

Abyssal A 661

Chapter 661 - 661: The Nun's Master

"Who's your master? Why are we considered honoured guests?" Alice questioned, pointing her blade at the woman.

Even though she couldn't use her energy right now, fighting was still possible.

[Alice, I wouldn't recommend it.] Cayla frowned.

'I know. But it's not like I have much of a choice right now.' Alice agreed.

She had thought that the fight wouldn't be bad considering the lack of energy. But the fact that they were 'honoured guests' now put her on high alert.

Hearing that Alice was confused as to who they were guests of, the woman let out an elegant chuckle.

"Allow me to let you greet my Lord personally then." Reaching her hands around her own neck, she snapped it 180 degrees as both Alice and Jin widened their eyes while looking at the back of the nun's head.

Twisting for a moment followed up by the sounds of gurgling blood, the woman snapped her head back to normal.

"How. . . Pleasant to have come across one another so soon. Is this not fate? V-489k? Ah no, pardon me. That's the old name, one must address you with your current name. Alice." The woman's voice sounded more calm, ominous even as the thick stench of corruption began to spread throughout the tunnel.

A chill shot down Alice's spine as her pupil constricted at the mention of her old designation.

She understood who it was.

She dare not say his name as she recalled Cayla's warnings.

"Worry not for I'm simply viewing the sights through this woman's eyes, speaking through her mouth and moving through her body. I lack the power to do to you that which you fear." The woman reassured, holding her hands behind her back as she slowly inched towards Alice.

Jin was wondering whether or not they should attack as he felt a strange sense of suppression from this woman.

Taking a deep breath, Alice frowned.

"Zal-Ka'Rith."

"Glad I am to see that you recall my name. After all, everyone with no exception has two deaths. The first, when their mortal body dies. The second, when they are forgotten. Even if they leave behind traces, the people who find them know not of the person behind the trace." Zal-Ka'Rith smiled, standing in front of Alice.

"I can see the light of conflict within your eye. Therefore I feel the need to let you know that I hold no animosity towards you dear Alice." She leaned forward, reaching her hand towards Alice's hair.

"Don't call me dear, we're not that close." Alice slapped away Zal-Ka'Rith's hand with a frown.

She didn't know what the Outer God was playing at but the only saving grace right now seemed to be the fact that he found interest in her background. It's what keeping them alive for the moment.

"Really? Considering we are two beings who understand your past to the same extent, I'd say we are plenty close. Closer than most even. Or perhaps it's my status that puts you on guard? The existence of an Outer God is poison to this world after all." Zal-Ka'Rith took a step back and sat on the bloodied table.

"Forcing yourself to stalk my past and me willingly sharing it are two very very different things. Do Outer Gods even know about something called personal privacy?" Alice scoffed, still maintaining her sword aimed at her head.

"Dear, I'm the Outer God of the Writhing Script. I'm an observer, a recorder and the library of knowledge. What makes you think such mentions of privacy means anything do me on the pursuit of knowledge?" Zal-Ka'Rith let out a hearty laugh.

"If I deem it interesting enough, I will even spend time counting the hairs on your body, the breaths you take, the times you swallow your saliva, the blinks you do in a day. How your eyes wander, how you play around with your fingers or even how you occasionally lick your teeth. All of these details are important to me if I am fascinated by a subject." She grinned.

Hearing this, Alice felt a deep chill through her body. A disgust hearing how much detail the Outer God wanted to record if he's amused.

In one aspect, it felt like Enris if she was more psychotic somehow.

"Please don't tell me I'm one of those subjects right now." Alice recoiled in disgust.

However, his silent gaze and smile told her everything she needed to know.

"So am I to take it that you won't be trying to kill us, even though you're an Outer God?" Alice asked, trying to ascertain Zal-Ka'Rith's stance on things.

"Oh of course not. Why would I? You're my honoured guests after all. Well. . . you are. As for him. . ."

She trailed off, turning her eyes to Jin.

"He's getting up there."

He wanted to observe what Kazira and Voruth'Zal had done to this poor boy after all.

"And as an observer, my existence as an Outer God is hardly worthy of mention. I'm aware of the conflict you have and the disagreement towards their involvement in this world. Let's just say I'm fully content with just observing the movements outside of the barrier.

"It's my principle to not directly intervene with an observation in case my presence was to. . . disturb the natural outcome." Zal-Ka'Rith waved her hand.

"So why did you attack me during the ritual then." Alice frowned.

From the sound of things, Zal-Ka'Rith was an observer yet he made a move during that moment.

"Can you blame me? And it was hardly an attack dear. I simply was told that there was an anomaly for me to observe and all I need to do was to stall you. I didn't need to fight so I accepted. Had it not been for that acceptance, I wouldn't have come across such an interesting marvel such as yourself." She shrugged.

Indeed, comparing what she said to what Cayla said, Zal-Ka'Rith mostly observed and didn't fight. He simply kept on digging into her past, trying to figure out her nature.

Even now, he was answering her questions and refusing to fight.

"What's all this then, I don't think this counts as an observation." Alice sighed, gesturing to the grotesque view around them.

At this point, she had sheathed her blade. If the Outer God wanted to talk then so be it.

"Oh this? This is simply an outlet for the poor girl I've made a contract with. I wouldn't call her my Icon though I won't deny that I'm currently observing her. . . Artistic talents." Zal-Ka'Rith pointed at herself.

"As for her subjects, these are all the people that took a portion of my script but refused to obey the agreement. So I had this girl use them as materials."

Furrowing her brows, Alice focused on the words she spoke in the middle.

"Portion of your script? What do you mean?"

Instead of answering, Zal-Ka'Rith held her finger over her mouth.

"That answer is too much for what you have provided me thus far. I work on the basis of equal exchange, I give equal to what I am given. I tell equal to what I'm told. There is a level to all forms of information and this is sadly above what you have told or rather, shown me thus far.

"It would be unfair of me to take all the information for free hence I've been telling you what I deem as equal." Zal-Ka'Rith held up her hands with a chuckle.

"A little stingy don't you think?"

"Not at all. In fact, without me, you wouldn't have even gotten a slight clue to this so early now would you? My divulgence of such information will naturally cause a change to the natural outcome. Though perhaps the moment I laid eyes on your past, the outcome had already changed. Or maybe it was predestined? Who can say.

"I simply give equal to what I am given. This clue is equal and letting you know will not change the natural outcome by much." She explained cryptically as Alice let out a frustrated sigh.

"Tsk, fine. And stop recording me with so much detail, I can see you scribbling sh*t into your book." Alice pulled a face of disgust as Zal-Ka'Rith revealed the invisible book.

"By this point you've breathed 60 times and blinked only 4 times during this entire exchange. A wary one you are, keeping such a close eye on me."

Alice felt goosebumps on her skin as she shivered.

"Creep. But let me ask you this, so you don't care what happens to the other Outer Gods right? You'd rather observe from outside the barrier, correct?" Alice asked as Zal-Ka'Rith tilted her head before a smile appeared on her face.

"Indeed that is the case. I'd much rather the barrier be in tact so I may observe in peace. What you do to the Outer Gods are of no import to me."

[Alice, are you sure about this.] Cayla frowned, knowing what Alice wanted to say.

'It's a rare chance. A little risky but he's probably our best shot at fully understanding the Eldritch energy in my body.' Alice replied.

[A little is underselling it a bit don't you think? This is an Outer God. Being that are literal cancers to our realm, parasites that corrupt everything it touches. Their thought process is fundamentally different from ours.]

'Yes, but this one prioritises knowledge. If he believes in equal exchange, it's best we get what we can from him. Especially since were severely low in intel.' Alice argued as Cayla was silent.

Indeed. In this situation, even if she had her full power, gathering information on the Outer Gods were difficult and always filled with sacrifice. All of her information, outdated it may be, were thanks to the deaths of many.

So if they can get information without much sacrifice, it would be preferred.

But even so.

Their target was an Outer God!

"Zal-Ka'Rith. Form an alliance with me. Information for information. Since you don't care about what happens to the Outer Gods, help me out instead and you can continue to observe." Alice offered as Zal-Ka'Rith was silent.

The smile remained on her face as she slowly opened her mouth.

"I refuse."

Chapter 662 - 662: Isolde

"I refuse." Zal-Ka'Rith spoke plainly with a smile, surprising Alice.

For someone on the pursuit of knowledge with such interest in her, she had expected him to accept.

If information was the thing he was after, surely standing by her will get him what he wants the most.

"Seems like my refusal was not what you expected to hear from me. While the proposition and potential you have offered indeed intrigue me, I can observe just fine by doing nothing. And there's a stark difference between not minding what happens to my race of Outer Gods and directly being involved with their downfall." Zal-Ka'Rith chuckled.

"Aren't you being involved by simply giving me clues?" Alice furrowed her brows.

"That's a little different. Let me rephrase it like this for you. Do you blame Velouria for your creation? That Nyer fellow seemed to have modelled you after her to some extent after all." He asked as Alice shook her head.

"Of course not."

"Then there's your answer. The clues I gave you are akin to Velouria's existence. A fundamental part and foundation to your creation yet not exactly directly involved. Whereas forming an alliance with you will be like me giving Nyer a hand in creating your blueprints." Zal-Ka'Rith explained.

"So no matter what I say or offer, you won't help?"

"Precisely. But I will be observing with keen interest." She chuckled, standing up properly.

"This girl that I'm borrowing for the moment, I'll have her journey with you. If you give me information I deem interesting enough, I will share with you the knowledge that I hold. Think of her as a . . . method of contacting me.

"And let's not forget, the information I hold does include how to deal with Eldritch energy and even helping out that boy with his. . . Hunger. He's holding on well for now but for how long?" She reminded with a grin.

Hearing this, Alice frowned in displeasure.

"So you don't want to form an alliance but you want to tag along? Aren't you a little fickle? And doesn't this count as intervening directly to change the outcome?" Alice folded her arms.

"Observing from front row seats doesn't count now does it? And giving information on how to save a life doesn't count as directly being involved with the downfall of my race. If I were to have this girl perform medical treatment on someone who just so happens to have Eldritch energy, someone who just so happens to grow very strong with this energy, someone who just so happens to end my race, it's not direct involvement is it?" She reasoned as Alice's smile twitched.

"What kind of backwards logic is this??"

[I told you Alice, their thoughts are fundamentally different from ours.] Cayla sighed seeing her master get tugged around like this.

"Not at all. Of course you may certainly try to kill this girl if you want but I'd rather you didn't. Though she is not my icon, I'm rather fond of her."

Without giving Alice a chance to respond, Zal-Ka'Rith closed his eyes as his aura disappeared.

Once more, it returned back to the woman that they were talking to before.

"Was your discussion with my Lord a pleasant one?" She asked with a gentle smile.

"About as pleasant as it can get with an Outer God. I'm guessing you're gonna be following us whether we like it or not then?" Alice asked while rolling her eye.

"It's my Lord's orders after all. I will follow it with all my heart. Ah, he has mentioned that there may have been some. . . Disagreements between the two of you so I hope you don't kill me for that." She held her hands together, causing Alice to let out a groan.

It wasn't exactly what she had hoped for but she had to admit that having a contact point between them might be good.

Information for information after all.

"Ask him how the exchange will go. Do I have to actively give him information or will he trade once he see's something he's interested in?" She wanted him to clarify after all.

Tilting her head with her finger on her chin, the woman paused briefly as the strands of energy around her trembled before stopping.

"My Lord has said that he'll simply observe and answer when he feels the need to. Of course, you can ask early if you wish and he'll calculate if the exchange is equal." She smiled.

"Tch, stingy. And please, clean up the blood and smell on your body. The Kids in the caravan wouldn't enjoy the sight." Alice reminded as the woman nodded her head with a slight bow.

"Are you sure about this?" Jin whispered, giving the woman behind them a glance.

"Hell no. But it's the best clue on how to deal with this Eldritch Energy crap. Having an insider will speed up the process a lot." Alice sighed.

"But wouldn't that give them your information as well?"

"Possibly. But there's also too much of my own past that I don't know of myself. If they can find out then so be it. He even managed to dig up memories I didn't even know I had." Alice pointed at her own head.

The memories, if that was accurate, of her time as part of the V series of clones was unfamiliar to her. If each clone had died, she shouldn't have retained these memories yet somehow Zal-Ka'Rith was able to dig into them.

She wasn't sure what else he could find but it could give her a full picture as to what Nyer was aiming to get from all of this.

The two of them glanced back once more at the Nun who was following behind them gracefully.

There was not a single trace of blood or stench left anymore.

If they didn't know any better, they'd think she was harmless.

Yet the moment these thoughts graced their minds, they recalled the horrifying displays they saw on the way in and shivered.

Such a terrifying 'talent' hidden behind that graceful smile.

"Right, you got a name? If you're travelling with us, might as well know who you are." Alice paused.

"This humble one is known as Isolde." Isolde introduced herself simply with a light bow.

Seeing that she wasn't going to say anything else, Alice shrugged and the three made their way back to the caravan.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice decided to fabricate a story.

Something along the lines of running into her when exploring a nearby tunnel and they just so happen to be going the same direction.

After explaining things to the caravan lead, Alice decided to pay for her food since she'll be travelling with them.

Sitting by her tent while looking at Jin and Isolde, Alice couldn't help but let out a deep sigh.

Out of everyone she's travelled with, this is probably the strangest group!

A cult vessel turned Eldritch Vessel and the favoured devotee of an Outer God.

[Honestly, it's not that different if you really think about it. Ria also used to be a Cult Vessel, same with Luke, Selen is an experiment by the Zenia family with ties to the Old Lords. Egil is a warrior turned hybrid due to circumstances. If you really dig deep, I don't think we ever had a 'normal' group while travelling. Anyone who's remotely normal either change or leave.] Cayla mused as Alice paused before agreeing.

'Do you think we'll ever get normal people?'

[Do you think you'll ever stop drinking?]

'No.'

[There's your answer. Our path is not one from normality. Even if it was at one point, it's long gone.] Cayla shrugged.

Only insane people can join Alice on this journey. Normal people have long left and are no longer in sight.

'Pft that's fair.' Alice smiled.

While her journey and 'freedom' may not have been what she originally expected while contained within that white room, she wouldn't trade it for anything.

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". . ."

". . ."

"What's wrong ya little sh*t? Having doubt?" Rosalyn smirked as the three of them stood on a hill.

"I wouldn't necessary say that doubt is the right word. Rather concerns about the power of my supposed target." Ria's smile twitched seeing the scene in front of her.

In the distance, a colossal storm dominated the landscape, a warning for those that wanted to approach.

It felt as though the realm itself was collapsing in this maelstrom of lightning and destruction with thunder roaring every so often. A spiral of clouds and electricity descended, forming a strange tree of sorts.

Veins of lightning that acted as the branches seemed frozen in time, expanding yet retracting. A pulse of violet and rose hues, glows that filtered through the clouds.

The skies churned and the earth trembled.

This was the supposed nest of the Sky Sovereign.

Despite being so far away, Ria could already feel the static electricity running through her skin as a chill ran down her spine.

To think a six star beast could cause this kind of phenomenon, truly deserving of its title as Sovereign.

"Honestly you're in luck you know that right? To make a nest like this, the beast must be close to death. It's trying to warn people off by threatening them with a boundary where it can use its power to the max." Rosalyn whistled with a grin.

"You call that lucky???" Ria shouted, pointing at a beast in the distance.

It seemed rather strong with a bulky body but the moment it approached, countless strikes of lightning crashed down, erasing it in an instant.

"I said the beast was near death not that it can't kill you. Even a near death sovereign can kill random bozo's 20 times before they even approach. Good luck~" Rosalyn shrugged, waving her parasol as blood surged around her.

Watching Rosalyn disappear, Ria let out a deep sigh and glanced back at the maelstrom painting the horizon with the colours of death and fear.

Chapter 663 - 663: Lightning Field

Giving her body a stretch, Ria pulled her hair back and tied it into a pony tail.

In order to reach the maelstrom, she had to first traverse this lightning field that can kill her with a single strike. Not only that, but in order to fight the beast, she needed Luke with her.

His buffs were indispensable if she wanted a chance at success.

"Give me a speed buff, I'm going to see what requirements there are for this lightning to strike." Ria asked as Luke summoned Rook and King piece.

Feeling the power flow through her body, Ria narrowed her gaze as electricity crackled across her body and she dashed forward!

The instant she stepped onto the field, her eyes widened as she felt the coils of lightning forming above her, creating a marker of sorts.

It was similar to how she activates one of her own abilities.

Gritting her teeth, she summoned her blade.

Raikiri!

Twisting her body, she slashed up, unleashing an arc of lightning.

*RUMBLE!!!

From above, lightning crashed down, colliding into Ria's attack.

But to her horror, her arc was shattered in an instant with no resistance!

'I need to dodge!'

"Ria!" Luke shouted, applying the Knight and Bishop piece from afar.

Increase attack and spell buff!

Clenching her fist, she punched the ground next to her, creating an explosion that sent her body rolling away, narrowly avoiding the lightning.

However, it wasn't done.

The charges were still being stacked above her.

Since this was the case, she'll figure out how to counter this attack. If she didn't, Luke will never be able to follow her into the maelstrom.

Especially when she's this far away from the centre of the storm.

As the charges reach the threshold once more, a second strike crashed down towards Ria who condensed several motes of lightning into a singular orb.

Directly clashing with the attack is off the table.

The fact that her Raikiri, buffed with Luke's pieces, shattered apart like nothing was a clear testament of the power difference.

But there is still a way for the weaker force to direct the flow of the stronger force!

Since they were both lightning, she simply had to take advantage of that fact!

Tossing the orb of power into the sky, Ria summoned her blade once more and cut it in half!

Two spikes of lightning shot around her, generating a charge far bigger than the one above her head!

***BANG!!!**

The lightning above immediately split into three, targeting all the charges present as a smile appeared on Ria's face.

This defensive boundary was automatic. Applying a charge to anything that breathes. But if she can make a false charge at the last moment, she'll split up the lightning enough so that she could deal with it!

With her initial spikes robbing most of the power away, Ria slashed up, dispelling the final lightning strike.

Her hands were still trembling a little which caused sweat to form on her head but it was manageable!

As the next strike of lightning crashed down from above, Ria repeated the same process but this time, she tried to make three spikes of equal strength.

*BANG!!!

Gritting her teeth, she took a deep breath.

'Two is the limit. Three doesn't give me enough time to charge them up properly.'

Jumping back to Luke to avoid the lightning strikes, they began to plan.

"Right now, if I were to make orbs on the fly, two is the limit and that only works for one person.

"If we both go at the same time, this wouldn't work. I won't be able to fend off the lightning coming at us since it'll still hold the power of one full strike. And as you saw earlier, my Raikiri was destroyed without a chance to even move it." Ria frowned as Luke folded his arms.

"What if you make these orbs ahead of time?"

"Maybe. But this is a lot of distance to cover. You also got to remember that if I was to carry super charged orbs while running through this field, lightning might come down faster and stronger." Ria created an orb and tossed it towards the field.

Since it was already 'charged', lightning crashed down twice as fast.

"I could try turning myself to lightning in order to teleport but since it's foreign energy, I'm not sure if I'll take damage from it or not. And I'm not keen to find out either." Ria sighed.

Her fourth Sigil is strong. Very strong in fact since it allows her to travel through lightning itself.

Whether that be her own or natural lightning.

But this? This was far from natural. As the attacks belonging to the sky sovereign, there was no guarantee of her safety if she was to try and travel through it.

Hell, there was even a chance that she'll be immediately vapourised the moment she stepped in.

Thinking about this point, both of them groaned.

Tapping his fingers against the ground, Luke glanced over at the field and had an idea.

"What if I used Castling? The King piece is a piece that I can designate on a lot of different things." He suggested.

"Depends, can you use it in quick succession?"

"Fair point." Luke sighed.

In the end, Ria decided to experiment a little.

If they wanted to traverse this field, she needed to probe and figure out the rules. Patience was key and trying to brute force it would welcome her death.

There were three key points she needed to figure out.

One: How fast this charge builds up and how the different items affect this charge.

The fastest accumulation of charge is through her using a decoy that she creates herself. This causes a near instantaneous strike. Humans take a bit longer while objects seemed to be untouched to a certain extent.

Two: How they can use Luke's swaps to have the two of them reach the centre of this field.

With her speed, if it wasn't for the worry of lightning striking them down, it'll take less than a minute for her to reach the centre of this storm from the outside.

But because this lightning was a permanent lingering threat, she couldn't put all of her focus into speed.

Three: Frequency of strikes and whether or not the Sovereign could consciously control it once they get close to the centre.

Right now, they were working on the assumption that the lightning was fully automatic with the Sovereign being unaware of what they were going to do.

But if it was to take over at the last moment, their gimmicks and tricks will be destroyed in an instant. With that kind of risk, Ria needed to make sure they have a backup plan.

Then there was also the case of Luke's castling having a small range limit along with the fact that he needs to establish a board.

Facing the storm, Luke was silent.

He was recording the different methods they had available to them, the possible uses and what he could do to allow them to traverse this field.

'If Ria uses her lightning swap, charge is built up faster.

'She could send out decoys but there's only two maximum at any given moment. Anymore and she won't have enough time to create more. If I can delay the strike, she'll be able to possibly create four decoys, giving us enough leeway for her to deflect the strikes.' Luke thought to himself.

However. . .

"Ria, you know how if you make three decoys, you can't fend off the main one?" Luke asked as Ria nodded her head.

"What if you don't have to fend off the main one? There's a. . . Potential gamble we can do. Create three decoys, split the lightning.

"At the last possible moment, I'll swap your location with your decoy and have you face the weaker strike while the decoy takes the strongest strike in the middle. It doesn't matter if the smaller decoys can't divert all the power since I'll focus on castling at the right moment." Luke suggested.

Thinking about it for a moment, Ria agreed with his plan.

They began to test the base threshold that the decoys needed to hit in order to divert a small section of the lightning.

One large charge to simulate Ria, one small charge to simulate the decoy.

Throwing both into the field, Luke took a deep breath and deployed his board before designating the pieces.

'Hold. . . ' He focused on the charge being built.

Already, he could see the lightning crashing down at alarming speeds.

But he couldn't do it just yet.

'Hold. . .'

The timing had to be precise. Too early and the lightning will change its course. Too slow and they get hit regardless.

Right as the lightning was about to hit the orb, Luke clenched his fist.

Castling!

The two charges swapped positions as the main source of lightning showed signs of trying to arc to the side but it was too late. It struck the weaker charge, destroying it and dispersing while the stronger charge took on the weaker lightning strike, absorbing it!

Seeing that it worked, Ria gave Luke a high five as they continued to experiment.

They had two methods of swapping.

Ria's lightning and his Castling.

If they space out their swaps, traversing this field was possible!

Watching everything with a relaxed posture, Rosalyn smiled seeing Luke figure out a loophole of sorts. A method where they can avoid the most dangerous strike.

"Atta boy." She chuckled.

They had to be capable of at least this much if they wanted to defeat a Sovereign titled beast.

Chapter 664 - 664: I Dream Of A Peaceful Village

I dream of a peaceful village. One that I hold dear.

The children sing hymns of my power, my protection. The adults bring me gifts of sustenance and grandeur.

They made me a home, worshipped me as their guardian and I saw them as children apart of my nest.

I defended them from the evils of this world, the beasts that wish to do nothing but tear them apart.

One day, a young boy had asked me this.

"Guardian beast o' guardian beast. Why do these beasts hunt us so? You protect us with your wings yet they seek to rip us apart with their fangs."

A question that lingered on my mind.

I was the strange one to ally myself with beings that I should hunt. To give them shelter, to give them warmth.

But perhaps it's because I saw the peace within this village that I chose to do so.

It had taken me a long time to reply to that boy for I was unsure of the answer myself.

The cycle of hunter and the hunted. It's one that I've seen repeated many times yet now I sought to change that.

I did not hunt, I was not hunted.

I simply stood by this peaceful village in blissful monotony.

When I open my eyes to greet the morning sun, my heart is at peace.

I am not welcomed with fear, I am praised with reverence.

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I dream of a peaceful village. One that is forever irreplaceable.

The children have become thin. The offerings have decreased.

I see the seeds of doubt, the uncertainty in the eyes of the adults.

Then I understand. To keep them safe does not only require me to defeat the dangers lurking around the edges. I must solve their issue of hunger.

A drought had hit, the harvest suffered. Beasts were keeping their distance and what little they hunt is not enough.

As the guardian, I have to protect this village.

I gave words of reassurance. Proclamations on how I will help them resolve their issue.

With a single beat of my wings, I soared into the cloudless sky.

I summon thunder, I summon death. But I cannot give life.

Therefore, I must strike a bargain.

I am not the only beast around here. Like me, there is another endowed with intelligence. A beast that could be reasoned with.

Rainveil Aetherdrake.

A neighbour of sorts. A beast that soars through the skies, commanding the very clouds themselves. Her song calls the storms, her breath births typhoons and her tears bring about ceaseless rain.

I heard of whispers in the air.

How she was called the lady of wind and sea.

With her, I will strike a bargain. With her, I will have her give the rain that my children seek.

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A bargain has been struck.

In exchange for protection and safety within my home, the beast will bless the land with rain and wind.

To revitalise the dying land and bring joy back to my children.

At first, my children feared. They see an unfamiliar beast behind me.

Regardless of whether or not she's called the lady of wind and sea, they see a potential threat.

But under my reassurance, they accepted her presence.

She soared into the sky, sending down the long awaited rain.

Once more, the children began to laugh.

Once more, they danced and sung hymns.

But this time, the Rainveil Aetherdrake was involved.

I can see the reluctance in her eyes. To her, this was simply a bargain of preservation under my wing. To seek the protection of someone stronger. But to the children of this village, she was their saving grace.

She now had their gratitude.

"Why is it that you protect these humans?" She had asked on an uneventful afternoon.

"A whim. Though now, it's because I treat them as my children." I replied.

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I dream of a peaceful village. One that occupied a corner of my heart.

Whatever my children require, I obtained for their sake. A verdant forest, a flowing river.

I had struck another bargain with a beast of wood.

By now, we were three guardian beasts of this land. Gods worshipped by their word of mouth.

Though I tell them we were not gods. Like them, we are simply mortals in another form, trying out best in this harsh world.

On deaf ears do my words fall. But I cannot help but smile from their praise.

To them, I am the parent who raise them, giving them everything that they sought.

To me, they are my darling children. I watch them grow up, fall in love and start their own family.

The boy who had once asked me the question that stumped me was now a man. He brought to me his daughter, asked me to bless her with a name and so I did.

Watching him grow up so fast brought a smile to my face.

This peace, I loved it.

Perhaps I was destined for something greater. The dark mother has given me the title of sovereign.

But I wish for nothing more than this.

A simple village under my care, my children happy and fed.

That's all I desire.

My heart is content.

If the world can birth such a blessing, then it might not be so bad.

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I dream of a peaceful village. One that I will give my all.

All the love in my heart, all of my care.

Venaris, the Aetherdrake, now shared the same sentiment.

At first, she was reluctant to show them favour but their love has pierced her cold exterior.

Her words may be biting and cold but her actions are filled with warmth.

Another family had asked her to bless their child with a name for they were saved by her in the past. Had it not been for her rain, they would've starved.

"Hmph, I am fatigued right now. Come back tomorrow and see if you still wish for me to do so." She replied coldly.

But that night, I could see her toiling back and forth for a suitable name.

She debated on the meaning, whether or not it sounded good. Would she be mocked for that name?

Hours on end did she spend deep in thought yet she didn't show that side to the others.

As morning came, the family returned early in the day.

Venaris panicked from their arrival but kept a calm exterior.

Casually, she blessed the child with a name and even summoned a light drizzle to bless her.

Seeing the family's satisfaction, she sat straight with a proud smile.

"Would it not be better for you to show your affection openly? Why keep it a secret that you didn't sleep a single wink last night." Halric smiled with a hearty laugh. He was the third of the guardian beasts.

He spoke the words in my heart and embarrassment spread across Venaris's face.

"Shut up you old fool! What do you mean I didn't sleep?! I slept like a log!"

Hearing this, the family laughed in joy, seeing Venaris put this much importance on the act of bestowing a name.

As the first of the guardian beasts, I am deeply content.

The bickering between Venaris and Halric, while harsh in words, was filled with affection towards each other. Towards this village.

###

I dream of a peaceful village. It now prospered within this desert wasteland. A utopia with everything they need.

I see travellers bringing trade. They marvelled at the village we have created, the harmonic life between man and beast.

By this point, we three guardian beasts have learned the art of humanoid transformation to better walk amongst the people we swore to protect.

We greeted the travellers and they gave us the respect that we showed to them.

Venaris was the playful one, she often visited the family who desired her blessings as the maiden of rain. She brought the children on her back to soar the skies.

Halric took a dignified form.

Those who wanted his protection was shielded from the harsh sun and given shade. He created swings on his branches, allowing the children to play.

I took the form of a mother. With my lightning, I defended this village.

With my powers, I protected my children with everything I got.

I was the guardian, the icon of power. Men who wished to protect this village with their own hands asked me for blessings.

I shared with them a slither of my power, the blessing of lightning. I allowed them to hunt with their own hands to defend this village.

We three guardian beasts saw ourselves as part of this village.

All of us were family.

###

I dream of the approaching ruin.

Followers of the Sun branding us as a heretical cult.

They claim that the villagers had been brainwashed, forced to do our bidding as slaves. On their crusade of righteousness, they will cleanse this corrupted land.

Enraged by their proclamations, Venaris was the first to lash out but Halric held her back.

Fighting head on would only be playing right into their hand.

###

I dream of a day of sorrow.

Venaris stood at the village entrance.

She stared at the box filled with the corpse of those who sought her blessing.

They had tried to reason with the followers of the Sun only be greeted with death.

The winds howled, the rain poured.

Venaris was enraged.

Her cries filled the sky as she soared with tears in her eyes.

She vowed vengeance, she vowed death.

She vowed to kill whoever dare lay a hand on her children.

I rushed after Venaris for I am the fastest of the three. Halric was better suited to defend our home.

But by the time I came to Venaris's aid, it was already too late.

I saw the lifeless expression on Venaris's face as her head was severed from her body. I watched as they tore out her wings and crippled her limbs.

I had watched as Venaris try everything to take down as many of them as she could.

I saw a sea of crimson.

###

I dream of a scorched earth. The corpse of Halric crackling with flames as no life was left in my home.

I see the charred remains of the family who first asked for my blessing.

Holding each other tightly, praying that I would save them. I see them clutching a pendant with my icon.

I...

I will kill them all.

I will kill those that dare rob my children of their freedom.

I will kill the blasted followers of the sun that branded them as heretics

I will burn their city to the ground with the fury of lightning!

Chapter 665 - 665: Nyzel's Curse

*Rumble!

Within the field of lightning, two figures could be seen flickering back and forth between different bolts of lightning.

Their positions ever changing, narrowly dodging the might of heaven striking down from above.

"Ria!" Luke shouted, activating castling as the two of them switched places.

Diverting the lightning using her decoys, Ria clashed against the weakened bolts and pushed them off to the side.

Cold sweat dripped down her face as she could feel the strength of the lightning increase.

With each step they took closer to the centre, the speed of which the lightning would charge increased drastically.

What could be considered somewhat of a simple stroll earlier was now a battle between life and death with each step.

Having just parried a bolt, Ria didn't waste any time and teleported herself forward once more.

'Just a bit more!'

They had already traversed roughly 80% of this field while making sure the lightning wouldn't strike them at the same time.

By carefully planning out the intervals, they were able to make it this far without any damage.

But the safe intervals were beginning to disappear with the increase in charge.

At this rate, Ria estimated that reaching the 90% mark meant that each bolt of lightning would constantly strike at them.

Meaning that last 10% had to be done in an instant!

Activating her resonance, energy surged within Ria's body as she created two blades.

Shinsei Raikiri!

Destroying the next arc of lightning, she stabbed the blades into the ground before using them as a foothold.

*BANG!!!

Her entire body transformed into a singular bolt of lightning, rushing forward and splitting the earth in half.

Behind her, Luke snapped his finger.

Castling!

Swapping locations with Ria, he guarded himself with the knight piece as she created new tethers towards her blades now that she had teleported behind them.

The final 10%.

A distance that had to be traversed in an instant or else it meant death!

'Do I turn back? Do I go forward?' That split moment, Ria felt as though she was facing a crossroad.

She could tell that the next strike would kill if they didn't dodge.

After so many close calls with death in her life, she was distinctively aware of her own mortality.

But.

If they turn back now, there was no guarantee that the power of the lightning would weaken.

What if on the way back, the charge persists? And they had to survive this kind of storm for the rest of the 90% back.

In which case, there was only one clear answer.

Forward!

Do not hesitate, do not falter. Keep charging forward!

Coils of lightning manifested in front of her as she blitzed towards Luke.

Several orbs of condensed lightning converged towards her body.

Naturally, this meant the charge was gathered in an instant as lightning crashed down from above. But Ria wanted this!

This final stretch of power that she needed.

She'll borrow it from the storm!

Clenching her fist, she twisted her body and kicked the charges towards the Knight's shield.

*BANG!!!

As the lightning struck, an explosion sent Ria crashing back while Luke and the knight was propelled forward.

Castling!

Swapping Ria and the knight's location, Luke quickly shielded her with his body as the two of them were thrown past the final stretch of the storm.

They could see the charge of lightning preparing to strike but it never came.

Letting out a sigh of relief, the two of them laid on the ground for a moment to catch their breath before sitting up.

"I do NOT. Want to do that kind of crap again." Ria panted.

That last moment, if they were any slower, that final strike would've landed and both of them would become char.

Sitting up, the two of them stared towards the eye of the storm.

It felt as though air was forcefully extracted from their lungs as they sat in awe. Suspended amidst the sea of golden light shining down from above, a verdant city revealed itself. An array of floating islands, each with their own forest above and ruins of what seemed to be a prosperous civilisation.

Waterfalls that cascaded towards the ground before being recycled as rain, rainbows that hung above the rivers and lakes.

Each island bore intricate towers with icons and statues that overlooked the city. Some were broken and some in good condition.

And on the main island, flashes of purple lightning could be seen striking the centre.

"Seems like this is the Sky Sovereign's home. Or at least what seems to be its old home." Luke mumbled as Ria nodded her head in agreement.

She recalled the stories she saw of the beast.

Had. . . Had the sun church not involved themselves, perhaps this city would be a cornerstone of the world. A symbol that reason can be spoken between man and beast rather than a few exceptions like Rosalyn.

But all of that was in the past now.

The reality of the current situation was that the Sky Sovereign was now killing everything and anything.

Taking a deep breath, Ria calmed her mind.

Do not hesitate. She chose this path.

Resolving herself, Ria made her way towards the closest island with Luke following behind her.

###

I dreamed of the past. A period of time that is irreplaceable. My friends, my family.

All of it, reduced to cinders.

I'm tired. . .

I have killed countless. I have gotten vengeance. But the church still stands for the foundation of their doctrine lies in the divine throne of the Gods.

. .

I cannot kill a god.

For I am a mere mortal.

Oh Venaris. . .oh Halric. . . What should I do?

You two were the ones to give me council when I needed.

I may be the first of the guardian beasts but you two made it possible to get to where we were.

Was this my punishment for going against my design?

The dark mother wished a Lord yet I played house. I created a family, looked after the humans whom I consider my children.

Was it my actions that brought them to ruin?

There is no more village to look after yet I carry its ruins with me.

There is no one here to enjoy this oasis yet I maintain the verdant forests.

There is no one left to kill yet I cannot fill this void in my heart.

There is nothing left.

This pain. . .

This sorrow. . .

It hurts.

The feeling of a knife tearing apart my chest, I hate it.

Why must I know love is the world tears it out so brutally?

I should just end it all.

I should just follow my purpose.

I shall become the Sky Sovereign and bring death as I was designed to do.

These wings do not bring life, these talons cannot protect.

I can only kill.

I weep for my dearly departed for I am alone in this world.

I wake, I kill, I sleep.

I wake, I kill, I sleep.

I wake, I kill, I kill.

I kill, I kill, I kill.

I will keep killing. I will follow my design.

Forgive me dark mother. I will not rebel against you again.

I will do what I am told, follow the commands I am given.

So please. . .

Give them back to me.

I beg.

My family. . . They shouldn't have died like that. Their death was unjust.

So please, anything, I will do anything.

Just give them back to me.

On deaf ears do my prayers fall.

For I know the time had long pass.

Had I become a Lord, had I follow my design, maybe I could've protected them.

But the dead cannot return.

A gentle touch I feel on my tattered wings and I force my gaze to open.

A faceless silhouette caressing my feathers. The image of the boy that believed in me with everything he got.

After all these years, the faces have begun to fade.

I cannot remember their voices.

I cannot remember their expressions.

I can't even remember Venaris or Halric.

I can't remember any of them anymore.

But I know. I know they existed. Even if I forget their faces, even if I forget their voices, I know what must be done.

Will they be disappointed with my slaughter? Their beloved guardian beast reduced to nothing but a killing machine.

Will their gazes of reverence be turned to disgust and disappointment? Perhaps it's better that I don't remember.

I rear my wounded head.

Two souls have entered my home.

Invaders. . .

They have breached the boundary that I have set.

One. . . Holds the aura of the dark mother.

I see. . . My time has arrived.

She desires that my soul be returned to the soil.

But I will not fall so easily. Dark mother o' dark mother, you have taken everything from me.

Why must you reject me once more? Why must you call for my death?

Why must you authorise this human to come claim my head?

So many if's and why's. Questions that never receive an answer.

But perhaps this is not so bad. I sense the divinity of chaos on her. The Cult of the Eclipse that detests the Sun.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

If my death is unavoidable, let it be by the hands of a worthy soul.

I will curse thee that claim my head.

Kill! Maim! Burn!

Raze this realm to the ground!

Reduce it to cinders!

Tear the head of the Sun's followers from their bodies and mount it on the highest peak!

A river of blood for the God who burned my home to the ground!

A throne of bones for the God who took my beloved!

He will witness the despair of his believers as they realise their god cannot save them from my wrath!

He will witness as his legion crumbles to dust!

I am Nyzel! The Sky Sovereign!

And I will bring about endless chaos against the Sun.

Chapter 666 - 666: Garden Of Silence

Getting up to the floating islands wasn't difficult by any means.

Especially now that the lightning has stopped trying to kill them.

However, reaching the centre was a different issue. Ria didn't want to rush in blindly to face the Sovereign.

Navigating through the ruins, she couldn't help but marvel at the layout of the place.

A ruin it may be but even the passage of time couldn't hide the care that had once gone into this city.

The carvings on the wall may be eroded but what little was left showed only achievable by master craftsman with weeks of dedication.

Tracing her finger along the carvings on the wall, Ria was silent.

"Time is fair on everyone. It doesn't care who you are or what you are, everything gets swept away." Luke muttered, picking up the remains of what seemed to be metal contraptions.

"Time is fair but humans are a catalyst for change. From the stories we read, if it wasn't for the Sun's intervention, maybe this place would've lasted a lot longer." Ria sighed.

"Even for supposedly immortal beings, once humans get involved and you lose your monotony, time will sweep away your corpse regardless of what you achieved in life."

Shaking her head, Ria continued her way through the city.

There were no treasures to be gotten and even if there were, she didn't want them.

She was already here to kill their old guardian beast that's fallen into madness. Any more would be disrespecting the dead who were wronged by the Sun church.

###

The floating islands were positioned in a way that acted as a boundary of sorts.

The first ring was the lightning field that kept the outsiders away.

The second was the empty space that allowed one to marvel at the city.

The third was the city itself that surrounded the centre.

The fourth. . .

"This. . ." Luke was hesitant.

"Mnm. . . It's a graveyard."

An expanse of stones amidst a field of blue and violet flowers. A silence that stretched on for eternity symbolising the fact that the dead will not speak again.

A starlit ocean of lavender and peony flowers that swayed gently from the wind.

Each stone stood tall and solemn, carved with the history of whoever is buried beneath.

Perhaps a graveyard was too cruel of a description. To Ria, it felt more like a gentle garden. Decorated with care, and each gravestone was placed with thought.

She glanced at the first three that she could see.

Names of a family.

Mother, father, daughter.

All three were placed side by side surrounded by a bed of flowers.

Messages dedicated to the family was etched in each stone.

It wasn't just the first few stones either.

Every single stone, every single message was different.

This. . . Garden.

Was handled delicately.

The biggest stones were placed in the centre.

Three in fact that looked over the others.

The first was placed in front of a statue of a woman.

She had long hair that flowed behind her and a pair of horns. Signs of scales on the edges of her face and a gentle yet cheerful smile.

"Here lies Venaris, the maiden of rain. Second of the Guardian Beasts." Ria muttered, reading the engraving.

"She brought about the rain when we needed it the most. She represented the reward after our hardship. The oasis in the desert. The smile that brought about light in deepest darkness. Though her actions were cold, she loved this place more than anyone.

"Let the storms sing your lullaby, let the winds remember your name. May the sky cradle you ever more.

"Venaris, sister not of my blood. I pray that your spirit soars the boundless blue."

Reading the engraving, Ria could see the slight tremble within each word. She could see the sorrow behind the one who had to carve all of these by hand.

One by one until this field was full.

The second statue showed a dignified old man standing tall. Despite his tall stature, he didn't look imposing. Rather, there was a gentle air around him. He felt like the home that sheltered you from the outside world.

"Here rests Halric, warden of the forest. Third of the Guardian Beasts

"He brought life to the desert, a verdant forest within the harsh wastelands. He showed that even in the harshest conditions, life can persist. The guiding hand that will help us up should we ever fall.

"Let the groves whisper your memory, let the moss keep your peace. May the forest open its heart to you ever more.

"Halric, brother not of my blood. I pray that your spirit walks the endless green." Ria traced her finger along the words.

Her eyes were downcast as a new form of bitterness filled her heart.

Then there was the third stone.

Empty and devoid of carvings but the statue behind the stone showed Ria the first of the three guardians.

A gentle woman with a motherly smile. She could tell that this statue was crafted with the greatest care, the one that started it all.

"Seems like this one. . . Nyzel reserved for herself." Luke muttered after a pause as Ria nodded her head in agreement.

Closing her eyes, Ria understood the true weight of what she was about to do. Clenching her first, she began to hesitate.

***RUMBLE!!!**

Dark clouds loomed overhead as Ria instantly raised her guard.

She could feel a threatening aura filling the space as Luke did the same and summoned his chess pieces.

Both of them felt cold chills down their spine, the eyes of death that bore into them.

Standing atop the hill, she was there.

Nyzel the Sky Sovereign.

A towering beast of lightning with wings that blocked out the sky. The feathers along her body shimmered with the crackling of lightning as pulses of energy could be seen beneath the surface.

Just her presence caused the air to become charged with lightning, ready to strike out at any moment.

It was a different kind of feeling facing a sovereign that wasn't holding her aura back at all.

Nyzel was an unsheathed blade pointed at their throat. One wrong move and it felt like everything would end.

It didn't matter how many scars were across her body, the wounds that have yet to fully heal.

It still wasn't a beast that couldn't be taken lightly and it was clear that she knew why they were here, what they were here for.

"So you wish to claim my head? My power?"

Nyzel was the one that spoke first. Her words were cold and biting, each laced with an underlying anger and fury yet barely restrained by her eerie calmness.

Ria wanted to respond but what could she say?

She was here to kill? She was here to plunder her power?

Perhaps it would've been better if she didn't read about the stories of the past.

Perhaps it would've been better if she didn't see the graveyard.

She felt pity for the beast. Pity for the things that she had lost.

A wound on the heart was clear for her to see.

Nyzel saw the shadows of hesitation, the sadness in Ria's gaze despite being here to claim her head.

She felt as though she was looking at her children of the past.

"Do what you have come here to do, child. But let us not fight here. I do not wish to disturb my family's slumber, they do not deserve to have a battle fought where they're meant to rest."

With a swirl of lightning, the three of them were transported from the graveyard and directly to the top of the spire that overlooked the ruins.

With them now being in an arena, Ria took a deep breath.

But there was one last thing she wanted to ask.

She wanted to question this beast who was clearly endowed with intelligence and love.

"Why? Why did you involve the innocent? You could've just gone after the Sun Church! You didn't need to burn down the other cities, to cull the masses. Your goal is vengeance so why not direct it at the right people?!" Ria shouted.

If it did that, then maybe she wouldn't be designated as a bounty.

Maybe things wouldn't have needed to be this way.

Tilting her head at Ria's question, Nyzel let out a laugh.

"Justification. Don't people need justification? Child, if I were to cull the masses, the Sun would send his devotes towards me like moths to a flame. The justification to wipe me out despite being called a guardian beast.

"Whoever they send, I kill. The more I kill, the more they send. I do not wish to be left alone, there's nothing for me. I will spend the last spark of my life doing what I am created to do. That is to kill. Nothing more, nothing less. So come child, do what you've come here to do.

"There is no need for words, there is no need for you to feel pity. You will either kill me and take my power or I will kill you and await my next executioner.

"I may be riddled with wounds, covered by scars, but do not think for a moment that I will fall easily. For my heart burns with the fires of anger. To kill me is to inherit my anger, so prove to me that you can withstand my fury."

*RUMBLE!!!

Lightning crashed down on Nyzel as she manifested in her human form.

In the blink of an eye, she had already appeared in front of Ria as violet lightning crackled in her hands and a spear stabbed towards her!

Widening her eyes, Ria wanted to quickly get away but a violet cage of lightning restrained her movement!

Castling!

Quickly swapping Ria with a knight piece, Luke watched as his piece had the upper half obliterated without a chance of resistance.

A sadistic smile appeared on Nyzel's face as the light of madness covered her eyes.

No more words needed to be said. No more words could be said.

The Hunt had begun!

Chapter 667 - 667: Ria Vs Nyzel

With Nyzel now out for blood, Ria understood that she couldn't hold back!

Everything had to be used!

"LUKE! EVERYTHING!" Ria shouted as lightning crashed down on her, activating her first resonance!

"Understood!"

Jumping back, Luke clenched his fist and 6 chess pieces shot towards Ria.

Pawn – Base stats up!

Knight – Attack buff!

Bishop – Spell rang and power buff!

Rook – Speed and defence buff!

Queen – Multiplication!

King – All buffs increase and resonance enhancement!

With Ria now at full power, she created a blade and launched her counterattack!

"Hehe~" Smiling from the fact that Ria was now showing some spirit, Nyzel slashed down with her hand, tearing a rift in space!

An arc of raw power burst out, surprising Ria as she quickly parried it off to the side!

*BANG!!!

But despite her successful parry, she could see razor slashes across her arms.

With Ria's guard broken momentarily, Nyzel aimed her spear and took a single step forward.

*RUMBLE!!!

Like a clap of thunder, her form shot towards Ria.

Gritting her teeth, Ria unleashed a wild discharge of lightning as her body flickered through the different sources, avoiding Nyzel's strike but she was unphased.

Her strike continued towards Luke!

Castling!

Swapping positions between him and Nyzel, Luke slid back and snapped his fingers, summoning the Bishop piece.

Void Flux!

"Garbage!" Nyzel shouted, twisting her body and unleashing a horizontal slash with her spear, cutting the Void Flux in half and forcing it to detonate early!

But the arc didn't stop there!

Even after destroying the Void Flux, the arc continued towards Luke!

Promotion! Paladin!

Combining his pieces to form the paladin piece, Luke ducked down in case the piece couldn't hold on.

Fortunately, he did so. After all, the arc of energy shredded his paladin piece apart, slamming into the wall!

"Holy sh*t! Is everything she does a one hit one kill?!?!" Luke couldn't help but pale when imagining what could've happened.

"It's a sovereign! What do you expect!" Ria shouted, slashing down from above but Nyzel weaved past it with ease.

Twisting her body, she slammed her heel towards Ria who also weaved but unlike her, Nyzel's attack detonated at the end, launching Ria tumbling across the floor.

Sliding for a good few meters before she forced herself to stand up, Ria quickly scanned her eyes across the arena before looking up.

*BANG!!!

Nyzel could be seen floating in the air as she sent down countless lightning bolts striking towards Ria.

Lightning Grid!

Slamming her hands down, Ria created several nodes around her as her body flickered across them, avoiding all of the strikes.

Seeing this, Nyzel let out a hearty laugh.

Indeed. Someone after her head should be capable of this much.

Someone who will inherit her rage should be capable of this!

Twisting her body, she threw her spear towards where Ria would teleport.

*CLANG!!!

Caught off guard, Ria barely managed to parry it off to the side when Nyzel appeared behind her spear, kicking it towards Ria for a second strike!

Castling!

Both Ria and Nyzel had their positions swapped as Nyzel quickly leaned back to avoid her own spear before catching it.

Shinsei Raikiri!

Using this change, Ria funnelled as much as her power as she could into the next strike.

*BANG!!!

An arc of raw destruction energy lashed forward with Nyzel clasping her hands together, catching the blade!

Lightning attacked Ria's blade from the side, crushing it and stopping the attack in its tracks!

Widening her eyes in shock, Ria gritted her teeth and abandoned her weapon.

This was a wounded sovereign! Yet despite being wounded and fatigued, she was still able to crush her strongest attack!

Flicking her hand to dispel the lightning, Nyzel grinned as lightning crashed down on her body.

Appearing next to Luke, energy crackled on her hand as she reached for a grab towards his neck!

Castling! Void Flux!

Swapping positions with the bishop piece, Luke detonated a Void Flux in front of Nyzel.

Within the cloud of smoke, three lightning blades shot towards him!

"Your target is me!" Ria shouted, appearing in front of Luke as she slashed up with her blade.

*CRACKLE!!!!

As the two sources of lightning collided, Ria flinched from the power.

Just as she thought it was manageable, the second lightning blade collided with the first.

"Three fold lightning." Nyzel spoke calmly.

"!!!"

*RUMBLE!!!

In an instant, Ria was almost blown back by the force of the strike!

Each sword that collides with one another was an act of amplification!

'If that's the case. . . !!!'

Seeing the third that was about to hit, Ria instinctively twisted her body and threw the attack into the air.

*BANG!!!

The moment the third blade struck, a torrent of crackling energy shot forward, destroying a portion of the arena as cold sweat dripped down Ria's back.

Had she continued to block it, she'd be dead!

"Any plans?" Luke asked as he created a new pawn piece, ready for promotion.

"If I had a plan, do you think we'd be struggling like this?"

"So winging it like usual?"

"Naturally." Ria admitted.

Looking at Nyzel who was walking towards them calmly, they couldn't help but feel a chill. The way the lightning was bending to her will, the dark clouds that loomed overhead.

This is a Sovereign that had fought basically without rest up till now. Wounded and exhausted.

But even in this state, one hit was enough to kill them.

There was no plan, only instinct and combat experience. She hoped that it'll be enough.

"For now, just keep swinging. Even if you miss, I'll sort something out." Luke took a deep breath as Ria nodded her head.

*RUMBLE!!!

Lightning erupted from Ria's body once more as she rushed forward.

"Three fold lightning." Nyzel grinned.

Twisting her body, she slashed towards Ria using her spear.

Behind it, after images created from lightning manifested as Ria blocked the first strike.

*CLANG!!!

As the second after image collided with the main body, the force of her swing increased drastically as Ria flipped into the air to avoid the rest.

Mid flip, she twisted her body and unleashed an arc of destructive energy towards Nyzel who turned her body to the side.

En passant!

"!!!" Widening her eyes in surprise, Nyzel glanced at her arm with a cut along the length of it.

"Ah, so it's that kind of trick." She chuckled, licking her blood as her wounds slowly stitched itself back together.

It wasn't an obscene healing like what Caelan showed but it was still enough to worry Ria.

'The healing is slow. The wound is still there. She's simply repairing the surface.' Ria concluded from what she could observe.

So long as it stays like this, it's manageable!

Once more, Nyzel raised her hand as spears manifested and shot towards Ria.

Wrapping herself in a layer of her own protective lightning, she parried the first two off to the side before wrapping her leg around the third spear!

Twisting her body to generate momentum, she flung the spear back towards Nyzel, destroying the remaining spears sent her way.

"Do you think you can hurt me with my own power?" Nyzel asked curiously, flicking her finger and regaining control of the spear.

"Of course not." Ria replied, appearing within Nyzel's range and slashed up with her blade.

*BANG!!!

Catching the blade between her fingers, a halo of lightning coiled above Nyzel.

"Four fold lightning." She grinned menacingly as afterimages appeared behind her spare hand.

Castling!

Swapping Ria's position with his Rook piece, Luke watched as Nyzel's strike completely obliterated the piece without a chance of fighting back.

From above, Ria gathered six nodes as her eyes stared at Nyzel.

She could feel the energy flowing through her body, the power surging on her fingertips.

Amplification coils appeared between them as Ria aimed her sword.

With her resonance being enhanced along with Luke's queen piece, her next strike wasn't just going to hit once.

No, it'll hit multiple times all at full force!

Shinsei Raiki-

"I don't think so." Nyzel interrupted as her hand grabbed Ria's head.

Her form was similar to Ria, partially transformed into lightning as she had travelled through the coils!

Castling!

Just as Nyzel was about to slam Ria into the arena, their position was swapped with Ria now being behind Nyzel!

The coils compressed in an instant, turning into a singular array.

Shinsei Raikiri!

*BANG!!!!

A line of lightning energy stabbed through Nyzel's back as she was sent crashing into the arena.

Despite landing a good hit, Ria wasn't in a better position herself as that singular grab felt like it was enough to crush her skull.

Had it not been for her fifth Sigil helping her heal, she might've been out of commission from that hit.

Wiping away the blood, Ria wanted to prepare for the next strike when a storm of lightning crashed towards where Nyzel landed.

Shielding themselves from the explosions, both Ria and Luke frowned as Nyzel stepped out.

The wound was still there but it was recovering.

'Just one more stretch child. Do not despair, do not falter. Face this challenge with your body and soul. Show me that I can entrust my vengeance to you. Show me that I can finally rest and find my family.'
Nyzel thought with a smile before her face warped with fury.

Lightning erupted from her body as she plunged her hand into her own chest, ripping out a crackling orb of lightning before crushing it.

Around them, the world began to shift with dark clouds surging around the arena. The realm cried out in pain as Nyzel summoned her own realm!

A battle amidst the thundering clouds!

Chapter 668 - 668: Six Fold Lightning

As the light faded away, Ria and Luke finally saw the reality of Nyzel's realm.

A fractured sky split into three violet cracks.

The heavens tore apart like shattered glass, revealing the cosmic swirl of ominous energy flowing behind the cracks. A jagged spiral of lightning flickered through the gaps and struck against the tall obsidian pillars around them.

The ground cracked beneath their feet with floating pieces of debris crackling with electricity.

It felt like the first boundary they had to traverse but far far worse.

At the centre of this maelstrom, Nyzel stood. There was now a gaping hole in her chest but she paid it no mind. Instead, her energy continued to soar while being in this environment. The lightning that arced across the sky brought her satisfaction.

This was how it was always meant to be.

She was always meant to be the bringer of destruction. The icon of slaughter. The Sky Sovereign that brought terror to all who saw her.

Raising her hand, she narrowed her gaze.

"Five fold lightning."

At that moment, Ria felt the realm cry out around them as lightning converged towards their location.

"!!!"

Gritting her teeth, Ria mustered all of her energy in one split moment and slammed her hand down!

A cage erupted around the two, forming a network of pathways where the lightning could travel away from them.

Shocked by the speed of the cage's deployment, Ria glanced down at her hands and forced herself to smile.

This environment wasn't beneficial to just Nyzel. With her being also focused on lightning, this realm was helping her accumulate the charge she needed.

Of course, the benefits she received couldn't be compared to what Nyzel receives but it was better than nothing.

"I won't be able to use castling too much since I'm focusing on making sure she doesn't just kill us." Luke reminded. In a clash of two personal realms, he had to make sure his doesn't collapse.

Once it does, Nyzel will be able to freely manipulate this realm as she pleases.

"Got it!"

Creating several lightning nodes, Ria shot them towards Nyzel as her figure began to teleport through the nodes.

Seeing this, Nyzel snapped her finger and created a halo of lightning behind her.

Immediately, the clouds around them began to rumble with flashes of lightning striking towards Ria.

Lightning grid!

Creating a network of nodes, Ria's eyes darted around her as she nimbly dodged every single strike.

Unfortunately, Nyzel was harder to trick as she appeared above Ria.

Lightning coiled around her weapon as she slashed down.

"Five fold lightning."

Five after images manifested behind her strike as Ria didn't hesitate to use her heel to kick the side of the weapon, knocking it off course.

*BANG!!!

As the five after images descended onto the weapon, the realm was cleaved in half before repairing itself.

Cold sweat dripped down Ria's back as she understood that even with her life steal, there was no chance of her surviving if she took the full brunt of that attack.

An absolute one hit one kill.

"The child over there doesn't seem to have a full grasp of the realm around him." Nyzel suddenly spoke, locking weapons with Ria.

Furrowing her brows, Ria's pupils constricted as she wanted to break free but Nyzel refused to budge.

The halo behind her began to spin rapidly as lightning flickered in the clouds.

The entire realm was reacting to Nyzel's actions!

"LUKE! DODGE!" Ria shouted, detonating a lightning node in Nyzel's face but Nyzel blocked it with her own lightning.

In an instant, countless lightning strikes crashed against Luke's board as cracks appeared across the surface.

*BANG!!!!

Seeing the explosion where Luke was standing, veins bulged on Ria's neck as she clenched her fist.

Forming a knife hand, coils of lightning manifested along her arm.

Shinsei Raikiri!

Slashing up with her hand, Ria could feel her muscles tearing apart as her body screamed out in pain.

The torrent of lightning channelling through her flesh and bones before arcing towards Nyzel destroyed everything in its path.

Pushing herself away from Nyzel, Ria rushed towards Luke.

Thankfully, the smoke cleared and he was there, unharmed with several broken pieces around him.

"Don't worry about me, I'm holding back the realm but that doesn't mean I'm not aware of my surroundings." Luke's panted.

The Visionary!

He knew that he was the weak link right now despite giving Ria buffs.

Therefore, he understood that Nyzel would no doubt target him.

The instant Nyzel locked weapons with Ria, something that she hadn't done before, Luke felt that something was off.

He immediately activated his second resonance piece and saw the grim future ahead of him!

In order to counter this future, he assigned two bishop pieces and multiplied them using the Queen piece. Having the spectre of Alice create four Void Fluxes, he then overlayed the inner defence with a mix of Knights and Paladins.

However, this also meant that the buffs that he could give Ria were now beginning to run out.

If they don't end this fight soon, he'll have nothing that he can give. Once that happens, Ria will lose the buffs that are letting her keep up with Nyzel.

Seeing the unspoken warning, Ria understood that time was short.

She had to end this fast!

###

I see the panic in their eyes. Their desperation. Their window of victory disappearing slowly with each attack.

Wounded I may be, but this child in front of me is more tenacious than most.

Had it been in the past, I would've praised her openly. Proclaimed her a warrior.

But this is not the past. My mind is on the verge of crumbling. Around her, I see the shadow of my enemies. The targets of my vengeance.

I see their shadow overlapping her.

I see a sea of flames.

I see a crumbling ruin.

I see my muddied and blood soaked hands burying my family one by one, carving out their memories onto stone.

How vile.

This realm of mine.

The thunderous roars of my rage and sorrow, how unpleasant.

Ah. . . Venaris, would you mock my current predicament? Hah. . . I can do nought else but laugh.

Halric, what would you have done?

I raise my arm and summon the call of lightning. Each attack, each strike, I watch as the child in front of me begin her counterattack.

She learns, she adapts. She finds the gaps in my defence.

I see her desperation as she clung to life, knowing that her failure meant the death of them both.

Perhaps this was what I lacked.

In my rage having seen Venaris's death, I neglected the defence of my home. Instead, I sought out the fires of vengeance, killing everything and anything in my vicinity.

Had I gone back, had I not lost myself in sorrow, perhaps there would still be something for me to protect. If I had gone back in time, Halric might still be alive.

And even if my home was fated to fall, I would've died alongside it.

Instead of this vile existence that I am now. A wandering ghost of the past. . .

The only survivor.

". . ."

I see the shadows of Venaris and Halric. I feel their pitiful gazes. They weep for what I have become.

I had all the chances to rebuild and take that step forward.

. . .

But I couldn't. I couldn't leave them behind. I could not find the strength in me to rebuild.

So perhaps this was a long time coming.

I live yet I am not alive. My heart beats yet I feel no love.

Only cold survival.

Lonely, desolate, devoid of warmth that you brought me.

I feel the strength disappearing from my limbs little by little.

I see the distant shore. . .

But I cannot go yet.

I will end things on my own terms.

So watch carefully child of man.

If my fall is destined to be by your hand, observe the final flight of the Sky Sovereign.

Hear the roars of my lightning and bear witness to my majesty.

###

Pushing Ria away, Nyzel looked at the sky and a wild smile appeared on her face.

Behind her, lightning wings manifested as she soared into the sky.

The entire realm flashed with countless arcs of lightning as Ria felt the goosebumps on her skin.

Hidden by the shroud of darkened clouds, Nyzel's silhouette unfurled her wings, blocking out the sky.

"Six fold lightning." Her voice echoed out in eerie calmness.

With a single, final flash of light, the clouds parted to reveal a spear of raw energy descending towards them.

Six silhouettes flashed behind the spear as it collided in an instant!

There was nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. This was unavoidable.

Is this where she falls?

Ria felt the urge to drop her weapon.

However, she knew that Alice would mock her if she were to give up at this stage.

If she were to die, she'll die fighting!

"LUKE! EVERYTHING ONCE MORE!"

Ria shouted as she began to stack charge after charge of lightning on her weapon.

With all of her Sigils now burning at full power, Ria felt cracks spread along her body with Luke's pieces infusing themselves into her.

The flow of energy that amplified with each second.

Designating the falling spear as her target, marks began to manifest around the weapon.

Turning herself into a stream of lightning, Ria lunged towards the weapon.

"ARGGGG!!!" Letting out a shout, Ria slashed with everything she got.

Shinsei Raikiri!

*RUMBLE!!!

The pain that Ria was anticipating never came. Or perhaps death was too fast for her to feel it.

But as she opened her eyes, she found herself in a field of flowers where the gravestones were.

The spear had disappeared and her weapon was embedded deep into Nyzel's chest.

She stood in front of Ria, a gentle smile with blood flowing down the corners of her lips.

She wanted to curse her killer, to make them carry out the vengeance she wanted fulfilled.

But perhaps that's a fate too cruel for her.

It was this vengeance that caused her to neglect her home after all.

This time. . .

This time she'll simply rest.

Stumbling backwards, she collapsed in front of her own gravestone.

Her vision began to blur as strength left her body. Blood poured from her wound, soaking the flowers and grass around her.

She felt life slipping away from her fingertips but she did not fear.

After all, beside her was her family.

'Ah. . .Venaris. . . Halric. . .'

I'm home.

Chapter 669 - 669: Enris's Blessing

Standing in silence in front of the now lifeless body of Nyzel, Ria clenched her fist.

She could tell.

That last attack. . .

Nyzel held back.

She chose death.

If she carried on her attack, she would've died.

Looking up at the sky, Ria could see the lightning clouds fading away as a rain began to fall.

Perhaps the maiden of rain was weeping for the first of the guardian beasts.

But what's done is done. There's no going back now.

Ria could feel the dizziness approaching as her body will no doubt adjust to the changes brought forth by the Sigil.

However, before she passed out, there was one last thing she needed to do.

Kneeling in front of Nyzel, she closed Nyzel's eyes.

Burying Nyzel in front of her own grave, Ria glanced at the two gravestones next to her before deciding what to etch.

[Here rests Nyzel, the Sky Sovereign. First of the guardian beasts.]

[She carried with her the memories of the dead, to bury each and every one of them with care and the love she showed in life. May you find peace.]

It wasn't long like the ones that Nyzel wrote for her family as in the end, Ria didn't know much about her foe.

But this was the respect she had to show her, for the life that she spared.

Fighting off the dizziness, Ria finished the final carving before stumbling back as Luke quickly caught her.

"You can rest now." He reassured as Ria nodded her head.

She couldn't fight off the dizziness anymore and allowed herself to pass out.

Picking Ria up, Luke glanced back at the three gravestones once more and offered a silent prayer.

It wasn't because of her past or the details they might've found out in this city.

The prayer was a simple thank you. For the woman in his arms was still alive thanks to Nyzel's mercy.

Picking up Ria, Luke made his way out of the city.

After a long moment, Rosalyn appeared in front of the three graves.

She stood in silence before turning around. As a beast, she couldn't comprehend Nyzel's choices. The time she spent burying the people around her, the carvings that she made and to allow Ria to kill her at the end.

All of these decisions. . . Rosalyn felt as though she'd never make the same choice.

Regardless, she'll pay her respects to the dead.

###

". . ."

"Got nothing to say? After I gave you such a nice gift as well kekeke~" Enris chuckled while sitting on a table with her legs crossed.

There was a devious grin on her face as Ria could feel her anger rising.

"If anything, you should be thanking me for giving you that bounty. Did you know that Solaris was actually planning on having one of his followers kill her? Nyzel was quite the menace. Even though she killed quite a few innocents, most of her attacks were still targeted at Solaris' operations in the east.

"How else do you think the Cult managed to take over so much of this place?" Enris laughed while clapping her hands.

"At that point, it's better for someone like you to get her Sigil than one of Solaris's lackeys."

Letting out a frustrated sigh, Ria opened her mouth.

"So what do you want? And why are you even here? I thought I'm meant to be getting my Sigil."

"Don't worry, you are here to get your Sigil. I'm just here to give you another option since this is a sponsored bounty after all. You can either choose one of Nyzel's powers or go for my blessing." Enris waved her hand dismissively.

Clenching her fist, she opened it to reveal a black and red Sigil that seemed to flicker with crimson lightning.

"Nyzel may not have realised it. But after she went mad, I gave her a little gift of my own. So long as her vengeance burns, she'll keep fighting no matter the wound. Of course, there's a limit to that blessing. But if it wasn't for me, she would've died a while ago.

"And since you hate me and my cult so much, why don't you inherit it? Go on, take it. Make sure you don't die until you try and come claim this head of mine." Enris smiled, holding out her hand.

However, Ria only gave her a disgusted glare.

"No thanks. You can keep your sh*tty blessing to yourself. I have no need for it." She spat, turning to the side and walking towards the different Sigils that was made available.

"You can't run from it Ria. Eclipse is in your veins, chaos is your instinct. You WILL accept the doctrine of the Eclipse sooner or later. It's unavoidable." Enris jumped off her table and stood up.

"Maybe. Maybe not. But I know that if I ever stray from this path, Alice will smack some sense into me. And. . ." Pausing for a moment, a smile appeared on Ria's face.

"And if I'm beyond saving, I know that she'll finish me off if I request it."

If she truly loses herself to the Eclipse, to commit atrocities, she'd rather meet her end than continue down that path.

Letting out a chuckle, Enris began to fade.

"I hope you remember those words Ria. Because when you face that final turning point, I will be there. Watching your choice. And I will laugh when you become the very thing you hate."

"Then keep watching you creep. Assuming you survive long enough that is." Ria didn't turn around.

"I welcome it. By all means, please come claim my head if you have the power to do so."

Without responding, Ria observed all the different Sigils that she could pick.

There were two that tempted her.

One was the halo that she saw manifest behind Nyzel during the fight and the other was the power of creating a realm.

Yet strangely, Ria couldn't find any Sigils that would've helped Nyzel create her three fold, four fold, five fold and six fold lightning attacks.

'Was it a technique rather than a Sigil? To create after images and charge it upon collision.'

If it was a technique, then perhaps there was a chance that she could achieve the same with enough time and practice.

With that in mind, there was only one choice that she could go for. And naturally, it was the one that Rosalyn suggested.

###

"Hm hm~ So that's her choice after all." Enris muttered with a cheerful smile.

She was currently sitting on a wagon kicking her legs back and forth while looking up at the sky.

The option for her blessing was silently sitting by the side but Ria never once gave it an extra glance.

Though it was a good choice that she didn't.

After all, if Ria had picked it, it was akin to going for an all or nothing. A path where only vengeance can be allowed.

If her belief was to ever falter or worse, extinguish, all of the wounds that would've killed her would all hit at once.

The moment her target of vengeance is killed and her desires fulfilled, only death awaits.

What she didn't expect was for Nyzel to give up her fury for this world.

Enris was always there, in the corner of her mind, amplifying the feelings of hatred. But she gave it all up and accepted her death.

Looking at the lightning feather in her hand, Enris shrugged and lifted it into the air, allowing it to shatter.

"I suppose meeting Ria was good for you isn't it Nyzel? Had you persisted, your soul would've been mine as we had originally agreed. At least now you get to meet your family in the next cycle." Enris muttered, watching the fragments disappear.

She knew full well the feeling of losing a dear friend. A family even.

Velouria was many things to her.

A friend, a rival, an enemy, family. Even the target for her affection.

But once she disappeared, the world became ever so dull. Nothing could move her heart anymore.

But now. . .

A turbulent era. Outer Gods, the Will of the Abyss, vessels worthy of reaching the divine thrones.

So many factors all happening at once.

Enris felt like a child on her birthday.

The more chaos there is, the happier she becomes. Maybe at the end of it all, she'll finally forget the void in her heart. Maybe at the end of it all, someone will claim her head as a God and bring a new vacancy to the three divine thrones.

Oh how she waited in excitement.

"My head is all yours if you can take it Ria. Don't disappoint me." Enris leaned back as she closed her eyes.

###

"Well? Is this vessel satisfactory? The degeneration of your flesh tissues are. . . still progressing but its within acceptable limits." Voruth'Zal asked as he observed the woman in front of him.

There were stiches around her body along with special cuffs to keep things from breaking apart.

Clenching her fists, Kazira furrowed her brows before taking a deep breath.

Pulling her arm back, she gritted her teeth and punched towards the wall.

*BANG!!!

Unable to stop her punch, the wall shattered apart but Kazira was dissatisfied.

There were still cracks on her fist as it wasn't able to contain her power.

"Not enough! How do you expect me to fight with a fragile vessel like this?" She berated but Voruth'Zal simply shrugged.

"I never said you can fight with this. Simply that we wouldn't need to keep finding vessels for you if this one can last longer than most. Seeing as how you have the energy to shout at me rather than scream in pain, I'd say it's a resounding success."

Watching Voruth'Zal record the data before walking away, a vein bulged on Kazira's neck as anger filled her chest.

Just recalling the humiliation she felt turned her eyes bloodshot.

Once a suitable fighting vessel is acquired, war will descend once more on the battlefield.

It is there where she will regain her lost strength.

Chapter 670 - 670: Isolde's 'Hunt'

What does it mean to hunt?

Is it simply to chase your prey? To track and kill?

No, the Abyss Hunter's Hunt is more than that. It's older than war.

It's instinctual even, a ritual of the old. A game between the hunter and the hunted. One seeks, the other flees.

To Hunt is to listen to silence, to feel the world shift with each passing moment, each step, each heartbeat, each breath that they take.

Patience that's used to sharpen the blade.

The Hunter tastes the fear of the prey, they see the despair of death.

To be a Hunter, to Hunt the prey, it is to understand them. And this understanding becomes the foundation of the Abyss Hunters. The roots of their strength, their Sigil.

But perhaps this philosophy is ever so slightly different to those that have touched upon the corruptive nature of the Outer Gods.

To Alice, Isolde is not the average Hunter.

There is something. . . Fundamentally different about her 'Hunts'.

To her, the prey are fragile, beautiful beings that should be turned to art. To Hunt is not to end their life or to accept this understanding as the foundation of her strength.

For Isolde, it's the act of unveiling. The peeling of the skin, the unravelling of the nerves and tendons, the reconfiguration of their base state into something 'transcendent'.

A cruel reflection of what they were.

A different form from the muted state of side effects that occur from drinking Abyss Blood.

This, this was a tainted, bloodied art from human hands.

She doesn't kill in haste, she listens, observes and enjoys.

She injects paralysis into their veins, on that doesn't dull their senses but rather prevents them from moving. She performs surgeries while making sure the victim feels every cut, every touch.

Her methods are laced with unspoken cruelty hidden behind her smile. Her surgeries are a dance, slow, deliberate and reverent. She reshaped them into the beauty in her mind, an earnest offering to her lord.

Their panic and silent screams was music that only she could appreciate.

Was she always like this?

Alice couldn't understand. She couldn't help but wonder if this was something always present in Isolde or if it was the Outer God's influence.

By her own tongue, she claimed that she was a nun before. A true believer even.

But now, she was the saint of the Writhing Script.

Something happened and the Outer God held out his hand. An invitation and Isolde accepted.

Watching Isolde string up the corpses of beasts that tried to attack, Alice furrowed her brows in displeasure.

She ended the beast in front of her in one swift movement and flicked the blood from her blade.

"Does everything need to be so tedious for you? Honestly, it seems a bit gratuitous to turn everything into 'art' if there are multiple beasts that attack." Alice asked while observing Jin who punched a clean hole in the chest of another beast.

Tilting her head for a moment, Isolde thought about it before smiling softly. The same smile that she showed to everyone.

The fake smile to make others drop their guard.

"Nothing of the sort. All of these are offerings to my Lord. How could I dare think of this as something on the same level as a chore? It is simply my duty." Isolde replied.

There was one thing that Alice had to admit.

Isolde was good at her 'job'. Very good in fact. No matter how bloody the battle, she made sure she wasn't covered with blood. Not once did she reveal a speck of blood to the caravan that they travelled with.

Not even the smell of blood could attach itself to her.

She kept herself clean and pure.

"That so?"

"I'm well aware that my standards stray from what people consider to be normal. Heretical even. But that is something I've accepted long ago. I appreciate the understanding of my art but it is not required. So long as my heart is dedicated, no matter what words are spoken about me, I am not disturbed." Isolde clarified.

Hearing this, Alice shrugged.

'She's bat sh*t insane. More than us even.' Alyss yawned from her bed, observing everything.

After a while of travelling, Alyss had finally woken up but not without issues.

The main issue, from having overused the chains, was that she could no longer 'borrow' Alice's body. At least for the current moment without major backlash.

The moment Alyss takes over, the chains will snap tight, halting all regeneration and begin burning the flesh away.

Not only that, but she couldn't access a majority of her powers.

Of course, that only applies when Alyss is in control. When it's Alice, everything functioned as normal minus the Sigil swaps.

'Well you've got to remember that she's 'interesting' enough for Zal-Ka'Rith to keep her around. If she wasn't interesting, he would never bother. Something happened to her, enough for him to bless her just like how he's observing us.' Alice reminded.

'Speaking of that, do you think if we trade him enough information, he'll unlock more of our past? Like the conversations with Nyer and so on.' Alyss asked.

Right now, Zal-Ka'Rith was their only real path to understanding their past.

Since he was having someone he favours follow them on their journey, it would be a waste not to make the most of this.

'I already tried to ask. There are two issues. First, the information we can give him right now is not equal. Two, he's unable to. He knows the reason but he's being stingy about it.' Alice held up two fingers.

But even though he was being stingy about the information, she could already infer the answer from what he said. The only one who could manipulate what he could access could only be one person.

Nyer.

During the moment they met, he did something to her.

Reinforcing her body without the need for Sigils was one thing, there were probably other 'features' that she didn't know of right now.

Regardless, a week had now passed. Alice could use her energy again.

However, there was a need to 'purge' the Eldritch energy that Alyss had accumulated during her fights.

"Isolde, has your Lord said anything about how to purge the Eldritch energy yet?" Alice asked as Isolde shook her head.

"The Lord has not changed his answer."

"Tch, I see."

Since she couldn't give him information or anything entertaining, the 'price' for answers right now was kills. On their journey to Fusha, Alice had made sure to kill everything that showed hostility, no exceptions but it still wasn't enough for the Outer God to answer her question.

"We still have about a day's worth of travelling at our current pace. The closer we get to Fusha, the fewer beasts there will be since the area is being maintained." Jin spoke up, making his way back from having cleaned up his side of things.

"I guess we're not getting answers anytime soon then." Alice scratched her hair.

Looking up at the sky, she could see that it was getting pretty deep into the night and decided to set up camp for now.

Aside from her strange fascination for art, there was something else that Alice found out about Isolde.

She was a glutton. She didn't know how to cook but she ate A LOT.

Looking at her own plate before looking towards Isolde, Alice's smile couldn't help but twitch.

Her portion was bigger than her torso!

Which only made Alice wonder where that food was even going.

Was there a singularity in her stomach?

And despite the large quantity of food on her plate, she ate with grace. She didn't rush, she didn't make a scene.

Yet strangely, she would always finish first before any of them and ask for seconds.

Seconds?!

Alice had to wonder. If they weren't hunting beasts for food, how long would her rations last?

She couldn't be affected by Abyss Blood. Jin wasn't hungry because of his 'hunger' being fundamentally different.

And Isolde. . . Basically ate two whole carcasses on her own.

With their meal now dealt with, Alice took the initiative to be on first watch. Sitting in the trees, Alice leaned against the trunk and stared off into the distance.

*Rustle

"It's my watch, you should sleep while you have the chance." Alice opened her mouth without turning around.

However, Isolde didn't respond.

"Young master Jin is struggling." She spoke plainly as Alice glanced over.

She could see the same fake smile as before and clicked her tongue.

"I know."

It wasn't hard to notice considering Jin looked like he was constantly holding back.

The times he kept swallowing his saliva and the brutality in his hunts.

"It should be dealt with before we enter the city of Fusha. Otherwise, when he sees the place full of food, he won't be able to hold back anymore." Isolde suggested.

"Is this what your Lord has told you to say?"

"No it is not. I simply deem it to be recommended before we enter the city. My Lord wishes to watch your journey through my eyes. If chaos were to spread because Young Master Jin is unable to control himself, it may disturb the flow of this journey." Isolde clarified.

"So it all loops back to your Lord in the end. We'll figure something out tomorrow, It's not like your Lord will give us answers for free." Alice waved her hand dismissively.

Every time she talks to Isolde, it always loops back to Zal-Ka'Rith. At this point, Alice would be more surprised if she didn't talk about him.

"It's as you say. In which case, I will retreat for the night. Please notify me for my watch." Isolde smiled even though she understood that Alice wouldn't do that.

She couldn't trust her back to Isolde.

Watching Isolde rest, Alice furrowed her brows before letting out a sigh.

Jin's hunger definitely needed to be dealt with. There was no question about it.

