

Abyssal A 76

Chapter 76 Ria's Past

Waking up in the morning, Alice was going to go down and get some breakfast when she noticed Ria waiting just outside of her room.

"G'morning. Is it okay if we talk a bit?" Ria asked with a slight smile.

Understanding that this was going to be a talk about what she had demonstrated, Alice took a deep breath to try and calm herself down before nodding her head and gesturing for Ria to come inside the room so others don't overhear.

"Well... How do I even startahaha." Ria scratched her cheek awkwardly.

"First things first, I'm sorry for charging in when we saw the Cultists. If I didn't charge in, you wouldn't have had to fight something so dangerous. My choice could've killed us both and you don't know the reason yet you still helped me and even exposed something about you that you didn't want others to know.

For that, I'm thankful but also sorry for dragging you into it." She apologised as Alice nodded her head, not sure on how she should respond.

"The second thing I wanted to say was I don't plan on telling anyone, not my grandfather or Allura about what I saw. It's your secret and something you're clearly not comfortable with so when you want to reveal that is your choice. It is not mine to interfere.

"I will however, explain a bit more about my history with the Cult. After all, even though I told you I wanted to hunt them down, you knowing a little more might better help you prepare since my reaction took you off guard." Ria sighed. She was happy that Alice jumped into the fight without asking much but the fact that both of them nearly died was weighing on her conscience.

If it was just her, she wouldn't have minded so much as she died doing what she believed was right. But Alice? She hardly knew her history and if they were going to run into more Cultists in the future, she wanted Alice to at least know why she hated them.

The reason why she was risking her life.

"It's going to be quite long, would you like to take a seat while we talk?" Ria asked as she pat the bed beside her.

Nodding her head, Alice sat down and listened silently. To her, this was Ria's own way of comforting Alice as she's exposing her own secrets as Alice did with her powers.

"Well... I don't believe you know much about the Cult's practices do you? I mean the ones that don't involve fighting wars or starving people for famine." Ria asked as Alice shook her head.

"You see, there are a multitude of rituals in the Cult that have different purposes but all tying back to the concepts of War and Famine. And well... I was part of one I suppose. A ritual of starvation."

Turning around, Ria took a deep breath and lifted up the back of her hair. While most of it has been regrown, Alice could see deep scars across her scalp. A visage that was usually hidden by Ria's long hair.

Patterns that were seen on the clothing belonging to the Cultists as well as iconography seemingly depicting a higher being that the cult worshipped was carved into her flesh.

"The ritual had all participants carve markings upon the scalp and the rest of the body. I was being prepared to join the ritual for a long time so the markings on the back of my head was carved first. Too much time passed before my grandfather found me so we were unable to get rid of these marks.

"The ritual would have those participating starved for weeks, locked up alone to the point they become desperate where they would do anything for food and water. And when the conditions are met, we would be released into a blood pool to drink the blood of those that have starved prior and feast upon one another.

"The one who survives to the end will be taken out of the pool and have the rest of their markings carved and completed on their body, allowing them a connection with the Apostles and be granted power that is amplified by the desires of famine." Ria sighed as she let go of her hair, allowing it to cover up the markings that could not be erased.

"When my grandfather broke into the chamber where the ritual was being held, there were only 5 people left within the pool and I was one of them. He managed to get 3 of us out before being forced to run away. The other two died on the way back and I was on the verge of death when grandfather did everything he could to save my life.

Afterwards he adopted me as part of his family." Ria smiled softly as she owed Gin far too much.

"I don't know who my original family was but I assume they're dead. Grandfather is my only family now and I want to erase the Cult from this world so no more will have to go through what I had to. Even now, I can still remember the stench of the blood, the taste of their body in my mouth, the hunger that invaded my mind while I clawed my way through the blood pool.

No one else should have to go through what I did."

Even now, Ria would have occasional nightmares of the horrors she saw that day. The frenzied cries of those having their flesh torn from their body. Their gurgles as she forced their head into the water, drowning them so they couldn't fight back.

Looking at Ria's expression, Alice could see that she was hiding the pain inside. The thought of having to eat others to survive, to drink their blood to quench your thirst.

Alice knew it was not easy for Ria to reveal all of this.

"Anyways that's what I wanted you to know. Why I want to fight the Cult and so on. I don't know what kind of life you lived but if you ever need help, I'll try support you as best as I can." Ria stood up and took a deep breath. She was prepared to see the judgemental gaze of Alice, the disgust in her eyes hearing that she had to cannibalise on others within that ritual.

However, when she looked back at Alice, she saw pity and understanding in her eyes.

Seeing Alice open her mouth, Ria could see her intention in her eyes as usual.

Leaning forward, Ria covered Alice's mouth and shook her head.

"You don't have to explain your side of things because I exposed my side, okay? We got lucky that day, he was not prepared and we managed to kill him with my power. Nothing strange happened." Ria reassured.

Hearing this, Alice took a moment before nodding her head. After doing so, Ria removed her hand.

"Thank you."

"You're welcome. Bah now the awkward talk is over, shall we go get some food? Acting like this doesn't really suit me ahahaha." Ria grinned as she gave her body a stretch.

Following Ria downstairs, the two got some breakfast and started to plan the rest of their day out.

"I was thinking of doing some jobs since we failed our hunt, but after the instructor compensated us for our information we're not really pressed to get a job. Though we should do a few hunts just to gain some experience. Do you want to try for another two star hunt?" Ria asked while drinking some water.

"Hmm... Probably just a hunt near the city since Allura should be coming back soon right? Speaking of which, isn't your grandfather supposed to be here by now?"

Tapping her chin, Ria thought for a moment before shrugging her shoulders.

"Maybe there are more things to sort out in the Slaughter Docks than we initially thought. Grandfather is rather punctual with time unless something unexpected happens. Though he never really gave me a time frame on when he'll arrive so he'll look for us when he's here. As for a job near the city, we can probably look for something in the outskirts of the plains around the city.

Of course, there's also the option of just doing some training within the city walls but I'd prefer getting some experience outside." Ria replied, listing off the options they had.

"Let's go to the Guild then. I want to find some hunt targets so I can practise using my new weapon."
Alice made up her mind as she quickly finished her meal.

"Eh you have a new weapon?"

Nodding her head, Alice pointed at the new attachment she added to her gloves.

Giving the bracelet a command, it transformed into a dagger without any sharp edges as that's where the blood will be.

"What the sh*t? I don't think I've ever seen something like this before." Ria blinked her eyes in surprise as she needed a moment to double check what she was seeing was indeed real.

"Mister Nalem gave it to me last night. I was taking a stroll and his store was open so I was learning a little more regarding what the spy and Neal was talking about. He thanked me for some information and said he'll be closing shop for a while." Alice explained, causing Ria to pout slightly.

"I told him a bunch of stuff on my adventures and he never gave me something this cool. What else can it turn into?" Ria asked curiously.

"Erm... A few different blades but it requires blood to create the bladed bits. I'm choosing dagger for now since the others might be too heavy for me."

"Well now that you've told me this, obviously we have to go for a hunt to see what this bad boy can do."
Ria grinned as she dragged Alice away to the guild, hoping to get a two star hunt near the city.