

Story Starts

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Book 1 - The Empty Twin

Ch 3.2 Depersonalization-Derealization

[Part 2 of ?]

After that filling breakfast, according to Haruhime the breakfast Shirou made was inspired by a Hong Kong breakfast staple and a Filipino lunch, Haruhime and I decided to check out our development projects; we also asked Lefiya to tag along as she offered to help us train after.

Leaving the tent, I called for Cuspey to apparate us to our project site.

We surmised that one day someone might visit this planet to either start developing the planet, conquer the dungeon, or open up a trade deal once they find out it is already inhabited.

It actually is kinda peculiar that the government in Leafil Prime hasn't started anything here, especially with a planet dungeon that probably hasn't broken in a long time. Which made us more wary about what's lurking below the dungeon's depths.

The problem is we really don't have much choice as we are trapped here, without any of this galaxy's technology to communicate outside. Plus, Zelretch provided us with this mission through the hints everyone bought; and if the omniscient dimension hopping vampire also hinted at the fact that we'll register our group as an adventurer, mercenary, bounty hunting group at a space colony 3 star systems away within 2 years there must be an event after clearing the dungeon where we can get off this planet.

Speaking of which, every time that logic is brought up, Marin always complains that it is too metagaming for her liking.

A sigh escapes me again, I've been doing that a lot lately; on top of that there's something I've been keeping to myself and it's—.

"Are you okay, Sakura?" Haruhime, who was just apparated by Cuspey, asked.

"I'm fine, just worrying about our situation."

"I think everyone is feeling the pressure, after the difficulty of the first boss and the fact we do not know how many floors this dungeon possesses, it's quite understandable. Maybe—

"Pop"

"--after the next raid should we organize a day of relaxation?"

“What’s this about a day of relaxation?” Lefiya, who was just popped in by Cuspey, approached us. She currently is just tagging along as this island is my and Haruhime’s development project.

We are currently at a separate island from our main settlement and quite a bit far as it’s located north of the island which contains the planet dungeon, so it takes the brownies a few apparitions before they arrive and Illya and Gabrielle are too busy to make a portkey beacon here.

“Yes, I think everyone is on the brink of burning out. We already have Rin and Hermione regularly passing out in their laboratory.”

“I also caught Illya and Gabrielle doing the same thing several times now.” Sakura added.

“Also ever since Hermione fixed several of the time-turners, Shirou, Marin, Ryuu, Rose, and Haruka have been going on multiple cycles a day now.”

“Oh yeah, I think Shirou, Marin, and Rose are on a three day cycle.”

Frowning at that, “Yeah, at least with Marin she uses the 3rd day as her inspiration day.”

Marin’s inspiration day is basically her playing video games she got from **Inherit Previous Life’s Assets**. She got help from both Shirou and Rose to set-up her gadgets as it obviously had a lot of incompatibilities with our magical setup as it is not magically shielded.

Despite their description of their magical society being horribly backwater and lacking in any technological innovation, their magical tent and supplies are quite relatively modern looking.

Well I’m not one to talk because according to Shirou magus’ homes are the same way, disconnected from the electric grid and still using gas powered lamps.

This thought brings me back to my actual current problem the one that I’ve been holding close—

“Sakura?”

Snapping out of my thoughts to see both Haruhime and Lefiya looking at me worriedly.

“Are you sure you are okay?” Haruhime asked me again as she put a delicate hand on my forehead.

“You should go back home to rest if you’re feeling under the weather, I could help Haruhime with your projects in the meantime—”

“No, I’m really fine, just distracting thoughts.” I denied, cutting Lefiya off.

“Hmmm, do you want to talk about it?”

Shaking my head, “This— is something I need to discuss privately with Rin, Shirou, and Illya. Umm—” thinking whether I should share or not.

“--it’s really personal.”

“If you’re sure, just don’t bring those distracting thoughts to our training later as one mistake might cause irreparable harm to your sparring partners.” Lefiya lectured, sounding stern and serious.

Thankfully they dropped it, shaking my head as if to rid myself of my distractions while we started our inspection as the brownies and centaurs assigned here busily tended to the fields.

The island is currently divided into three sections.

The first part, located at the north west section of the island would be our citrus fields, currently by request we are cultivating lemons, limes, orange, yuzu, shikwasa, calamansi and sudachi.

Using the cultivation techniques from the library that was recently translated, with the help of Rose, centaurs, brownies, and the amazing assistance of Rin and the skrattes with the runic arrays, we were able to receive our first harvest in about three and a half weeks.

Our plans for development shall not lie with the raw ingredients or materials we’ll harvest but the products we can develop from it.

Take our citrus fields, instead of just selling whole raw citrus fruits we break everything into its constituent parts and this can be easily and quickly done with magic; plus we wouldn’t stress much with regards to storage and the food perishing as it is easily solvable by space expansion and stasis arrays.

The juice of the citrus can be processed into a concentrate, juice, or even some other beverage; both Haruka and Shirou are planning on a lot of fermented products like alcohol. Haruka said that there’s this thing called a ginger bug, which is basically fermented ginger which can provide drinks with a natural fizz since we currently don’t have the capability of injecting CO2 within a drink.

Normally, you wouldn’t be making a beverage with dissolved gas and selling it to people who live in outer space; since according to Hermione due to atmospheric pressure and the different levels of gravity, gas could be trapped as a bubble within your digestive tract and lead to embarrassing accidents when releasing said gas.

Fortunately, most if not all citizens of member nations of the Consortium Primaris are implanted with several things upon birth. The first would be a translation implant, as the galaxy isn’t just filled with anthropomorphic beings, there are a lot of different sentient life on this galaxy, and a lot of them don’t possess the vocal cords to speak Galactic Basic.

In fact we can't physically speak a lot of the language we can understand due to Zelretch's blessings as again we do not possess the necessary vocal cords to make this certain noise.

Well— Gabrielle theorized that if Marin trained her metamorph abilities enough and studied human anatomy and other sentient life's anatomy, she should be able to morph her vocal cords into a facsimile of the one she's copying.

Anyway, another thing that's standard that is implanted from birth is a basic nanomachine vaccination. These nanomachines serve basically as a smart body maintenance machine, from assisting your body into quickly producing antibodies when infected by virus to even preventing certain self-debilitating signals in your body from taking place, effectively stopping any autoimmune functions; these are one of the many things the basic nanomachines can do.

Though this isn't perfect as there are higher tiers of this nanomachine implant but those are very expensive, costs that could equate to purchasing a planet or even a star system.

Anyway, one small function of the basic nanomachines is effective delivery of nutrients to where it is needed, optimizing bioavailability and the optimization of waste. So the accumulation of gas from drinking carbonated drinks can easily be released without any drawbacks.

Though the vessel you are travelling in space still needs proper atmospheric pressure and artificial gravity, the fizz might not be as exciting as the fizz when it is on a normal planet but it'll still have that carbonated feel, and any of the remaining trapped gas can just be managed by the nanomachines.

After inspecting the continuous harvest of the citrus plants we checked into the warehouse. The skrattes really did outdo themselves as two days ago they were able to make a bottling array powered by the magicites from the dungeon. This array effectively uses mana, to conjure bottles and auto dispenses liquid into it. The best part about this is that the conjured bottle vanishes when you finish what's inside or when the bottle is smashed.

They had to amend the last part as they set a timer and a threshold when triggering the vanishing but sometimes the threshold isn't met and you have like 0.001% of liquid over the needed threshold not triggering its vanishing function.

The only thing we need left is a brand for the bottled products, but that's going to be Haruka's main job.

Next would be the rind, originally I suggested making candied rinds as this also includes the pith, the problem is we do not yet have a stable source of sugar. We may eventually add that to our products produced but for now we are doing fermented citrus peels and peppers, a kosho.

Opening a dark room within the warehouse, as our first batch is just about done. We have a vat full of the fermented product and as we opened the cover, we were pleasantly hit with a wave of strong citrus, fruity, and a bit of spicy smell.

You can see the joy in Haruhime as her tail wags in excitement. Cuspey handed us both a teaspoon and a small dish, only needing a very small portion for the taste test as this thing is powerful.

Divided my portion into very tiny dollops of the product, scooping one into my pinky and offering Lefiya one of the portions.

I first inspected the colour as it has a somewhat muted green colour with a hint of brown, the colour maybe due to some oxidation or the orange zest included in this batch, as this is the batch with the mixed rinds as we have seven other first batches.

Taking a hit of the smell as the notes of citrus and peppers hit me. I then licked the portion on my pinky, letting it and my saliva fully coat my mouth. The salty, tangy, zesty, with a pleasant hit of bitterness tickles my flavor receptacles as I savor the condiment we have made.

You can see Lefiya's ears wiggle at the taste as her face shows her surprise at the flavor it provides. The same goes for Haruhime, unfortunately her excited wagging accidentally hits Cuspey on the face.

Cuspey, who was also savoring the product as Haruhime shared a portion with her, suddenly yelped in surprise, sputtering to get some of the fur off her mouth.

Panicking, Haruhime crouched down while frantically apologizing to Cuspey.

"Mistress Tohsaka, here be your boiled chicken breast." I asked one of the elves yesterday to prepare this as Shirou suggested that this can be a perfect vessel to highlight the taste of the condiment in its pure form while in the context of a meal.

While both Lefiya and I watched the spectacle between Haruhime and Cuspey, I offered up a piece of the boiled chicken. Both of us dabbed our piece on the condiment and squealed in pleasure at the amazing taste.

"Umm Mistress Tohsaka, Illya-chan be asking you to be meeting with her after training."

Illya has been trying and been very successful in asking the brownies to call her Illya-chan instead of Mistress von Einzbern, much to everyone's amusement. How I wish I could be that successful in making Cuspey call me by my first name.

Sighing as I wondered why Illya is asking for me, we just finished our daily check of my and Haruhime's projects.

Before leaving the citrus plantation, we started a new project where we use the discarded pith as a source of pectin which we can use for marmalade. We'll probably be making orange marmalade on our next harvest.

The next part of our tour around the island directed us to the south west part of the island where we are producing tea leaves.

Upon arrival we tried our first batch of teas. For now we have a field of *Camellia Sinensis* as this is one of the more versatile tea plants, and currently we have made three different tea products from the same plant.

First would be the second largest batch, our sencha tea leaves. These are basically young leaves that have direct sunlight. We then steam these leaves, this is so we prevent certain enzymes that discolours the leaves from activating, preserving their vibrant green colour.

The brownies then use their magic to roll these leaves, this process helps the leaves release its oils and other flavors, plus it helps reduce oxidation as the whole leaf isn't exposed to the elements. Then finally we dry the leaves.

Now we have green tea, to be enjoyed by everyone. The next tea that we successfully produced was matcha; we used the same process with sencha but we used shaded young leaves instead, called tencha. After drying the tencha, the leaves are then ground into a fine powder.

Finally, for our British friends; Gabrielle is asking for coffee which we do not have, for now; we use the older withered tea leaves and fully oxidize them to make English Breakfast.

All of these different types of teas essentially come from the same plant; we might even make oolong, which is just partially oxidized English Breakfast; hojicha, which is roasted green tea leaves; and genmaicha, green tea mixed with roasted brown rice.

This also is a boon as the Grakkan Empire is a very avid tea drinking empire, hopefully there aren't equivalent products to what we are currently producing, if our product is purely unique this alone could actually fund the whole development of the planet.

Well of course we need to eventually expand production if we are going to sell these products to the empire.

The final part of our tour is our inspection of the eastern side of the island. Here we have planted a vast amount of soy plants. Unfortunately for now we only have 3 products, tofu, soy milk, and edamame.

We are currently waiting on Haruka's project to make koji rice, apparently her family was in the business of making Shochu and Sake, and she has the experience in making these things.

Once koji rice is available we can start with making miso and its by-product tamari. We'll also be eventually making soy sauce but growing wheat is one of Gabrielle's projects, unfortunately she's been very busy with the dungeon raids and the portkey beacon.

We'll get there eventually.

Bending forward to stretch my calves, currently, we are on the planet dungeon's island for our training session.

It has been decided that all training shall be done on this island, as people who are training doubles up as a sentry when trouble brews within the dungeon.

"Let's start with a two on one, but I want you, Haruhime, to apply your enchantment on us three and continue your training with how you can use other magics in-tandem with your sorcery, and finally try your mind-meld magic with Sakura at the same time."

With her usual earnest self Haruhime acknowledged Lefiya's orders, though she asked if she can apply her enchantments before the battle so she can go straight towards the new things she's currently training. She amended that when her enchantment breaks during the practice, she'll start over with her sorcery mid-battle.

Crossing her arms, Lefiya thought about it for a second but eventually acquiesced to Haruhime's request.

"As for Sakura, I know you're relatively new with fighting but trust in the aptitudes you have bought. Even Haruka and Marin who lived very peaceful lives in the past were able to easily adapt within the dungeon. Oh, and also within training I don't mind you trying something new. It's better that you learn new things here where it's a controlled environment"

After acknowledging her advice she also told me to later use the Pensieve and review our training as mind-meld will help my teamwork with Haruhime but it'll be a crutch when we are forced into a position where mind-meld can't be used.

"Okay, finish your stretches and make your alterations on your weapons, we'll start in around 10 minutes."

Checking my weapon, a double-bladed spear, this is something that suddenly came to me as if it felt right. Shirou was able to break down the Weapon's sword and used that as materials for almost everyone's new main weapon.

The metal shaft slick and with a weight that isn't unwieldy, at both ends are blades about 40 cm in length with two smaller blades at the base of each main blade pointed at a diagonal angle, serving as a potential guard.

Activating my circuits, I feel the usual heat of my body processing od and prana converting it to usable mana. Analysing the spear ends, I temporarily blunted each blade so as to prevent too many injuries from happening as even a blunted blade can tear into flesh when enough force is used.

After doing the same to my arrows, I walked towards Lefiya and Haruhime psyching myself up.

“--GROW”

The exhilarating feeling of Haruhime's sorcery enchantment is incomparable to anything I have ever felt so far. According to her, in their reality this enchantment grants a temporary level up, no matter what level the person being enchanted is as even their level 9 captain has already experienced being temporarily boosted to level 10 with Haruhime's help. In this reality, since there's no indication that there are levels, aside from skill and aptitude levels written in our status, it's hard to quantify the increase in strength Haruhime's enchantment provides, but to put it into their reality's context; a normal level 2, would be able to take on 50 or more level 1s.

So it isn't just a doubling of your power, it is as if I ascended to the next stage of my potential. Maybe we can later check our status while Haruhime enchantment is applied.

Then the sudden feeling of being part of a whole entered my psyche, the feeling that I get from the mind-meld isn't like two conscience speaking with each other.

I initially had some hesitance with the mind-meld as I was afraid that my secret would be discovered before I was able to tell Shirou, Rin and Illya, but thankfully it isn't anything close to that.

It's hard to describe it as I know what our initial action would be but it's not knowing in the sense that information is flowing through my mind and I must do something based on said information; it is more like if the action is to close your hand you don't need to think of manually clenching certain groups of muscles to achieve said action.

I twirled my spear pointing it a diagonal towards the ground in front of me as Haruhime did the same with her ko-naginata, a shorter version of the normal Japanese polearm, it looks more like a katana with a longer tsuka*.

Lefiya, who's dual wielding a short staff as a magical focus on her left and an elegant black rapier on her right in an orthodox position, left foot forward, staff extended, right foot back; rapier raised eye-level, parallel to the ground.

Without needing to look at each other or signal anything, while keeping our focus at our target we charged.

“Falling like rain, burn away the savages, Fusillade Fallarica!” One of her god blessed spells where she was able to successfully shorten the required chant to cast.

A wide arc of elemental fire rushed towards us, as Lefiya charged ahead, tailing her magic.

Slamming my spear on the ground I pole-vaulted over the flames flanking Lefiya’s left, while Haruhime using her fire retardant kimono, courtesy of both Marin and Shirou, covered her front with her furisode*, going through the flames as her furisode blocked Lefiya’s line-of-sight on Haruhime’s weapon.

Summoning two black shadows, one at her opposite flank and one behind her. Ordering them to both hold and attack Lefiya.

I extended my arm, palms perpendicular to the ground, I started rapid firing gandr at Lefiya as one of the tentacle-ribbons were able to take hold of Lefiya’s left ankle as Haruhime went low, and angled her ko-naginata upwards towards Lefiya’s torso.

Showing her experience, Lefiya responded.

“Becoming a shield, holy grail of crushing evil, Dio Grail.”

A circular barrier shined in front of her staff blocking my curses, as she was pulled backwards by the ribboned tentacle wrapped around her ankle; as she temporarily lifted off the ground, falling sideways as a consequence.

Taking advantage of her position, she parried Haruhime’s ko-naginata with her rapier, and in one action cut all of the tentacled ribbons around, slamming her right foot on the ground extending her right elbow, slamming it towards Haruhime’s face.

As soon as I saw her gain a foothold, I urged my shadows to harass her more as I charged into the fray.

Lefiya, still elbow deep into Haruhime’s face, extended the same hand to meet my charging spear.

Redirecting my spear with a sharp parry while using force generated by her hips she rotated three-hundred-sixty degrees, sending Haruhime towards me as she pointed her staff upwards.

“Dazzling stars crossing the jet black sky. Listen to my immature prayer, guide the flash - Come, shine of tears, defeat the filthy, Lumine Pleiades.”

Looking above I see beams of light rushing towards us, as Haruhime grabbed on to me and twisted midair.

I felt as if I was being squeezed through a very narrow tube, the feeling was unpleasant as we appeared a few meters from the initial skirmish.

Upon appearing, everyone could feel her enchantment suddenly stop while I no longer felt our melding of minds.

“Mistress Sanjouno, you be splinching.” A panicked Cuspey voiced out.

Lefiya’s stance suddenly relaxed, giving us a reprieve, as I was already breathing hard from the very short bout, while Cuspey tended to Haruhime’s severed ear.

Looking questioningly at Haruhime as she is currently sporting quite the amazing smile; which is a little off putting as her nose and lip is busted; and you can really see her face turning a bad shade of purple, due to taking on Lefiya’s, probably reinforced, elbow to the face.

Now sporting a larger grin, she explained that, that was the first time she was successful apparating; an amazing feat as only Illya, Rin, and Marin, so far, has gained this achievement.

As we wait while Cuspey tends to Haruhime, I start psyching myself up by slapping both cheeks. This will probably be a long day of getting beaten up as this shall not be our last injury of today, as we’ll continue this until we either can no longer or Lefiya gets tired, whichever comes first.

Dragging myself towards Illya’s laboratory. I actually am quite thankful for the ragged tiredness I am currently feeling right now, as it has significantly lessened my stress and nervousness.

Opening the door, I spy Illya’s “guest”, a girl with short hair and bangs currently in stasis. She currently is working on a project she’s been saying will most assuredly help us with our dangerous mission.

She currently is on a platform overlooking a large space, with a clipboard on her left arm and a pen on her right, as she takes note of the large formalcraft circle on the large space.

A formalcraft circle formed from a colloidal newtonian fluid made of powdered blackstone they harvested from the dungeon suspended in a viscous liquid.

Nine circles interwoven with a nine pointed star within a nonagon, a myriad of runes written throughout.

Looking to my side I spy a myriad of reference and research materials, currently open and haphazardly strewn across a large wooden table.

Looking up again to meet Illya’s eyes, unfortunately my stress and nervousness suddenly rushed back, as I somewhat lost my composure and my resolve.

I nervously waved at her as the short albino quirked her eyebrow at me.

“We have something to talk about something important.” Illya declared as she jumped off the platform, twisting in the air, as she demonstrated her newly learned skill, apparition.

Appearing at the far side of the large desk, putting her clipboard down and drinking from a flask.

Before I lost my determination, I briskly walked towards her.

“Before that Illya, I really, really need your advice on something first.”

Probably seeing the seriousness from my facial expression, she sat down, crossed her arms, and gestured towards me, acquiescing to my request.

I then started to spill the truth towards Illya. As I have quite the large secret, something I was somewhat scared to reveal for fear of disappointing my companions.

For I am not the Sakura Matou they knew—

—well at least in a technical sense.

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END

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Glossary:

Tsuka - handle of a katana

Furisode - Long sleeves of a Kimono that can reach up to your shins. It is basically like a cape with sleeves.

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