

Chapter 377: Cassandra

Alanah and Queen Cassandra had been fighting for some time—if one could call what they were doing fighting. At the very beginning of the battle, Cassandra had tried striking first and catching Alanah off guard by throwing dozens of poison laced needles at her. Alanah had, of course, easily dodged the needles before returning the favor.

Once the fighting began, Alanah kicked off the ground and, to Cassandra's bewilderment, grabbed hold of the queen and carried her into the distance at her full speed when she wasn't in her Dawn Siren form. The queen was quite shocked at what happened and before she realized what was going on and tried to counter, the two had already moved quite the distance away from everyone else.

The reason for all of this was because Alanah knew that Queen Cassandra was a user of poison—some would even call her a poison master. Alanah didn't want their fighting to spread to any others. It would only take a poorly blocked needle or Cassandra releasing an area of affect poison and there would be more casualties than needed.

Another reason that Alanah dared to be so bold as to directly charge at the woman was because she was confident in her stats and abilities to negate or at least slow the spread of poison within her own body if she was affected. Alanah was, after all, very prepared. She has dozens upon dozens of potions in her storage rings, and a good portion of those potions were anti-toxin, anti-poison, and anti-venoms.

She had dealt with poisons before—multiple times, in fact. Poison was the one element that she refused to allow Zac and Lucas to train in when Avery brought them to her restaurant in the capital. She hated it, and wasn't very fond of people who used it, either. Poison was good for one thing, and one thing only: Killing.

Sure, killing was a big part of the Great System, but Alanah, after so many years of being hungry, had a certain appreciation for good food. If a beast was poisoned to death, there was a good chance that it would no longer be edible. That wasn't the only reason she looked down upon poison users—she wasn't a big fan of how it was used to indirectly kill people.

Maybe she was a hypocrite, though. She had used her own Deathsworn to kill others, and technically, that would be considered killing indirectly, too. Maybe her overall reason that she hated poison was just because she'd had to deal with it so many times in the past, and barely got away with her life on multiple occasions. She could only scoff that she had ended up having to fight against a person from a house known solely for their poisons.

That's what I get for using that ability when I wasn't sure if I could control it, she thought to herself as she backed away from the poison master. The first thing she did when she transformed was rip the heart out of Cassandra's son. It had taken her a short time to get control after she transformed, and by the time she was in control enough, the guy was already dead. *I doubt I would have done anything differently, though.*

The Crown Prince of Astrus had interfered in her fight with Ryven and had already greatly irritated her. She most likely would have taken him out either way because of how annoying he'd been without worrying one bit about the consequences.

So, there she was, squaring off against the queen of a country while everyone else was in their own battles. Well, everyone other than that old elf who had fought against the former king. In the short time that it took Alanah to move her battle away from the others, then the time she spent dodging attacks from Queen Cassandra and learning more about how her opponent fought, she noticed that a once potent aura that she had felt had simply disappeared.

For a short time, she took her eyes off of Cassandra and glanced up at the sky where Marrick and Traven had taken off to have their fight and noticed that the old elf was the only one left in the air. He was floating on a small cloud of sand, hunched over with his hood up and interlaced behind his back while looking over the rest of the battlefield.

Alanah had believed that the man would be strong just because of how he talked to the leadership of the other country and his age, but she had no clue he would be that strong. She actually didn't know much about the man, which was rare considering how much information she'd gathered in the time that she'd been on the continent. She knew of the name, but there really weren't many stories or rumors going around about him, and she mostly focused on information related to Cydaria.

In fact, his granddaughter was much more well known than he was because of her tragic love story before she eventually found another love and had children and grandchildren of her own. *Just how old is Marrick?* Alanah couldn't help but wonder. The elven man seemed to have surpassed the usual longevity limits of even an elf.

Unfortunately, she didn't have the time to think of the old man, as Cassandra just wouldn't leave her alone long enough to do so.

"Just stop moving and die already!" the queen yelled from her position over a dozen feet away from Alanah, then produced multiple needles dripping with green liquid between each of her fingers before whipping her arms forward and launching them in Alanah's direction.

Alanah took one step to the side, then ducked before spinning around and avoiding each of the needles with little room to spare. The more she dodged the other woman's attack by a hair's width, the more and more angry Queen Cassandra became.

"You deserve death after what you did to my son! And in front of everyone, at that. You could have at least let him die a dignified death!" she lashed out and continued her attacks.

"He interfered in a battle that he shouldn't have after attacking a city he should have never attacked, during a war he was stupid enough to be a part of. On top of that, he was part of the army's leadership. Every one of those reasons was enough for him to die—dignified or not," Alanah calmly explained to the woman.

"No!" the lady screamed once again and continued her assault. Alanah moved back and forth, gracefully dodging each poison coated needle the queen threw at her. "Why did Ryven, that elven bastard, make it out alive? Why didn't he end up like my son? It's not fair!"

"Really?" Alanah tilted her head questioningly. "Not fair? Do you think this life is fair? Hah!" She snorted. "Try going through what I did. You would have been dead a dozen times over. You want fair? Go become a middle tier crafter and keep your head down. Then you can have fair." Alanah shook her

head. "And why did Ryven live? Because he made me less angry than your son did. If you really want to get into that, you could say that Titus was the one who saved Ryven's life."

"Bullshit!"

"I can see you're grieving," Alanah said. "The loss of your eldest son must be hard to bear. Unfortunately, you won't have any more time to grieve him, but you can take solace in the fact that you will soon be joining him. You knew the second we arrived what your fate would be, and you knew what would happen when you singled me out to attack."

Alanah really didn't take any pride in fighting the grieving woman. Sure, she may have been powerful in her own right, but after the short exchanges they had, Alanah knew that she completely outclassed the poison master. Even if she would have been even stronger, her emotions caused by the loss of her son and facing the person who did it had overwhelmed her—just like how seeing Marrick had caused the former king to react.

Still, both the queen and the former king knew that they had no chance in the fight, yet they still chose to fight. They wanted to strike a blow to some of Cydaria's and Indria's strongest people before they took their last breath. Unfortunately for the two of them, they chose the wrong people to try to strike down as a final desperate action.

Yes, Cassandra was strong, much stronger than the average level 250 fighter. Just the fact that she never once faltered when Alanah spoke with force—not even a little—showed that she had wisdom that was probably through the third threshold. And her training and use of her poison and needles proved that her dexterity and intelligence weren't anything to scoff at.

Under her robe, Alanah could see that Cassandra had a very slim build, which let her know that her stats were heavily skewed toward dexterity over strength. Also, when dealing with poisons, it was a death sentence if you didn't have high stats in either vitality to regenerate your health or endurance to resist the poisons, so the lady had to have at least one of those stats pretty high—if not both of them.

Still, those physical stats were nothing to Alanah—even when not transformed. For the first time in the fight, she held her hand out and her rapier appeared in her grasp. She held the weapon vertical in front of her body, then, with her free left hand, she flicked the blade, causing it to vibrate.

Alanah looked around and hoped they were far enough away from everyone so that the high pitch of her skill didn't bleed over into any of the other fight, but at the same time, she was aware that everyone battling were truly elites. *Everyone other than the soldiers that Derek and Silvi are entertaining, but it doesn't really matter if it reaches them, it won't have any effect on those two anyway...* She thought. So, even if her sounds and vibrations reached them, she was sure they would be able to withstand it.

Cassandra winced when the vibrations began, and a small droplet of blood even fell from her nostril. She reached up and wiped her face with the sleeve of her robe—staining a couple of active runes in her own blood. The woman sneered and, instead of retreating, actually rushed forward to meet Alanah.

Surprised by the woman's actions to get close to her, Alanah shrugged and kicked off the ground. As a sign of respect—what little she had for the queen—she had chosen to keep the fight grounded since it appeared that the woman did not have the ability to fly or battle in the air, at least not easily.

She was like Avery in that aspect. *At least, she was like how Avery was.* Alanah thought about the dragon wings that he had told her about and was happy that he finally received an ability that helped negate his biggest weakness.

Soon, the two met, and they clashed. Alanah ducked under a set of clawed blades laced with poison and drove her rapier directly into the heart of the Queen of Astrus. The battle was over in an instant.

"I... got... you..." the woman muttered while breathing heavily. Then, a massive green cloud exploded from under her robes. "You... shouldn't have... gotten... close."

"No..." Alanah said, standing directly in the cloud. "You didn't even get close." From there, she increased the vibration of her body, and blew the poison cloud away with it never having reached her.

Panting heavily, Cassandra tried to wipe away more blood that had fallen out of her mouth this time, but her arm fell just as she tried to raise it. "I... guess... not."

Queen Cassandra took one final deep breath in, then Alanah finished the fight. With a flick of her wrist, her vibrating blade, which had been driven through the other woman's chest, cut through her body horizontally before soon cutting directly through her right arm. Alanah ceased her vibrations and her blade appeared solid in front of her again—not a drop of blood staining it.

Cassandra's arm fell to the ground just before her body fell over. Soon after, Alanah received the notification.

"Good fight," Alanah muttered quietly.

The Queen of Astrus was dead, and with Traven being taken out just before, Astrus was left with no rulers—unless they counted a captured duke—which she didn't. With the foundation destroyed, it was only a matter of time before the rest of Astrus's leadership collapsed.