward with a savage strike that didn't care about her safety and Kazira responded in kind.

A fast sword strike aimed at her shoulder but Alice only grinned.

*KRK!!!

The instant the sword hit her, Alice activated four Sigils simultaneously.

Her plan was a simple one yet it was something she wasn't sure if she could accomplish.

She knew that Kazira could sense her emotions so this was perfect.

Her first Sigil, something that could cause hallucinations if they were to inhale her blood mist. These hallucinations can be controlled to some extent depending on how weak or vulnerable her opponent was.

However, against an opponent that was blocking out her blood mist, this wouldn't normally work.

She had to be tricky about it!

Think outside the box!

With this in mind, Alice created a new physical resonance that she hadn't tried before.

Just like how her first Sigil acted as a catalyst for her other physical resonances, this time, she was going to focus on the illusion side while pairing it with the Jester!

Duality + First Sigil + Jester!

She inverted the requirements of the hallucinations. This time, it'll no longer affect the perception of her target but rather the environment!

By fusing it with the Jester, her own body becomes part of the Illusion. But Alice couldn't make it obvious.

She had to introduce it step by step, wound by wound.

'I can take care of that.'

Assisting momentarily, Alyss unleashed the Mirage step, making it seem like she wasn't hit!

A movement art that created three possible movements, confusing her opponent.

But in this case, it was to hide the fact that she was hit so that the resonance could conceal the truth!

Deceive the world, deceive War, deceive her perception of this reality!

Feeling the blade dig deep into her torso, Alice forced herself to act as though it never happened as she jumped back.

Hide the blood, hide the wounds.

To Kazira, she had to look unwounded. To look as though she evaded everything even though she's been hit.

To pollute this land with her blood!

"Urg!" Twisting her body, Alice parried Kazira's strike off to the side as the impact caused her to stumble.

Her wound had already begun to heal, but that's not what she wanted.

They needed to control their regeneration. A risky play no doubt but against this kind of opponent, they had no choice but to risk it!

Taking over, Alyss halted the regeneration as she lunged forward but Kazira was fast.

There was no doubt that her strength was returning as her next strike slashed into Alyss's thigh.

Physical Resonance + Phantom Shift!

Her body flickered and despite the blood dripping from her thigh, the world shifted to conceal her wound.

She could see the frustration and annoyance on Kazira's face.

'She doesn't think anything is wrong yet. The illusion is only on the surface level right now. It's still lacking the potency to truly mess with her perception.' Alice reminded.

Right now, they've only achieved a surface level illusion where she's hiding her wounds and blood that's beginning to spread across the battlefield.

Her goal was to fully infect Kazira.

And to do that, she had to figure out a way to make Kazira believe that she's keeping the blood at bay.

Mirage Step!

Rushing towards Kazira, Alyss unleashed a flurry of attacks that Kazira parried with ease before aiming to grab Alyss by the throat.

Taking over, Alice created a Void Portal, avoiding the grab but this created a gap for Kazira to slash towards her stomach!

Phantom Shift + Physical Resonance!

Allowing the slash to cut against her stomach, Alyss didn't let it go too deep before retreating.

They were racking up the injuries but Alice still failed to see a way to infect Kazira.

'Calm your mind Alice.' Alice took a deep breath as she decided to do this one step at a time.

First, she had to analyse exactly what Kazira was doing to block out the blood. Was she blocking it consciously or was it through filtering?

Rushing forward, Alyss jumped behind Kazira while Alice set the conditions for a triggered cast!

Just as Alyss's blade collided with Kazira, the blood pooling around her suddenly spiked up, aiming to stab Kazira in the back but collided with a barrier.

'A permanent barrier around her main body. But it seems to only focus on liquids.' Alice narrowed her eye.

If it was blocking everything, there was no reason for Kazira to block her strikes.

Therefore, Alice decided to try something else.

She recalled the very first experiment she did with her first Sigil.

An experiment suggested by Allura to test the parameters.

It was also an experiment that caused Ria to worry since she had stayed up all night.

Back then, she didn't think much of it. But now? It might become the key.

She discovered that the longer her blood was left out to dry, the more condensed the effect became but in exchange, the duration was reduced significantly.

If she was to adjust the composition of her blood and paired with the powers she could access right now...

Dismissing her own thoughts for now, Alice quickly consumed the second phial of Lord blood that she had gathered since the first was beginning to run out. She could feel the effectiveness of her strength dropping and not because of the blood loss.

Once she regained her strength, Alice summoned Ruinous Void lance form.

Understanding what Alice was aiming for, Alyss took over as she activated Phantom Shift.

Destruction Point!

Stabbing up with the lance, Alyss guaranteed the hit against Kazira's body, even through her guard.

Next!

From the lance, disguised by the resonance was chunks of solidified blood. If her barrier was blocking liquid blood, this was to see if she could breach it using concentrated solid blood.

She didn't need to infect Kazira. It's simply to see if she could bypass the guard using a mixture of different illusions and states of matter.

As the chunk of blood broke apart into dust, Alice's smile slowly curved up.

###

Collapsing on one knee, Kazira couldn't help but vomit up a mouthful of black blood.

With the illusion finally dispelled, she understood the current state of her body!

This vile poison was far more potent than she had expected. Even to the point where it wouldn't be an exaggeration to call this on par with the Lord of Poison's strongest poison!

Her vision was shifting as she tried to purge the blood from her body but it was too deeply entwined.

No matter how much she tried to isolate it, it clung on like a parasite, siphoning, corrupting, mutating her body.

But it didn't stop there.

This... Abyssal energy invading her body...

It was trying to corrupt her soul!

"Ah~ It finally kicked in. I was wondering how long it'll take haha..." Alice let out a soft laugh as she was on the verge of passing out.

The amount of blood she had to lose for this to happen.

But it was worth it!

Seeing the purple veins around Kazira's body and her bloodshot eyes, a sense of ecstasy filled her heart.

She could see the corruption of the Abyss slowly overriding her body. Her blood, the combination of a myriad of beasts, the most potent and corruptive Abyss Blood there was in this world!

Even a single drop was enough to mutate the normal man yet she had to lost most of her blood to make Kazira fall onto one knee!

'What a f*cking monster.' Alice couldn't help but mutter in her mind but the end was finally in sight.

The final stretch.

*BANG!!!

Gritting her teeth, Alice made full use of the adrenaline running through her veins as she rushed towards Kazira with blade in hand.

"ARGGG!!!" letting out a shout of anger, Kazira slammed her hand down, trying to create rusted weapons to push Alice back.

But to her shock, Alice's blood took root and combusted into Violet Flames that burst through her wounds.

The speed of which she was gathering energy decreased drastically!

Widening her eyes, Kazira understood that it won't make it in time and grabbed her weapon.

*CLANG!!!

Clashing blades with Alice, Kazira's pupil constricted in disbelief.

Alice had stood her ground!

She wasn't blown back!

Her authority as War was fading!

"What's wrong? Where's that confidence from before? Is the esteemed Apostle of War feeling... Fear?" Alice grinned as her body seemed to loom over Kazira despite her small stature.

Kazira felt a chill down her spine.

She needed to run!

Chapter 645 - 645: Kazira's Despair

Panic filled Kazira's mind as the cold hands of death finally caught up to her.

The Immortal War Apostle, the harbinger of death. The one who stands at the battlefield.

She was finally feeling fear.

'I'm going to die? ME?! Die before I become a God? NO! I cannot die here! Not me!' Kazira denied the possibilities as she pushed against Alice's sword.

Creating some distance between them, she wanted to take this moment to compose herself but Alice didn't give her the chance.

Flicking her wrist, crimson threads shot out, wrapping around Kazira's arms as Alice pulled herself closer.

Twisting her body, she unleashed a devastating overhead cleave that Kazira was forced to parry off to the side.

She had always been the aggressor, the attack.

But now?

'Time. That's right, I need time! Jin is being prepared as my vessel. As long as I can shed these confines and descend into something more suitable!'

While this wasn't what she wanted to use Jin for originally, she had to make do. This body of her's was no longer suitable with the corruption from Alice's blood.

As long as she changes bodies, as long as she switches vessels, she was sure everything will go back to normal.

This time, she'll kill Alice the first chance she gets!

"Where do you think you're going?!" Alice shouted as she clenched her fist.

The surrounding space began to collapse as a singularity spun to life behind Kazira. Blades of energy whipped out from the singularity as Kazira tried her best to avoid the attacks.

If her authority of the Unbroken Stride was cancelled, she didn't want to test if her 'immortal' body was affected or not.

Each of these attacks could potentially increase the corruption in her body. Therefore, she couldn't allow them to hit her!

Gritting her teeth, Kazira couldn't believe she had to fully rely on Abyssal Powers to keep herself alive.

*BANG!!!

Slamming her hand down, a pulse of energy erupted, pushing Alice back as dark silhouettes began to manifest with rusted armour coating their bodies.

"Soldiers! Heed my call!" Kazira shouted out before clenching her fist.

On Alice's body, a Sigil manifested causing her to widen her eye.

Spitting some blood out in disgust, Kazira quickly turned around and ran while the soldiers rushed towards Alice.

"Fodder!" Alyss took over as she adjusted her stance.

Phantom Shift!

Staying low to the ground, she unleashed a myriad of slashes using the principles of martial arts that she had studied!

As she rushed past the soldiers, the sword in her hands cracked apart and shattered into countless shards.

Since they switched out their third Sigil, she wasn't able to reinforce the blade.

Glancing up, Alyss frowned as Kazira had already created quite the gap between them.

Alyss was about to chase after the War Apostle, but zombified hands broke through the ground, grabbing at her ankles.

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

After all this fighting, after all this boating and confidence, the esteemed Apostle of War was scrambling for her life!

Gathering her violet flames above her hand, Alyss slammed down, creating a vortex of fire.

'We won't catch her! Let me!' Alice shouted, taking over.

Physical Resonance!

Duality + First Sigil + Tiamat!

Bloodline Release!

Artificial Resonance!

Resonance!

Activating everything that she could activate, Alice wanted to stack Crimson Immolation one more time but instinctively, she knew that doing so would cause Exile at this point.

She had kept it activated too long before.

Whether this exile was this strange realm or reality outside, Alice couldn't risk it!

Clasping her hands together, a garden of spider lilies blossomed around her as glistening sparks of energy began to dance around her.

A chaotic yet harmonic swirl of red, purple, blue and gold.

Behind her, the wings of Tiamat unfurled in its full glory, crafted from the very same energy surrounding her.

Spiralling into countless amplification coils, the energy began to converge in front of Alice with a singularity spinning to life in her hand.

Opening her palms, the singularity transformed into a singular glowing spark that drowned out all colour in the world.

With the attack now prepared, Alice handed it back to Alyss, who clenched her fist.

Flames roared across her arm before hissing into a pure white.

Destruction Point!

Slamming her fist into the spark, it shattered into countless fragments that all collided with the amplification coils, transforming into a hailstorm of raw energy. Every single mote, every single stand of energy was all focused on Kazira who felt danger behind her.

Gritting her teeth, she let out a roar as crimson flames erupted around her body, turning her into this inferno icon of anger.

"I will not fall! Mark my words! You may have won the battle today but the War is mine!" Kazira roared, transforming her body into a spiral of energy that hungrily devoured Alice's attack.

"Talk all you want, but I see the coward beneath those eyes!" Alice shouted, slashing up and creating a portal.

Lunging through, she came face to face with Kazira. She had actually shed most of her energy to form a distraction!

But thanks to Cayla's power, she could see the clear energy of the Apostle of War!

Widening her eyes in fear, Kazira panicked!

Blood and rusted chains exploded from her body, trying to push Alice away but Alice ignored everything!

So what if it harms her?!

So what if the chains pierce her body?!

If her blood fills the area then so be it!

*KRKK!!!!

Slashing down with her blade, Alice tore Kazira's right arm apart while the chains pierced her throat.

Not letting this chance go to waste, Alice spat her blood towards Kazira who tried her best to get away but Alice wasn't letting her go.

She was a feral beast who had finally sunk her teeth into her prey.

She'll only let go if she died!

"ARGGGG!!!" Letting out a shout of anger and perhaps to push her body past the limit, Alice took a step towards Kazira while the chains continued to ravage her body.

It pierced through her back, slashed up her organs and even shredded her tendons but darkened limbs stitched Alice's body back together.

Seeing this level of regeneration, Kazira couldn't help but back up in horror.

What kind of monster? What kind of being was she?!

"!!!"

Feeling Alice's blade dig deep into her stomach, tears began to well in Kazira's eyes as she wanted to live.

She wanted to live.

To live.

LIVE!

She didn't care if she wasn't a God anymore! Let her be a slave!

'GODDESS! PLEASE! SAVE ME!' She cried out in her mind as Alice's blood was further injected into Kazira's body.

Scales, draconic horns and twisted bones began to pierce through Kazira's wounds as her body was finally succumbing to the most potent Poison there was in the Abyss.

'My my dear Kazira. To call upon me with such desperation... It does not fit the Apostle of War now, does it? Or should I call you the God of War?' Enris's voice rang out in Kazira's mind as she could see the smiling silhouette of Enris.

'S-sav-'

'Save you? Oh no no. You know how I view such things. And honestly, I can't help but wonder. Can this girl actually steal your authority?' Enris's grin widened as Kazira's eyes sunk in despair.

Her goddess had abandoned her.

Realising that Enris had now cut off their connection despite the authority still being her's, Kazira looked up at Alice who was mid swing.

Is this where she'll die?

Die? Die? Die? Die? Die? Die? Die?! DIE?!?!

"DON'T F*CK WITH ME!" Kazira tried to deny reality but the blade carving deep into her bones shattered her illusion.

I will abandon my mortal flesh.

*BANG!!!

A burst of energy exploded from Kazira's body as her eyes rolled back. Her body fell limp momentarily before grabbing onto Alice's arms.

Gritting her teeth, Alice felt the chains disappear as she immediately slashed at Kazira's arm but the husk wasn't phased.

Abandoning her flesh, Kazira felt behind the rotting, mutating corpse that was now standing in Alice's way. It had only one instinct and that was to kill anything within its vicinity!

"Coward!" Alice shouted, jumping away from the husk.

She didn't have anything to deal with the soul yet!

Duality may have the option but she didn't know how!

The only option was to use Kaden's power once more!

Activating the authority, Alice wanted to summon the grimoire but corruption overwhelmed her as the energy scattered.

She collapsed on one knee, and black blood leaked from her eyes.

Punching the ground, Alice glared at the husk with anger.

###

'Leave! I need to leave!' Kazira managed to get away as the cage around the area shattered apart.

With her abandoning her body, the anchor of the ritual was now collapsing and she had to retrieve Jin's body.

As long as she can get Jin's body, things can still be repaired.

Finding the capsule containing Jin, Kazira's fear turned into joy as she could see the Eldritch energy fully taking root inside his body. There were signs of corruption and him being unable to fully withstand the power but it was fine.

It didn't matter I he couldn't withstand it as long as she was in control.

She simply had to modify her original plan.

*RUMBLE!!!!

A split in the realm appeared in front of Kazira as she widened her eyes and dodged to the side.

A Void Flux shot past her, erasing a pillar as she glanced back and saw a bloodied and wounded Alice stepping through the portal.

There was only one desire in her eye and it screamed bloody murder.

It'll take too long for her to hijack Jin's body at this rate.

There were no more paths left for her.

Her husk had failed to stop Alice, and in her current state, she was a cornered rat.

She abandoned her body. She has been abandoned by her Goddess.

There was only one thing left if she wanted to survive.

Widening her eyes, Kazira gritted her teeth.

'Voruth'Zal! You know what I desire!'

'That I do. I've heard your call, I've heard your plea and I have chosen to answer. Worry not, for I am your salvation.' A voice answered as the Outer God began to manifest behind Kazira.

Voruth'Zal, The Silence Beyond Death.

Chapter 646 - 646: Voruth'Zal

Looking at the swirl of Eldritch energy that was manifesting behind Kazira, Alice's eyes widened in anger as she quickly lunged forward.

'DON'T LET HER GET AWAY!' Alyss shouted, realising that an Eldritch God was trying to intervene.

*CLANG!!!

Seeing her sword bounce off the energy, Alice switched places with Alyss as she slammed her fist into the veil.

Golden energy erupted out from the chains, pushing back the Eldritch forces.

She ignored the pain she was feeling and how the cuffs dug into her flesh.

After coming this far, they refused to let Kazira get away.

Not like this, not now!

"So this is what caused so many icons to fall. Indeed, a foul seal designed to keep us at bay. Not unlike the cage placed around this world in its entirety." A haunting voice rang out as a figure stepped through the fabric of space.

Its body was made from cosmic space while golden markings decorated the surface.

Revealing a gap with sharp teeth in the shape of a smile, Voruth'Zal had caught Alyss's punch with one of its tendril like hair strands.

Widening her eye, Alyss could feel this being fighting against the energy from the chain. With her current state weakened and the energy being used over and over against the other Icons, it was actually too weak to force a backlash!

"KILL HER!" Kazira shouted but the Voruth'Zal held a finger over its mouth.

"You desire life, you desire escape. Our bargain does not include the termination of this one." It chuckled, flicking Alyss away and causing her to slam into a pillar.

She could feel her bones shattering as the chains were hindering her regeneration.

Yet if the chains weren't here, she wouldn't be able to contend against this beast at all!

"Don't f*ck with me! She's right there! Weakened! If you won't do it then I will!" Kazira roared, refusing to allow a being like Alice to continue to exist.

She had to deal with her now!

If she didn't, she'd always be wondering when she'd reappear.

A shadow in the back of her mind.

The creeping figure in her peripheral vision.

Her nightmare.

Just as Kazira lunged forward, Alice glanced up, her eye completely focused on her movement.

'I figured you'd try to finish me off. You won't rest easy if I'm not dead, right?' Alice had come to understand Kazira during their fight.

Despite her powers, despite her authority, beneath all of that, she was simply greedy and cowardly.

She wanted the power of a god but not the trials that came with it. She revels in death yet her life is more precious than anything.

A person like this shouldn't be given power.

*BANG!!!

Clenching her fist, energy swirled as Alice gathered every last drop of her power.

One more hit.

One more hit at full power. To push everything to the limit just so that she could deal with the soul in front of her.

It felt as though her surroundings were beginning to darken. Her vision tunnelled on a singular goal.

KILL KAZIRA!

*CRACK!!!

A fracture appeared on the golden chains that suddenly manifested around Alice's limbs.

Dark energy was being drawn towards her as Voruth'Zal paused in mild surprise.

It was wondering why such a seal was placed around the girl in front of it but now it made sense.

It wasn't a simple case of Eldritch energy being imbued into her. Otherwise, it wouldn't cause a reaction like this.

"Indeed, humans are the most entertaining when they greed for power." Voruth'Zal smiled, flicking its finger as Kazira was forcefully pulled away from Alice.

However, to his shock, darkened limbs erupted from her shadow, latching onto Kazira and preventing her from being taken away.

Clenching her fist, Violet flames erupted out from Alice's body before handing over control to Alyss.

Phantom Shift!

Appearing in front of Kazira, Alyss's blade was practically brushing against Kazira's face when Voruth'Zal interfered.

*CLANG!!!

A dark spike burst out from one of the limbs, intercepting Alyss's strike.

Without a change in emotion, Alice took over, aiming a finger at Kazira.

Void Flux!

Swallowing the singularity using its own cosmic body, Voruth'Zal tried to break the grip Alyss had on Kazira.

Meanwhile, Kazira was screeching in pain from having two sources of Eldritch power tugging and ripping at her soul.

Dark spots began to manifest with clear signs of corruption.

Seeing that she wasn't going to reach Kazira without first dealing with this Eldritch being, Alice gritted her teeth and slammed her palm down.

Spider lilies began to blossom as a garden of blood manifested around them.

Summoning a pair of swords, Alice rushed towards the Outer God.

Void Flux Cleave!

Twisting her body, she unleashed an upward slash that tore apart the realm. But unlike the normal attack, from this tear, teeth and limbs began to manifest with the chains now digging into Alice's arm.

They were beginning to manifest even when Alyss wasn't taking over!

Swatting the attack to the side, Voruth'Zal skipped backwards, avoiding Alice's barrage when all of a sudden, limbs burst out from its shadow, clutching at its ankles and wrist.

With her target now standing still, Alice combined both blades into one with flames roaring against the surface.

If it's an Outer God, then there must be a tether holding him, anchoring him down to this realm.

She simply had to cut it apart!

Severance!

Twisting her body, Alice unleashed a horizontal slash that seemed as though it was going to miss but Voruth'Zal knew otherwise.

His body began to mutate, twist and writhe.

*BANG!!!

A ghastly maw burst out from his chest, lunging up and swallowing Alice's slash of severance.

"!!!"

Sliding across the ground, Alice wanted to continue when she realised chains were binding against her limbs. Glancing down, she could see a dark energy polluting her ringers, reaching up to her hand.

The reason why the Outer God could swallow her slash was simple. . .

It became corrupted with Eldritch energy!

'Eldritch Energy assimilates Eldritch Energy. . . Sh*t.' Alice gritted her teeth as she collapsed on one knee.

She could see the cuffs binding her wrists and ankles, digging into her flesh while energy started to gather around her neck, forming a collar.

Alice's breathing fluctuated as she instinctively scrambled to try and tear the collar off.

But the instant it manifested, energy was purged from her body, including the Eldritch powers.

Her vision began to blur, and she wondered if this was the end.

She could see the Outer God approaching her step by step.

At that moment, a figure placed his hand on the Outer God's shoulder.

"I thought the death of this girl wasn't involved in your contract. Why don't we leave it at that?" A man smiled while Voruth'Zal glanced back.

Curling its lips up into a grin, Voruth'Zal shrugged and snapped its finger.

Kazira's screaming soul was dragged along despite trying her best to kill Alice while she had the chance.

With the Outer God now gone from this place, the man kneeled in front of Alice.

"I can see why he treasures you so much." He muttered.

Saliva slowly pooling in his mouth as he swallowed.

He could sense the traces of energy inside her body. Even though she may be drained right now, if he was to let her regain her power, she'd become a meal like no other.

Alice could see this strange man's silhouette beginning to shift as tendrils whipped around him.

However, he soon returned to normal, understanding that the specimen was off limits.

And not a moment too soon either as he noticed a certain man staring at him from behind.

"I held myself back, okay? Even I'm not that stupid." He raised his hand, showing that he wasn't planning on consuming Alice.

"Do what you're supposed to do and gather my materials." Nyer spoke coldly.

Watching the artificial Outer God walk away, Nyer glanced at Alice.

A myriad of conflicting emotions flashed through his eyes for a brief moment before returning back to their usual state.

"N...yer..." Alice squeezed through gritted teeth.

"Sleep now." Nyer placed his hand over her eye as Alice lost her consciousness.

###

Looking at the golden chains that were slowly fading from Alice's body, Nyer couldn't help but trace his fingers along them.

A familiar and nostalgic energy. . . This method of placing a seal. . .

Hesitating for a moment, he picked up Alice into a princess carry before glancing at the egg that the Artificial Outer God was observing.

"The kid inside is still alive you know. Surely he's not off limits right?" He asked, glancing over at Nyer who was carrying Alice.

He glanced down at the subject in his hands and a shadow of Velouria seemed to overlap. His gaze softened just for a split moment.

Opening his mouth, Nyer paused. Countless thoughts flashed through his mind before shaking his head.

"Everyone here is off limits. I'll give you something to eat when we get back. Remove the corruption then leave."

"Everyone?! So what if one or two of them were to go?" The man frowned, feeling as though he was robbed of his meal.

Samples like these who have been touched by the Eldritch energy were perfect for him but a warning glare from Nyer caused him to recoil back.

"You can take samples from the south if you're unhappy. It seems like the new Apostle of War has now lost her position. You've seen how she's been infected by the Eldritch energy. There's no doubt that she'll be raising a new army in the south. You may enjoy your meal there so long as you keep it controlled."

Hearing this, joy flashed through the man's eyes.

"That's a promise okay! No going back on it!"

Chapter 647 - 647: Cryptic Intentions

Standing in a white Void, Alice let out a heavy sigh before glancing behind her.

She could see a white figure walking with his hands behind his back. There was a small smile on his face.

"What do you want." Alice frowned.

"There's a lot of things I want. Many of which you can't give me." The Will chuckled, walking past her.

"Though there is one thing I will say. It's quite a shame that you failed to kill Kazira. Such an opportune moment too. Kaden took on some of your burden in order for you to use his authority, Velouria even unknowingly gave you one of the best tools against Outer Gods.

"The powers were balanced, you had the upper hand even. She was corrupted by your blood and the Realm Lord of the Void also gave you her assistance. Yet despite all that, you still fumbled the bounty I helped you target." The Will let out a regretful sigh.

Alice wanted to refute but she couldn't say anything. Once again, she was reminded of the fact that she needed a method to target the soul outside of Eldritch powers.

"Is that all you wanted to say?" Alice clenched her fist.

"Far from it. I present to you two choices. While it is true that you 'failed' the hunt in the sense that Kazira still lives, you did kill her main vessel. Her body is yours to claim." The Will curved his lips up into a twisted smile.

Next to him, the limp, lifeless corpse of Kazira was thrown onto the ground.

"You can choose to end the hunt here. Claim your prize from her body." He gestured.

But seeing Alice's annoyed gaze, he smiled knowing that Alice wouldn't choose this option.

"You think it's pity? I believe otherwise. To force an Apostle to abandon their mortal body and even beg to their God for salvation is quite the achievement. It's equivalent to a hunter giving up all of their Sigils to live. So think of it as a momentary reward.

"Alternatively, you can choose to continue the hunt. Find where she limped to, rip and tear her soul apart. Take every part of her essence and make it yours. And if you choose this, I will keep the body for the moment you succeed. And when you do, I will personally grant you your Sixth and final Sigil before Lordship." The Will offered an empty hand.

"What's your purpose? You wouldn't have targeted Kazira for no reason nor would you have urged me to give it another try. So spit it out."

"I don't think I will. Whether or not I give you this option or not, you would've sought to kill her regardless. Therefore, I am merely giving you the platform you need to perform. A push on the back." The Will smirked.

While it was quite the coincidence for Alice to meet up with Kazira right now, such a coincidence was welcomed in the Will's books.

Rather, this worked things out better for him.

Seeing the scheming light in his eyes, Alice didn't want to accept any of the options. Unfortunately, the fact that the Will has forcefully designated the target for her meant that it was not something Cayla or any shaman could override.

She was stuck with Kazira as her sixth target for the foreseeable future.

"Tsk. Then at least tell me this. Even if the Outer God intervened, could I have killed her soul?" Alice asked.

She knew that the Will wouldn't have made Kazira a target for her if it was impossible.

"You could've killed her twice over."

"!!!"

Before Alice could say something, she felt a force pulling her away from the location as the Will gave her a wave.

"I await your next battle o' worthy vessel."

###

Slowly sitting up, Alice clutched her head as she felt pain shoot through her entire body. Bandages covered her arms, torso and legs while a faint scar could be seen on her wrists.

Besides meeting up with the Will, the last thing she recalled was seeing Nyer and Alice immediately widened her eye.

Just as she was about to summon a sword, she felt as though a fire was burning through her veins, causing her to flinch and stop.

Looking around her, she saw that she was alone in a makeshift room. Pristine white bed sheets, white walls and floor.

Her breathing began to speed up as Alice forced herself out of the bed and limped towards the door.

Thankfully, it wasn't the same door as the one back in her prison.

Opening the door, she noticed several people in white running around from tent to tent.

There were screams echoing in the distance while other tents were silent.

Guards stood by, protecting the injured.

Observing her surroundings, Alice understood that they were still in the city. The only difference was that the barrier that had surrounded this place now disappeared.

All of the Eldritch beings left with the barrier and the city had been returned back to 'normal'.

Letting out a sigh of relief, Alice glanced at the symbols on the chest of the guards and came to the conclusion that they were part of the Abyssal Tyrant Sect, one of the three Sovereign sects that rule this land.

[Alice, let's go back in for now.] Cayla suddenly spoke up, surprising Alice as she glanced into her mental realm. To her shock, both Cayla and Alyss weren't in great condition either.

Nodding her head, Alice stepped back into the room and sat down.

'What happened after I passed out?' Alice asked with a frown.

[I don't know. Alyss is... Injured, having pushed her body too far with the chains. You're not in a great situation either since you showed signs of Eldritch Corruption.

[But there is one thing I will say.] Cayla furrowed her brows before opening her mouth.

[Nyer was able to access this place and we had a conversation.]

Hearing this, Alice's eye constricted in shock as she didn't expect this to be possible.

Originally, she thought this realm to be something that belonged to Cayla. But after Alyss's appearance, she understood that it was not the case. Rather, this was a mental realm of sorts, a soul realm where the three of them could converse.

If Nyer could access this realm then...

Swallowing her saliva nervously, Alice looked around in hesitation.

'Did he plant anything?'

[Not that I know of. But that doesn't rule out the possibility.] Cayla shook her head.

[But in regards to what we spoke about... He simply mentioned that you shouldn't force your body to fight for a week, and as for Alyss's condition, she'll be out of commission for a little longer so that the chains can fully suppress the excess Eldritch corruption.]

'That's it?' Alice furrowed her brows.

[That's it. After this, he left.] Cayla nodded her head.

On one hand, the Will of the Abyss was giving her a cryptic mission of killing Kazira. On the other hand, Nyer was seemingly doing nothing to her and even telling her how to look after herself.

Alice wanted answers but all she got was more instructions, feeling like a floating piece of wood in a river, being swept along by the currents.

In the end, she decided to take it one step at a time. There one thing that was made abundantly clear and the Will confirmed it.

Even without getting a sixth Sigil, she had plenty of methods to deal with the Soul. She simply had to figure it out.

###

Heavy panting echoed out in a chamber as a figure could be seen scratching and tearing away at her own body.

Bloodshot eyes and signs of side effects.

Her skin bubbled and melted while bestial features protruded from her body.

"Do you have any idea how difficult it was to find even a remotely suitable vessel for you?" Voruth'Zal sighed, looking at Kazira who was trying her best to keep this body together.

If she spent too much time in her soul state, she would become a different kind of entity.

"F*ck off! There was one there! If you had killed her, I wouldn't be struggling like this!" Kazira snapped back.

Alice's blood was strange.

No matter how many times she tried to switch vessels, no matter how she tried to purge, it's like this corruption was rooted into her essence.

Even using what little power she had remaining, she could barely keep things together.

Her God has abandoned her but traces of her authority remained. Had Enris taken the authority away, Kazira wouldn't even be certain what kind of state she'll be in.

"Killing her was your task. You asked me for salvation and I granted it to you. You asked for a suitable vessel, I granted it to you. I've played my part, you failed yours. It's hardly fair to blame me now is it." Voruth'Zal asked, looking at Kazira with a hint of mockery in its eyes.

But he too was concerned by the potency of this 'poison'. It corrupted deeper than Eldritch powers did. Even with what he could do, the most that could be achieved was to keep it at bay and stop it from progressing.

"Jin." Kazira suddenly spoke as she clutched at a piece of flesh that melted off.

"Jin is still alive. His body has been attuned to Eldritch powers. If I get to him, as long as I abandon my Authority, I can take over." Kazira's eyes darted, trying to figure out a way to save herself.

In her current state, she had given up everything with the exception of her life. As long as she can get her hands on Jin, she can get them back one by one.

"Glad I am to see your ambitions burning strong. I will find you a new vessel to inhabit for the time being. Once I do, let us proceed with the next step of this operation." Voruth'Zal smiled, turning around and leaving the chamber.

Behind him, Kazira's screams echoed out as she clung to life.

Chapter 648 - 648: Mind, Body and Soul

Giving her body a final check up to make sure everything was fine, Alice felt unnerved.

Aside from the fact that she couldn't use her energy for a while, everything was normal.

Too normal.

There was nothing wrong with her besides the marks caused by the chains. Outside of that, beneath the bandages, her body was healing itself.

It was similar to what she suffered in the north with Selen looking after her but not as dangerous.

Furrowing her brows, Alice understood that Nyer was definitely up to something.

There was no chance that he'd simply leave her body be like this without tampering with it. Hell, meeting the him of the past in the Inverted World had already caused him to act.

What's to say he hasn't done something now?

But as it stands, there was truly nothing wrong with her body. It was pretty much the same as before she was dragged into the ritual.

Shaking her head, Alice made sure she hadn't left anything behind before trying to leave her tent, only to be stopped by a few Guards.

"If you're ready to leave, please wait inside while we call someone over. There are final tests that need to be ran before we can allow you to leave." One of the guards explained as Alice raised an eyebrow.

But considering how the Abyssal Tyrant Sect came to 'clean' things up, Alice figured they were probably aware of the Eldritch Energy involved in the ritual.

Unfortunately, even if she wanted to leave, she wasn't exactly in the best position to do so. The only thing she could do right now was to head back inside and sit down.

She closed her eye, refusing to look at the white walls and bed. It simply reminded her too much of the past.

Tapping her finger on the table, she waited patiently while observing Alyss's condition from within.

Occasionally, she would twitch while sweat dripped down her face, causing Alice to worry.

But there was nothing she could do about it.

In the end, she could only think about the seal that Velouria placed around them. The chains that helped contain the Eldritch power.

'Alyss uses anti Abyss powers and Eldritch while I use Holy and Void. But that's not to say these four aren't interchangeable, at least from my stance.' Alice thought to herself.

Near the end, it was clear that Eldritch energy had polluted her body as well, making her attacks outside of using Alyss's power part Eldritch.

Her slash of severance being a clear evidence of that.

By unknowingly making it part Eldritch, the Outer God was able to consume it practically effortlessly.

If she wanted to use Eldritch against Eldritch, she'd need to enhance her Eldritch side.

[I don't recommend it. Alyss had already 'consumed' it to some extent which caused the chains to lash out and put her in this state. As much as it may seem helpful, I don't think we should ever rely on Eldritch powers.] Cayla interjected as she had a bad feeling about it.

It's one thing to be able to access this power but another for Velouria to seal it in such a manner.

'I'm aware. Don't worry, I don't plan on enhancing the Eldritch side. Knowing how Eldritch Energy works, the more I enhance it, the worse it'll be for me since it'll keep corrupting my body.

'At that point, I'm basically food on a platter for Outer Gods. No chance of fighting back.' Alice shook her head.

She was fully aware of how dangerous Eldritch Energy was.

To put it in another way, the other energies were 'fair' in the fact that everyone is equal. But Eldritch? Anyone with remotely more power can easily 'consume' you without you ever being able to fight back.

Simply through assimilation.

If anything, Alice should be putting her focus towards researching Duality.

Thinking up to this point, Alice's finger stopped tapping as this was always something that stumped her.

Duality was not simply inversion, as Tristan mentioned.

No, Duality was much more than that. A conceptual power that plays with the essence of Inversion, Synchronisation and Harmony. Life and Death, Absorbing and Expelling.

But then it reaches the question of the Soul.

What is it exactly?

At a certain point, Alice understood that to others who could perceive the soul, she was 'soulless'.

It made sense since Alyss was the original and she, the construct of Nyer, hijacked her body.

Yet she 'developed' a soul later. Becoming two souls in one body.

Was it artificial? Or was it a true soul?

Could she be considered a normal 'human' if the conditions were different?

How could she function without a soul? Was she running on a set of orders that Nyer implanted without her knowing?

If it could be artificially constructed, what was she?

How far does a 'soul' need to go before it's considered a soul rather than a machine running on instructions?

To Alice, she felt like a normal 'human' with freewill. She could think for herself, make decisions for herself. Feel all the emotions a normal person could even before she developed a soul.

If the soul was not required for that, then what was it?

A source of life held within a container?

At first, Alice considered that you, as a consciousness, was the soul. You simply pilot the flesh machine known as the body.

But if that was the case, how did Nyer achieve the result of having her take over Alyss's body when she didn't have a 'Soul'?

Or was Alyss simply used as a foundation for her to grow? Her memories of their childhood was taken from her after all.

She only began to exist after she was injected into the body.

'Soul... Body... Foundation? Union.' Alice muttered in her mind, trying to work out the connection between the two and how Duality could tamper with it.

The Church of the Moon are specialised in Soul techniques so there must be an angle that she was missing.

It was hard to pinpoint the exact moment her soul manifested. Where did Alice begin and where did Alyss end in her?

Where did the separation occur?

'Is the Soul... a bridge? A connection between action and thought?' Alice furrowed her brows.

What if the 'soul' wasn't what she thought it was. That there was a difference between the conscience and the soul?

If one was to lose their memories, are they a new soul? If not, then it's clear that conscience and soul were two very different concepts that shouldn't be considered.

Thought, action and freewill are byproducts of the conscience rather than the soul.

So the state that Alice saw Kazira take near the end was similar to a bridge that connected the mind to the body.

Or perhaps the bridge wasn't quite the right way to put it.

A container?

Thinking up to this point, Alice paused and sat up straight.

'Container... Container? Alyss as a foundation... Duplicated memories, Soul appeared later? Spiritual heart, container for power? Connection to the soul...' Alice began to mutter rapidly as Cayla glanced over in a mix of confusion and worry.

She could practically see Alice's mind racing through all of the possibilities.

Each possibility, each potential outcome, she explored and when she reached a dead end, she would explore a new path.

To put it crudely, Alice as an Artificial construct created by Nyer was unbelievable in Cayla's eyes.

The speed of which she learns, adapts and reacts. Far faster than normal humans yet at the centre of it all, despite her talents, she was vulnerable like a human. A duality of talent and nature.

Therefore, Cayla didn't consider Alice as artificial. Rather, her own adventure, her interactions with her surroundings, the people that she met and the life that she has lived made her human.

'Cayla.' Alice opened her mouth as she glanced over.

'I have a new theory regarding Duality and Soul.'

[I'm all ears.]

'Before we talk about the Soul, we need to first understand the foundation of our world. The rules of which power works. The resonance system per say. The strongest and most stable of power structures, keeping each node balanced. The resonance of three Sigils, three parts of threes.

'The God and two Apostles as perfect balance. Three realms of Reality, Void and Abyss. Our world works in three's to keep things balanced. But what if the same goes for the human body, mind and soul?

'The mind that thinks, the body that acts and the soul that endures. Even if you were to forget your sense of self and memories, the soul and body persist and eventually, a new mind takes its place.

'The body weakens and the mind dies, the fundamental system in this world reincarnates them in a new body and mind. But the soul remains. Each 'soul' is the container of individuality that anchors them to this realm.'

Coming up to this point, Alice took a deep breath.

'Now let's talk about my birth. An artificial creation of Nyer. The mind he obtained through Alyss. A duplication of memories, thoughts and emotions. The surroundings to cultivate new memories to avoid the sense of disconnect.

'The body that I 'hijacked' from Alyss that synchronised with the mind. The issue is the soul. Even with the presence of Mind and Body, the lack of a container would cause the two to dissipate. Mind death and body death.'

Hesitating for a moment, Alice pushed on.

'I think my birth was a coincidence. Nyer never thought that I would've been a success. The fact that Alyss wasn't fully erased, her mind and body existed at the same time as me, allowed her to be the temporary container for my 'mind' and 'body'.

'For a period of time, Alyss was the soul I lacked.'

Chapter 649 - 649: Shell

Hearing this theory that Alice proposed, Cayla wanted to say something but paused.

'By having Alyss act as my temporary soul for the moment, it allowed me to develop my own container by using it as a template of sorts. All three were present, but perhaps the soul seen as 'damaged'.

'Over time, as Alyss began to manifest more and more, I think that's when my soul was going through development until the two of us finally split into two beings inside the same space. Two souls in one.' Alice suggested as Cayla folded her arms.

Indeed, if she was to go with what Alice had said, a lot of things now made sense.

[Then what about all the souls trapped in the spiritual heart?] Cayla asked since that was something that the Apostle belonging to the moon brought up.

Like her, Alice or rather, Alyss has countless souls attached to her, using her as a bridge to access their powers.

If the Soul was indeed the container, then what are those souls?

'Better question would be how does the Abyss keep a catalogue of powers. I think... Nyer was trying to make a second version of the Abyss in my body. Similar to how Velouria could access a myriad of powers, my body became a library. Rather than souls per say, I think these things inside me are something else entirely.' Alice furrowed her brows.

What she was consuming might not be the 'soul' by previous understanding.

When she stole Duality, the Goddess of the Moon was livid. Rightfully so.

But with Alice's theory, the soul doesn't hold 'data' in the sense that there's nothing there except a container. What holds data is the mind and body that's being connected by the soul.

Unless...

At this point, Alice opened her eye wide, coming to a conclusion.

'Cayla. What if the 'shell' is where the Abilities of the Abyss are being carved rather than the body? We always been talking about the Spiritual Heart but what if the Spiritual Heart is merely one aspect of the shell?

'When me and Alyss swap out abilities, we modify the shell of our soul. By taking that piece the Sigil is occupying and replacing it with something within our library, we modify our soul to fit that newly added piece.

'Theoretically, that means we can quick swap the pieces as long as I understand the structure of this shell. Right now, perhaps unconsciously, whenever we swap out abilities, we're not doing it more than once in fear of damaging the shell too much. An unconscious act of self preservation.'

[Then what about Griselda?]

'For that, I need to first understand what exactly I'm consuming when I take the souls. Since the some of these shells are 'crying' which I can only assume to be a remnant of despair in their final moments. Since

it works in threes, perhaps what I'm taking from them is the Shell and the Mind? No, that doesn't quite work.'

Furrowing her brows, Alice snapped her finger.

'Their blood. When I consume their blood, that replaces the body. As you know, my blood is a concentrated source right? Perhaps the body is being replaced by me. No... That still doesn't answer why they're crying.' Alice frowned.

She was glad that Cayla asked these questions since it allowed her to modify her theory regarding the souls.

The more she understood, the better it'll be when it comes to manipulating it.

'Setting that aside for now, what if a portion of Duality allows you to modify or tamper with this shell? The Will said I could kill Kazira two times over. With that being the case, had I saved one of my lance usages, I could've probably killed her at the end. Or, alternatively, I could've used Duality to maybe invert her shell and kill her that way.' Alice theorised.

But without being able to use her energy for now, it was hard for her to test out her ideas.

Frustration began to build up inside Alice as so many ideas and inspirations was flooding her mind but she couldn't verify them!

It's akin to having starved for weeks on end and a meal appears before you.

However, it was locked behind a case that you couldn't open at all.

Absolutely agonising.

As time passed, her finger tapping against the table began to speed up as a small dent was being formed. The Guards outside felt like they were going insane, hearing this constant tapping but they couldn't or rather, didn't want to be rude to her.

Inside the tent was the Demoness after all!

Thankfully, someone came to relieve them of this duty as a man entered the room.

"Are you the one who's going to conduct my final test? I have to say, isn't this a little extravagant?" Alice asked with a frown.

She didn't even need to open her eye to sense that the person in front of her was a Lord level being.

Just the aura he was exuding was enough to warn her.

"To speak this way despite knowing the kind of power I hold, you're exactly how Sect Leader Jian described you as." He frowned as Alice glanced up.

He had pale white skin, practically the same colour as chalk, a pair of deep crimson eyes and dark grey hair that reached his lower back. On his forehead, a crimson mark could be spotted and he wore a black and gold outfit.

"It's simply the truth. I don't believe a Sect Leader like yourself should come meet a patient like this for the final test. Unless the test is merely an excuse for me to meet the esteemed leader?" Alice shrugged.

She couldn't use energy but that doesn't mean she couldn't use her other tools.

If needed, in her pouch, there were still vials of her own blood.

She couldn't detonate them or use them however she wanted but as mist that disperses Abyssal energy, it was still doable.

The two were locked in a stare down for a while as the Sect Leader appraised Alice from head to toe. Despite the fact that she should be injured and the lack of energy that he was sensing from her, she still felt dangerous.

Like a sword waiting to be unsheathed at any moment.

"Seems like the Cult's energy didn't corrupt you at all. How and why?" He asked.

However, Alice simply shrugged her shoulders.

"Don't know. I fought then I passed out. Next thing I know I was here."

"You were the only one outside the heart of the ritual by the time we found you. How did you escape the initial stages?" He questioned once more.

Having the Sect Leader question her like this while white walls surrounded her, Alice had to admit that she felt discomfort. Rather than meeting a patient, it felt more like an interrogation.

Furrowing her brows, Alice's finger twitched for a moment when a shadow lunged towards her.

*BANG!!!

Jumping out of her chair, Alice widened her eye for a moment before grabbing a dagger from her pouch along with a vial of blood.

"Stop!" The sect leader shouted while massaging his eyes, stopping both Alice and the shadow.

"Reckless like he mentioned as well. This isn't an interrogation. We're trying to figure out a way to counter the corruption caused onto the civilians and disciples of the sect. See for yourself." The sect leader gestured with his head as he motioned for Alice to follow him.

Glaring at the shadowy figure that faded away, Alice stored away her dagger for now and walked behind the sect leader.

'You saw that too didn't you?' Alice asked as Cayla nodded her head.

At first, she thought that nothing had changed with her body after Nyer's tampering.

But now it was clear. Her body got stronger! Without access to her energy, she wouldn't have been able to avoid that grab just now in the past.

And judging by the energy she could sense from the man, he was around five to six Sigils in strength.

Or at least that what she presumed from the energies of people she's seen in the past.

But this only brought up the question of how it was even possible outside of getting more Sigils.

Abyss blood doesn't work on her in terms of reinforcing her body.

There was something else that Nyer did which she didn't know about.

Either that or perhaps it was a byproduct of Alyss consuming Eldritch power.

Shaking her head, Alice dismissed the thoughts for now as she observed the civilians lying on the beds.

There was a dark murky energy flicking from their shadows.

The spread of corruption had stopped but it didn't disappear.

In fact, on the beds that they were lying on, there was signs of having a ritual carved into it, keeping this energy at bay.

"If you don't have a method that can counter act this corruption, then there is no need for her to keep speaking." The Sect Leader spoke up after seeing Alice being unresponsive towards the patients.

"Yeah I got nothing here, sorry." Alice shook her head.

If it was Abyss energy, she could wait a week before helping.

But Eldritch? There was too much she didn't know about.

And she refused to consider the idea of consuming it to help these people.

Doing so meant putting Alyss in danger and no matter the situation, she's picking the safety of her twin over the lives of people she didn't know about.

Letting out a sigh, the man nodded his head.

"Do as you please. Sect Leader Jian has already mentioned the mistake of the bounty to me. The guards won't hold you back." After saying this, the man walked away, seemingly to concentrate on his own tasks while Alice decided to track down her marks.

She wanted to see how everyone else was doing.

Especially Jin.

Chapter 650 - 650: Check Ups

The closest mark that she could find was Sect Master Jian. He was the closest to her when the ritual hit so she wasn't sure about the kind of damage he took from the eldritch energy.

But to her surprise, when she arrived at the tent, she saw both Sect Master Jian and old man Mo being placed next to one another. Jian was lacking while Mo seemed annoyed.

"Seems like I didn't need to be too worried after all." Alice folded her arms.

Glancing over, a vein bulged as Old Man Mo clicked his tongue and looked away, refusing to acknowledge Alice.

"Ignore the baby. I'm glad to see that you are safe." Sect Master Jian smiled as Alice nodded her head.

"Same to you. Are you... perhaps hearing any voices or anything of the sort? I know the... ritual wasn't exactly a harmless one." Alice asked, but Sect Master Jian shook his head.

"I was feeling something for a little while, but I managed to purge it with the help of my old friend over here. He's proficient in dealing with the cult. Unfortunately, those with less resistance suffered quite a bit. To the extent that not even he can help them." Sect Master Jian sighed.

The people that were caught in the cross fire was the people he vowed to protect after all. Disciples and civilians who wanted to enjoy a festival.

"Oh? This cranky old man can do that?" Alice raised an eyebrow.

If she could learn how he purged the Eldritch power then...

"Yes but not without drawbacks. I've lost quite a bit of power and one of my eyes was blinded." Sect Master Jian shrugged with a bitter smile.

Unlike Old Man Mo, his body wasn't accustomed to fighting against Eldritch power. A Lord he may be, but against this level of corruption, the fact that he could still live to fight another day was already impressive.

Losing an eye and some power was a small price to pay.

"Unlike some of us, seems like the potential cult member is untouched. In fact, that corrupt energy around you only grew stronger." Old Man Mo interrupted, surprising Jian.

"I'm aware. Though it's something I can't control and it's not like I'm completely unharmed. This energy is bad for me as well, ya know?" Alice shook her head with a shrug.

Despite bringing their attention to the energy surrounding Alice's body, Old Man Mo didn't say anything else and only huffed.

He didn't try to attack her as he knew that if she was involved with the cult, she wouldn't be injured like them.

Not to mention the fact that the ritual wouldn't just randomly end the way it did.

The Abyss Tyrant Sect may have arrived to help but there was no way they were the ones who stopped the ritual. It was simply impossible to come that quickly with the distance they needed to cover.

Meaning that something had stopped the ritual while it was happening.

With everyone being dragged into it, and Alice being the only one relatively unscathed and the increase in corruption around her, he came to the conclusion that she was the one who stopped it.

Now, there was the chance that she might've used this as a ploy to get their trust, but there was no reason to do such a roundabout thing when they were practically dead.

So the chances of her having ties to the cult were unlikely. It was simply a case of this girl being suspicious as hell.

While Old Man Mo was coming to terms with his own thoughts, Alice and Jian chatted away regarding what had happened.

Unfortunately, neither of them had too much information on the event.

Regardless, Alice was happy to see that he was safe and thanked him for letting the sect leader of the Abyss Tyrant sect know that she wasn't a threat.

With the checkup on Sect Leader Jian done, Alice made her way out and targeted the next closest patient.

Hualing and Xiao An.

Both of them were spectating the fight when the ritual happened.

According to Cayla, Alyss had found Hualing in the ritual realm connected by a strange tether.

Alice had to admit, she was a little worried about the damage potentially done to her.

But as she opened the tent, she couldn't help but lean to the side.

"Seeing as how the two of you are so... heated up maybe I didn't need to worry after all."

In front of her, Hualing was laying on the bed while Xiao An was leaning over her.

With Alice suddenly intruding, Xiao An coughed awkwardly, standing up straight while Hualing let out a laugh.

"It's not like that. I still get a headache every now and then, so he wanted to check if everything was okay with me." Hualing wanted to sit up but Alice shook her head.

"I'm not going to be here for long, just wanted to make sure you were feeling alright. Are you perhaps hearing any... voices?" She asked, grabbing a chair and sitting down.

Hearing Alice's question, Hualing paused before a sad smile appeared on her face.

She nodded her head.

"Sometimes I hear the voice of my sister. Nagging at the corner of my mind. I thought it was my own thoughts, but it doesn't seem like it from what you're saying."

"It's most likely a byproduct of the Ritual. Just... try to ignore it for now. I don't know what'll happen if you let that voice, well... Hmm... I guess if you listen to that voice, nothing good will happen." Alice furrowed her brows.

She couldn't exactly warn them about something specific since she wasn't sure herself. The Voices just give her an eerie feeling.

After all, she had to deal with Zal-Ka'Rith of the Writhing Script. He had messed with voices in her mind quite a bit during her journey.

Chances are, the people that fell victim might've had a 'seed' planted into them, waiting to germinate and there wasn't anything she could do about it for now.

She simply reinforced the marks for future use if she found a cure.

Gifting Hualing a small bottle of mead for her to drink at her own convenience, Alice left the tent.

She wanted to check up on Qiu Qiu, though unfortunately, she wasn't awake yet so Alice had to skip her.

This only left Jin, who was also unconscious, but because Alice was his master, she was allowed to check up on him regardless.

Entering the tent, Alice saw him lying on the bed.

Even now, she could see the corrupt energy weaving through the strands of energy around his body.

The twitches in his shadow.

She could clearly remember him being held captive in a capsule of sorts with dark energy being injected into his body. So the fact that he was now lying here was concerning.

Unconscious he may be, it didn't change the fact that Kazira tampered with his body.

'Are you able to give him a check up?' Alice asked as Cayla furrowed her brows.

[I'm the eye of the Abyss, not a medic. But I will see what I can do since I'm not exactly proficient with Eldritch Energy.] Cayla sighed in mild annoyance since for someone who had sealed her away, Alice was asking quite a lot from her.

Alice could feel Cayla's gaze and simply tried her best to ignore it for now.

Even if she wanted to undo this seal, it wasn't something that Kaden could undo easily either. He made it so that it'll undo on its own rather than through brute force.

[Erm... You know how you're rather proficient in examining the energy lingering on the body now?] Cayla spoke up after a moment of silence.

[I think it's better for you to examine his body yourself than I tell you. You'll get a clearer picture of it if you do.]

Raising her eyebrow, Alice didn't reject and did as Cayla told her.

Placing her hand on Jin's chest, Alice focused on the strands of energy around his body. The way they moved, how the Eldritch power was trying to merge and corrupt.

Following the flow of energy, it soon reached a pathway into Jin's body and then...

Emptiness.

'The f*ck.' Alice couldn't help but curse in confusion.

There was nothing inside.

It was a similar but very different situation to what she's in right now. She couldn't use energy as it would harm her body for this period of time.

Jin didn't have any Abyssal Energy inside him, which shouldn't have been the case. He had Sigils that modified the shell of his soul so there was always going to be Abyssal energy stored within.

So why was there nothing?

Furrowing her brows, Alice tried to check again, wondering if she misread the flow only for it to reach emptiness once more.

'Why is it empty???'

[Don't look at me, I don't know the answers. I may have prior knowledge of Outer Gods, but that's pretty outdated after everything we've seen in the ritual.]

'What about theories then?'

[One. This kind of emptiness probably signifies one thing since your power to observe energy came from me. And I'm connected to the Abyss. Inside this body, there is probably not a single speck of Abyssal energy left. Meaning, there's a chance that the capsule he was in converted everything into Eldritch power.]

Hearing this, Alice paused for a moment as she thought back to her previously mentioned theory on the shell of the soul.

But more importantly, with Jin not having a single speck of Abyssal energy meant only one thing.

He was now a fully Eldritch being!