

Abyssal A 671

Chapter 671 - 671: Injecting Eldritch Energy

Alice wasn't sure what she was looking at.

A corpse? A walking husk? A zombie?

After so many days of not fulfilling his 'hunger' Jin was now lumbering around with sunken cheeks and completely devoid of strength.

Hell, he even looked like a thin old man that could barely walk.

"Oh my." Isolde muttered, seeing Jin's state while Alice massaged her nose bridge.

Normal food could only do so much when it comes to staving off this hunger. They can delay it but they can't avoid it.

And now, he needed to eat.

"Isolde." Alice called out as Isolde glanced over.

"You rely on Eldritch powers as well right? So surely you felt this hunger. How do you deal with it?"

If Zal-Ka'Rith was going to be stingy with answers, the next best option would be Isolde herself.

"Me? I believe my hunger is dealt with by my Lord, I haven't had the need to sustain myself." Isolde chuckled as Alice scratched her hair in annoyance.

Folding her arms, Alice thought about how the Outer Gods dealt with their hunger. First of all, from what she saw during the ritual, it seems like 'assimilation' was a key part of being an Outer God.

To inject their energy into outside sources and absorb it as their own.

This Hunger. . . It might be a manifestation of this desire, similar to the Hybrid berserkers that she made in the north. They needed to expel the corruptive energy inside them every now and then otherwise they'd lose their mind.

If that was the case, then maybe Jin needed to 'eat' something with Eldritch energy.

Thinking about it for a moment, Alice had Isolde look after Jin for now before rushing out to find a beast to hunt.

'Since your energy is mostly Eldritch due to what happens, if you inject your power into a beast, do you think you can turn it into something Jin can eat?' Alice asked curiously.

'Dunno, never tried. But without the additional regeneration and the chains burning my body, I won't be able to take over the body for long.' Alyss shrugged.

The longer she stayed in control, the faster the chains burned. An exponential increase that made it impossible for her to stay for an extended duration during a fight.

Closing her eyes, Alice placed her hand against the ground and activated her Sigil.

*RUMBLE!

A network of blood expanded in an instant as she began to track all of the movements around her.

'Weak, weak weak, eh hh no it's weak. Oh this one isn't that bad.' Alice smiled as she snapped her fingers.

*BANG!!!

Not far from her, an explosion occurred as dirty was flung into the clouds.

Deep underground, a giant serpent was entangled by blood and thrown into the air.

*HISS!!!

Letting out a hiss, it tried to break free but blood mist surrounded it, preventing any powers from activating.

'Do you think you can do it without killing the thing? We need to make sure the corruption is done properly.'

'It's just injecting Eldritch energy into that thing right? The only thing I can control is Eldritch energy right now so it'll be a walk in the park.' Alyss smirked as Alice created a sword for her to use.

Golden chains snapped around her limbs as Alyss glanced down.

She could already see the chains burning her flesh and shrugged.

Holding the blade in her mouth, she began to dash towards the serpent while tying up her hair into a ponytail.

Since she took over, the blood binding broke apart as the serpent glared at Alyss.

Energy began to flow through its scales as orbs of fire manifested in the air! Several flaming serpents rushed towards Alyss as her lips curved up into a grin.

"Morning workout time!"

*BANG!!!

Stomping down, the ground cracked apart as Alyss practically teleported into the air.

Soul Chaser!

Her blade whipped out, severing the serpents in an instant. Landing on the Serpent's body, Alyss tightened her grip on the blade as a black and purple aura began to spread across the blade.

Immediately, the chains around her limbs erupted with a golden light but it was manageable!

"Let's give you a little surgery."

Running up the serpent's body, Alyss began to stab her sword at certain intervals, injecting energy into its body.

The beast's pupil constricted in pain as parts of its body started to bulge.

Flesh began to rot, exposing the bone under the layers.

Reaching the head, Alyss injected one last dose of Eldritch energy before handing back the control of the body.

After all, any more and she'll start losing limbs!

With Alice now back in control, the chains disappeared as flesh regenerated.

Landing on a platform of blood and metal that she had created, Alice watched as the serpent writhed on the ground.

It was a pitiful sight but this was so that Jin could survive. They had already tried to give Jin her energy directly but it didn't work. In fact, it had more risk since there's a chance that she'll assimilate him rather than 'feeding' him.

Soon, the beast stopped panicking and began to accept the change.

Little by little, the beast reared its head and glanced up at the sky.

It cracked open its jaw but no sound escaped. A twisted spiral of bones, malformed skulls that grew from the plates and rotting flesh that hung from the ribs. The creature turned its head towards Alice, the one who gave it this form.

A silent anger as a dark aura began to spread from its body.

All vegetation near it started to corrode and from within this darkness, limbs and ghastly cries sounded out.

'I don't suppose this counts as Eldritch now?' Alice asked while observing calmly.

She folded her arms and watched as the beast crept ever closer.

[Hmm. . . It's gained an Eldritch nature. But as for whether or not it'll count as an Outer God's minion, I'd have to say no. it's simply an incomplete vessel that can't contain Eldritch power.]

[Potency wise, it seems weaker than Jin so assimilation shouldn't be an issue.] Cayla commented while noting down the changes.

Just as Alice was about to restrain it, she felt a surge of power not far from her.

"Hiyaha!!!"

"???" Glancing back in wild confusion, Alice wondered where the laugh came from when she saw Jin flying through the air.

Behind him, 'branches' or perhaps it was limbs made from Eldritch energy unfurled, creating a daunting silhouette.

"Food! Food! FOOD!" Jin grinned wildly as reason was no longer present in his eyes.

*KRKRKRKRK!!!

Letting out a series of clicking sounds, the serpent launched several limbs towards Jin but he was nimble! His silhouette flickered through the attacks while the limbs behind him tore apart at the energy.

Stuffing the energy into his mouth, he lunged towards the Serpent's main body and took a bite!

Ripping off a large chunk, he clawed away at the serpent while Alice watched in silence.

"Kekeke~ What else did you expect?" Isolde's voice rang out. But this method of talking. . .

"Done with watching from the side?" Alice glanced over as Zal-Ka'Rith shrugged.

"I figured I'd give you some information since you traded it with an. . . interesting scene let's say. I'm beginning to figure out what they did to that boy now." Zal-Ka'Rith chuckled.

"But setting that aside, it's only to be expected that the boy would react like this. You starved him for more than a week, hardly fed him any energy and then presented to him a delicious meal. I'm afraid restrain is the last thing on that boy's mind.

"Like a wanderer who finally got a taste of water after being dehydrated, that boy cannot hold himself back. He will consume and consume until there is nothing left." Zal-Ka'Rith explained, pointing at Jin who was laughing while eating.

He looked no different than a starved beast who finally got a taste of blood.

"I'm guessing you're telling me to feed him this more often so he doesn't lose control?" Alice folded her arms.

"Partially. Though there are better ways to feed him than to create such a mess. You don't see me corrupting everything and anything to feed Isolde now do you?" Zal-Ka'Rith smirked as Alice felt a vein bulge on her head.

She wanted to smack this Outer God with all her might.

But unfortunately, he had the answers she needed.

"What do you want? There's no f*cking way you're going to tell me this for free." Alice clicked her tongue.

"How harsh, I believe I've been rather generous with the amount of information I've been giving you." Zal-Ka'Rith sighed as he waved his hand, knocking aside a piece of bone that was flung towards them.

"What I want is simple really. Let me make a contract with that boy. Do so and I will keep him fed."

"Depends, what kind of contract are you after? And it's not up to me, it's up to Jin." Alice furrowed her brows.

It's an undeniable fact that Jin was already no longer a normal human. Therefore, common sense couldn't work in this scenario anymore.

"Huhu~ It's not a complicated contract. Something similar to what I've established between this girl and myself. A connection so that I can keep them alive while they give me an offering every now and then."

However, Alice could hear the underlying meaning in his voice. By having Jin take this contract, he'll essentially become a hostage. He already saw that Alice would rather not let Jin die if she could help it.

What he didn't expect however. . .

"Don't push your luck parchment. I've already told Jin that if he loses control, I'll kill him. Figuring out if he can stay alive despite being turned into this thing is a side bonus, not the main goal." Alice narrowed her gaze as a blade pressed against Zal-Ka'Rith's throat.

Sensing the killing intent and seriousness behind her words, he couldn't help but laugh as he pushed the blade away slightly.

"Alright. In that case allow me to apologise. As compensation, I'll even give you a piece of information for free."

"That is?" Alice raised an eyebrow.

"How to control the nature of assimilation."

Chapter 672 - 672: Nature Of Eldritch Energy

"Controlling the nature of assimilation?" Alice raised an eyebrow as she thought that was something that only Outer Gods could do. Considering this was an extension of their power.

On the other hand, while she might be an amalgamation of different energies, she doubted the fact that she counted as an Outer God.

"I know the look of doubt when I see one. Now let me ask you this, if the one with greater Eldritch energy will always assimilate the weaker one, how do you think we have Icons? Or minions for that matter.

"There is bound to be a way for us to filter down our power without killing our followers." Zal-Ka'Rith explained with a smirk while creating an upside down pyramid of Eldritch power.

Watching the power flow down, Alice tilted her head in confusion.

She gets what he was trying to say but at the same time, every time her Eldritch energy comes into contact with another source, assimilation occurs without exception.

"Allow me to change the example then. Eldritch energy in a sense works somewhat similar to liquids. When you collide two sources together, depending on the parameters, the smaller source is absorbed into the larger pool."

Creating a large orb of Eldritch energy and a smaller one, Zal-Ka'Rith had the smaller one collide into the pool from above.

"For this, which source do you think is in control? The big one or small one?" He asked.

Furrowing her brows, Alice sighed and decided to play along.

"Big one."

"Correct. Let me change things a little."

Repeating the same experiment but with the big one colliding from the top, he asked the same question.

"Which is in control?"

"Big one?" The source didn't change so surely the answer stayed the same right?

Shaking his head, Zal-Ka'Rith separated them before turning the large source into the colour blue.

Colliding them, Alice noticed the smaller source swallowing the large one like a net.

"While the energy primarily functions similar to a liquid in some sense, depending on how you use it, it can turn into a net like this. Allowing a weaker source to assimilate the stronger one. Of course, there is still a limit to what can be achieved using this method but this allows most of the followers to accept power from a greater source."

Observing the example, Alice opened her mouth.

"But if the bigger source doesn't control its powers well, it'll break the weaker vessel wouldn't it?" She frowned.

Staying silent, a twisted smile appeared on Zal-Ka'Rith's face.

"Correct. Had you allowed me to make a contract with that lad, I'd have given him the same treatment I do for this girl I'm borrowing. But since you declined, it'll be up to you. Let's hope you can figure out how to control things before the boy loses too much of himself in his hunger." Zal-Ka'Rith smiled before glancing down at his arms.

There were black veins beginning to spread as he closed his eyes and left Isolde's body.

"!!!"

Collapsing on her knees, Isolde panted as she clutched her arm in pain.

Having an Outer God 'borrow' her body could be accepted every now and then. But having him descend in close succession puts a heavy toll on her body. He may be able to use Eldrich energy but having an actual Outer God trying to squeeze into her as a vessel will break her sooner rather than later.

"You alright?" Alice asked, noticing the burden that the Outer God was placing on Isolde.

However, she simply forced a brave smile and nodded her head.

Scratching her hair, Alice sighed and rummaged through her pouch before bringing out some healing vials.

"I don't know if these work on you since you have Eldritch energy. But for normal people, these should reduce the pain and heal some wounds."

Accepting the vial, Isolde sat on the ground and rested as the two of them watched Jin tear away at the beast.

Honestly, at this point it was rather impressive with how fast he was eating the thing. A bottomless stomach to consume the entire body of the serpent.

"Does parchment ever forget to feed you?"

"There's not been a single day where I've starved after meeting my Lord. Thanks to him, the notion of hunger never exists." Isolde chuckled.

Glancing down, Alice was somewhat surprised to see a genuine smile on her face.

She was telling the truth.

"Sounds like he's the world to you." Alice scratched her cheek.

If Zal-Ka'Rith really helped her out a great deal then calling him parchment in front of her might not be great. Putting into perspective, she would probably smack the ever living sh*t out of someone if they gave Allura or Kaden a crappy nickname in front of her.

"My Lord is the world to me. This world is harsh, it cares not for those that lose their way. The three Gods consider only their own agenda and benefits. The Sun sits atop his lofty throne of gold, praising himself as the perfect protector. The moon submerges herself in the everlasting dream of immortality and the Eclipse. . .

"Well, the eclipse is the most pitiful of them all. More pitiful than us humans in fact. Her actions seek only to spark chaos and violence. A whim to spark any sort of life hoping to break monotony.

"As for my Lord, he's different. As you know, he is an observer. He watches the world run its course, recording, learning, understanding. What I desire, he grants. He protects me, prevents hunger. I am one of his many eyes to this world, but I am not neglected." Isolde traced her finger along the dark veins that appeared on her arms.

The only pity she felt was that her vessel was not strong enough for her Lord.

Seeing her trust and belief towards Zal-Ka'Rith, Alice couldn't help but shiver.

She couldn't imagine herself being devoted towards something to this extent. Though perhaps her wish of rebuilding Ayr was a form of devotion. It may not be to the level of Isolde towards the Writhing Script but it's devotion nonetheless.

"Sounds like you know quite a lot about the religions. Considering you're a nun, I'm guessing you were part of them in the past?" Alice asked, changing the subject.

"Unfortunately I was part of two of them before my Lord found me. At first, I was part of the Sun then I changed to the Eclipse." Isolde replied simply before turning silent, clearly not intending on saying more on the topic.

Nodding her head, Alice glanced towards Jin who was pretty much finished with consuming the corpse.

At this point, there was nothing but bones left over that was already showing signs of breaking down.

Just as Alice was about to call out his name, Jin snapped his head towards her with drool in his mouth.

"Seems like he still hasn't woken up properly yet." Alice narrowed her gaze as he crouched down, lunging towards her.

Letting out a sigh, Alice snapped her finger and a web of threads revealed itself, tangling Jin and stopping him from getting closer.

But to her surprise, the Eldritch limbs that appeared behind him shredded her threads apart!

"Oh hou~ Seems like you're full of energy after a meal." Alice narrowed her eye with a grin.

These threads weren't easy to break, especially considering the fact that they were made with her blood. Normal Abyss abilities that come into contact would begin to dissipate.

Of course, even without the nature of cancelling abilities, these threads were tough in their own way.

Yet Jin broke it apart easily.

Zone!

Creating a boundary around herself, Alice raised her knee and slammed her heel into Jin's stomach.

"!!!"

Seeing him catch her leg, Alice watched as the Eldritch limbs began to surround her, looking for gaps in her defence.

Void Flux!

*BANG!!!

Detonating small Void Fluxes around the tips of the limbs to push them away, Alice tilted her head.

"How long are you going to keep holding onto my leg?"

Jumping up, she twisted her body and slammed her spare heel into his face, sending Jin crashing back.

Recovering from the hit, Jin glanced up and saw a wave of blood weapons shooting towards him.

Zone!

Creating a boundary of his own, the Eldritch limbs knocked aside every limb and dug into the ground.

His shadow expanded in an instant but Alice wasn't phased.

She simply snapped her finger, creating a portal and stepped through.

Using one of the weapons that Jin knocked aside as the medium, she appeared behind him with threads around her.

"Seems like you didn't forget everything." Flicking her finger, the threads grabbed him by the ankle and tossed him into the air.

Gritting his teeth, Jin clenched his fist and sent a tangle of Eldritch energy towards the corpse of the serpent, reanimating it as the energy acted as flesh.

Seeing Jin land on the head of the beast that was now under his control, Alice massaged her neck.

Void Flux – Cleave!

A single slash to destroy the beast!

Flickering in front of Jin, Alice grabbed him by the face and threw him towards the ground before following up with a punch to his stomach.

*BANG!!!!

A web of cracks appeared beneath Jin from the force of the punch.

"Awake yet?" Alice smirked seeing the pale expression of Jin who looked like he was about to throw up.

"Yeah. . . I feel sick." He groaned.

"Please don't throw up. I'd rather not corrupt another beast to turn it into your meal." Alice helped him up.

"Me neither. I'd rather not see everything as food for a while." Jin clutched his stomach.

Even though Alice was holding back, her hits still hurt like crap!

Just thinking about taking a full powered punch from her sent a shiver down his spine.

Regardless, with Jin's hunger now temporarily solved, they approached the city of Fusha.

Chapter 673 - 673: Fusha

As Alice approached where the city of Fusha should be, she began to hear the distant storm stirring beyond the mountains and horizon. An ominous sky of red hidden beyond the jagged cliffs.

Even from afar, the sounds of battle could be heard with attacks flying across the sky.

Furrowing her brows, Alice didn't wait for the two and immediately created a portal leading up to the highest peak that she could see.

Upon reaching the top, she paused.

The City of Fusha, the border against the south, the last bastion and the city of war.

It was burning.

Crumbling towers, and splintered earth, the city was on the verge of collapsing.

The clashing of steel, the cries of the dying. A malevolent tsunami of Eldritch beasts crashing against what remains of the walls, trying to pry a way through.

Siege towers hooking against the walls as rifts were torn from above.

Flying beasts invaded the city from above, clashing against a net of raw electrical energy that prevented them from entering.

However, gaps were being created with each corpse.

Fire curled like serpents along the battlements, setting the banners ablaze while the screams of those being burned alive were drowned out by the falling towers.

'It's not going to last.' Alyss frowned seeing the endless wave of Eldritch beasts and cultists alike, sieging the city.

But worse of all, there was an aura of divinity flowing through the side of the invaders. The aura of war, a cry for battle.

The source wasn't here but Alice could tell.

They're rallying under Kazira.

Their war cries chanted out in synchronicity, a rhythmic attack against the city that broke down the defences one by one.

[Under the rallying of War, those who fight in her name know no pain, know no fatigue. They are in the literal sense, warriors that will only stop when they are killed. And even then, they'll take one with them.] Cayla frowned as she'd seen the previous incarnation of War fight before.

These kinds of large scale battles are the most suitable for someone of her authority.

A vein bulged on Alice's neck as she glared at the incoming army and took a deep breath.

Behind her, Jin and Isolde waited.

"Jin, careful you don't get assimilated by the Eldritch beings attacking the city. If you sense someone stronger, retreat. That's not a worry that you can't kill them. But rather Eldritch energy will force you to lose. Isolde. . . Do whatever you want." Alice commanded as Jin nodded his head.

As for her. . . She'll show them why she's the one who forced Kazira to run with all her might.

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"STAND AND FIGHT! DON'T LET THEM INTO THE CITY!" A girl roared at the top of her lungs while standing on the castle walls.

She didn't know what the new corrupted beasts were but they were far more tenacious than usual beasts. One touch from them and it's practically over.

"Remember what you're fighting for! Do you want these b*stards to reach the main cities?! Do you want your sons and daughters to cry beneath the claws of these foul beings?!" She screamed.

A beast nearby lunged towards her but neon circuitry patterns manifested on her arm as the surrounding scrap around her spun to life, tearing the beast apart and pushing it away.

"Do you want your wives, husbands, partners or parents to fall to these beasts?!" She roared as an army of flying blades circled around her.

""""NO!!"""" The army shouted back, pushing away the wave of beasts.

"Then fight! Fight till your last breath! If you die then take the beast with you! If you can't, grip its throat, grab its leg! Make sure your brothers and sisters have an easier time avenging you! Make your death worth something!" Bai Suyin roared as an arrow flew towards her, piercing her eye.

Holding back her scream, she grabbed the arrow and ripped it out before sending an army of blades towards the archer.

A blender of metal killed the archer before he even had a chance to scream.

"Commander!" Her assistant shouted, rummaging through her pouch for a healing vial as Suyin grabbed it and drank the contents.

Her flesh began to pulse as the eye was regrown but her vision was still blurry.

"Tch! Casters! Load the cannons! Aim it near the walls! We cannot allow them to get closer! Use the debris and their corpses as our new barricade!" Suyin commanded, jumping onto a blade and flying towards one of the remaining of the towers.

Gritting her teeth, she could see the army of cultists and beasts marching towards the city without any fear.

"Report! Where is General Tars?!" She asked one of the scouts.

"No response!"

Clenching her fist, she took a deep breath and forced herself to calm her mind.

"Evacuate the civilians to zone C. We'll retreat and group in zone B. Have the scouts prepare the traps at the entrance and have the casters move to towers that are still standing. Make sure they get a good vantage point but a path of retreat if needed. Readjust the barrier around the city and focus it around these zones." Suyin ordered, pointing out the locations on the hologram the scout was holding.

With her command now given, she furrowed her brows and glanced down at her arm.

The circuitry pattern was slowly eating away at her flesh and there wasn't anything she could do to stop it.

She wasn't blessed by the Abyss after all. All of this was basically poison in her veins.

"Is this the punishment for my genius?" She muttered with a mocking smile before pulling out a crystal from her pouch.

Throwing it into her mouth and crushing it, she felt a wave of energy pulse through her body as the circuits began to expand.

"Ivar! Ivar report back!"

"This is Ivar reporting back! What do you want dear commander?!" A rugged voice replied on the communication orb.

"New orders. Retreat to zone B and stage the next defence. We're giving up on the wall for now." Suyin commanded as Ivar nodded his head without questioning her orders.

There was only one concern and that being whether or not they could retreat properly without losing too many men.

However, he'll trust her judgement. After all, Bai Suyin has been one of the core reasons as to why this place could stand for so long.

Watching the squads fall back one by one, Suyin stood up on the wall.

She had no Sigils, no blessings, no powerful physique. She tried to go to a Shaman, sought out communication points and even tried to learn martial arts but it was no avail. The Abyss wouldn't bless her and her physique didn't allow for martial arts.

But even so!

As a normal human, she'll fight till her last breath!

So what if she didn't have Sigils, so what if she couldn't fight like martial artists.

She didn't need any of that!

She is Bai Suyin! Genius of Sikha and creator of the tools that make up the foundations of this nation!

"Wake up my babies! It's time for work! Let's show them what a normal f*cking human can do in this world of monsters!" Suyin shouted as the entire city began to tremble.

The walls of the city began to transform, lifting into the air and throwing the beasts back.

Little by little, its true form was being revealed!

Beneath the stone walls and towers were countless cannons aimed towards the enemy.

It was no exaggeration to say that Suyin was the heart of this city.

Only she could control all of the cannons and weapons she's put into place!

"Come on!" Jumping onto a flying blade, Suyin threw herself towards the enemy as a barrage of cannon shots followed behind her.

*RUMBLE!!!

The entire frontline of the city was now illuminated by the countless explosions that occurred simultaneously.

Seeing Suyin, a Cultist lunged towards her with five Sigils glowing on their body.

*BANG!!!

Slamming into a barrier, the cultist widened his eyes in shock.

"Aren't you looking down on me? I won't be killed by something so sh*tty!" Clenching her fist, a blade stabbed through the cultist from below before exploding, shredding his body into countless chunks that bounced off her barrier.

But while her attention was dragged by the cultists, more took this chance to unleash a stream of attacks towards her that were blocked by a barrier.

*CRACK!!!

Widening her eyes, she was shocked to see her barrier crack as she quickly retreated.

Glancing at the equipment around her, she furrowed her brows upon seeing the eldritch energy eat away at the internals.

'So not even my gear is safe from this energy. How annoying.' Suyin thought to herself.

Looking at the wave of enemies that didn't seem to decrease no matter how much cannon fire she was raining down on them from above, Suyin understood that the situation was dire.

The flying beasts were now targeting her cannons so there was no doubt that someone was commanding them.

Even though they may have lost the outer wall, she gained a lot of information from that and it was now time to retreat.

Just as she was about to leave, she felt a chill down her spine.

"!!!"

"If you're the heart of the city, don't you think it's risky for you to show yourself on the frontlines?" A voice whispered in her ear.

She felt a sting of pain on her right shoulder as her arm had been torn off!

"ARGGGG!!!" The pain of having a limb ripped off flooded her mind as she quickly tried to retreat.

Why didn't the barrier keep the danger away? How did they get so close? Why didn't the warnings appear?

Countless questions rang through her mind but she couldn't hesitate at this moment!

Gritting her teeth, mechanical parts wrapped around her wound before stabbing needles into her body. Injecting healing vials, the bleeding stopped but the arm couldn't be recovered without some major side effects. Side effects that she'd rather not have so she simply focused on stopping the bleeding for now.

In front of her stood a strange being.

To call them human felt wrong but at the same time, to call them a beast wasn't correct either.

A woman with bestial parts across her body.

To put it bluntly, a hybrid.

Chapter 674 - 674: Snake Pit

'Neither woman or beast. Doesn't feel like the cultists either. A third party?' Suyin narrowed her eyes as random variables were her least favourite thing.

She had already accounted for most of the factors in this fight. But this Hybrid? It's the first time she's seen one.

Seeing Suyin observe her so carefully, the woman squirmed with a blush on her face.

"Aiyo~ If you stare at me so much I might get the wrong idea. You wouldn't like it if I fell in love with you darling." She gave Suyin a wink.

"Freak!" Clenching her fist, Suyin slid back as mechanical contraptions burst out of the ground around her.

For Suyin, all of her combat power was focused on the babies that she's created through her blood sweat and tears. Outside of these contraptions, she was a normal human!

'Her speed is too fast. I can't track it with my eyes.'

Mentally sorting through her gadgets, her lips curved up.

Contraption #290 – Kaleidoscope!

Floating grids surrounded her as information was directly injected into her mind.

She didn't need the details on the ground, she didn't need colours, she didn't need the distant scenery.

The only thing that her Kaleidoscope needed to track was this woman in front of her!

Blood began to drip from her nose from the influx of stress but Suyin simply licked it away before revealing a grin.

"Please don't break before I get my hands on you, I'll be very disappointed." The Hybrid wanted to take Suyin by surprise from behind.

But the moment she entered the range of Kaleidoscope, Suyin's head snapped towards her direction as a wave of weapons rushed towards her.

"!!!"

Reaching out to parry the weapons, the Hybrid paused in shock upon seeing them break apart before she could even touch them.

Each of the fragments then embedded themselves into her arm.

Her pupil constricted in shock, jumping back she tore off her arm before throwing it away.

The moment she threw it away, it began to bubble and mutate, turning into a side effect riddled mass of rotting flesh.

"New information obtained. Seems like injecting focused amounts of Abyss Blood is more potent on you than expected. Is it the result of half beast like appearance?" Suyin asked with a scheming grin.

Contraption #70 – Stationary Turret!

She retrieved two beacons from her pouch before throwing them in front of her.

A pillar of crimson light shot up into the sky with cannon sounds roaring from the city.

*BANG!!!

From above, two slabs of metal slammed into where she had thrown her beacons and unfolded into turrets that began to fire towards the Hybrid who weaved through the shots with ease.

In fact, the Hybrid looked like she was about to lose her patience.

Veins bulged on her neck as white crystals began to manifest across her limbs.

Sparks of energy flickered through the crystals as she opened her mouth.

*RUMBLE!!!

Neon energy converged into a single orb!

Contraption #124 – Void Gate!

*BANG!!!

As the orb fired forward, a wall of Void energy erupted from a line of nodes that Suyin threw down and was sucked away into the Void.

Even though her attack missed, the Hybrid tried to use this chance to approach Suyin but Kaleidoscope was still active!

"Your movements are clear as day to me!"

Contraption #25 – Big f*cking sword!

*CRACK!!!

From the ground, a blade slashed up with surprising speed, embedding itself into the Hybrid's torso before getting stuck.

"Shame." The Hybrid smirked before trying to lunge towards Suyin once more.

"You sure about that?! AHAHA!" Letting out a laugh, Suyin snapped her fingers.

Contraption #25 self destruction!

*BANG!!!!

Wrapping herself with a barrier, Suyin was flung back from the point blank explosion and rolled across the ground.

Contraption #25 was never meant to be something that could be swung multiple times. It merely took on the form of a sword and had the name of one. But in reality, #25 was simply a method of stabbing a bomb directly into the enemy!

As long as the blade can get stuck, the damage it'll do was enough!

Recovering from the tumble, Suyin could see her eyes straining from the use of Kaleidoscope but she couldn't stop here just yet. The beast no doubt survived an attack of that level.

But there was a good piece of information she received from the destruction of #25.

The hybrid had a weak defence! If #25 could pierce the hybrid's skin then her other contraptions shouldn't have too much trouble!

Contraption #8 – Jormungandr!

Circuit patterns sparked across Suyin's remaining arm as she took control of one of her bigger inventions!

*RUMBLE!!!!

The earth broke apart to reveal the dark metallic plates of a giant serpent! 3 sets of neon pink eyes locked targets with the figure hidden in the dust as its gargantuan figure reared high up into the sky before slamming down.

"DON'T F*CK WITH ME!" The Hybrid's voice rang out in anger as a flash of light erupted from within Jormungandr's mouth.

Tearing apart the jaws of this metallic beast, the Hybrid broke free, revealing her bestial form to Suyin.

Her pupils constricted upon seeing what the Hybrid had turned into.

A quadrupedal draconic beast. White crystals ran down the length of her spine while her wings were akin to a second set of arms. Giant talons dug into the metal, crushing it under her grip.

The Hybrid had expected Suyin to be trembling in fear. Instead, she saw the light of excitement.

She's excited? Why?

A normal human who only got this far because of her inventions was excited from seeing her form?

Impossible!

Coming to the conclusion that she must've gone crazy, the Hybrid cracked open her jaw, preparing another breath attack.

*BANG!!!

From below, a second Jormungandr struck! Biting her neck and forcing her to look up into the sky with her breath attack!

"Did you think I'd only make one version of each contraption?! Once I make something, the blueprint is stored so that it can be reproduced at anytime!" Suyin laughed as following the second, two more Jormungandr's burst out from the ground.

With three restraining the Hybrid's movements, Suyin summoned a flying blade and flew up into the air.

Contraption #100 – Kinetic Bombardment!

Landing on the top of the arms that used to be the old city walls, Suyin designated the Hybrid as their new priority target.

From the gaps, giant metal rods were loaded.

"Fire!"

Upon receiving Suyin's command, a bombardment of rods slammed towards the Hybrid.

Naturally, the first wave wasn't the end and a second wave fired towards the Hybrid!

Through the use of Kaleidoscope, Suyin could see one of the rods managed to break the Hybrid's bones.

Contraption #100 self destruct!

*BOOM!!!!!!

Watching the mushroom cloud form from the explosion, Suyin quickly jumped to the side as a torrent of raw energy blasted through the clouds, erasing the portion of the arms where she had stood.

"Tenacious b*tch." Suyin cursed, riding the flying blade to hover around the location.

Waiting for the Hybrid to step out of the smoke, Suyin turned around in surprise.

Her Kaleidoscope tracked the Hybrid behind her!

Looking at the giant silhouette dwarfing her in size, her smile twitched for a moment before hastily erecting a barrier.

*BANG!!! CRACK!!!

Slamming into the ground, Suyin coughed up a mouthful of blood. She could feel her insides being scrambled from the fall as vials were injected into her veins, stopping her wounds from getting worse but not necessarily 'fixing' them.

*BANG!!!

Landing on the ground, the Hybrid returned back to her normal form and walked towards Suyin.

"If you didn't struggle so much, I would've given you a good time before killing you. But now, I only want to tear you apart." She narrowed her gaze as Suyin let out a laugh.

"Funny you say that. Truly. Do you know what's a form of entertainment in this city?" Suyin suddenly asked, confusing the woman.

"Sometimes, my dear soldiers return with beasts far too big for my lab. Beasts that would've taken days or even weeks to fully dismantle. By then, some of the raw materials would've gone to waste. A true shame and wasting resources was something I hated.

"Therefore, I converted a portion of the city by merging a few of my precious contraptions together." Suyin chuckled, keeping her eyes locked on the Hybrid.

Target locked.

Curling her lips up into a grin, Suyin opened her mouth.

"Contraption #199 – Snake Pit."

Wires burst out from the ground, whipping around the Hybrid in an instant.

Before she could even shout in surprise, a metal hook burst out from the ground, digging into her stomach.

"!!!"

Wanting to transform into her beast form once more, she writhed in pain as her organs were extracted!

Clamps wrapped around her arms, tearing them apart, preserving the skin, muscles, tendons, veins, everything.

The sudden flood of pain caused the Hybrid to hesitate and this hesitation allowed the machine to drag her underground to be completely extracted and stripped of 'samples'.

With the countless arms and miniature Jormungandrs swarming around the pit, it was no wonder she called it Snake Pit. A writhing mass of metal, tearing away at the target with deadly precision.

Letting out a chuckle, Suyin was glad that the hybrid didn't have a secret third form as she took a laboured breath. She could feel her body screaming in pain.

Unfortunately, the enemy didn't seem to have any intentions of letting her go as the swarm rushed towards her.

"I can't tell if I should praise you or if I should be freaked out by the fact that you did all of this as a normal human." A voice suddenly rang out, surprising Suyin as her Kaleidoscope didn't track her.

But the moment she saw the source of the voice, she let out a chuckle.

"Don't you think it's a little late for our appointment?"

"Yeah well it's better late than never. Anything I need to be careful of? I don't want to accidentally blow myself up because of your inventions." Alice asked, creating a blade while watching the incoming swarm.

"None!"

"Good."

Curving her lips up into a grin, she rushed towards the incoming swarm!

Chapter 675 - 675: Retrieval Of Family Assets

Dealing with the swarm wasn't difficult at all. If anything, the only concern would be the Eldritch energy filling their bodies.

Jin was. . . Well. Jin was enjoying this banquet.

He was still controlling himself but Alice could tell he's getting high from the battle.

Isolde walked as though she was in a peaceful garden.

Each swing of her arms would create a new art piece before it was shredded apart. She looked like a puppeteer in the middle of a show.

Twisting her body, Alice unleashed a Void Flux Cleave using purely the energy of the Void to kill the Eldritch beasts.

Cultists on the other hand got to enjoy a Void Flux from her second Sigil at point blank.

[I'm surprised to see a Hybrid in the east. Do you think the Zenia family send the doctor here?] Cayla asked with a frown.

She was worried about Alice as the Doctor was far harder to kill than they originally expected. During their time in the north, the man seemed practically immortal.

'I doubt it. To begin with, he didn't seem like the kind to always go on trips. If anything, last time was probably an exception since they sent a lot of Hybrids to attack.' Alice shook her head.

Unfortunately, after Suyin killed the Hybrid, there didn't seem to be any more lurking around.

'She didn't seem that strong either. The beast side was. . . lacking to say the least. Do you think the Zenia's are running out of powerful Hybrids?' Alyss asked curiously.

They weren't sure what the exact number of hybrids there in the Zenia army. So each loss of a Hybrid could either be devastating or negligible.

'Doesn't really matter. We'll just deal with all of them one by one.' Alice shrugged.

Their priority right now was to kill Kazira and cut off the source of these shipments from the East. Anything else was secondary for the time being.

###

"Alice. . . Alice! LET ME GO! I'LL KILL HER RIGHT NOW!" Kazira roared but Voruth'Zal held her by securing her limbs using tendrils of Eldritch power.

"Do not rush. You are in no state to fight her. Or are you wanting to willingly give her your soul?" Voruth'Zal gave her a side eye before looking at the battlefield.

Originally, they wanted to use this city as a sacrifice but they were more tenacious than they originally expected.

Alternatively, if they were the ones to make a move, the 'harvest' will decrease hundred fold. It was simply not worth it.

"Fufu~ This is quite an unexpected surprise. I didn't think I'd see the prototype so soon." A woman chuckled while staring at the moving figure of Alice.

She had long braided emerald hair that reached her lower back, a pair of purple eyes and round glasses.

"Prototype? Seems like it's something I should know about." Voruth'Zal turned to the woman who shrugged.

"It's exactly what you think. Us Hybrids were designed after her. Or rather, the discoveries made on her body were the foundation of our existence. Without her, we would never be born. The. . . Doctor reported about her survival a while ago and the family was in quite the uproar." She chuckled remembering the looks on the higher up's faces.

She also recalled their dread when the Doctor reported about her powers, how she was far stronger than predicted and how her growth didn't show even the slightest hint of slowing down.

"We'll be modifying the mission a little if that's fine with you." She grinned.

"Hou? It entirely depends what you want to change it to and the compensation you'll be giving me." Voruth'Zal rubbed his chin in interest.

"Mission priority will be changed to the retrieval of Zenia family property. Highest priority including the sacrifice of Hybrids. Should the asset retrieval be successful, the Zenia family is willing to accept any requests that you have. Please keep in mind to not take things too far." She explained with a slight bow.

Staying silent, Voruth'Zal contemplated before a twisted grin appeared on his face.

"How about you offer me the Nation of Extalia as a sacrifice."

Tilting her head, the woman chuckled as her eyes glowed with an ominous light.

"If the asset retrieval goes as planned, consider it done. Are you happy with these terms?"

"So easily? Seems like she's more important than I thought. Are you not afraid that I'll take advantage of this?" Voruth'Zal laughed.

For the Zenia family to offer the nation of Extalia so easily. . . Seems like their claws dug far deeper than he expected. Hell, maybe the ruler of the nation is nothing but a puppet to them.

"Of you wish to take advantage of the family's good will, by all means be my guest. But please, don't go back on your stance once you made this choice." She grinned, revealing a set of sharp teeth.

A dark aura began to emanate from her body as light seemed to be devoured from this room.

At that moment, Voruth'Zal could only see her and her alone.

Kazira wanted to protest but she could tell that if she interrupted now, she wouldn't be let off easily by Voruth'Zal.

If only she didn't lose her physical body, she wouldn't need to take this sh*t from the Outer God.

"Ah. . . I see the kind of Hybrid you are now. I don't suppose I should call you the new generation?" Voruth'Zal grinned.

"New is. . . Entirely based on perspective. But let's just say I'm the most recent generation."

"Alright. I'll bite. I'll help you retrieve your asset. But do keep in mind that it's 'help' and not leading. I will reserve how much I can help. I don't want the barrier to expel me once it realizes what's going on." Voruth'Zal chuckled as the woman nodded.

"Of course, we never expected you to lead. Let's just say it's so that you can keep your puppy on a leash." She gave Kazira a mocking glance.

Hearing this, veins bulged on Kazira's neck.

Without waiting for their reply, the woman clapped her hand and two figures appeared behind her.

"Give the prototype a greeting for now. We'll prepare proper measures for her retrieval soon."

Hearing this order, the two bowed before disappearing.

###

"They're retreating?" Alice frowned, noticing the sudden shift in the movements of the enemy.

Instead of mindlessly throwing themselves at her, they were now looking for ways to run away while sustaining the least amount of damage.

Even in his hunger, Jin noticed the same thing and so did Isolde.

But even though they were retreating, it wasn't to say that they weren't fighting back.

Looking at the net of ranged abilities firing towards the city, Alice snapped her finger and created tens of Void Fluxes to intercept.

[Something's wrong.]

'We should take Suyin back for healing first. She's not in a good state right now.' Alyss suggested.

Nodding her head, Alice sheathed her blade.

"Isolde, can you carry Suyin for me? I don't know if she'll blow up the moment I touch her since I'm in compatible with her inventions." Alice asked as Isolde nodded her head.

"Of course. My Lord has also expressed his interest seeing a normal human fight with such tenacity. Having her die here would be a large shame."

Seeing that Isolde was on the same page, Alice let out a sigh of relief.

At least that strikes off the possibility of Isolde turning Suyin into 'art'.

"Jin?" Noticing that Jin wasn't moving, Alice furrowed her brows and glanced over.

"They're reluctant." Jin suddenly spoke, confusing Alice.

"What do you mean?"

"The retreat. The Eldritch ones are reluctant to leave. They received a command, to make way for something." He frowned.

Raising her eyebrow, Alice wanted to say something when a streak of black energy rushed towards her.

"Get behind me!"

Creating a blade, Alice clenched her fist and cleaved up.

Facing the sudden resistance of the attack, she gritted her teeth and parried it up into the sky.

From her right, a woman with black and blue hair appeared. An azure halo spun to life above her head as Alice felt the space around her begin to freeze. Her movements turned sluggish but it was different to Selen's time stop/deceleration.

What wasn't different was their aura.

Hybrids!

Resonance!

*RUMBLE!!!

A garden of red spider lilies expanded as Alice flicked her finger up.

Briar thorns whipped out towards the two while Isolde grabbed Jin and Suyin away from the area.

Giving Isolde a silent thanks, Alice furrowed her brows at the two new arrivals.

"I don't suppose the Doctor sent you? Or are you just happy to see your progenitor?" Alice asked while the power of the Void began to wrap around the area.

"The family knows of your survival." The first woman spoke without a hint of emotion in her voice.

"Your retrieval has already been authorized." The second woman spoke.

Hearing this, a vein bulged on Alice's neck as she forced herself to smile.

"Retrieval? You'll have to kill me first so good luck with that!" Clenching her fist, portals opened and Void Fluxes shot towards them at blistering speeds.

*BANG!!!!

"!!!"

Alice's pupil constricted upon seeing red threads form a scarf around the first woman. The same scarf that intercepted her Void Fluxes and cancelled them out.

'My blood!'

Alice could instinctively tell that the scarf was created by weaving her blood into the material.

The most important aspect was the fact that it was able to negate her attacks!

"I've been tasked to give you a greeting." The blue haired woman took a step forward as dark stars manifested around her neck.

Plunging her finger into her neck, a hook was grabbed as she pulled the trigger.

The instant she did this, Alice felt sweat cover her back. Her pupil trembled seeing the familiar design manifest on the woman's neck.

The Collar!

It was finished!

Chapter 676 - 676: Finalized Collar

The Zenia family collar.

An item originally intended to stop Alice from suicide that'll put a stop to their experiments. Each compartment of the collar held a special blend of Healing blood at the perfect mix. Enough so that she didn't die, not enough so that it gave her power to break out.

After a while, they noticed that these collars could be put to. . . Other uses outside of simply preventing suicide.

Of course, keeping the rather bulky design would be a terrible weakness to expose so the inventors made some adjustments instead.

While keeping the primary function of keeping their Hybrids in check with some additional modifications, it now also functioned as a limit break.

To push them beyond the normal functioning capacity.

After all, unlike Alice, they were still unable to fully access the power that her blood could grant.

###

Pulling the trigger and removing the limiter around the collar, the device revealed itself in full before stabbing spikes into the woman's neck.

Her body immediately showed signs of change as cracks appeared around her body, revealing the glowing blood beneath the surface.

The pulsing of power and the mutation of her body.

Gritting her teeth, her hair extended all the way down to her lower back as a pair of black wings unfurled behind her.

Darkness spread from her finger tips, transforming her arms and legs into bestial forms.

Her pupils constricted, morphing to a pair of golden slitted pupils.

[ALICE!] Cayla shouted but Alice was rooted in place.

Should she run? Should she fight?

Her fight or flight instincts were in turmoil after seeing the collar. The past came flooding into her mind.

'F*ck! Let me handle this!' Alyss gritted her teeth and took over.

Golden chains snapped around her limbs as she bent her body back, narrowly avoiding the blue haired girl's grab.

However, even though Alyss dodged the initial grab, her movements suddenly flickered and the next thing Alyss knew, she was grabbed by the throat!

"F*cker!"

Killing arc!

Flicking her wrist, her blade slashed the woman's arm off as Alyss unleashed a series of steps to create some distance between them.

Raising her severed arm, the woman gave it a side glance before the limb began to regrow.

The speed was comparable to Alice's regeneration at its peak!

Sliding to a stop, Alyss noticed the woman with the scarf simply watching by the side, showing no sign of wanting to intervene.

Unfortunately, Alyss couldn't turn her attention away for too long as the blue haired woman made her move once more.

"!!!" Widening her eye, Alyss was suddenly hit by an invisible force, throwing her body into the air.

'Is it space?!' Alyss furrowed her brows.

[Half and half. Give me a bit of time, I'll analyse what I can!]

Nodding her head, Alyss tried to adjust her body but the woman was faster.

Soul Chaser!

The moment the woman entered Alyss's field, she unleashed a series of strikes but all of them missed!

Something felt off but Alyss couldn't pinpoint it. It wasn't an illusion either!

Quickly raising her guard, Alyss felt the woman place her palm against Alyss' arm.

*KRK!!!!

In an instant, her arm was forcefully pulled to the right and torn off by an invisible force. It felt like her body was dragged along but while her arm followed the motion, her main body was stuck in place.

The worst part about all of this was the fact that her regeneration wasn't working right now!

*BANG!!!

Kicking the woman away, Alyss wanted to use her abilities to try figure something out but flinched from the pain.

She was reaching her limit!

'Alice! Pull yourself together! If we let them catch us it'll be over!' Alyss shouted.

Biting her lip, Alice glanced down at her hands that were still shaking and clenched her fist.

Alyss was right. If they're caught, it'll be all for naught.

Don't let the enemy touch her, keep a distance and make sure they do NOT place that collar onto her!

Taking over, the chains disappeared as Alice immediately regenerated her limbs and created an explosion of blood around her.

Blood mist boundary!

With this, it doesn't matter what the enemy tries to do, the potency will be reduced once it comes into a certain range-

"!!!"

Instinctively opening a Void portal, Alice watched as the woman was somehow able to bypass the field, ignoring the properties completely!

It definitely wasn't Zone otherwise Alice would've sensed it. Not only that, but even if it was Zone, this kind of performance was impossible!

*BANG!!!

Firing a Void Flux, Alice watched as she 'slashed' it apart, erasing the attack all together.

[Keep stalling! It's clear that manifesting the collar is putting a burden on her body. We can't fight her right now!] Cayla shouted, flickering through the different notes that she had but nothing was coming up to a match.

However, the woman wasn't about to give her an easy time.

Despite spreading her Zone, the woman breached it with overwhelming speed and avoided detection!

In a sense, it felt like Selen's trick where she manipulates Alice's focus but it was different.

Time flowed normally but it's as though she was 'erased' from the location.

*CLANG!

Parrying the woman's strike, Alice wanted to push her away when her body was frozen in place once more.

This time, she was prepared!

*RUMBLE!!!

From above, three blood spikes pierced down!

Triggered Cast!

The moment her body is locked in place, her triggered cast will automatically form a counterattack!

'Chance!' Sensing the bindings around her weak, Alice followed up with her own attack, forcing the woman back.

'Did you get that?' Alice asked as Cayla nodded her head.

[I have some theories, keep testing her with the triggered cast, I need to verify a few more things.]

Clenching her fist, Alice snapped her finger.

From the blood mist that she had scattered previously, tens of Void Fluxes manifested in spear form and shot towards the woman.

As expected, the attacks began to diverge once it reached a certain distance from her.

Creating a portal, Alice swapped locations with one of the spears and appeared in front of her woman.

She didn't care about the Void Fluxes since they were extensions of her own power. Even if she takes damage, it was manageable.

But the same couldn't be said for the woman!

Void Flux – Cleave!

*BANG!!!!

"Tch!" Watching her attack freeze in front of the woman along with the other attacks, Alice clicked her tongue.

However, she didn't miss the moment when blood began to drip from the woman's nose.

She was also reaching a certain limit!

*CLANG!!!

"I thought you weren't going to interfere? Fed up with just watching?" Alice parried a kick from the scarf woman using a pillar of metal.

Unlike the blue haired woman, her movements were fully captured by Alice's Zone!

Since her movements could be tracked, Alice will deal with her first!

Personal Artifact!

Artificial Resonance!

Two singularities spun to life. One to occupy the blue haired woman while the other to attack the woman with the scarf!

Dispelling the attack using her scarf, she created a spear of black energy and slashed towards Alice who created a portal where the attack would hit.

An exit portal was formed behind the woman, sending her attack back at her!

*CLANG!!!

Before the attack could hit, it was frozen in mid air as the blue haired woman managed to escape her bindings.

Triggered Cast!

With her trying to bind Alice once more, the trigger cast was activated, giving Alice the freedom that she needed to deal with this woman with the scarf.

Just as she wanted to transport the two of them into the Void, Alice found her portal to the Void revoked as her smile twitched.

'Stingy b*tch!'

Even though she couldn't send the woman into the Void, it was merely to prevent the possibility of reshaping the map.

But at this point, she didn't care!

Activating her skill that was still in the process of finalising, a singularity fired off several arcs of destructive energy.

*KRK!!!

Defending herself using the scarf, the woman tried to create a cage around Alice but portals prevented the cage from forming fully.

Just as Alice was about to follow up with another attack, she felt her body being thrown away once more.

'Tch!' With her zone being unable to detect the blue haired woman, it was hard to completely keep track of her unless she was staring at the woman.

It's as though she didn't exist unless Alice was staring at her directly.

Falling back sightly, Alice watched as the two of them regrouped.

The blue haired woman looked a little pale as the cracks were beginning to grow larger.

[I think I know her abilities now. I don't know how much of it was influenced by the collar but I can say one thing for sure.] Cayla frowned, looking worried.

[Her abilities does not exist in the catalogue that I have access to. There are some that resemble what she's doing but only on a miniscule level. She has a set of artificially created powers.]

Hearing this, Alice understood that the Zenia's were still making progress with each passing day.

The longer she stalls her fight against the Zenia's, the more powerful they'll become!

[It's just a theory and I don't know how the Zenia's managed to compile abilities together to form this power. But I think she can manipulate certain forces in space. It's different to space manipulation that Nyer had in the past.

[Instead, it's more like the ability to control 'pathways'.]

Chapter 677 - 677: Kaine And Mira

'Pathways?' Alice frowned.

If that was the case, it made sense why Alyss's arm was torn off despite her body being stuck in place.

It's simply a case of manipulating two different pathways. The first to secure the body and the second to move the arm.

Then came the question of how much force can be exhibited and the restraints of her ability.

'She had a nosebleed while trying to control too many pathways. I'm guessing there's a limit to what she can manipulate before her body gives in. She didn't show this power without the collar either.' Alice analysed.

Just as she was about to continue, Alice noticed the blue haired woman deactivating her collar before collapsing on one knee.

The woman with the scarf held her up with one arm over her shoulder.

"Where do you think you're going?!" Clenching her fist, the space around them began to collapse as Alice refused to let them leave so easily.

However, the scarf created a cage around them, cancelling out Alice's ability.

Triggered Cast!

Appearing in front of the woman with a grin, Alice reached out with her hand.

She knew that the woman would try to stop her through the scarf. Therefore, the moment she does, Alice will teleport herself into her range.

Since the scarf was made by weaving her blood, she'll hijack it!

Snapping her finger, several blood needles stabbed into the scarf as Alice injected her own fresh blood into the mix.

Immediately, the woman's eyes turned bloodshot as her scarf began to twitch and mutate.

Seeing this, the blue haired woman reached out to Alice and tapped her on the leg.

*BANG!!!

Throwing Alice away, the two stepped into a blood portal and left the area.

Landing on her feet, Alice had a frown on her face.

Even if she couldn't cancel out the scarf or hijack it, she at least wanted to plant a tracker so that she could keep an eye out.

Instead, what happened was that her blood was hijacked instead. It was assimilated into the scarf. It wasn't the same assimilation as Eldritch energy but instead, it was more akin to stealing.

The blood she injected into that scarf no longer 'belonged' to her.

[It's probably why her body showed negative signs. She absorbed what you injected.] Cayla furrowed her brows.

'I suppose it does make it easier to deal with her next time then. That scarf seems connected to her on a physical level. If I overflow it with my blood, she'll die.' Alice let out a sigh.

She already knew that the Doctor reported about her survival. So them finding out wasn't that big of an issue. What was an issue was the fact that now they know she's in the East.

'Tsk, we can't stay here for long. We'll have to finish what we're here to do quickly.' Alice scratched her hair.

Giving the battlefield another glance, Alice couldn't help but wince at the loss of life.

The countless corpses of friend and foe scattered across the land. Not all of them were strong, some might just be normal humans.

But in the end, they still fought to their last breath. They were already braver than most by throwing themselves into danger like this.

Especially Suyin.

When Alice laid her eyes on Suyin, she couldn't believe what she was seeing.

Not a single speck of Abyss energy accepted her.

No strands, no nothing.

It's as though the Abyss rejected her existence.

Instead, she filled her body with machinery, using that as an extension to accept healing vials. Flesh 'regenerated' as an extension of her machines rather than her.

Then there was all of the weapons that she created. The mechanical arms that acted as the walls of the city.

She could sense a tremendous amount of energy beneath the city. Suffice to say, she WAS this city and this city an extension of Suyin.

###

*Stumble

Collapsing on the ground, the woman with the scarf coughed up a mouthful of blood as she clutched her arms in pain.

She writhed on the ground while the blue haired woman held her tightly.

"I suppose she is the prototype for our existence after all. We cannot deny the fact that our blood comes from her. It's because the family wanted to learn how to harness the potential of her blood do we exist." A woman chuckled, watching the twins hugging each other.

Even though their emotions couldn't be seen properly, she could tell.

They were disturbed by the original!

That regeneration, the powers she hold. Even her adaptability and potency of blood.

The blood they received was watered down variants. No matter how 'recent' they were, they still couldn't handle the original blood.

"Kaine, take Mira to the scholars that we brought with us. Have them extract the original's blood since the family is lacking some samples. Doing so should save Mira's life." She ordered as Kaine, the blue haired girl nodded her head frantically.

Unlike Laura and Kagen, twins of the previous generation that could fuse into one beast, Kaine and Mira were 'made' as separate entities.

One showed talent in perceiving space and manipulating it while the other showed affinity for using the base properties of Alice's blood.

Therefore, the Hybrid protocol was different for the two.

As twins, having a connection was unavoidable. Therefore, their solution was to have Mira act as a regulator for Kaine.

Kaine limit breaks by injecting more blood into herself, unlocking the power to control Vectors while Mira ensures that Kaine can fight for the full duration without dying to the after effects.

The two fight side by side and even though Mira rarely intervenes, that's because her focus was on keeping Kaine from breaking apart.

Losing one would be akin to losing both since neither can fight without the other.

If Kaine fights alone, she'll die before the fight even ends.

If Mira fights alone, she lacks the powers to kill a strong opponent.

Had Alice not injected her blood into Mira's scarf, she would've been able to help 'fix' Kaine's body, allowing her to continue the fight.

But because Alice took Mira out of commission, they had to retreat.

Not that she believed the two could retrieve Alice to begin with.

They were simply there to gather information. Only taking damage to this degree was outside of her expectations.

'Her abilities haven't changed much compared to the Doctor's report. Though she was still holding back.'
She narrowed her gaze.

From the Doctor's report, she understood that Alice could manifest a soul state of sorts, amplifying her power.

Then there was also the crimson halo that pushed her abilities beyond what's originally perceived.

It was also because of this ability did the Doctor add some extra modifications to the collars, helping them break past their perceived limit.

"She's not going to make this easy. I might have to get more reinforcements from the doctor. What we have is lacking." The woman sighed but there was a calculating look in her eyes.

###

With the enemy army retreating, the City of Fusha was given a break.

Even though it should be a happy occasion, a sombre aura filled the city with the countless corpses of the deceased in the distance, reminding them of the price they had to pay for this 'break'.

After returning from the battlefield, one of the guards had guided Alice to the emergency ward as Suyin wanted to see her.

Naturally, Alice was careful not to accidentally bump into any of her equipment.

Standing behind the glass, there was a frown on Alice's face as she watched Suyin being hooked onto a large contraption.

"Sorry for the . . . current state I'm in. I wanted to talk to you as soon as possible." Suyin let out a hollow chuckle. She wore a breathing mask right now, numbing her sense of pain while wires were being hooked into her arm.

Mechanical bones were being inserted into place with pieces of tissue being applied to the surface.

"Honestly I don't mind waiting if you need some time to finish this procedure." Alice raised an eyebrow.

"I wanted you to see this so that you don't try to shake my hand. I'll die if you do hahaha." Suyin joked.

With a lot of her body being a result of her experimentation, just touching Alice could cause her to explode.

"That is a very fair point." Alice paused before agreeing.

Having the commander of Fusha explode because of a handshake would be rather...

"But now that you've seen my arm, let me get up first then we can talk." Suyin smiled.

Injecting Abyss Blood into the pieces of flesh grafted onto her arm, tissue began to regrow with Suyin wincing from the feeling of foreign flesh fusing with her own flesh.

Little by little, her arm was being reconstructed with mechanical bones. And finally, the skin was regenerated.

Moving her arm, Suyin furrowed her brows before shrugging.

The arm itself felt a little numb but it was better than not having an arm at all.

Stepping out of the operation room, Suyin had Alice follow her to the lab.

"After we had the chat when you were still at the port, I ran a few tests to see what could've possibly caused this reaction. After all, I've designed all of my tech to avoid situations where it might go berserk and explode like it did with you.

"Yet it still happened so it was clear that something was wrong with my calculations. I have some answers but these came with more questions.

"One of the questions that I wanted to ask you was. . .

"What's your connection with the Abyss?"

Chapter 678 - 678: Suyin's Questions

"What's your connection to the Abyss?" Suyin asked, glancing back towards Alice.

She spent her life trying to combat the fact that she couldn't use Abyss energy. Her solution to that was to create machines and fuse it to her own body.

A desperate grasp at some crumb of control over her own life in this f*cked up world.

Naturally, these machines were created with herself in mind. To allow for even a civilian to gain access to what's deemed to be unique to Hunters. It takes outside sources of Abyss Energy to feed itself and activate.

Yet for Alice, this causes everything to short circuit with a single touch.

No matter how dense the Abyssal Energy there was in the surroundings or even within a Hunter, it wouldn't short circuit. She made sure of that by placing safety protocols and limitations.

If Alice could short circuit it with a single touch then. . .

She was essentially a walking reservoir of Abyss Energy or her connection to the Abyss ran far deeper than just Sigils.

"No matter how strong a normal Hunter may be, short circuiting my babies are impossible. I even had an Abyss Lord help me verify this case. But you. You're different. One touch is all it takes.

"You're no ordinary gal. Not even a Lord and you can short circuit my stuff. So spill, what are you?" Suyin asked, jumping onto her chair and swinging herself across the lab.

"And don't give me crap like you're an exception or you're just a little special. Little doesn't cover for this kind of anomaly.

"Now, here's my theory. Because I've figured a way where I can results similar to what you exhibited." Suyin snapped her finger.

From the ceiling, a tube descended with a sample of black liquid in a container. Around it was pieces of her machines.

"Abyss Waters. I'm sure you know what it is right? The most potent kind of liquid the Abyss has to offer. One splash of this stuff is enough to kill a man never mind submerging themselves in it. I had quite a hard time getting my hands on this since there's no use for it anywhere. It's just trash that comes from the Abyss with a sh*t tonne of drawbacks too." Suyin lamented before having her mechanical arms dunk pieces of her machine into the water.

The moment it came into contact, the machine began to spark before short circuiting.

The reaction was less volatile than the one that Alice showed but she was on the right track.

"Now, it's not just a case of my babies not being waterproof since I've already resolved that issue long ago. Instead, it's the 'information' that the waters carry with them. The different amalgamations of Abyss Blood all compressed into one. In a sense, you can call it the water of life. Or death I suppose if you really think about it.

"But the key fact here is that it's this information overload and multiple sources of Abyss energy that f*cks with my stuff. With this added point, please rethink whatever excuse you were going to give me. Because being a little 'special' doesn't make you more potent than the literal water of death extracted from the bowels of the Abyss." Suyin crossed her legs while facing Alice.

Blinking her eye, Alice was rather surprised.

One interaction.

That's all they had.

Yet in this time, Suyin managed to deduct that she had a deeper connection AND the fact that she was more potent than the Abyss Waters.

Honestly, if Alice were to give her more time, she wouldn't be surprised if Suyin managed to deduce everything that was unique about her body.

"Aren't you a smart cookie. Yeah, you're right. My body isn't exactly what you consider normal. I don't want to get into the detail of things but think of it as me being a walking mass of energy that has deep ties to the Abyss." Alice shrugged.

Just as she was about to sit down on a chair, Suyin hastily moved it away before having some mechanical arms create a 'normal' metal chair for her.

"I don't have the budget to reconstruct my lab if you blow it up." She explained.

Shrugging her shoulders, Alice sat down and leaned back.

"As much as I want to run some tests on you, I don't think my equipment can handle it. I can't believe I have to rely on the outdated crap." She lamented.

After making this place her base of operations, Suyin essentially replaced all of the outdated lab equipment for the stuff that she's made. It makes it easier as they're an extension of herself.

She could control them at will.

But it's also an issue now due to Alice's unique physique.

"Well setting aside the issue of me possibly blowing up everyone, can you fill me in on what's going on? I know this city is on the border but this kind of battle is a bit. . . extreme no?" Alice asked with a frown.

To have both Cultists and Eldritch beasts fighting side by side. . .

Alice understood that she had to deal with it quickly before it spiralled out of control.

Then there was the involvement of the Zenia family.

Thinking about this, Alice subconsciously rubbed her neck. It felt like just yesterday when the cold iron was clamped around her throat, preventing her from escaping their clutches.

"Extreme yes. Though battles aren't exactly rare for these parts. The only thing that's abnormal are these weird things joining them. I got zero data on them.

"Touching them is similar to touching Abyss Water, death if not dealt with quickly." Suyin snapped her finger, creating a hologram of the Eldritch beasts.

"They're using the same kind of energy that we found in Cultists before. But the difference being the Cultists only used a small part of it while these things are entirely composed of it." Suyin folded her arms.

She was already having people compile all the data she found out about them during the fight through recordings and observations.

But despite all that, there was no clear method to fighting them.

The only exception being Alice and the two she brought with her.

Especially Jin.

"Unfortunately, we don't know what they're after. In the past, it was simply to gain access to the rest of this nation. But this attack. . . they were more focused on killing us than breaching the borders. They had plenty of chances to bypass but instead, they circled like vultures, bleeding us out." Suyin sighed.

"I think they're looking for sacrifices." Alice suddenly spoke up.

She recalled what she saw at the ritual back at the Empyrean Dragon sect. They were trying to gather a large amount of people for a Ritual that was both a blend of Eclipse and Eldritch.

With the last one being a failure, they might be trying the same again this time. Or rather, to recuperate their losses.

[The Zenia family Hybrids did mention about retrieval of family assets. I'm guessing they have a higher up with them and they saw you.]

'Mnm. Ideally, I want to cut off information from reaching the main family but that doesn't seem possible. If we stall this, reinforcements will be sent over.' Alice nodded as she couldn't stay for long.

"Sacrifices? Well I suppose that does match their usual movements." Suyin scratched her chin.

She looked at a birds eye view of the current city and the battlefield that was left behind.

Her mind turned, drawing imaginary arrows where attacks had happened and where they defended.

Her finger tapped against the table.

"This won't do. We won't be able to hold out for another attack." Suyin concluded after evaluating their defences.

Even with all of her weapons, defending would simply be suicide.

"Originally, I wanted to find out why my tech was blowing up because of your touch. But it doesn't matter right now. Instead, I want to hire you for your services." Suyin stood up with a grin.

"Hou?"

"What would it take for you to help us in the next battle. I'll be preparing a counterattack since this place can't hold on anymore."

She knew that Alice was powerful. The fact that a bounty was placed on her and she was still alive and kicking was evident of that. In addition, she also dealt with the two new arrivals and the swarm rather easily.

Someone of her calibre was comparable to a one person army. Lords were busy dealing with their own things and it's not like Suyin could hire them to begin with. At most, she could only ask them to partake in one experiment to verify the limits of her tech.

Therefore, having Alice on their side would increase their odds of winning drastically.

"You realise that if you say something like that, people will take advantage of you right?" Alice raised an eyebrow.

Suyin was practically revealing her entire hand with this request.

"Maybe. If you want to take advantage of me then be my guest. There's not much of me that can be taken advantage of anyways." She shrugged, placing one hand over her modest chest.

"But having your cooperation would help us out greatly. So state your price and I'll try my best to match." Suyin offered.

Thinking about it, Alice folded her arms.

There were two choices in front of her.

The first was naturally the money grubbing way.

But it didn't feel right. She recalled the bodies of those who sacrificed their lives, how Suyin was putting herself on the frontline despite being a normal human.

To ask for more money on top of all of this, especially when she's wanting the same goal. . . it didn't sit right with her.

And not only that, but Suyin was upfront about what she needed at this moment.

Since she was being honest, Alice will reply in kind.

"I don't need anything since I want the same result as you. I'll help you wipe them all out. Instead, I want to ask a favour of you." Alice smiled.

"I want you to help me figure out how Eldritch Energy operates."

Chapter 679 - 679: True Nature Of Curses

Blinking her eyes, Suyin froze up as Alice's words reverberated in her mind.

Alice wanted her to figure out how Eldritch Energy operates?

This singular question was like a bomb going off in her mind.

First and foremost, help her figure out.

This simple line. . . it verified the fact that Alice could access this energy. Heck, she could control it to some extent! If not, why would she need help to figure out?

Second of all, Eldritch Energy.

It has a name.

It's different to Abyssal Energy and Holy which are relatively well known. Void was a strange subject since not many could put it to use and it's mostly used as a realm for them to store treasures in vaults.

But this? This is a third unknown energy. So far, they simply called it corrupted energy. A unique signature that they've seen in the recent uprising in cultists.

With so many unknown factors around this energy. . .

If she was to help Alice figure it out. . .

She'll be able to publish research about it worldwide, spreading her name and even exposing the world to her gadgets. It will no longer be limited to the boundaries of Sikha.

Instead, everyone in the world could get access!

Just thinking about it made Suyin tremble as she revealed a goofy smile with an equally goofy laugh when thinking about the possibilities.

"Hehe~ Hehehehe~ Hehehehahahaha~"

". . ." Staring at Suyin blankly, Alice was speechless.

Perhaps being a researcher had a requirement that Alice didn't know about. That being a personality that flips on the moment research is mentioned.

Elara was like this, Caera was also like this. Both researchers that Alice knew on a deeper level had shown sides like this and now added to the mix was Bai Suyin.

Once a pattern forms, maybe it's not a coincidence or exception anymore.

"Alright, we can do it. I'll help you figure out how Eldritch Energy works and in return, you'll help me with the counterattack!" Suyin rubbed her hands together.

For a moment, Alice swore she could see hearts in her eyes.

Nodding her head hesitantly, she watched as Suyin grab a communication orb and connected to one of her subordinates.

"Inform the soldiers to rest as much as they can and give them some luxuries as well. Send the scouts out to secure our perimeter and notify us the moment they spot an ambush or the next wave of attacks. Keep in contact and report every minute. Keep coms open so if anything happens we know. We'll make an announcement in 2 to 3 days." She ordered.

Without questioning the choice, her subordinate nodded and ended the call.

"Alright, that gives us around 3 days of privacy hehehehehe~" Suyin glanced back at Alice who was sitting on the chair.

"Am I performing the experiments on you or someone else?" She asked curiously.

"Both. I got a bit of Eldritch energy in me and my student was modified by a ritual that they caused. His body is now entirely made up of this energy."

Nodding her head, Suyin began to note stuff down as she had Alice explain everything she knew about this energy.

How it assimilates, mutates and merges with other stuff.

"Wait hold on. How do you know what it does with the other sources of energy?" Suyin blinked her eyes.

Without saying much else, Alice snapped her finger.

First, a portal to the Void opened up, exuding Void energy.

Then came her standard Sigil powers flowing with Abyssal Energy.

Summoning the Crown of the Abyss, holy energy was now present.

Looking at the energy readings on her monitoring device, Suyin widened her eyes before a wide grin appeared once more.

"Oh hou~ Ohohoho~ Three??? You actually have three sources in you?!" Suyin couldn't hold back her drool as Alice shook her head.

Closing her eyes for a moment, Alice allowed Alyss to take over.

Golden chains clasped around her limbs and the energy readings now turned to Eldritch.

"FOUR?!?!" Suyin stumbled off her chair.

Having Abyss energy was a given.

Void? Byproduct of a Sigil.

Holy? Could be a religious woman.

But Eldritch as well?! How the hell is her body containing all of these different sources? Especially when, according to Alice, Eldritch merges and corrupts everything else.

If that was completely true, she should be corrupted by now yet she was fine.

Swallowing her saliva and wiping away her drool, Suyin tried her best to compose herself.

"Oh my gods, no wonder my babies short circuited."

Pacing around for a moment, Suyin began to rummage through all of her gadgets, even tossing some over her head at moments.

Avoiding the flying debris, Alice watched silently.

She could see Suyin's mind turning rapidly while thinking up of certain tests that they could do.

'Imagine how she'll react if she knew you could switch your Sigils or copy others.' Alyss chuckled.

Seeing someone get this excited about something was rather charming to see.

'She's already losing it as it is. Let's not give her more information that could break her mentally.' Alice waved her hand.

Meanwhile, Cayla was silent.

She sat behind her desk with an assortment of notes in front of her.

Her eyes stared blankly at the sheets.

After a brief moment, she let out a deep sigh.

It was lacking.

The information she has is lacking too much.

There was only one thing left for her to do.

Break Kaden's seal!

But breaking the Seal placed by the Apostle of Corruption was no easy task. It's one that Kaden confirmed himself. He can't remove it to end this 'training' period faster. A decision that Alice couldn't back out of.

Therefore, Cayla wanted to work on it from within.

This is a test for her as much as it is for Alice. To see if she could grow beyond her normal capabilities.

She's long past her prime. Hell, she might never reach it again after Nyer stole the other half of her.

But what she could do was forge a new path like Alice.

She can maintain her current abilities but develop more on top.

[Discard my current understanding of the world. I need to return to a foundational level. What is a curse?] Cayla closed her eyes.

A curse, to put bluntly, is a restriction placed on a person. It could be the curse of blindness that prevents them from using the sense of sight. A curse of deafness that prevents the use of hearing.

The more powerful curses involve eliminating the use of abilities or even thought.

But restriction. . . It only scratches the surface of the possibilities. Natural curses, ritualistic curses, there are many forms of curses in this world. Some are obvious, some are not.

Perhaps calling it a 'curse' is what causes some misconceptions regarding its origin and true nature.

A curse. . .

It's a command.

A result of the world reacting to a command centred around a person or place.

In other words, it's 'Law'.

Curse of Sealing?

It's a command placed onto her and the world. A command that prevents the use of the gifts that she was born with. A command that seals off the flow of energy flowing into her.

If so, then undoing it early would require a counter command. One that goes against the original directive.

But making a counter command against the curse placed by the Apostle of Corruption wasn't going to be easy. Especially since it's a curse placed by the Grimoire of Original Sin.

She needed to break it down further, to get into the roots of this command and break it apart.

[!!!] Pausing for a moment, Cayla opened her eyes.

She had an idea.

One that may loosen her bindings or if things go well, undo them completely.

And for that, she'll need Alyss's help.

Alice was going to be busy with experimenting so she might as well take this time to borrow Alyss. Of course, her idea was theory right now.

For all she knew, it might not work at all but it was worth a try.

###

Walking around the city, Isolde kneeled in front of a pair of children hugging each other. Without saying anything else, she handed them some clothes and food.

She didn't know their story, she didn't know anything about them. But what she did know was that this wasn't uncommon.

The consequences of battle.

Those who never return, leaving behind their families.

'Do they remind you of the little ones you used to look after?' Zal-Ka'Rith asked as Isolde paused and nodded her head.

'Is. . . Is it possible for you to see if these little ones have anyone to care for them?' Isolde asked.

'It is possible. But I've already borrowed your body too much. If I try again so soon. . . I don't think your vessel can hold on.' Zal-Ka'Rith replied.

Currently, Isolde was his eyes to observe Alice's actions. Losing her would be akin to losing his ticket to entertainment and that's not what he wanted.

Isolde understood her Lord's methods. She knew that she was asking a lot for a pair of people she had no knowledge of.

But she didn't want to see the little ones suffer. They don't deserve this kind of life.

'Hold their hand. One each. I'll see if they have any blood connections alive nearby.' Zal-Ka'Rith let out a soft sigh, surprising Isolde.

'Surprised? You've done me a great service. Is it not natural that I reply in kind? Law of equivalent exchange.' He chuckled as Isolde didn't hesitate to hold their hands.

For a brief moment, dark energy flowed from Isolde's fingertips and poked a small pin sized hole into the little one's palms.

Taking a drop of blood from each of them, Zal-Ka'Rith was silent.

'There is one weak signature. It seems to be surrounded by a lot of other weak signatures which I can only assume to be wounded soldiers. I don't suggest taking the little ones there as they might see a gruesome sight.'

Letting out a sigh of relief, Isolde patted their heads before standing up and walking away.

Just knowing that they had someone alive who could look after them gave her a sense of peace.

'Thank you, my Lord.'

Unlike the three Gods, Zal-Ka'Rith actually made a move to help her. The Law of Equal exchange, to put herself at the table to bargain with the Gods.

For Zal-Ka'Rith, Isolde was willing to offer her everything.

Chapter 680 - 680: Isolde's Smile

Giving most of the information she had regarding Eldritch Energy to Suyin, Alice gave her the time she needed to formulate some experiments that she could do while they had some privacy.

During this time, since she couldn't contribute much else, Alice decided to roam the city and look for Jin and Isolde.

The first that Alice found was Isolde who spent the time caring for those affected by the battle.

To Alice's surprise, Isolde wasn't just talented with her. . . sculptures. She seemed to be a master of instruments as well. Disguising her 'limbs' as dark silken flowing energy, she played a variety of instruments at the same time, holding a small concert of sorts in the main square.

Those plagued with dark thoughts were distracted and sat down to enjoy the music.

There were no bewitching effects, no Sigil abilities. Just her pure talent for music and offering those seeking escape a moment of distraction.

To turn their attention away from the gruesome reality.

People who had requests would tell her roughly what they wanted to hear and if Isolde didn't know about the piece, she would improvise and make something new.

Alice had to admit, even she found herself sitting down and enjoying the music on a rooftop.

A moment for her to glance up at the sky and wonder about her own future.

She could see a path laid out in front of her.

A path of blood and chaos. To kill, kill and kill again.

But what's at the end of that path? Beyond being someone who can kill, what else is she?

This wasn't the first time she's had this thought. Was her goal to achieve Godhood? But what else? To put it bluntly, Alice didn't know what it meant to be a Goddess.

She didn't know the tasks she should follow. Hell, she doesn't even have any followers that believe in her.

How can she recreate Ayr without subjects?

Though. . . Alice never saw herself as someone to lead the masses. If she were to become a Goddess, the most that she imagines herself doing is maintaining the peace of the Abyss. Perhaps making it so that people don't get killed by the side effects of drinking Abyss Blood.

Or rather, maybe it's better for this world to not have such a thing to begin with.

Outer Gods, the Three Main Gods, Will of the Abyss.

These. . . 'divinities' think nothing of the common people. They see them as pawns in their game.

'Though. . . I suppose there are some exceptions.' Alice paused, glancing down at Isolde who was the vessel for Zal-Ka'Rith.

An Outer God he maybe but a fair one at that. His punishments are cruel but his gifts are bountiful. A being that prides himself on fairness. An opportunity for equal exchange, not giving or receiving more than they are willing to reciprocate.

In this aspect, Alice couldn't help but wonder if there are other Outer Gods that are like him.

Ones that might be willing to become an all-

[Don't get your hopes up. Zal-Ka'Rith, while an ally right now, only did so because he found you interesting. Had you not interested him, he would've sought to end you during the time you were

trapped. Finding him is already a miracle if I'm being honest, finding another. . . I doubt it.] Cayla interrupted Alice's thought before she could finish.

Even now, Cayla was doubtful towards Zal-Ka'Rith. But it's indeed true that he hasn't pulled anything suspicious yet.

Cryptic, yes.

Suspicious? Not quite.

In fact, he's been rather truthful regarding his allegiance and code of conduct.

'Are they really that much of an exception?' Alice asked curiously as her knowledge of Outer Gods were lacking.

As someone who was there when a battle between this realm and the Outer Gods were waged, Cayla knows a lot more.

Crossing her legs, Cayla leaned back a little while tapping her finger on the table.

She was trying to think about how to explain what kind of existence they were to Alice.

[Outer Gods are. . . To put it bluntly, they are fundamentally different to us. We are completely incapable of coexisting and that's not concerning the properties of their power.

[They think of every living being as their pawns, vessels waiting for their selection. If humans are born with the instinct to survive, the Outer Gods are born with the instinct to assimilate. It is the core of their being.

[Perhaps it's because of Zal-Ka'Rith's inquisitive nature that allowed him to understand humans a little more. But that nature is deeply engrained into the fact that he's born as the Writhing Script. A being

that records and understands. A rare instance where a bridge can be formed between two very different beings.] Cayla explained.

[No, rare doesn't even come close to the anomaly that is Zal-Ka'Rith. If you're an anomaly of the human race that can ignore Abyss Blood defects, Zal-Ka'Rith's an anomaly of the Outer Gods.] She corrected herself.

Hearing Cayla give Zal-Ka'Rith this kind of evaluation, Alice began to see just how rare it is for him to be like this.

After all, in the history of the Abyss, only two people could shrug off the defects.

The Goddess and herself.

If an understanding could be reached between them, it would be a waste for Alice not to take advantage of this opportunity. To learn as much as possible.

However. . .

Being a being of fairness and someone who focuses on equivalent exchange, there was a chance that Zal-Ka'Rith could 'sell' her information to her enemies.

Even if an understanding could be reached, Alice had to be careful with what she exposed.

Isolde's concert lasted for around two hours. It gave the people the rest they needed and the distraction to dispel the gloom.

"I didn't know you were talented in music." Alice called out, landing next to Isolde who was still sitting down.

At this point, most of the people have already gone back to doing what they were doing earlier.

Only a few left behind to give her some extra words of thanks.

"It's a hobby I picked up in the past. I needed something to keep the children occupied after all. Picnics and music, that's how we spent most of our days. I did try to learn some woodworking so I could make toys for them." Isolde smiled softly.

"Though it was a little late for that when the time came." She shrugged while maintaining this smile.

But Alice saw it falter. There was a bitterness in the smile. But beneath it all, a silent rage.

No smile could hide that glimmer in her eyes, the slight furrowing of the brows and twitching in the corner of her lips.

"I must say, seems like they're the reason why you always keep a smile on your face, no matter how you feel." Alice glanced over, watching Isolde wave goodbye to the kids that stayed behind.

"Adults are the protective shield for children. This smile of mine is to reassure that everything is okay. If I can smile, they can smile too. They don't need to know the struggles just yet." Isolde chuckled before standing up.

She had already put away her instruments.

"Then what about when you're alone? Do you still need to smile?" Alice asked curiously.

Hearing this, Isolde paused.

A moment of silence stretched on before she nodded her head.

"Yes. Even alone, I need to smile. That way, I can remember what I'm doing all of this for."

Without waiting for Alice's reply, Isolde stepped away.

Her smile was forced, she wanted to stop but she couldn't.

She could still remember the days of peace. Moments where she would take them on a small hill, make them a picnic and enjoy the scenery of the river banks.

She would tell them how everything was going to be okay, that they had each other in this life.

That they had her.

How she would protect them all.

But in the end, it was all just a lie. None of what she said was true. She couldn't protect them, she couldn't keep them safe. What little she could give them wasn't enough.

While they struggled, others continued to take advantage of them.

When they needed medicine, when they needed food, the ones giving it always looked to extract more.

And the churches didn't help either.

No matter how she begged for their help, the excuse was always the same.

'We're doing everything we can.'

Thinking about this, Isolde clenched her fist around her arm as a vein bulged on her neck, but she kept her smile.

'My Lord, do you still recall our promise?' Isolde asked.

'Naturally. I don't forget the deals that I've made.' Zal-Ka'Rith reassured.

He knew that there was only one thing that Isolde desired in this world. For Lumiria to suffer a fate worse than death!

She wanted the Goddess of the Moon to suffer, to torment, to cry out in pain. To beg, to weep.

She wanted the Goddess to become an ugly mess begging for mercy. For all the lives that she stole, for the lives that she took from Isolde's embrace.

The children didn't deserve the fate that she bestowed onto them.

Immortality? To live on in the afterlife? It was all bullsh*t. She was simply a false idol collecting souls for her own enjoyment, her own nourishment.

Her twisted hobby.

As long as Lumiria dies, she'll even sign a contract with the devil. Though perhaps, to them, she already has.

A sinner that has reached an agreement with an Outer God. To shake the foundations of their realm.

For her, this smile was a promise. A promise to the children that she lost. A promise that she'll avenge them no matter what.