

# **These Tragic Souls and a Sword Reborn in an Intergalactic Space Opera**

Story Intro: "Welcome! I'm an evil god, though not that evil of a god!" is what they woke up to. Join our heroes and heroines, having just met their demise, displaced by an extradimensional event."

## **Story Starts**

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### **Book 1 - The Empty Twin**

#### **Ch 1.8 Gaining Trust in the Thirteen**

**(Ryuu Lion-Astraea)**

**[Part 7 of 9]**

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Grakkan Empire

System: Leafil | Planet: Unnamed Pair of Theta

Date:

Grakkan Standard (GknS)| System | Local | Galactic Standard (GS)

'Revolution' / 'Prime Satellite' / 'Rotation' / 'Time'

GknS 34k6.rev-70% / 10.rev-43% / 256.rot-25% / 06:07:46 System:

Leafil | Local: Unknown

GS 13k9.rev-47% / 8.rev-49% / 256.rot-17% / 06:31:03

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Ryuu Lion-Astraea opened her eyes to the unfamiliar ceiling of her new life. The smooth, pale surface above her bore none of the worn familiarity of the Hostess of Fertility's upper rooms, nor the warmth of the Hearth

Mansion—previously owned by Apollo. She lay perfectly still for a breath, orienting herself to this strange reality, allowing the disorientation to settle before she quietly pushed herself up and rubbed at her eyes with careful, measured movements.

Through the door came the muted clatter of kitchen activity—someone was already awake and moving about—and with it drifted scents both familiar and unfamiliar.

She looked to her side, and despite herself, felt the corner of her mouth twitch with reluctant amusement. Her roommate, Marin Kitagawa, lay sprawled across her bed in cheerful, unconscious abandon—both hands splayed wide as though she'd fallen from a great height, one foot curved inward just millimetres from her own inner thigh, the other stretched straight across the considerable gap between their cots to rest brazenly atop Ryuu's bed. Her blanket had migrated entirely to the foot of the bed in a crumpled, forgotten heap. She snored loudly, mouth hanging wide open, seemingly without a care in any world, dimension, or reality.

Even in sleep, Marin radiated that infectious energy, that complete lack of self-consciousness, which reminded her loosely of her previous familia's captain.

Scattered around Marin in chaotic constellation were what she enthusiastically called manga—books filled with drawn characters speaking through text bubbles. Several lay open where she'd abandoned them mid-read before sleep had finally claimed her, probably well past any reasonable hour. Ryuu found herself genuinely intrigued. These, at least, weren't like those lewd things Marin called "eroge"—those games she'd described in mortifying detail with absolutely no shame whatsoever.

'Well,' she amended, glancing at one of the open volumes and the improbably proportioned woman on its pages, *'less lewd, perhaps.'*

They were written in her Marin's language, Nihongo, which used three entirely separate types of characters. One set, Marin had explained with ease, had

been borrowed from a neighbouring country centuries ago—roughly ten thousand characters in total, each representing concepts and ideas rather than mere sounds.

Ten thousand. The number alone made Ryuu's disciplined mind reel.

Marin had assured her cheerfully that you only needed two to three thousand characters to read most things comfortably—still a staggering figure, though Marin had waved it off as 'not that bad, really,' with that impossibly bright smile of hers. The other two writing systems, she'd continued, were phonetic, representing the same sounds with two entirely different sets of symbols.

When Ryuu had asked the obvious question—why anyone would possibly need two separate sets of letters for identical sounds—Marin had simply shrugged, utterly unbothered by the absurdity. "It just makes reading easier," she'd said, as though that explained everything.

Marin had brought out a pen and notebook last night, writing a sentence using only one script, her hand moving with practised ease:

ははははをはみがきではみがいた

To Ryuu, staring at the flowing curves, it was utterly incomprehensible—nothing more than a string of curved symbols that looked nearly identical to one another. She had no frame of reference whatsoever; Orario's written and spoken common language—Koine, elegant and logical in its own way—bore absolutely no resemblance to this, and now they all spoke Galactic Basic anyway. The linguistic whiplash was dizzying.

"So these first four," Marin had said, pointing with her pen, "all make the exact same sound—'ha.' If you just read it plainly and without any context, you'd genuinely think someone was laughing. 'Hahaha.'" She'd grinned at that, clearly delighted by the confusion on Ryuu's face.

Ryuu had nodded slowly, trying to parse meaning from the visual sameness.

"But when written like this—" Marin had written beneath it with a flourish:

母は歯をハミガキで磨いた

Ryuu still couldn't read this either—the symbols remained foreign, impenetrable—but she could see the difference immediately. The second line had variety, visual rhythm—dense complex shapes that seemed to carry weight, sharp angular ones that looked almost geometric, flowing curves that her eye could follow. Each symbol was visually distinct, creating natural breaks and groupings.

"Three scripts," Marin had explained patiently, pointing to each type in turn. "This one means 'mother.' This one means 'tooth.' See how they look completely different? Your eye immediately knows they're separate words, separate concepts. And these angular ones—" she tapped the geometric characters, "—that's a brand name. The script itself tells you it's something modern or foreign."

Ryuu had studied the two lines carefully, her mind engaging despite the late hour. The first blurred together into meaninglessness, an undifferentiated stream. The second had structure, natural rhythm—meaning encoded not just in the sounds but in the very shapes themselves.

"It provides immediate visual context," she observed quietly, genuine interest colouring her typically composed voice.

"Exactly!" Marin had beamed, absolutely delighted. "The sentence means 'Mother brushed her teeth with Hamigaki'—that's a toothpaste brand, by the way. Three scripts working together. Way faster than parsing a wall of identical letters."

At some point during her impromptu lecture, Marin had pushed her bed closer—the gap between their cots shrinking to almost nothing as her enthusiasm grew, the space between them disappearing inch by inch with each animated gesture. She'd pulled volume after volume from her collection, eager to share favourites, her eyes absolutely gleaming with the kind of infectious joy that made refusal impossible.

One story in particular had captured Ryuu's attention: an academy exclusively for women, where the power-armour-like suits they piloted could only be activated by female users. Marin's hands had moved expressively as she described the setting, the mechanics, the character dynamics—all with the sort of unselfconscious passion that suggested she'd lived in these stories as much as read them.

Ryuu couldn't help but shake her head at the fact that, due to having "**General Knowledge**," she could easily understand what power armour was. The term should have been foreign, nonsensical—something requiring explanation or context. Instead, the knowledge simply existed in her mind, complete and accessible: mechanised combat suits, typically bipedal, providing enhanced strength and protection to the wearer. The casual familiarity with concepts that had never existed in her original world still felt deeply strange, like memories that weren't quite hers settling into place beside ones that definitely were.

The premise itself was curious—the seemingly impossible event of a single man somehow activating a suit and finding himself the sole male in an all-female institution. Marin had explained the plot with obvious delight, leaning in closer with each revelation, her enthusiasm transforming what could have been a simple summary into something vivid and engaging.

Later, she'd circled back to her plans to become their group's armourer and fashion designer—an ambition declared during last night's meeting, when she'd partnered with the sole male of their group. Shirou, whose family, he'd only just discovered, had been generational blacksmiths. Marin had spoken of the partnership with genuine excitement, already spinning plans about combining traditional techniques with modern aesthetics, about creating gear that was both functional and beautiful, about making sure everyone looked their absolute best whilst staying alive.

Ryuu's expression had sobered at the thought. Shirou had forgotten his own family—childhood trauma severing him so completely from his own history that he'd only discovered their legacy in this second life. The implications sat uncomfortably in her mind. What sort of pain could do that to a person? What

had it cost him, losing those years, that connection? And what must it feel like now, reclaiming something that should never have been lost in the first place?

She'd still been pondering that thought when Marin moved on to sketching. Ryuu had lain back on her cot, not yet sleepy despite the late hour. Her mind was too active, processing too many things—new knowledge settling like sediment, unfamiliar possibilities branching outward, the sheer strangeness of everything that had happened in such a short span of time. Sleep felt distant, impossible, a luxury for minds less occupied than hers.

Her contemplation was interrupted by Marin suddenly kneeling beside her, the motion boisterous as she bounced on the mattress, her whole cot shifting beneath the sudden, enthusiastic weight. She proudly held up her sketch with both hands like a prize, her expression absolutely radiant with satisfaction.

Ryuu felt warmth creep into her cheeks at the memory. Marin had announced, with zero warning, that she'd been "thinking about a look" for her—and before Ryuu could formulate a response, before she could even begin to process the implications, the design had been thrust into her hands with gleeful insistence. An armoured leotard in pristine white, the kind of pure white that would catch light and practically glow. A flowing cape in deep green lined with vibrant yellow, caught mid-billow in Marin's skilled rendering, the fabric almost seeming to move on the page. Metal gauntlets that balanced function and elegance, protecting without obscuring, and mid-thigh-length greaves that suggested both mobility and protection. Ribbon accents at the hair—delicate touches that softened the martial aesthetic.

The leotard was cut very high, showing much of her hips, and from the sketches of her posterior—multiple angles, because Marin was thorough—showed a lot of her cheeks, something Marin was talented enough to render in disturbing detail. Disturbingly *accurate* detail, actually. Ryuu's face had absolutely burned looking at those particular studies.

Ryuu had wanted to protest. She truly had. The words had been right there, ready to deploy—*too revealing, impractical, inappropriate*. But even as she'd opened her mouth to voice them, an uncomfortable truth had surfaced

unbidden, rising like a bubble she couldn't quite suppress: her own adventuring gear wasn't exactly modest. The short green bloomers she'd worn throughout her years with Astraea Familia—up until her transfer to Hestia Familia—had drawn their share of comments. From fellow familia members. From passing adventurers who thought themselves clever. And on one memorable occasion, from Alise herself, who had cheerfully pointed out that Ryuu's combat stance left very little to the imagination. Her captain had been utterly shameless about it, too, grinning that wide, infectious grin that made it impossible to take offence.

*'You're one strong breeze away from a scandal, Ryuu,'* her captain had teased, eyes sparkling with mischief. *'Not that I'm complaining about the view.'*

She'd never changed the outfit. It was practical, allowed freedom of movement, and she'd grown accustomed to ignoring the commentary. The bloomers were functional. That was what mattered. That other people noticed was... irrelevant. Mostly.

But sitting there, staring at Marin's sketch with its bold lines and bare thighs, with those meticulously detailed posterior studies burning themselves into her retinas, she'd found herself without a leg to stand on. Metaphorically speaking. Criticising Marin's design would make her a hypocrite of the highest order, and Ryuu Lion-Astraea was many things, but hypocritical was something she tried to avoid being.

So she had no choice but to keep quiet and hope Shirou might temper Marin's vision.

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Ryuu stepped out of her room, stretching deeply as she went—arms overhead, spine arching, the kind of full-body extension that chased the last vestiges of sleep from stiff muscles. Her borrowed shirt rode up to expose a strip of toned midriff. She'd borrowed some of Marin's clothes after Rose Potter and her group had helped resize everyone's wardrobes with their

magic; at least that spell hadn't resulted in a catastrophe like a room full of scattered paper.

A curious thing, that. Whilst the clothes they'd woken up in had been appropriately sized for their new proportions, none of them from her reality had actually known their precise measurements beforehand. It had been quite a long time since Ryu had last been measured, she realised as she padded down the corridor. Proper measurements were typically only taken during custom-fitting for adventure gear.

The only people who'd actually recorded her height and reach had been weaponsmiths—Goibniu, the god she'd commissioned for customisations during her time with Astraea Familia, and later Welf Crozzo after her transfer to Hestia's. Though even Welf had never touched her Alf's Justitia, focusing instead on maintaining her twin kodachi.

In any case, her current height was apparently around two hundred and two centimetres, which sounded remarkably similar to their unit of measurement in her previous reality—celch and medr. The conversion seemed almost one-to-one, which made a strange sort of sense when she considered it.

That thought led naturally to another. Many of the concepts and terms she'd heard from Marin last night had sounded remarkably like the sort of babble gods and goddesses threw about—words like "tsundere" and "chuuni," which, according to Marin, were simply words from her language. Common vernacular, even. The enthusiastic blonde had been utterly unbothered by the strangeness of it all.

Adventurers had always heard gods and goddesses spout such nonsense—phrases and references that made no sense, dismissed as divine eccentricity. Apparently, they'd been referencing things from other realities all along. A drunken trio of Loki, Syr, and Hestia had let that secret slip one evening. Unfortunately—or fortunately, depending on who you asked—Takemikazuchi and Hermes had been there to cut them off before they could reveal more.



Which explained why medr and celch aligned so closely with centimetres and metres. The gods had likely borrowed the concepts wholesale.

She'd have to ask Syr about that connection later—whether there was something more to the overlap, or whether Ryuū was simply seeing patterns in coincidence.

For now, she pulled out a chair and settled at the dining table, the wood cool beneath her palms. Shirou, Sakura, Haruhime, and Haruka were already moving about the kitchen area with quiet efficiency. From what she could see laid out before her, breakfast appeared essentially complete. The four of them moved like a well-rehearsed team—which was remarkable, given they'd only known each other for a day.

"Good morning, Ryuū!" Haruhime's voice was bright and warm, her ears perking forward.

"Good morning," Ryuū replied, inclining her head with a small smile.

Both Haruhime and Shirou approached just as she settled into her seat—her previous thoughts about Syr sliding to the back of her mind as she returned their greeting with quiet pleasure. It was... nice, she thought, to wake to something familiar. Mornings at the Hearth Mansion would never happen again—but at least Haruhime was here with her.

The two flanked her on either side as they took their seats at the dining table, Haruhime's tail swaying in that gentle, contented rhythm Ryuū had come to associate with the kitsune's quieter moments of happiness. Shirou, by contrast, sat straight yet relaxed—the posture of someone comfortable in his own skin, alert without being tense.

Shirou reached for a platter bearing what appeared to be eggs, though not in any preparation Ryuū usually encountered—mainly dishes from Far Eastern Familias like Takemikazuchi's. These had been shaped into neat cylindrical logs, golden-yellow and faintly glossy, layered in a way that suggested careful, repeated folding. The scent was subtle—eggs, yes, but with something slightly sweet beneath.

Shirou placed two slices on his own plate before passing the platter smoothly to Ryuu. She accepted it with a nod, taking the same modest amount before passing it along to Haruhime. They fell into an easy rhythm—this quiet song and dance of shared meals—as they worked through the rest of the spread: grilled fish with crispy, salt-kissed skin; pickled vegetables that gleamed jewel-bright in their serving dish; stir-fried meat and vegetables still faintly steaming.

Sakura and Haruka approached the table moments later, both carrying bowls of what appeared to be steamed rice and soup, serving everyone with graceful efficiency just before they settled into their own seats. Shirou continued passing the platters of breakfast around, ensuring everyone had access to everything.

"Oh, good morning, Hermione!" Haruka's voice was pleasant and measured as she glanced toward the doorway. "We've finished preparing lunch, dinner, and snacks already. Could you apply the same stasis charm you used last night?"

Ryuu turned to see Hermione standing in the doorway, looking faintly surprised at being addressed so promptly upon arrival. The bushy-haired witch recovered quickly, nodding as she moved toward the kitchen.

Ryuu turned her attention back to her meal, using her fork to lift a piece of the egg toward her bowl of rice. As she ate, her thoughts drifted back to Syr.

The thought of Syr brought another memory surfacing—one from last night, just before dinner and the group meeting, whilst they'd still been taking initial inventory of everything gained from **'Inherit Claimable, Unclaimed Inheritance'** and **'Inherit Previous Life's Assets.'**

Ryuu had been in Haruhime and Haruka's room at the time—Haruka herself absent, busy assisting Hermione and Rin with the people in stasis. Lefiya had been helping brush Haruhime's tail dry, a task that required considerable patience given its volume, whilst the kitsune herself worked through her hair

with gentle, practised strokes. Ryu had accompanied Syr there, already knowing what was coming.

The request itself had been simple enough. Syr had worn that rare serious expression—the one that reminded Ryu, even now, that the cheerful tavern girl had always been something more than she appeared. Something *profoundly* more.

"I have a favour to ask everyone here."

Syr had fidgeted as she spoke, uncharacteristically nervous, and Ryu had quietly urged her to continue. She'd seen Syr tease and torment with equal flair, seen her face down threats with that disarming smile still in place—but this? This was different. This was vulnerability, raw and unadorned.

What followed was an explanation Ryu had already heard in private: Syr had died in her mortal body during the Black Dragon's attack, whilst Horn had been in her goddess body elsewhere. The Bifurcated Stall had caught only the mortal shell, and so she'd been reincarnated into this new reality as a mortal in truth.

She'd retained most of her abilities, she explained, showing them an edited copy of her status screen—projected outward somehow, visible to all of them rather than just herself. The others had purchased the basic version, a simple tattoo that required a blood ritual to copy, but Syr's interface was clearly something more advanced. Her charm was gone—that overwhelming, reality-bending allure that had once bent the hearts of all who beheld her. Her ability to perceive and manipulate fate had vanished as well, stripped away like so much gilding from a tarnished statue. What remained was skill with bow and blade, a more subtle form of charisma, and two blessings whose nature she hadn't fully elaborated on. Ryu had noted the omission but hadn't pressed.

Her race, she'd disclosed, was now listed as "Katabatic"—descended from godhood, though of course she'd edited it to display as human. A mortal who

had once been divine, now walking amongst them without the weight of worship pressing down upon her shoulders.

"I want to experience what actually being mortal means," Syr had said, her grey eyes unusually vulnerable, stripped of their usual playful gleam. "So I'd like to keep my previous divinity a secret from the others. Please—well, at least for now."

Ryuu had already agreed before they'd entered the room—Syr had asked her first, privately, and Ryuu had seen no reason to refuse. It wasn't as though the knowledge would change anything practical about their current situation.

Lefiya had simply shrugged when looked to for her opinion. She'd been a regular at the Hostess for years, dragged there often enough by Loki Familia's rowdier members, and had weathered the aftermath of the war game revelation with the rest of Orario. One more secret to keep was hardly a burden.

Haruhime had tilted her head, ears twitching thoughtfully, before offering her gentle agreement. She'd known who Syr truly was since the war game—that desperate, doomed assault where most of Orario's familias had challenged Freya Familia and learned, in the most visceral way possible, exactly why the goddess of beauty had remained unchallenged for so long. The revelation had been impossible to miss for anyone paying attention.

And so they'd acquiesced, all of them, much to Syr's visible relief. Her shoulders had sagged, tension bleeding out in a way that made her seem smaller, more fragile. *More human.*

Ryuu had understood, even then, why it mattered so much. For millennia, Syr—Freyja—had been defined by her divinity. By her beauty. By the weight of worship and expectation and the inexorable pull she exerted on every soul around her. To set that aside, to walk amongst mortals as one of them rather than above them...

It was a chance to discover who she was as a being unshackled from what others expected her to be. To find interest and meaning in things that weren't coloured by the lens of godhood.

Ryuu could respect that. She'd sought something similar herself, once, in the years after Astraea Familia's destruction—working at the Hostess not as the Gale Wind, but simply as Ryuu. A waitress. A woman. Someone defined by her choices rather than her bloody legend, by the quiet competence of service rather than the sharp efficiency of a blade.

Whether Syr would find what she was looking for, Ryuu couldn't say. The path of self-discovery was rarely straightforward. But she'd keep the secret regardless, guard it as she would any other trust placed in her keeping.

The memory faded as a voice cut through her reverie.

"Oi! Shirou! Ryuu!" Rose Potter called out, striding into the dining area with what looked like three brooms tucked under one arm. A couple of small bipedal creatures followed at her heels—house-elves, Ryuu recalled from yesterday's explanations, though their purpose here wasn't immediately clear.

"I've already tested it out—quickly finish up breakfast so I can teach you how to fly, before we start looking for the celestial dungeon."

Ryuu looked up from her plate, which was now close to empty. She glanced toward Hermione, who rolled her eyes—Ryuu's keen ears catching the witch's muttered commentary about Rose and her obsession with flying.

She turned to Shirou, who was already done with his plate.

"Shouldn't you eat breakfast first?" Ryuu asked the tall redhead holding the brooms, one pale brow arching slightly.

"She was the first one to eat breakfast," Shirou informed her as he stood, bringing his dish toward the sink and cleaning it with practised movements.

Rose nodded at the house-elves, who departed for the exit ahead of them.

Ryuu took the final bite of her breakfast, savouring the last mouthful before following Shirou's lead and cleaning her own dish. Then she followed the pair of redheads out into the still-dark outdoors, the cool air a sharp contrast to the warmth of the dining area.

"I felt like I slept at least five hours. I wonder how long the day-night cycle of this planet is?" Rose wondered aloud, her voice thoughtful as the trio stared up at the still star-dotted sky. The constellations were unfamiliar, their patterns alien and strange—a reminder that they were truly somewhere else now.

Ryuu tilted her head back, letting her gaze sweep across the heavens. The stars were crisp and clear, untouched by the glow of Babel's ever-lit windows or the torchlight that spilled from Orario's streets at night. Beautiful, in their own cold, distant way.

"We'll need to track it properly," she murmured. "Establish patterns. It could affect everything from rest schedules to dungeon expeditions."

"Oh yeah, by the way—" Rose gestured toward the house-elves trailing behind them. "Let me introduce you two to—"

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