

Abyssal A 811

Chapter 811: Abyss Lord Of Wrath

[Syrion, Abyss Lord of Wrath - ♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦]

Alice gritted her teeth.

Void Fang trembled by her side.

After training together for so long, she knew how oppressive Syrion was during battle. His experience and skills made him an absolute wall that they struggled to overcome.

As for Gwen, she gritted her teeth.

Why now... why did they have to fight now. She... She hadn't prepared herself to kill Syrion yet.

Not after he's shown her so much good will. Why must she kill him!?

"Hesitation leads to defeat! Either turn back now or stand tall!" Syrion shouted, his figure disappearing. In his wake, the ground crumbled!

*CLANG!!!

"GWEN! Get it together! This is your Hunt!" Alice shouted, injecting energy into her Vision and parrying Syrion's strike.

A heavy downward swing where even Void Fang was crying out in pain!

Alice winced, void energy spiralling to life next to her as she fired a point blank Void Flux!

Before her attack could even fire, a blade stabbed up, shattering the spell!

"Tch!"

Adjusting her footwork, golden chains snapped around Alice's limbs as Alyss took over!

Destruction point!

Erasing all colour from her world, Alyss lunged forward into Syrion's guard, aiming for the weakness that she saw.

Yet the moment she was about to strike, the weakness disappeared! He erased it!

*BANG!!!

The ground beneath them shattered as Syrion hopped back. A sword hung by his side as Alyss immediately felt danger!

Death!

*KRKKKK!!!

Sparks flew as Syrion drew his blade, unleashing a horizontal strike!

Fast yet slow.

The motion, calm, controlled. But the strike reached Alyss before she could even move her sword into place!

"I got it!" Alice shouted, countering with her own horizontal slash filled with Void energy.

A slash that perfectly swallowed Syrion's attack before it could reach them!

Alice's eyes darted, Syrion's speed was tremendous. Even with her Vision, Alice only saw faint bursts of energy with each step! He was circling around them like a shark!

'I can't fight while protecting Gwen.' Alice gritted her teeth.

She needed to buy some time for Gwen to make up her mind.

'Let's go after him! We can't damage him too much otherwise Gwen won't get her bounty.' Alyss suggested as Alice nodded her head.

Resonance!

Energy burst out from her body as spider lilies blossomed around Alice.

The pattern of a singularity spun to life with Alice slamming her hand against the ground.

*RUMBLE!!!

In an instant, a barrier was projected outwards.

Space lock!

Syrion froze in the air but broke out immediately.

However, the fact that he was frozen even for just a moment was the important factor!

"Gwen! Whatever you choose, I'll support you." Alice glanced back before teleporting behind Syrion.

*CLANG!!!

Their blades clashed as Syrion summoned four more blades to attack Alice from around her.

But her Vision had already seen it coming!

Before they could even fire, the Void swallowed the weapons!

"Don't think you can use your favourite weapons so easily in front of me." Alice grinned but Syrion was unfazed. Pushing Alice away, he stomped down, creating a field of blades.

Yet once more, they were swallowed by the Void.

"I've dealt with your kind before. Tell me..." Syrion's voice was low, calm yet filled with a suppressed fury. A calm sea with a turbulent storm hidden deep within.

"Can you 'see' all of this?"

He lifted his blade slowly. Yet with this slow motion came an unrelenting force that shattered the space in two. Cracks spreading across the abyssal realm, revealing the gaps between.

"!!!"

Alice's smile twitched, blood dripped from the corner of her eyes. Her vision being pushed to the extreme as she observed the net of energy.

"Oi... Isn't this a little crazy? Even for me this is insane." Alice couldn't help but force a laugh.

What else was she supposed to do?

Above her, through the gap of realms, a forest of blades hummed. Rows upon rows, layers upon layers. Countless blades hanging like guillotines, waiting for the command to attack.

Each one ready to tear apart any spell that Alice launches towards the skies. Should she try and force the Void to swallow this, blades will cut apart her spell from the sides.

But... Alice saw this as a challenge.

If she couldn't avoid this attack, if she couldn't cancel it out, why not destroy it head on?

Coiling her fingers around Void Fang, Alice brought it up to her face.

"Sorry, this might be a little painful." She whispered before entering an offensive posture.

*Badum...

Her heart pounded with vigour, energy rushing through her veins, Sigils burning into action across her skin!

Alice injected her energy into the array that was Void Axis!

*RUMBLE!!!

Abyssal energy surged, holy energy coiled into a crown, a connection between the three Abyssal artifacts. Eldritch flowed out from the depths of her spiritual heart as golden chains snapped and hissed around her limbs.

And finally, Void converged to form a singularity that compressed into a spark of pure light. A disk of violent energy formed as Alice pulled her sword back.

With this motion, the spark disassembled itself into tiny strands of energy that funnelled into Void Fang.

The sword screamed. Trembling in Alice's hands as the edge burned with power it had never felt before.

Aiming towards the cloud of swords, Alice unleashed a horizontal swing.

Void Axis!

A strike faster than any.

A sense of danger that sent chills down Griselda's back.

An Apostle of Immortality who subconsciously took a step back in fear, in dread.

'What would happen if that strike hit my core?' The question lingered in Griselda's mind as she finally saw the depths of Alice's power.

This entire time, she had avoided revealing her true self during training but no more!

With this, Griselda had received an answer to a question she hadn't thought of asking.

Alice was the one who killed Kazira!

The one in front of her was the inheritor of Velouria's throne!

Syrion was frozen in his steps. He looked up at his blades shattering apart. By the time Alice had swung, his attack was already destroyed. They were merely reacting late to the damage.

"Magnificent." Syrion praised.

What a beautiful strike. So full of power and refinement.

There was no doubt in Syrion's mind. This attack was one that's been modified by those far stronger than he!

If he had a mouth, he would be grinning manically right now.

"Good! Good! Show me more! Let me see the blade that will allow me to reach the divine throne!"
Syrion laughed, reaching towards the empty space in front of him.

Coiling his fingers around an invisible hilt, he pulled!

*KRK!!!

Crimson lightning tore through the realm as a new blade constructed itself.

A single blade with no guard and a deep crimson metal that shimmered as though it was blood.

This was the blade that'll adapt as the fight continues.

With Alice's strike, he will forge a new sword in her name!

"Go on! Show me that strike again!" Syrion aimed his blade, ready to counter but Alice rested Void Fang on her shoulders.

"Again? I don't think so. My job was simply to stall you know? This was never my battle. Never my bounty and it never will be. It's Gwen. She's the one who'll put an end to this." She laughed, preparing to step back.

But whether it was because of madness or perhaps Syrion's true feelings, he lunged.

*BANG!!!

In an instant, he was already in front of Alice, his sword mid swing.

But Alice was calm, she didn't falter.

She simply hopped back so there was enough room between them for someone to intervene.

*CLANG!!!

Gwen appeared in front of Alice, her phoenix transformed into a set of gauntlets and leg guards.

She had parried Syrion's strike by kicking against the face of the blade, pushing it off course!

Gwen gritted her teeth, energy surging through her body. Clashing her fists together, she fired herself up as she lunged towards Syrion!

"Just fight however you want! I'll support you!" Alice jumped back with a grin. She deactivated Vision and created an invisible grid around the area instead.

"Okay!"

Ducking under Syrion's slash, Gwen's arm shot up like a bullet! A devastating upper cut that was dodged at the last second.

Pulling her arm back without delay, she took a heavy step and leaned into her next strike!

*BANG!!!

Her fist slammed against Syrion's parry, a shockwave pushing the dust away.

"Not enough... Far from it!" Syrion shouted, summoning two blades that tried to cut Gwen down but the Void swallowed the blades once more!

Shooting a glare towards Alice, Syrion was about to move when Gwen slammed her foot into his knee, disrupting his balance momentarily.

"Eyes on me."

She punched his wrist, forcing it down before following up with a shoulder charge and into an elbow strike against his core!

Syrion stumbled back and Gwen chased!

Pulling both arms back, she slammed them into his guard.

Flames bursting out upon collision as a golden radiance filled Gwen's body.

Blessing!

Taking a deep breath, Gwen entered a low stance with two open palms.

Flames coiled around her as golden markings spread across her body.

Pushing her palm forward, a wave of flames rushed towards Syrion who cleaved it apart like it was nothing.

As the flames faded, he noticed that Gwen was already in front of him!

Blades shot up from below but she caught it between her fingers. Twisting her body, she slammed both of her feet into Syrion's guard, pushing him back some more.

*KRK!!!

Yet despite catching his swords, Gwen's arm had multiple cuts appear along her arm.

Furrowing her brows, she slammed her fists together before bringing them to her side.

Emerald flames burned against her arm, mending the wounds.

Guinevere, Cardinal of the Sun, Daughter of Arax, will claim her seventh Sigil here and now!

Chapter 812: Golden Crest

Gwen had always thought to herself about Shiera's fighting style.

Her aunt, the Apostle of Preservation, focused on honing her martial arts to the point of fanaticism.

At one point, Gwen couldn't help but wonder. What does it mean to be the Apostle of Preservation? What does her authority entail? And why does she need such power?

Shiera developed the Zone technique, taught it to the masses. She modified it to the safer version.

Then, in her pursuit of greatness, she developed the Vision. One could even say this was the highest peak when it comes to physical mastery.

A technique that allows you to grasp any and all movement honed by your physical attribute.

A technique that allows her to become a receptacle of information, capturing the entire fight in her eyes.

As long as it's within the physical limitations of her body, she could react to it.

But what pushes an Apostle of Preservation to create such power?

Gwen didn't know.

No matter how she scrambled her mind, she couldn't think of why Shiera was so desperate for the height of martial art.

To her, those that chose power for protection were those that screamed at the world.

"I don't care if my body is hurt or broken so long as what I treasure is not lost."

In which case, what did Shiera treasure? What did she want to preserve so desperately for her to develop this technique?

Gwen wanted to know.

She wanted to find out.

If she discovers what Shiera held in her heart, perhaps she'll be able to further her own Vision.

Syrion stepped through the dust cloud. His eyes locked onto Gwen. If he had a mouth he would be frowning in displeasure.

"Can you do it?" He asked, aiming his sword at her.

"It doesn't matter whether or not I can. What matters is that I give it my best shot!" Gwen clenched her fist, veins bulging with radiant fire.

"That's right! It doesn't matter if the task before you is what most deem as an impossibility! Just as how I wish to tear down the moon with my own hands, you wish to extinguish the light of the sun that has deviated from its cause!

"So burn! Burn your life force and show me the desire to transcend the divine throne!" Syrion roared, his killing intent surging like a tidal wave.

*BANG!!!

With a single step, Syrion was already in front of Gwen, blade practically grazing her neck.

But before his strike could sever her life, Gwen parried with the back of her fist!

A second strike was coming!

Gwen's eyes turned bloodshot. Information flowed into her mind like an endless storm.

*CLANG!!!

A second strike echoed out from her right as she parried once again.

Cuts spreading across her arm while emerald flames healed her in the same breath!

A flurry of swords along with perfect parries!

With Alice acting as support, Syrion was limited to physical attacks!

This was a duel.

A duel between a father who lost his family and a daughter who's watching danger approach her father.

Syrion disappeared from her sight.

Widening her eyes, Gwen slammed her fist into the ground without hesitation.

Shattering the foothold beneath them, flames converged into a single radiant sphere, a false sun!

Debris burned into molten lava as Gwen snapped her gaze upwards.

Syrion was preparing a downward strike!

Clenching her fist, the false Sun detonated as she unleashed a torrent of energy towards him.

Blade Horizon!

Gwen immediately stepped to the side yet a cut still appeared on her neck!

If she was any slower, her head would've been severed!

Green flames burned, healing her wound as she prepared her counter.

"Too slow!" Syrion appeared in front of Gwen.

Blade Horizon!

*CLANG!!!

Forcing herself to give up any of the blessings that Solaris had given her, Gwen parried Syrion's strike using her gauntlet.

Blood dripping from her nose as she forced her body beyond its limits.

Her Vision pinpointed exactly where she needed to hit at full power so that the attack would miss.

A command that her body followed to the best of her abilities!

Slamming his fist into Gwen's stomach, Syrion threw her into the air as he sheathed his blade.

Blade Horizon – Multi Strike!

"Old man! Don't you think that's cheating a little!" Alice shouted, firing three singularities that transformed into bolts of energy.

Each of them accurately swallowed one of the strikes while Gwen parried the last.

Syrion furrowed his brows.

His attack should've cut through Alice's parry yet they were still swallowed.

"Surprised? I bet you are. Want to know the secret? Not gonna tell ya~" Alice stuck out her tongue.

Pressing her finger against the ground, a blood pool spread out in an instant with Alice in the centre.

Spider lilies blossomed, latching onto Syrion's armour.

However, he had already figured out her trick.

Striking against the Void directly would allow it to tear and his ability will function as normal.

But by folding the space around the strike while in motion, Alice was able to negate the attack without it breaking apart.

A move that needed exceptionally high visual clarity and timing.

A move that she can only activate while Vision was running.

"Seeing too much is detrimental to you." Syrion warned, tightening his grip around his sword.

*KRK!!!!

The space around him fractured, tens of sword slashes freezing in the air before shattering all at once!

Alice shielded her eyes in pain.

Each of those slashes were actually constructed of hundreds all doing the same motion!

To overload her senses in an instant...

"Freak!" Alice cursed while diving into the Void momentarily to avoid Syrion's follow up attack.

Before Syrion could reach Alice, Gwen crashed down in front of him.

She slammed two fists into his guard, forcing him back.

Just as Gwen was about to kick, Syrion stabbed his sword down with the blade facing her, forcing her to stop.

*CLANG!!!

His upwards swing was punched to the side as Gwen twisted her body, faking a roundhouse kick before shifting into a leg hook.

Forcing Syrion to bend his knee, Gwen slammed her fist into his jaw. A devastating upper cut.

Blood splattered into the air.

Gwen gritted her teeth, green flames coating her arm as Syrion had actually countered!

When she smacked his sword away, he quickly shifted his grip and transformed a slash into a jab!

"You are flesh and bone, I am nothing but a set of hollow armour. These attacks won't work!"

Syrion reached out for a grab but the Void opened beneath Gwen, dragged her through.

Reappearing behind Syrion, Gwen was about to strike when Syrion countered with Sword Horizon!

"!!!"

His strike missed as Alice had created two more portals where Gwen's stomach would be, causing Syrion's attack to miss!

Jumping out of the portal, Gwen slammed her heel against Syrion's head, knocking him back.

"You're too focused on the appearance of your techniques! Forget Shiera, forget the sun! How does your body want to move! Listen to that flow!" Alyss took over quickly as she jumped in front of Gwen.

Destruction point!

Unleashed three slashes in quick succession, Alyss shredded three hidden strikes that Syrion had thrown out the moment he was kicked away.

Seeing this, Gwen nodded her head and lunged towards Syrion.

Each attack she threw was parried.

And in return, Syrion would counter with slashes aiming for her life.

She blocked what she could while Alice covered what she couldn't.

If Alice wasn't here, the fight would've ended long ago!

Gwen gritted her teeth.

This was her bounty yet she still needed so much help. How was she supposed to protect her father if she was this weak!?

"ARGH!!!"

Letting out a shout of frustration, Gwen grappled Syrion but he threw her away.

If she was struggling with a Lord, how was she supposed to fight Solaris!?

False sun? Blessings?

F*ck all of that! These were things he'll take back the moment she turns her blade towards him! She couldn't rely on this!

What she had to rely on was her own power. Gwen understood why Shiera chased after this power. The power to control the space around her through pure power.

It was so that she could preserve the delicate balance that was Solaris' whims and boredom.

Too weak and she'll be replaced. Too strong and Solaris may get rid of her.

By being able to accurately control her surroundings and choose how much power she needed to exert, she could effectively control the status quo.

So what about her? What kind of goal did she want to achieve with her Vision?

"Alice! You don't need to interfere anymore."

"Huh???" Alice glanced over in confusion.

If she didn't interfere then how was-

Alice froze. After a short moment, a smile appeared on her face.

"Alright. I'm trusting you here." Alice took a step back.

That look in Gwen's eyes. One of clarity, of confidence.

"Alone? Even though you were struggling against my strikes?" Syron frowned.

Was this the limit of Gwen's potential? The folly of her overconfidence.

"Yeah. It's meaningless unless I do this alone." Gwen smiled, closing her eyes.

Clashing her fists together, Gwen summoned the false sun and shattered it with her own hand, returning the power to Solaris.

She didn't need this power. It was a liability.

Syrion frowned and adjusted his grip.

Blade Horizo-

Before he could unleash his attack, Gwen punched the pommel, forcing the blade back into the sheath!

"!!!"

As Gwen opened her eyes, radiant flames surrounded her pupils.

On her forehead, a golden crest manifested, one that's different from Solaris' icon yet radiated a similar feeling.

The power of the Sun.

Chapter 813: Gwen Vs Syrion, Last Stand

Syrion stared at the crest in shock.

Divinity? No, not quite. She didn't feel like Lumiria.

Blessing of Solaris? That wasn't accurate either. Whatever Solaris had given her she had already crushed a moment ago.

So what was this power?

Jumping back, Syrion was summoned three blades, creating a net of defence around him but Gwen had already attacked!

Before he could even finish establishing his defence, Syrion felt a punch connect with his chest.

Gritting his teeth, Syrion stomped down with his foot.

His figure blurring out of existence.

Ripples across the surface of a lake before unleashing a devastating slash from above.

Sword Horizon!

The strike severed Gwen in half yet...

'It didn't connect!'

Slamming his hand down, Syrion created four blades that guarded his sides as a torrent of flames crashed down from above!

*BANG!!!

A densely packed array of slashes erupted around Syrion, cutting apart and extinguishing Gwen's flames.

"Alright. I'll acknowledge it. If it was the me before, you would be declared winner. But that is no longer the case." Syrion spoke with an eerie calmness.

Then, from the back of his armour, blades began to appear.

Resonance!

Gwen didn't make a move as everyone was dragged into Syrion's second resonance.

A world of his own making.

His hell.

Like before, a land of water rippled out. Countless blades standing like gravestones,

What was different however, was the lack of calmness. Instead of gentle waves, beneath the surface was a raging current.

From this current, flames burst out, boiling the water in an instant as blades melted into lava.

Mountains of metal solidifying into horrific hills, lakes of lava and burning embers scattered through the air.

Screams, lots of screams.

Those who flee, those who kill, a myriad of cries merged into a symphony of carnage echoed out.

The false moon above split in half with blood pouring down in the horizon.

Burning banners, mutating silhouettes.

This is the personal realm of the Lord of Wrath.

The hell he could never forget.

Griselda was familiar with this place.

She clenched her fist while staring at this realm with bitterness in her heart.

As expected, even after all these years, this place still haunts him.

Meanwhile, Alice sat with her arms crossed.

A smile could be seen on her face as she observed Gwen's movement.

'No wonder she told me to not interfere anymore.' Alice chuckled inwardly.

[Indeed. Seems like she has a knack for grasping the true essence of techniques like a certain someone.]

'Nah, this is a bit different from what I do. You could even say I cheat a little which is probably why I can't fully grasp Vision.' Alice shook her head.

'But Gwen? It takes her a moment but once she grasps the key and true nature of a technique, she'll be able to use it with just a snap of her fingers.'

The true nature of the golden crest that Gwen was using...

The power she's summoning from deep within, a power similar to Solaris' blessing.

Perhaps it's because she's the daughter of an Apostle, blessings run through her veins.

And what she was using was a self modified version of two techniques fused into one.

Gwen's own Vision and Bloodline Release!

Bloodline Release was a technique that required you to synchronise everything.

A link between body and soul. To form a stable passage that allows the soul to shape the body.

And right now, Gwen had achieved her ideal physical state!

Within Syrion's twisted resonance, a single radiant orb of light had invaded this realm.

The second coming of the Sun.

Reaching out with his hands, Syrion crushed several blades into countless splinters. Shards of raw energy converging to form a new blade.

*BANG!!!

Syrion disappeared, closing the gap in an instant.

But as he appeared behind Gwen, he saw her eyes tracking his every movement.

Previously, when he had unleashed this move, she had eyes of fear. Of panic.

'So you've improved this much.'

*CLANG!!!

Gwen slammed her fist into the side of the sword, shattering it with a single flaming punch.

Before Gwen could launch a counter, Syrion clenched his fist.

A storm of blades erupted from the mountains, surging towards the duo like a malevolent dragon.

Transforming herself into a streak of fire, Gwen created some distance between the two of them.

Yet strangely...

The swords weren't going after Gwen!

Each of the shards began to pierce into Syrion's body!

"Guinevere, show me the proof that your desires are greater than my rage. Show me the power that transcends my wrath!"

Summoning his sword, Syrion conjured seven crimson Sigils around the battlefield. Each one radiating with malice and bloodthirst.

Their target? Gwen!

Each of the Sigils transformed into a blade as Syrion pierced his sword into the sky.

A spectral array radiating the most brilliant blue spun to life before crackling with a deep crimson!

A twisted modification of Lumiria's ritual!

Yet despite all of this, Gwen simply stared at Syrion with pity in her eyes.

She couldn't say she understood his full pain. Only partially.

If she were to die before her father... Would her father be the same? To go from protecting the people to a man so full of malice and hate.

There was no doubt that Syrion was a good man in life. But circumstances and the Gods have driven a good man to such extremes.

Gwen's heart ached.

She didn't wish this on Syrion nor anyone else.

If so, what must be done?

The Gods must go.

Vile tyrants with no thought for the mortals they rule over. Their desires changing on a whim, forcing people to bow to their will.

She hated Solaris for forcing her father to do so much.

But what she hated more, was her own weakness. If she was stronger, her father wouldn't have been subjected to such treatment.

If she were stronger, she' be able to relieve his burden.

Taking a deep breath, Gwen stomped down with her foot.

*RUMBLE!!!

The entire realm trembled as burning fractures erupted from the ground!

But before the fire could spread, the seven swords pierced towards Gwen!

Rings of energy manifested around Gwen as a barrier was being formed. No, rather than a barrier it was better to call it a cage!

Illusionary gears locking pieces into place, Sigils marking itself upon the surface and the swords stabbed into the cage while Gwen had nowhere to run!

From above, twisted lunar light began to descend-

*BANG!!!

The cage shattered in an instant.

Where Gwen should've stood was a burning sun.

Radiant light seared through falling embers. Shadows stretched far from the intensity as Syrion's realm began to warp.

Then, in a single heartbeat, the entire realm was filled with light.

Gwen stood, the sun nowhere in sight.

Yet the darkness that Syrion had conjured disappeared.

As though the entire realm was trapped in a light room, every corner was illuminated.

Liquid evaporated with Gwen conjuring a tiny thumb sized orb. Pure white in colour, blinding.

Her arm transformed into pure obsidian with molten veins.

She glanced up at Syrion.

"I'm sorry."

Crushing the orb, her arm ignited with flames as she disappeared.

'Behind? Above?' Syrion's eyes darted until he realised she didn't circle around at all.

No, it was a head on strike!

Syrion swung down. But before his sword could build momentum, Gwen's left hand grabbed his wrist, preventing it from completing the swing.

With her right hand burning with radiant white fire, she slammed her palm into his chest!

"!!!"

As her palm came into contact with Syrion's armour, a sun bloomed behind him.

A single instantaneous strike that shattered his defences, unleashing solar might directly into his body.

*CRACK SHATTER!

Syrion's realm disappeared, his body falling towards the ground.

His swords were disappearing one by one.

He had lost.

Even now, his armour was burning away into nothingness from that last strike.

"Truly magnificent..."

To condense everything into a single strike.

A gamble with her life on the line.

If this strike had missed, Gwen would've died. She had no more energy to continue the fight.

But her gamble paid off.

That last strike... Syrion could feel it. His death.

Unable to maintain her form, Gwen began to fall from the sky but a portal to the Void opened up, catching her.

Seeing this, Syrion sighed in relief.

As he was bracing himself for impact, he felt a pair of hands catching him.

"Griselda..." Syrion muttered.

"You're such a fool... why must you force the matter to end like this?" Griselda looked at him with a bitter smile.

"Haha... You knew my condition. Any longer and I won't be myself..." Syrion let out a weak laugh.

His armour was slowly peeling away, transforming into ash.

"Do... Do you think I'll be able to see them?" Syrion asked, his voice trembling.

There was a hint of fear in his tone as his hand reached out towards the broken swing.

Griselda held her words.

She didn't know. Fate wasn't something that could be controlled. But a part of her wished it was different. So, rather than a promise to Syrion, it was more of a wish. Her wish.

"Yeah... You will. Next time, don't join any stupid order okay?" Griselda smiled.

"Treasure her. Hold her close. These hands of yours are meant to protect rather than be used as a weapon of war."

Hearing this, Syrion let out a soft sigh.

His strength was fading, darkness crept in from the edges of his vision.

Reaching up, he held her head gently.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry I couldn't reciprocate your feelings..."

Griselda's pupils trembled.

"Do... Do not... Do not die for the moon. Live... Live for yourself. Be happy."

Griselda opened her mouth, her lips trembling.

Biting her lips, she forced herself to smile.

"Stupid oaf... Why are your last words rejecting me?" Holding his hand, she hugged his arm.

"I'll live happily. I won't die for the moon. So go, go see her. This time, protect Mariel okay?"

For a moment, Griselda felt as though she saw Syrion smile.

The light in his helmet disappeared.

Despite being a puppet. Despite abandoning her flesh and bone centuries ago...

A single tear rolled down Griselda's cheek as she kissed him gently on the forehead.

Chapter 814: Gwen's Lordship

Alice caught Gwen through the Void.

Despite her new state deactivating, Alice could still feel the burning heat radiating from Gwen's body.

Winching slightly, she teleported to the ground and gently set down the unconscious Gwen.

Above her head, the seventh Sigil was slowly being formed.

*Badum...

Alice could feel her Abyssal heart stir.

Perhaps Syrion was a beast so it was a little different. She didn't feel much of a reaction from her relics.

But Gwen was different. She's a human.

Tendrils of energy filtered through the realm, injecting themselves into her.

The Abyss was stirring.

Golden cracks spreading across Gwen's body, a transformation occurring deep within.

"Don't move her too much. Her body is in a delicate state." Griselda's voice rang out as Alice glanced over.

She saw a small grave by the swing that she had made rather quickly.

There wasn't much of Syrion to be buried in the first place, his body had turned to ash and drifted off to the wind.

But what little she could grab was buried.

At least that way, a part of him was where he wanted to be.

Home.

"You haven't seen a 'person' achieve Lordship before have you?" She raised an eyebrow, glancing at Alice who was frozen from head to toe.

"Nope. Syrion was the only one I saw transform into a Lord. The rest are either already Lords or became one in the time I haven't seen them." Alice shook her head.

"Well for humans, it's a bit different. Lordship is... Hmm. Lordship is a transformation. A sign that the Abyss favours and accepts you. So your body naturally needs to change in order to accommodate said power." Griselda explained with a slight frown.

She waved Alice off with her hand but Alice didn't move, looking at her in confusion.

Rather than explain, Griselda rolled her eyes and grabbed Alice by the back of her neck.

"Hey!" Alice flailed her limbs but Griselda's grip was surprisingly sturdy.

Ignoring the cat trying to break out, Griselda snapped her finger and created a barrier around Gwen.

Lifting her up slightly, she adjusted it so that Gwen could rest comfortably.

"What are you going to do now?" Alice asked, sneaking a glance at Griselda.

Now that Syrion was dead, there's nothing connecting the two of them together.

"Maybe I'll capture you and turn you in. Maybe I'll even get on Lumiria's good side if I bring this girl over. A little bit of brainwashing and modification of the Soul should make her obedient to us don't you think?" Griselda smiled ominously as Alice immediately snapped her finger.

Energy converged into a single spark and was ready to fire.

"If you didn't get it, that was a joke." Griselda interrupted before Alice attacked.

Hearing this, her smile twitched furiously.

"THAT, was what you call a joke???" Alice questioned, dismissing the spark.

"Does it look like I spend my time learning how to joke with people? But no, I won't do anything. I was simply here visiting Syrion's home as I have done for the past few centuries. Nothing more, nothing less." Griselda sighed, shaking her head.

Alice furrowed her brows, finding it a little hard to believe.

But then again, it might not be so far fetched considering her relationship with Syrion.

"I think I'll go back to the order once I've had enough time to mourn." Griselda sighed, letting Alice down.

"So while I'm here, I'll ask you some questions. I do wish you'll answer them truthfully but I understand if you don't want to."

Alice furrowed her brows.

But with Gwen undergoing the transformation into a Lord, there wasn't much choice.

"Alright, I'm listening." Alice nodded.

She might as well stay on Griselda's good side while they were here.

"Are you planning to kill the rest of the Apostles?"

Griselda's first question was direct and straight to the point.

She held nothing back even if the answer may turn them into enemies.

In fact, her guard was completely relaxed.

Was it a trap? Or did she no longer care about what happened to her?

"No. I don't plan on killing all the Apostles. But... Famine. Famine must be dealt with no matter what. I need to get an answer out of her." Alice shook her head.

She didn't want to kill the Apostles.

Kazira was a coincidence and naturally, she didn't want to kill Arax or Shiera. But Famine, dealing with Famine meant that Allura might have a chance being freed from her curse.

"Hmm... I see. Allura must be alive and kicking if you want to deal with famine. No wonder Kaden stopped messing around with us and instead focused on tracking down Famine again." Griselda scratched her chin.

Just from one answer, she was able to find answers to questions she hadn't even asked.

"You know Kaden right? Emo raven b*stard. Gloomy motherf*cker that one." Griselda clarified in case Alice didn't know.

Cayla was laughing in Alice's mental scape while Alice simply nodded her head.

Indeed Kaden was quite the gloomy one. But recalling what he wore during Ayr... Namely that pink apron...

Maybe him being gloomy is a phase.

"Yeah I do."

"Seems like he's getting involved with Ayr again. Your casting has traces of his techniques in them while your martial arts has signs of Allura's movements. You have the relics and both Apostles are teaching you.

"If I wasn't sure you're Velouria's successor before I am now." Griselda leaned back.

"For someone who SHOULD be sneaking around, aren't you making a lot of high profile moves? You've alerted the entire faction of the Sun-" She paused, staring at Gwen before turning to Alice.

"Why the hell are you with the Sun if they're looking for you? Unless they don't know you're the one they're looking for?"

Alice scratched her hair.

"Long story. I snuck in for some training and got dragged into a bunch of things." Alice stuck out her tongue.

Griselda let out a long exhausted sigh.

"I suggest you keep your distance. The moon is somewhat on alert but I'll be honest, Lumiria doesn't care too much about you. She's more concerned about a cardinal that we have." She suggested.

Alice blinked her eyes. Just like how Griselda was getting information from her, she could get information from Griselda.

"Lumiria is interested in a Cardinal?"

"Yeah. Though she's in a bad mood lately with his faith wavering. If I hadn't intervened, she would've tried to break him directly." Griselda shook her head.

She recalled how bad of a mood Lumiria was in. Enough where she was even considering killing Arwen in order to monopolise Tristan's attention.

All because someone with the power of duality managed to fix his sis-

Griselda sat up.

Her head turned to Alice.

"F*ck... It was you."

"Huh? What was me?"

"Caethis. You were the one at the port and fixed Triss' sister." Griselda widened her eyes.

Alice choked on her saliva.

"You've really f*cked up you know that right? Lumiria is livid towards you since you fixed Arwen. Solaris is on guard since he's fearful. Not to mention the fact that you killed Kazira. Being the successor of Ayr is bad enough already but you've annoyed all three factions on top of that..."

Griselda couldn't believe what she was seeing. One person was able to stir so much chaos. Hell, she wasn't even doing it on purpose too!

"Are you a magnet for troubles?"

Cayla stared at Alice with a set of piercing eyes.

[Yeah Alice, why not answer the question.]

"Ahem..." Alice looked away sheepishly. She couldn't help it!

It's not like she was intentionally searching for them either!

Seeing Alice acting like this, Griselda understood that she had hit the nail on the head.

She massaged her temples.

What was she even supposed to say towards this girl?

"Do you have a map? I'll mark down a few locations you must absolutely avoid unless you want a head on confrontation with the Moon."

Alice blinked her eyes.

"You helped Arwen right? Her issue was one that not even Lumiria could solve without direct modification. Something that Triss wanted to avoid. And since you managed to succeed, I owe you one." Griselda gave Alice a nod of respect.

"Are you in love with Tristan too?" Alice asked suddenly.

". . ."

[. . .]

' . . . '

Griselda gestured for Alice to lean closer for a second.

Just as Alice leaned in, Griselda punched her on the head.

"Stupid b*tch." She cursed.

"Ow! Hey! What was that for???" Alice clutched her head.

"Just because I show someone favour doesn't mean I'm in love with them. Triss has helped me before and seeing his sister... I just pity the siblings." Griselda huffed with a shake of her head.

[It's deserved.] Cayla nodded.

'Absolutely.' Alyss agreed.

'Traitors!' Alice felt wronged.

"And I gave Arwen a visit before since Lumiria asked me to double check her condition. Not even a sign of the Abyss's influence. You did a wonderful job." She praised.

Though her praise wasn't exactly great since Alice wasn't fully responsible.

When she tried to revoke Arwen's contract, the Will stepped in and mocked her.

Asked her to get a Sigil that interacts with the soul before trying again.

While her sixth Sigil does indeed interact with the soul, it's a little different than what she had imagined.

Tapping her finger, Alice had an idea.

Wasn't there a person that's experienced with the soul next to her?

"Griselda, can I ask a favour?" Alice opened her mouth.

"Depends."

"Teach me more about souls." Alice spoke bluntly.

Griselda could see the light of determination in her eyes and after a moment, she nodded her head.

"Alright. While I'm still here, I'll teach you a little about souls."

###

Gwen found herself in a strange white realm. No matter how far she walked or looked around, only boundless white awaited her.

Then, within this vast emptiness, a single figure stepped out of the light.

Faceless and without detail. But a single toothy smile could be seen.

Chapter 815: Gwen's Title

Gwen was immediately on guard.

Something about this... 'person' was ringing all kinds of warning bells in her mind.

Every fibre of her being told her to get away, to avoid him at any cost.

But in this vast landscape of emptiness, where could she even go? She tried to circulate her energy, she tried to summon her flames but nothing.

It was just him and her, with no one else to come help.

"Why the cautiousness? I don't believe I've said anything to warrant your aggression or wariness. Yet."
The Will chuckled, sitting on an invisible chair with his legs crossed.

Gwen was like a frightened animal right now, her fur standing on end.

But even so...

So what? The Will couldn't care less about what she was about to try and do. That is if she even had the courage to do so in the first place.

"Who are you?"

"Did Alice not tell you? Well then again, I suppose why would she? You can call me the Will of the Abyss. I'm the operator of this realm." The Will laughed, snapping his fingers.

In that moment, Gwen felt an invisible force grab her and force her to sit down on an invisible seat.

No matter how she tried to move her body, it wouldn't listen to her.

"Now then. With you completing your bounty, here are the selection of skills you can choose from. Of course, you can even choose to inherit a portion of his title of Wrath but I don't think you have the heart for that." The Will chuckled, creating seven cards for her to choose from.

He placed them on an invisible table and gestured for her to take her pick.

"If you're the operator, how come I've never seen you before?" Gwen asked with a slight frown.

The Will tilted his head.

"Does a peasant have the authority to meet with a king in private? No right? So why would you?"

Gwen ignored his blatant insult.

"Then why now? Why are you letting me meet you now?"

"Why wouldn't I? You opened the doors to your own potential. You've become more than a peasant." The Will laughed, leaning back before snapping his fingers.

The options floated in front of Gwen, forcing her to stare at her choices.

"Go on, make your choice. I must remind you that there is still the case of bestowing a title to you. And I must say, if you choose to take too much time, I may lose interest."

Furrowing her brows, Gwen let out a sigh before turning her eyes towards the Sigils presented to her.

The... Sigil of Wrath looked to be a powerful one. However.

That's only if she keeps the fire of wrath burning brighter than any sun in her heart.

Gwen knew that she didn't have that kind of rage. At least not yet. She doubted she'll be able to make full use of this Sigil.

Therefore, she chose the Sigil she had originally intended to get.

The Bladeweaver's Arsenal.

The power to summon up to six weapons forged by fusing artifacts. Then, as the fight progresses, she'll be able to access the crucible to forge the seventh blade. A blade crafted to directly counter her opponent.

"As expected, you're going after this one in the end. What a shame, and here I thought the Lord of Wrath will finally get a user." The Will shook his head with a small smile.

A Lord title associated with the seven sins.

Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath and Sloth.

It was difficult to find the right inheritor for these titles. But so long as they live by that sin, the power they can exhibit was far greater than most.

If Syrion had fully lost himself in his wrath, if he had given up his sense of self for power, he would've become a weapon like no other.

"What a shame."

With Gwen making her choice, the Will recalled the other pieces to his side.

Flicking his wrist, they disappeared.

"What did you mean when you said I was more than a peasant? What door did I open?" Gwen asked with a frown.

The Will glanced over and scratched his chin.

He was currently imbuing the card with threads of energy, pieces of the contract.

Thinking about it, he curved his lips into a smile.

What's the harm in telling her?

"Long ago, I had what you could call a daughter of sorts. Mortal but gifted in all the ways. A bundle of potential and she achieved something no one else had before her. She created her own divine throne. A self ascending goddess, that's what she was.

"In her veins ran my power. Power beyond mortals, beyond Lords. Beyond Apostles. When you discarded the blessings of Solaris, what did you feel inside?" The Will turned to Gwen, finger tapping against the centre of her chest.

In an instant, fire erupted from her body and golden markings appeared across her skin.

On her forehead, the crest of the golden sun.

"I doubt even Solaris expected this outcome. That you would usurp his power in such a manner." The Will laughed.

Like how he was forced to share his authority with Velouria, Gwen now had the seed of divinity within her. Waiting for the perfect chance to blossom into a new throne.

One that destroys the old order.

"Congratulations girl. You may rejoice. You have become one of the few that have broken out the cage of the divine thrones." The Will spread his arms out before clasping it together.

Beneath Gwen, the realm opened to reveal a yawning chasm. An infinite darkness where she began to fall.

"I hope your title is one that benefits your goals."

With that, the entrance sealed her shut.

Gwen was forced to close her eyes.

The miasma of the Abyss invading her body from all sides.

The temperature dropped. She could feel a coldness settling in. Tips of her fingers losing sensation, her ears frost bitten. Gwen felt like she was plunged in the deep northern waters.

But strangely... Deep within, a warmth began to appear.

A small pulsing heart beat.

Each beat would invigorate the ember in her chest, the warmth that spread across her body. Her lungs, her muscles, her limbs.

Her entire body.

Words flashed through her mind, disconnected sentences with no start or end.

"...before the stars, there was silence..."

"...a flare without origin, a path without a map..."

The feeling of falling disappeared and Gwen was on her own two feet. Her eyes yet still refused to open.

She was standing on a silent path, a choice to be made before her.

She could feel several sources of warmth leading to multiple directions. Some strong, some weak.

Some hot, some cold.

Her heart was telling her to seek the hottest flame.

She navigated the maze of darkness, avoiding the flames that tried to persuade her mind.

The further she travelled, the louder the words became.

"...the dawn does not ask to be born..."

"...from stillness, a flare..."

Gwen could feel it clearly. This fire burning away at her body.

Like a moth to a flame, she couldn't help but reach out.

She felt a pain searing through her flesh but she endured.

She could feel her bones melting but she endured.

Gwen felt her entire existence faltering in front of this fire but she endured!

She couldn't back out.

Every part of her, her mind, her soul, cried out for her to endure. To keep pushing on, to claim this fire as her own.

"...all things return to ash. And from that ash the first ember is found..."

Gwen felt an overwhelming blade of light slashing through the darkness, erasing the veil placed over her eyes. She could feel the pain slowly disappearing before transforming into a gentle warmth that filled her body.

The world had gone quite and Gwen opened her eyes.

Before her stretched an infinite horizon in every direction. Not land not sea. Not the cosmic map that stretched overhead.

But a strange, endless field of fire. Fire that burned without source.

Not fires of destruction.

Rather it was strangely... comforting for Gwen. Serene and peaceful.

A garden of fire for her to enjoy.

And at the very centre of this field, there was a single bundle of fire that waited for her approach.

A coil of red and blue blending together in harmony, pulsing in synchronisation with her heartbeat.

It flickered, it steadied.

A dance of elegance in the form of a fire.

Gwen found herself walking towards that fire subconsciously. Her hands reached out towards the hearth.

"...I bow before the promethean goddess..."

She felt the fire around her bowing to her presence. They were submitting themselves to her control.

And the fire in front of her... the first spark.

The first ember.

The very first flame.

Life, death, light and darkness. Polarising characteristics fused into one, the origin of all.

Unable to hold herself back, Gwen reached out.

The flames coiling around her hands then plunging into her heart. A merger.

She felt her soul shifted to accommodate the fire, the golden markings across her body shifting to a pulsing red and blue.

Gone was the influence of Solaris's order. Her body had been purified.

Clenching her fist, six blades erupted from pillars of fire.

Each an extension of her will, each waiting for an artifact to be reforged by the fires of genesis.

Then, in her heart, Gwen could feel the presence of the seventh. The crucible of her heart blood, the blade that will reach god.

As the fires slowly disappeared, Gwen found herself back in the pristine realm that was the Will's home.

In front of her, he clapped his hands.

"My my, would you look at that. Aren't you something? To dig through all the possibilities and end up with... this." He praised.

Snapping his fingers, fire coiled into words that hovered between them.

Gwen's title.

Abyss Lord of the First Flame.

Chapter 816: Persistence

Days passed and they continued to stay in Syrion's house for now. Griselda didn't sleep.

In the time that Alice was resting her body and mind, she mourned his passing.

And when she woke up, their lessons continued while waiting for Gwen to wake up.

Within the barrier, Gwen's body was slowly peeling away. Cracks upon her flesh, flames burning through the gaps.

Alice was worried but there's nothing she could do.

As for the lessons on souls...

It was different.

It seems that through Lumiria's authority, the way that Griselda interacted with souls was different to how Alice had expected.

In fact, she wasn't even aware of the fact that it was possible to 'read' the history of the land.

Alice's sixth Sigil interested her greatly.

Griselda understood that the soul took form in different ways based on the method of interaction.

Beasts interact with souls via Bloodline Release.

Humans who follow the Church of the Moon do so via Lumiria's blessings.

And anything else...

Well, anything else was done through the connection between body and soul. The Spiritual Heart.

Each method granted a different result.

Bloodline Release allowed for the soul to harmonise with the body, to change and gain power through this modification.

Lumiria allowed one to touch the soul directly. To modify it but not the body.

And the Spiritual Heart observed the contracts formed between the soul and the Abyss.

However, these three categories were the most prominent. There are other ways such as through Sigil abilities or certain blessings outside of the moon.

But most fall into one of the three.

Modification, extraction and observation.

"Are you listening to me? When a soul is extracted from the body, there is a certain amount of time it can be away. Too long and even if it's your original body, some form of rejection is bound to occur." Griselda explained through the use of her puppets.

She would create a silhouette of a soul and extract it from the puppet. And to simulate the passing of time, the puppet began to break down while the soul's outer edge became blurred, fusing with the world around it.

“When you use the power of Duality to invert your fifth Sigils, you are performing an act similar to this but at an accelerated rate. Your soul is stuck in a strange state of being outside of your body while still being connected.

“And the reason why Triss didn’t want to accept Lumiria’s method of healing Arwen is because of the nature of extraction. Lumiria had intended to extract the soul, carve away the rot and supplement it with others.” Griselda created another puppet.

This time in the shape of a little girl.

Extracting the soul, she began to butcher it, carving away limbs and piece of the body.

Then, another soul was added into the mix, blended and roughly moulded into the same shape.

“But with this method, there is always the growing risk of rebound. The attached soul may cause large shifts in personality, memories and sometimes it becomes so incompatible that the original body rejects the soul completely.” Griselda sighed.

“I had told Triss this and warned him of the dangers. You can imagine how angry Lumiria was. Sometimes I think that gods are no different to people. They’re simply born different. But up here?” Griselda pointed at her head.

“It’s all the same.” She shrugged.

Alice leaned back with a groan.

It made sense why the Will suggested for her to get another power that interacted with the soul.

With her sixth Sigil, Alice now had access to all three methods. Modification was done through Bloodline Release, extraction done through both her sixth Sigil and duality.

As for observation...

It's also because of her sixth Sigil that she was now able to observe the change in souls. The history of their experiences.

Therefore, in theory, if she was to form a link between the three methods, she should be able to gain absolute control over the manipulation of souls.

[And on that note, you really love your resonances huh?] Cayla rested her chin on her palms.

No matter the situation, no matter the technique. So long as it requires the synchronisation of three powers, Alice will no doubt find a way to turn it into a resonance.

Give me freedom, give me fire. Give me Resonance or I retire.

'I haven't even said anything about resonance yet...' Alice pouted.

[You acting like you weren't going down that path?] Cayla raised an eyebrow, causing Alice to cough.

She won't say it out loud, but she was indeed thinking about it...

"It's lesson time, focus and stop talking to the voices in your head." Griselda snapped her finger as a puppet dropped down, landing a chop on Alice's head.

"Ow! Sorry." Alice rubbed her head.

"For now, let's focus on you mastering the second method. You've already have some experience with it but it's largely instinctual. If you can merge it with duality, extraction can become containment. Inverting the walls to become a cage." Griselda tapped her finger on the table.

She contemplated in silence. A question inside her head.

"Alice." She spoke, calmly.

"Hm?"

"Are you aware of the way we cast in the Church of the Moon?" Griselda asked.

"Yeah... Souls right?"

Alice wasn't sure what Griselda was trying to ask.

Why would the way of casting be important right now?

"I'm aware that you managed to take Duality from Esse somehow. With a method you're not entirely sure of correct? But you do know it has something to do with souls, hence the souls attached to your spiritual heart." Griselda gestured to Alice's shadow.

"Now, here's my next question. How does the Moon, or rather, how are souls used as a resource when it comes to casting?" She asked.

Alice furrowed her brows.

Was it a trick question? But Griselda didn't seem like the kind to do that kind of thing.

"I think the souls are... burned right? Based on what I've seen you do." Alice frowned.

"Exactly. Souls are burned, cleansed and stripped of power. Then, when they're used up, they're returned to be recycled. Burned then stripped of power, remember that." Griselda emphasized before creating a puppet with two souls.

“No matter what, the soul is used as a fuel. That’s the law. But you... You’re not like that. If it was, Duality should’ve ran out long ago. Especially if you don’t meet Esse often. Somehow you usurped a part of her soul but kept her powers. How?” Griselda tapped her finger on the table.

Her puppets demonstrated the usual casting method.

The second soul gradually becoming smaller with each cast.

Then she made one for Alice, who kept using the power but the soul didn’t shrink at all.

Alice was stumped.

Indeed. If souls were burned as a resource, the fact that she could keep the ones she stole contained for so long was... questionable.

In fact, how was she able to use their powers if she didn’t burn them?

“Here’s my theory based on my lacking knowledge.” Griselda had a serious expression.

“When you take the soul... Rather than use it for fuel I think you’re using it as a reference instead. You’re moulding a part of your own soul to match then recreate the power and experiences. Somehow.”

Snapping her finger, the puppet’s soul began to change its shape to match the second soul before outputting the same power.

This time, neither soul changed as it was now technically her power. No soul was needed to be used as fuel.

“But even so... While there’s been cases of people copying or duplicating powers, there are usually limitations to them as changing the base shape of your soul is harmful in the long run. If you repeatedly use the power, it’ll run into the same risk as grafting souls.”

So why was Alice fine?

Griselda had seen beasts and Hunters who were able to copy a power but can only use it once. More than that and changes start to occur.

In essence, using the power of souls was not so different to drinking Abyss Blood. In little amounts, it was fine so long as you keep to a variety.

But drink too much and the body changes permanently.

Only this time it's the soul.

And if the soul was harmed... The chances of physical rejection, even in your own body, was high.

So how does Alice achieve it?

"Would you... Demonstrate it to me?" Griselda asked.

Alice hesitated.

But she too wanted to know the secret behind her own body and nodded her head.

"Watch closely then." Alice sighed.

Closing her eyes, she switched out two of her Sigils for Duality and Tiamat. Then, she inverted Tiamat's Sigil and began to gather energy from around her.

A demonstration of how her powers worked.

Griselda watched while tapping her finger on the table.

Her brows creased the longer she looked.

Questions flying around in her mind.

But the biggest question that remains on her mind was...

Who the hell created Alice?

The techniques used to create this... anomaly. What are they? How were they able to achieve this kind of result?

There were even signs of power locked behind certain triggers. And not just one sign. Tens, hundreds. Some were open, some were closed. But they were there, waiting.

Was it knowledge?

Griselda didn't know. In fact, she felt like at this point she should just hand over her title to whoever created Alice.

It was far beyond whatever she could achieve.

After all, the secrets to Alice's body was something she never thought possible.

When Alice copies the power, she transforms a part of her soul, separates it and then burns it for power.

But it didn't stop there. Once the power is no longer needed, it is cleansed, purified and fused back to the main body.

The original is not used up and her body suffers no changes. A loop where she is now able to permanently use whatever power she stole.

A persistent cycle and a soul that didn't burn out.

Griselda felt a chill down her spine.

She looked around in confusion and fear. In that split moment, she felt a harrowing smile targeted at her.

Chapter 817: First Flame

Alice laid on the bed, staring at the ceiling.

If what Griselda said was correct, whenever Alice used her Sigils, she was essentially skipping the costs of her skills.

A zero cost casts.

Alice clenched her fist.

'Do you think it's Yrael's work? She mentioned a bunch of links connected to me too. Probably the inspirations I've been getting.' She sighed inwardly.

[Maybe. There's still a lot of unknown factors regarding the exact details of your birth. And I don't think Nyer would be kind enough to tell you the details.] Cayla nodded, her fingers tapping against some documents.

'Do you think this... persistence is what the Will is looking for? He mentioned that you'll complete the vessel regardless of what he does.' Alyss played around with her own hair.

She couldn't help but wonder...

How much of her family was dragged into this. The research with Abyss Blood, her father... If...

Alyss shook her head. There is no ifs. What happened has happened. What remains... Is...

She thought back to her brother. Albert. He found out the truth, he realised what had happened. And in his own way, he was trying to ask for forgiveness.

Would her father or her other brother be the same?

'Argh!!! My brain hurts. What the f*ck is going on...' Alice let out a cry of frustration.

Yrael, Nyer, Will, the Zenia's, Enris, Outer Gods and more. All of them were walking towards a destination that she herself didn't know about.

All of them were playing a chess game on a greater scale and she herself was nothing but a pawn, waiting for promotion.

To become the ultimate chess piece of their choosing.

Alice gritted her teeth.

What must she do in order to become a player rather than stay as a pawn?

Cayla couldn't answer. Alyss didn't know.

All three of them felt as though they were lost in the dark once more.

[Geniuses, traitors, Gods beyond gods and those who sit upon the divine throne not knowing what they want. Why don't we take one step at a time? The Zenia family in the south. Extalia. Why don't we make that our new destination?] Cayla suggested.

Alice sat up. Determination in her eyes.

Yes... It's indeed about time she dealt with the Zenai family.

Alyss clenched her fist.

'But Rosalyn and the others...'

[. . .]

'...'

'Do you think... We should ask Feris to help us?' Alice suggested hesitantly.

[Do you WANT her to kill you? I'm pretty sure bothering her would only make matters worse, wouldn't it?] Cayla raised an eyebrow.

Sure they needed help but asking Feris of all people...

*Sigh...

'Who else can we ask for help? Someone strong enough who can investigate the situation.' Alice's shoulders drooped.

Alice would've been tempted to say Kaden but... He's busy looking for Famine.

Allura and Gin... She still didn't know where they were.

*KRK!!!

Hearing cracks, Alice snapped her head to her left.

She saw fractures upon Griselda's barrier she placed around Gwen.

Inside, the fires began to rage, burning hotter than ever.

Yet despite the raging inferno within, the flame's warmth was surprisingly... gentle.

As the barrier peeled away, the flames faded to reveal Gwen hugging her knees.

Her eyelashes fluttered.

Slowly, she opened her eyes.

"Gwen..." Alice rushed over, worried about her friend's condition.

Gwen clutched her head as she looked around.

She saw the worried look of Alice and let out a small chuckle.

"Why do you look like you just saw me die?" Gwen smiled, leaning back.

Her entire body felt a little weak.

But little by little, her body was being filled with energy.

Like an empty vessel dunked into a lake, she felt power surging from all around her.

Was this what Lords felt?

The Abyss revitalising them.

“Anyone would be worried if their friend was passed out for a whole week. Do you even know how worried I was?” Alice sighed with a small smile.

“A week!?” Gwen widened her eyes.

She heard about the Lordship process from her father and Shiera. But it was a relatively fast even if you were weakened for a short period of time.

“Yeah, Griselda mentioned that your body was probably incompatible or needed some extra changes.” Alice nodded.

According to Griselda, if a Lord’s title and body didn’t match, the transformation process would take a lot longer than usual.

“I guess it makes sense. A weirdo said something about becoming one of the few who broke out of the cage of the Divine thrones.” Gwen sighed. She still couldn’t get his visage out of her mind. A freaky featureless being with just a smile.

Hearing this, Alice frowned.

The Will spoke to Gwen? Why?

What did he want with her?

“He acted like you two knew each other.”

Alice scratched her hair.

“It’s a long story. But if he showed himself to you, then I might as well explain what he is.”

Alice began to recount the tale of Velouria. Ayr, the Will’s involvement and even now, how he’s waiting for her to complete a vessel.

There were... some parts that Alice omitted. Mostly keeping tale focused on the Will and what he was doing.

The more Gwen listened, the more she frowned.

A dangerous individual with an unknown goal. The way he’s expanding the Abyss while waiting for a vessel...

“You’re involved with something a lot more dangerous than I expected huh...” Gwen massaged her eyes.

“Yep. And it’s been that way for the... Past year or so give or take.” Alice chuckled. She wasn’t exactly keeping track of time but from now to the start of her journey, it has been a long and arduous walk.

“But let’s not talk about the boring stuff. What kind of power did you get as your Lordship title?” Alice asked with a grin.

She had to admit that she was rather interested.

What kind of power caused the Will to show up personally?

Gwen curved her lips up into a smile.

Snapping her fingers, a radiant fire burst out from her finger tips.

“My title is Abyss Lord of the First Flame.”

[The first flame?!?!] Cayla shouted in a mix of shock and confusion.

‘First of all, ouch my ears. Second of all, does it warrant such a reaction?’

[Yes it does.] Cayla took a deep breath.

[The first flame is older than every other fire. Older than the stars, older than the Sun. It’s the ember that carries life in its warmth and the spark that can set everything ablaze.] She frowned.

[Even Solaris... You are aware that Gods have legends and myth’s tied to them right? Solaris is said to be a fragment of the first flame. A spark born to be a God. So if Gwen is the Abyss Lord of the First Flame...]

Even without Cayla finishing her sentence, Alice realised what she was trying to say.

If Gwen was able to push this power to the pinnacle then... Wasn’t it possible for her to replace Solaris?

And if Solaris found out about her title...

Alice showed a face of worry.

Gwen was no longer safe in Church of the Sun.

“Gwen you proba-”

“Probably shouldn’t stay in the Sun right? I could feel it ya know? When I got this title, this power. I felt the blessings of Solaris burn away. It holds a power that even the lazy god would be wary of and that’s fine by me.” Gwen shook her head.

“It’s what I wanted. I will still help the Sun fulfil what it promised to the people. I’ll make myself radiant so that people can’t look away. With this power, I’ll help my father.” She clenched her fist with a confident smile.

“Because once we earn the trust of the people, unless Solaris wants to discard all pretences, he can’t deal with us so easily.”

[Reckless as it is, she’s not wrong. Make a God falter and have act in ways he shouldn’t, the myths and legends begin to lose their potency. While Gods are powerful, the faith of the people are important components to that strength.]

“So a calculated risk then.” Alice smiled as Gwen nodded her head.

“What about you? We’re finished with the bounty so it’s about time for me to head back. But you’re different. I doubt you’d want to be so close to the Sun.”

Alice scratched her cheek and nodded her head.

“Mnm. There’s a lot of things I want to deal with but I’m thinking of starting in the south for now. There’s something I need to investigate.”

“So we’re splitting up then...” Gwen smiled sadly.

She had enjoyed her time with Alice. The talks, the spars, the moments of rest when they could just be themselves.

Gwen had finally made a friend yet now they needed to part.

But not all partings needed to be sad. With their brief meeting, Gwen was certain that Alice was an ally. Someone whom she could trust her back.

And...

Someone she could count on to bring a better future rather than a false god like Solaris.

Taking a deep breath, Gwen looked at Alice with eyes of determination.

"Take a portion of my soul with you. That's how you duplicate powers right? I'm not sure how much of my power you can use but it's always nice to have options isn't it?" Gwen smiled.

Alice blinked her eyes, not expecting Gwen to offer it like this.

In fact, they've only known each other for a short time but...

'It's a leap of faith. Faith towards the you that she's come to know.' Alyss smiled.

Alice nodded her head.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes I'm sure Alice. Just promise me you won't go after my dad okay?" Gwen joked.

"I would neve-!!!" Alice choked on her sentence.

She hadn't told Gwen that she's the one who killed Kazira yet.

"I figured it out but didn't want to say anything. One of the requirements for this bounty was to kill or summon Solaris when I see the one who killed Kazira. But after attaining Lordship, the first flame burned it all away." Gwen laughed seeing Alice's response.

"So go do what you need to do and I'll do what I can from my end too. Take my power so I know that I'm helping in a way. Even when we're apart."

Alice was silent.

Then, after a brief moment, she carefully made a small cut on Gwen's arm and drank the blood.

Chapter 818: Marionette of the Waning Moon

"Are you worried about your friend?" Griselda asked curiously, glancing down at Alice who was leaning against her chair.

After Gwen gave Alice a portion of her powers, she made her way back to the Church. She has been away for a long time after all.

"A little. She seems cheerful but I'm still worried." Alice sighed.

Despite being an Abyss Lord, her title practically made her the enemy of the petty Solaris.

While he couldn't kill her outright, there were other things he could do.

"Are you her mother? The girl can handle herself much better than you can. At least she has two Apostles close by helping her out. You on the other hand... keep pissing off churches like Kaden but without the power to back it up." Griselda rolled her eyes, causing Alice to cough violently.

"Was that necessary?"

"Absolutely." Griselda nodded.

Scratching her cheek, Alice sighed.

Of course, that wasn't the only reason she was worried about Gwen.

Before she left, she had also promised Alice to look into the things that happened in the north with her dad and aunty. They were deployed there to ensure things didn't go out of control after all.

Alice had a bad feeling about the north but with two Apostles and a Lord, they should be relatively safe... right?

Especially since Arax is the Apostle of Protection.

"Now that Gwen has gone back, I should go back too. If I stay away for too long, Nanna and Lumiria will start asking questions.

"And... You don't need to worry about me telling them anything." Griselda smiled.

"Huh? You're going to lie to Lumiria?" Alice began to sweat.

It's one thing to lie to Solaris but Lumiria could see your soul!

Lying in front of her is a death sentence!

"Yeah, I got my own methods." Griselda reassured as Alice scratched her hair.

If she's being honest, Griselda did survive as the Apostle for a long time. And with her wavering faith, if she didn't have her own methods, Lumiria would've found out long ago.

"Oh and before I forget, try not to interact with Triss too much until you're confident in helping him protect Arwen. Lumiria has her eyes on taking away everything he holds dear if he falters some more.

"If she hears him talk about you, there's no doubt she'll snap. If I hadn't talked some sense into Lumiria during the port incident..." Griselda sighed.

Alice shivered.

She didn't think Lumiria would pose such a large threat towards Tristan.

"Wasn't Lumiria in love with him? Why would she do that???"

"Because she's insane. It's the crazy kind of love that wants to abuse and torture him mentally so that he offers everything to her. Then, when he breaks, she'll take his soul and discard the body." Griselda furrowed her brows. Her fingers tightened around her arm as she had seen this happen far too many times by now.

"Forget it, just thinking about it annoys me. Anyways, let me deal with the knowledge I have on you." She shook her head.

Cracking her fingers, she plunged it into her own chest and pulled out a portion of her soul.

"!!!"

*BANG!!!

Detonating it, Griselda wiped the slate clean.

"What the f*ck?!"

"What? It's the best way to cover things up. It's not like it really hurts me anyways, the shape of my own soul has long been blurred because of my experiments." Griselda shrugged.

Now that the slate has been wiped clean, most of what they talked about had disappeared from her mind.

However, what little remains allowed her to stay the same despite not knowing.

"Remember, don't interact with Tristan if you meet him. It'll only serve to make Lumiria go crazy." Griselda reminded as she stepped away and disappeared.

All that was left was Alice whose smile twitched at the corners.

'You're crazy enough as it is!' Alice complained.

Who the hell hides a secret by wiping their soul!?

'Well you have to admit she has the determination.' Alyss was also impressed...

Along with being a little freaked out.

[Maybe that's what people feel whenever Alice decides it's the perfect moment to blow up her hand.] Cayla gave Alice a side glance, causing her to cough.

She couldn't retort.

###

"Ohya? My... Would you look at that? You're finally back Gi." Nanna glanced over to Griselda while floating upside down.

There was a lazy smile on her face.

"How many times must I tell you to not call me Gi?" Griselda sighed, pushing Nanna's face away.

"It's because you hate it that I keep calling you it. If you accepted it, maybe I would've lost interest long ago." Nanna smirked.

Even after all these years, they still didn't get along.

Griselda frowned but walked away. She didn't have the mood to play along with Nanna today.

"So how was it? Syrion's last moments? Did the poor lad realise that he got abandoned by the Moon? I do wish I could've seen it for myself but our Lady warned me not to push on this matter." Nanna narrowed her gaze.

***BANG!!!**

Blades burst out from Griselda's body while an avatar tore through the fabrics of space. Hooks, threads and surgical tools aiming for Nanna's body.

But Nanna simply summoned several phantoms to block Griselda's attacks.

"There's a good reason our Lady warned you. Unless you need a reminder, why don't you shut your trap." Griselda warned as her eyes glowed crimson with bloodlust.

"Wow~ So scary. But you can't deceive my eyes, Gi. You wiped your soul clean again." Nanna grinned.

Griselda held back a grimace as she snapped her finger.

***RUMBLE!!!**

Nanna jumped back before the puppets could reach her.

Clapping her hands together, dark mist rolled out as a moon was created behind her with several silver crosses protruding from the ground.

Landing on one of the crosses, Nanna spun her body and transformed it into a chakram hoop.

But Griselda didn't slack either!

Tearing off her arm, she transformed it into a chain whip!

""Resonance.""

Stabbing her sword into the ground, countless hooks pierced into Griselda's body, tearing her apart and swallowing the space around them.

Marionette of the Waning Moon.

Within her body, a stage was constructed with the crescent moon hanging above them. Countless strings attached themselves to the audience while Griselda herself appeared wearing a silver dress and crown. In her hands, she held a single blade.

But a portion of this stage has been usurped by Nanna.

Garden of the Silent Moon.

Gentle waves rolled out. Floating above the waves were silver and blue lotuses reflecting the light of the full moon that hung above them. Iridescent clouds shimmering with a myriad of lights.

Nanna sat upon her chakram hoop with her legs crossed.

A smile was evident on her face as she glanced at Griselda's resonance.

"Heh~ You've been slacking, haven't you?" Nanna took note of the lack of an 'audience' in Griselda's theatre.

In the past, this resonance would've been one to behold.

But like a star that had lost its radiance, it was now but a shell of its former self.

"I might've been slacking but it's more than enough to deal with you. Don't forget you've never won against me." Griselda flicked her finger.

*CLANG!!!

An armoured puppet crashed down from above as Nanna blocked it with her foot.

"Is that so? Why don't we change the score today?!" Nanna shouted as she spun her body around.

She kicked the Chakram towards Griselda while pushing the puppet away.

Just as Griselda was about to parry the Chakram, Nanna appeared below her and kicked the weapon up!

"!!!" Bending her body back, Griselda narrowly avoided the attack before seeing a spirit hovering above her.

Without hesitation, the spirit kicked the Chakram, unleashing a flood of radiant blue energy ripping towards the Apostle of Immortality.

*BANG!!!

The spirit merged with Nanna gracefully as she spun the hoop around her body.

Yet before she could even say anything, chains burst out from the ground as three puppets slashed towards Nanna.

Blocking it with her Chakram, her eyes darted above and saw Griselda unharmed!

Snapping her finger, three more puppets appeared!

They performed a synchronised sword dance as Nanna clicked her tongue.

Splitting herself into several spirits, she unleashed several arcs of destruction in an attempt to break the puppets.

"Rudimentary!" Griselda clapped her hands together.

A giant pair of puppet hands crushed two spirits in an instant before a large armoured puppet slammed its shoulder into Nanna's guard, sending her sliding backwards.

Just as she was about to counter, Griselda tugged her arm, pulling several threads taut.

"!!!" Nanna's eyes widened. Threads dug into her body, overloading her soul and restricting her movements.

Countless thoughts rushed into her mind while several puppets aimed their blade at her throat.

"And I believe that marks another loss, don't you agree?" Griselda slowly stepped down from the sky as she lifted Nanna's chin.

Nanna revealed a grin.

"I knew you would come in close like that." Nanna stuck out her tongue.

*RUMBLE!!!

The water around them boiled as several spirits lunged out but Griselda kept her composure.

While the number of souls at her disposal over the years have decreased, she didn't slack on training.

In fact, her personal power had increased as a response!

In a flash, her hair turned crimson as chains burst out from the realm around her, destroying everything without hesitation!

Threads searing against skin, blades cutting apart flesh! A maelstrom of calamity unfolded with Griselda in the centre.

Blood seeped from the gaps of Griselda's puppet body as crimson began to taint her silver blade.

*Clap...

"That's enough girls. You know there's only so much I can tolerate when it comes to fighting between allies."

Griselda's pupil constricted as she immediately retracted her power and kneeled.

Nanna did the same.

"There, isn't that better?" Lumiria smiled.

Griselda could feel Lumiria's gaze.

Yet nothing happened.

"It must've been hard to watch Syrion's death. You may take these days to rest."

Having said that, Lumiria disappeared as Griselda sighed inwardly in relief.

She was safe.

For now.

Chapter 819: Solar Archive

Leaving the Abyss wasn't difficult for Gwen.

Not because she could remember the way back. Rather, after becoming a Lord, her senses had... changed.

It was a different kind of feeling. To be so connected with this realm on a deeper level.

And now, as a Lord, she could clearly sense the anomalies within this place.

Within the miasma, within the entangled threads of energy invisible to the naked eye, there was... something.

Something had latched on, draining the Abyss of its vitality.

A parasite.

And the corrupting energy filtering through the streams... mutating the beasts that dwell here.

Gwen frowned.

It was only when she became connected to the Abyss on the level of a Lord that she realised how dire things were.

Solaris was cautious, the Moon... Gwen didn't know. Eclipse was doing what Eclipse is always doing. Then there's the unknown faction running around with blood sacrifices.

"Is this what Alice is always worried about?" Gwen sighed.

She barely knew the full extent and already her head was hurting from thinking about this.

Becoming a Lord simply meant that she got a key to a door. A door that leads to what's happening behind the stage.

On the surface, the ignorant masses do not know about the rolling waves and rising tides.

But behind the scenes, she saw the sheer chaos that was happening.

Shaking her head, Gwen grabbed her communication device and called her father.

She wanted to give Alice one but unfortunately, she didn't have any spare. There were other methods they could use to communicate but they lack the efficiency of this one.

"Ah! Gwenny! Hang on a moment your dad is busy right now!" Arax's voice rang out as Gwen immediately frowned.

The sounds of explosions and battle rang out in the background along with grunting.

She could hear the shields being deployed, Shiera screaming bloody murder while a myriad of sword slashes were being parried.

"What's going on!?"

Gwen gritted her teeth.

Something was happening in the north.

"Get behind me!" Arax roared.

The line between their devices crackled and hissed, static filling up the sound.

"Dad!" Gwen shouted once more but to no avail.

No more replies. Only static and the occasional scream in the distance.

Gwen felt her stomach drop.

Her dad was in danger.

"I'm coming over!" She clenched her jaw.

Before Arax could even respond, she ended the connection and erupted in a burst of radiant flames.

Transforming into a fireball soaring through the sky, Gwen tugged at her connection with the Abyss to find the closest exit.

She needed to leave.

Fast.

If she's too late...

Shaking her head, Gwen sped up.

###

"Damn!" Arax cursed seeing the line fall silent.

After not hearing from Gwen for almost a week, he now had to worry about his precious daughter arriving at this hellhole.

Above them, the skies split to reveal a bloody mess pouring down from above.

Beasts of all shapes swarmed like vultures.

"ARGH!!!"

A scream, louder than the rest, tore through the battlefield. One of the hunters tried to run for closed doors only to have a hooked limb catching him by the stomach and curved around a rib.

He was reeled into the sky, towards the tide of winged beasts. He tried desperately to hand onto anything he could, fingers gripping against stone. Nails cracking from the pressure.

Muscles began to tear, forcing him to let go as tears mixed with his blood.

He fumbled for a healing vial in desperation.

Hooks, beaks, claws digging into his body, gouging out his eyes.

He drank the blood. Flesh regenerated yet they didn't stop.

He flailed, he drank, he was torn apart. Limbs ripped from his body.

New muscles, bones struggling to reconstruct his flesh as hooks continued to sink into his flesh.

His desperation became a banquet for the beasts above.

Another tried to reach safety only to be dragged below ground.

The floor beneath him opening like an abyssal maw only to swallow him whole.

Worms shot out, coiling around the waist.

Barbed limbs skittering his body, cutting his flesh into ribbons.

He opened his mouth to scream but insects filled the gap. They dug through every orifice they could find.

His limbs bending in unnatural ways.

One worm burrowed through his foot, exploding out of his knees.

Arax grimaced.

He slammed his shield against the ground, wanting to expand the boundaries of safety.

But with him maintaining hundreds of barriers, even for an Apostle, things were becoming difficult.

Especially when some of the beasts were somehow corroding the edges of his barrier!

His attention was stretched thin.

"Quick! Get in!" Arax shouted towards a hunter who was carrying two children to safety.

But to his dismay, a spear like tongue shot through his stomach.

"Please catch them!" He shouted in desperation, throwing the kids into the barrier.

Seeing that they reached safety, a smile appeared on his face briefly before he was slammed into a wall. His innards were dragged out forcefully as a bird swooped down from above, feasting on the meal.

Veins bulged on Arax's neck.

But he couldn't move. If he moved out of rage, what happens to the barriers keeping people safe? What will he do about the hunters and civilians?

None of them expected it.

None of them expected portals to open up, bringing in hostages!

"F*CK!!!" Arax roared in pure frustration.

"Focus on the barrier!!!" Shiera shouted as her form flickered in the air.

"I'll kill as many of these f*ckers as I can!"

Twisting her body, her Vision expanded as countless sword slashes began to shred through everything within range.

Fireballs rained towards her but her eyes didn't even turn.

Within this space, everything was in her sight!

Tightening her fingers around the handle, she flicked her arm to the side and the fireball was extinguished!

Serpentine dragons rushed towards her, their scales warding off her slashes.

When Shiera unleashes her Vision, her slash takes on two forms. One where it focuses on area destruction, slashing apart anything and everything that enters her boundary.

The second, she focuses on slashing the one thing in front of her!

Every slash that can be unleashed, focused into one strike.

Every blade path, stacked upon each other in synchronisation. Not a single one deviated from the true path.

A blade honed by centuries of training and refinement.

Dawnbreaker!!!

Twisting her body, the entire realm felt as though it was slashed horizontally.

A single line bisecting everything within the range of Vision.

Panting heavily, Shiera glared at the endless horde that was raining down from above.

"As expected of an Apostle, even a Lord level hybrid focused on defence can't hold you down." A voice echoed out.

Shiera squinted her eyes for a moment and saw a man standing atop the body of a flying beast.

A lab coat fluttering in the wind as a sick grin was plastered on his face.

"Let's try this one on for size." Snapping his fingers, crimson barbs rained down before fusing together.

A woman with long white hair and crimson horns appeared.

Crimson briar coiling around her arms while white lightning crackled around her body.

Shiera gritted her teeth.

An uncanny feeling.

Something that shouldn't exist. A manufactured being.

With a flash, she dove through the gaps of space and appeared behind Shiera.

Above, a crimson moon hung with blood bleeding from the fractures. Her blade whistling through the air aiming for Shiera's neck.

*CLANG!!!

"!!!"

The white haired woman widened her eyes. Her blade was stopped by Shiera's neck.

She didn't guard at all! Her defence was simply that high!

"If you're going to aim for my neck, you better hope your attack is good enough to kill!"

*BANG!!!

Erupting with a burst of gold, gilded armour covered Shiera's body as she grabbed the white haired woman by the head.

Preservation had many uses. But for Shiera, when partaking in a battle like this, her attention was focused on a single blessing.

Preserving the state of her body!

No healing spell shall affect her. No curse, no confusion. No buffs.

And naturally.

No damage!

The crest of the mighty sun erupted behind Shiera as her eyes burned with golden malice.

Tossing the white haired hybrid into the air, she took aim.

The act of preservation was to hinder things through a temporal hold. Removing that restraint naturally meant that everything she had held back would be unleashed!

"O' Sun that never wanes, keeper of every moment." Shiera chanted as golden veins burned through her flesh.

Her eyes swept across the army of hybrids coldly.

"Witness each cut, each stroke, each scar. I engrave them in your light. I seal them in your flames. And when the fated hour comes..."

Her figure disappeared, shielded by the blinding sun.

"Return them all as one!"

Solar archive: Unsealed!

Shiera lowered her blade. The cries of the beasts were cut out.

Every heartbeat, every movement, silenced in that one instant.

With her final words, the sun cracked apart.

A single slash.

Tens of slashes.

Hundreds.

Thousands...

Countless shimmering arcs flashed across the battlefield in one go as a solar flare burst out.

Beasts reduced to ash not because of the heat but because of the slashes that tore through their body!

Hovering in the air, Shiera panted heavily.

That should buy them a bit of time.

"Marvellous! Simply marvellous! Such power, such beauty! Ah~ but still a tad short." The man clapped his hands, shocking Shiera as her eyes darted towards his direction.

He stood unharmed!

The beasts around him, unharmed and regenerating!

It wasn't just them either.

Every single beasts she had cut apart just now were slowly reconstructing their bodies.

Shiera's pupils trembled.

She clenched her jaw until blood seeped through the gaps only to evaporate due to the heat.

Raising her blade and entering a stance, Abyssal energy coursed through her body.

"By the name of Preservation, I will not fall!" She roared as nine burning suns manifested in the sky.

"I will slaughter you like the pigs you are!"

Third Resonance!

Chapter 820: Law Of Solstice

Third Resonance.

Shiera's form began to change as a blend of both Holy and Abyssal energy rushed outward.

Divinity rained down from the sky with the formation of nine suns.

From this light, a gilded winged helmet covered the upper half of her face, allowing her white hair to flow freely as it reflected the radiance of the suns.

The nine suns burned away the shadows upon the battlefield as Shiera activated her first Law.

Law of Solstice – Allies bathed in the rays of her suns shall meet no harm.

That removes the pressure of keeping everyone alive during the fight.

A tether was formed between Shiera and the nine suns, she established her second law!

Law of Solstice – Nine Suns, Nine Lives.

Each one stores a 'death', allowing her to bypass it nine times while also storing the cause of death, thus making her immune while her laws are in effect.

As for the third, Shiera decided to save it for now.

"Truly the Apostle of Preservation, one who vowed to keep the people safe along with the Apostle of Protection. Many claim you wield the blade for death yet... here you stand, using one of your precious laws to protect them." The doctor laughed, clapping his hands.

"Keep clapping and I'll cut them off first!" Shiera gnashed her teeth as she snapped her finger.

A flash of solar light and countless rays shot down from the nine suns.

"Number 27, it's your turn." The doctor commanded as a dark shadow flashed out from the group.

Her body crafted from a strange crystal, grey hair slowly darkening near the tips and a pair of black angel wings.

A corrupted halo spun on her head as she created a blade of darkness and slashed towards the sky.

"Do you think something like that would be enough to extinguish my light?" Shiera whispered, appearing in front of the hybrid as her hands crushed the head immediately. Shadow wasn't even allowed to escape her hands before being burned away.

"Oh my... Are you sure you should use this much power? Isn't it rather exhausting for you to try so hard for small fries?" The Doctor asked, not fazed by the fact that a precious hybrid was killed so easily.

Or at least that would be the case if she didn't regenerate next to him.

"What trickery is this?" Shiera frowned, looking down at her hands.

"A prototype. This will be a demonstration to see how effective the new hybrid models are. Is the new blood as potent as the man suggests or is it a false recreation of dear Alice? Let us find out!" The Doctor grinned.

But just as the other prototypes were about to make a move, a giant shadow loomed over them.

*BANG!!!

Radiant energy crashed down from above.

Arax has joined the fight!

"Thanks." Arax stood next to Shiera with a serious expression on his face.

Since his darling daughter was going to be coming here whether he liked it or not, the best thing he could do right now was to deal with this pest!

"You're welcome. Plus, it's not like I have many Laws that help with fighting to behind with." Shiera smiled, adjusting her stance to one where she entirely focuses on offence and gives up on defence.

"What would Gwenny think if she's to find out about your title?" She asked with a relaxed smile while staring at the army of hybrids.

"That's... a bridge that I'll cross when the time comes." Arax scratched his head.

To Gwen, he was the Apostle of Protection. Someone who has vowed to use his hands for protecting the masses rather than destruction.

But in situations like this, he couldn't hold back.

When the Abyss grants a Lord a title, that title cannot be changed. It can be inherited by one who has yet to become a Lord, but not by one who has already reached Lordship.

Yet as with all things, exceptions always exist.

The Apostle of Protection, few have seen him ever go on the offensive. In fact, many would think of him as incapable of doing so.

He is a man with a giant shield, what else is he to do but defend?

They were sorely mistaken.

Shiera, the Apostle of Preservation was tasked with keeping the natural order. To make sure the landscape doesn't get destroyed, to make sure that the people survive a clash of higher powers.

Arax, in his usual state, was tasked to be the ultimate shield. To defend and protect.

But when the natural order cannot be preserved, one must cleanse the land of its filth.

Shiera, while strong, was not the strongest. In fact, she acted as a limiter of sorts.

"Same as usual?" Shiera chuckled.

"Same as usual." Arax cracked his knuckles.

Shiera clenched her fist, a burning radiant sun erupted within the centre of the nine. Different to the others and housing a massive wellspring of divinity.

As the shell peeled away, a single burning ember could be seen.

"Manifestation!" Arax shouted.

The veins on his arm bulged as radiant solar fire coursed through his body. From his hand, an orb of pure light appeared as a link was formed from the ember and this orb.

The Doctor's hybrids lunged forward, sensing an ominous presence.

But this time, it was Shiera's turn to guard.

Gods were born with several powers at their disposal.

One such was the crystallisation of their myth. Stories that exaggerated a God's tale to further boost their power.

Clenching his fist, the orb of light transformed into a single golden spear with a solar orb held within the spearhead.

Crystallisation of Myth – Night Breaker Spear!

The weapon that Solaris used to split open the night sky and welcome the radiance of dawn!

While Arax wasn't a God, a blend of his renewed title and authority granted by Solaris allowed him to borrow the divine artifact.

Arax – Apostle of Protection, Abyss Lord of Destruction!

A man so suitable for destruction that the moment the previous Lord died, he was given the option to renew his title.

The one in a billion.

Even the Doctor had lost his smile as this wasn't within his calculations.

Arax twirled the spear while transforming his giant shield into a small round shield.

A spear and shield combo.

Golden markings spread across his body as a helmet manifested with flames acting as the plume.

"Follow me!" Arax roared, erupting with a burst of speed.

"Right behind you!" Shiera covered his spear side.

One of the Hybrids tried to stop them but Arax slammed his shield into her body.

*CRACK!!!

The sound of bones shattering from the impact could be heard as he pushed her back before impaling her several times with his spear.

Raising the body into the sky, a pillar of flames erupted, burning away the fragments.

This time, it did not regenerate.

"Hou~ Seems like there is a limitation to how many times you can regenerate yourselves. Hit you hard enough and you can't come back." Arax grinned.

Unlike his usual warm self, he was now akin to an unsheathed blade. Bloodthirst radiated from his weapon as his eyes were now sharp with killing intent.

The Doctor took a few steps back and folded his arms, observing the situation.

A spear infused with the powers of Solaris' divinity along with the power of destruction. A shield with the power of protection that can block any strike.

Beside him, the Apostle of preservation who can store attacks or keep herself from harm. Not to mention the nine suns above her.

He scratched his chin.

While the new hybrids have demonstrated fantastic results, they were not all powerful.

In exchange for superior regeneration that can fix them even with their entire body destroyed, their durability has been significantly reduced.

Each of them carries about 3 to 5 lives and certain attacks past a threshold, like the one Arax used, may take more than one.

Without saying anything else, the Doctor flicked his finger, allowing more hybrids to lunge towards the two.

"Shield deployed." Arax narrowed his gaze and slammed his shield forward.

A golden barrier manifested around them.

He watched the hybrids tear away at his barrier. Pieces falling off from the corruption.

Creasing his brows, Arax held the spear in front of him.

Third resonance!

A cape of flames fluttered behind him. Golden armour covered his chest, forearms and shin while a sun was born in the centre of his chest.

The spear in his hands transformed. The outer shell of gold peeled away to reveal the charred molten core.

Law of Destruction – No wounds inflicted shall be healed.

Law of Destruction – All restraints and protection shall shatter beneath the will of destruction.

Activating two laws at once, the chest of destruction shimmered behind Arax. Veins on his arms bulged from the influx of power, crackles of golden energy coiling around his spear.

The Doctor's pupil constricted. Even if his 'core' wasn't here, with these two Laws he wasn't safe! No matter the distance, the damage will be reflected onto his body!

"Where do you think you're running off to!" Shiera laughed maniacally seeing the panic in his face.

Law of Solstice – Still Horizon.

With this, no one could move, including herself.

But she wasn't done.

With her blessing of preservation, she secured the surrounding space, preventing it from being destroyed while also locking people into their current bodies.

A defensive tool yet futile when faced with Arax's Law.

"Face your judgment vermin." Arax's power boiled to its peak as the sky was ripped apart by the light of the true sun. Discarding his shield, Arax gritted his teeth.

His body was struggling to contain the power within the spear as cracks began to form in his arm.

With a single twist of his body, he unleashed a horizontal strike!