

Book 1 The Empty Twin - Ch 2.4 Fray into The Planet Dungeon

With most of the brownies and skrattes sent away to help the other group. We stand right before a large door. After about half an hour of climbing down a very long and winding staircase, we find ourselves in quite a large hall lit by torches mounted on pillars equidistant from each other. At the end of this wall is a massive double iron door about 15 meters in height.

“Let’s do our final checks.” Ryuu said as we laid an inventory of each load out. Beside us were Mipsy and 3 other brownies. We decided to recruit the services of 4 brownies instead of just relying on Mipsy.

Volkey and Jolsey volunteered to be both Ryuu’s and my personal support. During the battle they’ll remain mostly hidden unless they are ordered to help, they’ll be responsible with refilling the potions vials strapped on our belt, providing quick teleportation assistance when called, and the occasional support fire.

For now, we really are discouraging the brownies from being active in the battlefield, unless they are in the higher floors. Magic supply is a limited resource and their ability to teleport is a lifeline we wouldn’t want missing when we need it the most.

This was further emphasized during the previous floor, the sudden leap in difficulty between the 18th and the 19th made us reconsider with the number of brownies we are bringing to this battle.

“Volkey, Jolsey, and Ryuu, could you come here for a bit?” I then traced 6 pairs of daggers, I then resized half and distributed it equally to the two elves.

Addressing both Volkey and Jolsey “Can you feel the difference between these daggers?” I asked as I crouched down trying to lower myself to be at level with the brownie’s line of sight.

They acknowledge this with a nod as Ryuu stays silent, probably wondering where I’m going with this. “I gave you each daggers, each imbued with different magic signatures, if I throw a copy of a dagger similar to what each of you have, how fast can you teleport me to where the dagger is embedded?”

“If we be concentrating, we be doing this quickly.” Volkey replied while bobbing her head excitedly.

“Okay let’s do a trial run, have you both identified the difference between each dagger?” In which they returned with an acknowledgement. I checked to see if Ryuu understood the test.

“Okay, start concentrating Ryuu and I will randomly throw the dagger and your job is to teleport us both to each respective dagger’s location.”

“Yes Master Shirou”

Pausing for a moment as Ryuu suddenly threw hers near the bottom of the staircase, as Ryuu vanished I didn't wait for her to reappear as I threw my dagger towards the base of one of the torchlit pillars.

Right after appearing at the base of the pillar, I instantly traced another copy of the dagger and threw it towards the ground where we were previously standing; and without pause I was teleported again back where I started.

Seeing this Ryuu copied me as well by yanking the embedded knife and throwing it towards my direction. She too was instantly transported to my side.

"Good job!!" I said to both brownies as Ryuu stoically nodded.

"I'll just project extra copies for Ryuu, Jolsey you have the added responsibility of replacing these daggers after one is used. Just store this in the mokeskin bag as well together with the other potions. You can retrieve previously thrown daggers when you have nothing else to do." I said as I handed her about half a dozen more copies of the daggers.

"Volkey, you need not refill mine as I can easily trace this without any problems." Both brownies nodded as I demonstrated my point to Volkey by tracing another copy of a dagger I used previously.

"Oh yeah when you are in a pinch feel free to use the daggers as you see fit. These are all disposable."

"Yes Master Shirou."

Smiling at the brownies as I shift my gaze towards Ryuu

"How's your final equipment check? Do you want me to look at your sword if there's anything that needs to be fixed?"

"I think I'm good." Ryuu replies stoically as she holsters two kodachis at her hip and takes hold of her main weapon, a wooden sword.

Chuckling quietly to himself, *'She's like a stray cat'*, was what I thought she'll cycle between cold and worrying depending on the situation. She then sharply looks at me as she narrows her eyes. I blinked twice and tilted my head in return.

'Can those ears hear my thoughts? Shirou to Ryuu, Shirou to Ryuu if you can hear me raise your left hand.'

Anyway I looked at her main weapon **Alf's Justitia**, quite a unique sword; well this was made during their reality's equivalent to our age of god. Even though it is made of wood it still possesses an incredibly sharp blade and can cut and go toe-to-toe with any bladed metallic weapon.

According to my structural analysis the sword is made of a branch of a sacred tree from the Wishe Forest and is blessed by the waters of the Star Cavern's Holy Spring; the sword also possess a fragment of her old weapon, **Alf's Lumina**, and large jewel called a Spirit's Drop as it's guard.

A perfect balance between a sword and magic focus. Catching myself as I have been staring at her sword for awhile as everyone was just staring at me.

Awkwardly coughing into my closed fist, "Ummm, Mipsey just to re-emphasize your job is overwatch and backup."

"You'll be responsible for pulling out Volkey and Jolkey if they are put in a potentially bad situation; you'll also be responsible for checking out the surroundings and warning us of any potential ambush as the boss might have some minions with it."

After her acknowledgement, I continued. "You'll also serve as backup or replacement if anything happens to Volkey and Jolkey, but prioritise getting both brownies out first. You'll also be in charge of Tripsey." I added as I address the fourth member of the brownie team.

"Tripsey will be your assistant and he'll be responsible for asking help from the other group if our situation is about to become dire, the decision will be up to Mipsy's discretion."

"Here." I then furrowed my brow as I traced two copies of repeating crossbows and a few thousand arrows for it. "You guys can use it however you see fit, but avoid aggravating the monsters, we don't want you getting attacked mid battle."

"You should take point, I'll immediately start my chant upon entering." Ryuu said as she held her sword in her right and her left placed firmly on the door.

I myself also put my right palm on the other door as we pushed the gigantic door without much effort.

What greeted us was a spectacular sight. The large door opened up into quite a spacious area where a bridge held upright by several pillars is connected to a massive stage. This stage, about 3 to 4 kilometers in diameter, is also set on top of several massive pillars.

Beyond the edge of the stage and under the bridge lies what seems like a bottomless pit, the pit surrounded by massive dirt walls that stretches up to several meters above the stage's level.

At the opposite side of the area is another bridge which connects to another door not unlike the one behind us, and in the center stands our goal. This is the first boss of this planet dungeon, a **Weapon**.

"Fuck."

I hear Ryuu grunting beside me as well. "Why is a **Weapon** the first boss of this planet dungeon?" I rhetorically asked out loud.

Weapons are considered ultimate monsters within a dungeon. The first time these monsters were observed are within dungeons that are artificially cultivated to grow past its 100 floor limit. These are beings due to an immense supply of magic and psionic energies are formed through the will of the dungeon to try and wrestle back control, eliminate all its enemy within, and continue on with its purpose.

A dungeon's purpose is to set root into a planet, planetoid, satellite, or even an asteroid absorb all its energy, use all that absorbed energy turning the monsters within into a seed in which it performs one final dungeon break where its monsters shall escape the gravity well of the celestial body it infects. Eventually that sea of monsters will take purchase into another celestial body and restarts the cycle.

According to studies any external energy gathered from celestial bodies are used as energy to either produce additional floors or to start a dungeon break, however we only have theories and it is not exactly known from where the dungeon receives the energy to produce monsters and to repair itself. As the oldest dungeon in operation within this empire is as old if not older than the empire itself and it has not stopped producing monsters in its current lifetime.

It's theorized that planet dungeons are manifestations of the will of an alternate reality perpendicular to this one. That point where both realities meet is the original source of the first planet dungeons; however this point has not been found as it may not be even in this galaxy.

The reason why this theory on the planet dungeon is the prevailing one is because of that unknown source of energy the dungeon uses to produce monsters and repair its structure. If the monsters are being bred elsewhere and the materials to repair comes from a different place then we can rationalize why a planet dungeon can operate seemingly in perpetuity without having any dungeon breaks to absorb energy from outside.

That theory also ties in the other reason why it needs energy from this reality. As a dungeon is like a semi-separate reality present in both planes with defined bounds, it needs energy from the celestial bodies it plants itself for the creatures to escape the dungeon and exist in our reality; and for it to be able to escape the gravity well; and plant itself in another celestial body.

However, that theory also fails to explain that if the planet dungeon needs this reality's energy for the monster to escape the dungeon and exist in our reality, then how can we easily transport the dead bodies of monsters outside the dungeon?

One of the rebuttals to that is that once a monster dies it severs its connection with the dungeon and the alternate reality.

Anyway basically usually planet dungeons that are conquered without destroying its core are farmed in perpetuity, planets who farm these dungeons have even made communities within the dungeon to give the adventurers who tackle the dungeon some needed amenities.

The planets who manage these dungeons even feed the core external energies for it to add more floors, however at a certain point the dungeon, who has a somewhat will of its own, will realise that even with being fed external energy why doesn't it go to a dungeon break?

The reason why it doesn't go to dungeon break is because the monsters are getting culled while being fed external energy so it directs that energy into adding floors, but every now and then. The dungeon will retaliate as it needs to remove the adventurers within it to force a dungeon break.

Hence the birth of a **Weapon**, a weapon's goal is to annihilate and destroy anything foreign within the dungeon, once it does that the energies gained from said annihilation is absorbed by the **Weapon** giving it the means to escape the dungeon.

This **Weapon** will then lay waste to the celestial body the planet dungeon is on before it escapes its gravity well and will form a planet dungeon in a different celestial body. Planet dungeons born from **Weapons** are generally a lot harder to conquer.

Which brings us back to our predicament: why is a **Weapon** a floor boss? And if this is the 20th floor boss then what will the other bosses be?

Looking at its appearance the **Weapon** is a quadruped with a very long lizard-like tail with blades jutting out of its end. Its forearms, far bigger than its hindlegs, are armored with large claws, and with a large spike jutting out from its shoulder.

In between the two forearms is a monstrous face of a beast without a neck and on top of that face a humanoid armored torso is attached. This humanoid torso has the face of a dragonoid with 5 horns on its head. Two are spiralled like what you can find in rams while the top 3 are pointed towards the back, looking like the top half of a 5 point star.

On the back of its torso lies 4 spread out dragon-like wings that are also armored. Beside the **Weapon** is an extremely large double edged sword with a 7 pointed star as its guard, and within the **Weapon's** left hand is a large rainbow tinted crystal.

I immediately traced my bow, "Tripsey stay near the door, Mipsey your place is near the bridge. Do not cross it unless necessary."

"I am the bone of my sword."

"Astraea Record"

Both of us start our arias as I trace a large sword that has a spiral as its blade. "Volkey and Jolkey please take care and do not just sacrifice yourself for our sake, you already know your assignments."

This spiral sword isn't Caladbolg 2 the modified version my counterpart Counterguardian Emiya always uses, this is the prototype version found in Gilgamesh's Gate of Babylon. With my new reserves I'm able to modify this version. Compacting all that mass makes it more streamlined as it becomes a spiral arrow.

Reinforcing my whole body as I took aim, the **Weapon** sensing the energies coming from both Ryu and I, starts by picking up its sword.

“Duty shall be fulfilled, and the scales shall be balanced.”

I overload the modified arrow with prana as it is now considered a broken phantasm “My core is twisted in madness, Caladbolg”

When I released my devastating arrow, I didn’t even wait to see what’ll happen to the **Weapon** as I vanished my bow and started rushing towards the stage.

“Steel is my body, fire is my blood” I reinforced my body further, “Volkey, follow me. Double Accel.”

“Yes, master Shirou.”

“Bastion of order, crown of the honest, evil-crushing torch.”

I traced Prototype Gram, again one of the swords I stole from Gilgamesh’s gate, as I blurred towards my enemy.

As this happens an explosion rocks the center of the stage as my broken Caladbolg detonates upon contact with the **Weapon**, a dust cloud forms obscuring our view of the monster.

“I have created over a thousand blades.” I am now three fourths of the way towards the stage.

“In the name of the Goddess’s, charging through space, bind the star traces to this land.”

I traced 3 gigantic blades and sent it towards the area where I last saw the monster. Just as I stepped on the stage, the cloud dispersed as the beast’s face between its forearms growled loudly.

The torso now holding its gigantic sword with its right hand swats the three large blades I sent it. I surveyed the damage done by my swords as part of its wing, the left side of the lizard body is mangled and is spewing blood.

Unfortunately the monster begins to repair itself. “Great, a healing factor.” I grumbled to myself. The monster growls loudly again as the room stage reverberates, suddenly howling starts around me as I hear monsters from the direction of the pit.

As I reached the **Weapon** I leapt towards its torso holding Prototype gram with both my hands as I swung downwards. Of course this was blocked by the monster but I traced a few more large swords point blank, embedding several on the back of its body.

“Justice returns!” I hear Ryu finishing her chant as she follows this up with “Agaris Alvesynth!” ‘

Ryuu then throws one of the daggers I provided her towards the stage. It's a good thing that Jolkey has the presence of mind not to touch Ryuu in the parts of her body that aren't enchanted by flames.

I call forth the name of the Noble Phantasm I am currently wielding as blue green light envelopes the blade as it crackles with lightning "Sword of the Sun, Gram" I thrust my weapon towards the chest of the humanoid torso attached to its body.

A light burst from my blade entering the monster's chest and exiting from its back. The monster just shrugs this damage by closing the distance and swinging at me using a horizontal slash.

"Shirou!" I hear Ryuu as she glides towards the monster but then the scent of destruction wafts towards me as I feel a surge of energy coming from the face of the beast between its forearms.

As the torso takes another swing it me the bottom beast tilts its face to the left as a bright light forms within its mouth filled with jagged teeth.

"Ryuu, it's targeting you." I warned my elven partner as a beam of destructive energy burst forth its maw towards Ryuu. Ryuu, unfazed by this, still glides forward as she throws another dagger towards the right flank of the beast.

As she appears she immediately pommels the right side of the monster with her flame enchanted sword, singeing and slicing its body.

"Great job, Volkey." I called out, as I parried another swing from the torso I called forth the name of my blade again as I did a horizontal slash opening a large gash on the **Weapon's** chest.

Ryuu synced up with me as she pivoted towards the face of the beast as she pointed her sword towards its maw she chanted, "Arvelia!" A bright lance of flame burst forth from the tip of her sword towards the jagged jaws of the beast.

Unfortunately, this was misdirected by the **Weapon** as it stabs its weapon downwards angling it a bit, the lance made of flames stabbed through the horn of its right forearm. This was quickly followed by the torso, without removing the blade from the ground, performs an underhaw; a vertical cut which starts from the bottom. Sending chunks of rocks and debris towards Ryuu and I, at the same time the right claw of the beast performs a slash towards Ryuu.

We dodge this as we both threw another knife, Ryuu again towards the monster's flank, while I threw it several hundred meters to the left of the monster.

"Master Shirou, Mistress Ryuu, there be monsters climbing up the stage." Mipsey called out.

At this point aside from gash and the burnt hole made by both Ryuu's and my latest attack most of the previous damage done on the weapon are now healed. Looking at the towering giant of a **Weapon** at least 3 times my height.

Tracing my bow and another Hrunting. "Mipsey and Tripsey, please attack some of the monsters so they fall before they reach the stage. Just don't draw too much attention to yourselves." Ryuu ordered, as we now hear the howls of the monsters now nearing the stage.

"Hound of the Red Plains, Hrunting." Ryuu, already seeing this, backs away as she bombards the monster as well with her Luminous Wind.

"Unknown to death nor known to life" I started tracing multiple copies of Kanshou and Bakuya, throwing them as I ran around the **Weapon**. Ryuu, unflinchingly weaves between deadly flying buzz saws as she glides around monster hacking and slashing throughout the monster.

"Have withstood pain to create many weapons" As I have invoked the 5th line of my aria, I threw my final pair of Kanshou and Bakuya. I began tracing a myriad of swords as it bombards the space around the stage hoping that it'll further delay the incoming horde of monsters.

While the continuous rain of swords began, I then traced Gae Bolg lengthening it to match my height as I leapt into the fray.

Swinging the spear as I thrust towards the chest of the torso, "Double Accel" as I blurred towards its left flank. Ryuu then, replacing me, lounged with her flaming sword locking swords with the **Weapon**. I then performed a series of arcing slashes around its body which culminated in me landing the beast's back as I stabbed my spear at its spine.

The monster screamed in pain as it swiped at me with two of its wings. Throwing another knife towards its near its left forearm, switching places with Ryuu as she weaves around the monster gliding around it as she performs a series of slashes.

Ryuu then sheathes her sword as she lowers the center of her gravity. While this happens I distract the front side of the monster as I dodged one of the flying buzz saws that continues to weave in and out of the area.

Stabbing at the clawed foot of its left forearm I leapt towards the torso, "Volkey, please hold a bright light just above me and behind my head."

"Yes, master Shirou." While I weaved in and out while stabbing and slashing at the monster. I projected several copies of black keys, these are sacraments molded into a form of a weapon. While mainly this is a weapon used for exorcism and for dealing with entities like demons and vampires. Another ability of this weapon is to freeze anything if you pierce its shadow.

With the **Weapon** frozen it provides Ryuu the opening for her to lounge as she performs a battou. An attack that starts with a sheathed katana. As she unleashes her sword she loudly declares, "Gokou".

As I have already previously seen this technique I myself matched Ryuu, I first stabbed Gae Bolg at the eye of the body's face. I then traced a nodachi 1.5 meters in length, I then further lengthened it to match my height as I like Ryuu crouched down to lower my center of gravity.

This sword is called Monohoshi Zao, The Drying Pole, a nodachi that's almost too unwieldy that it is commonly joked that it's better to use it as a placeholder for you to hang your clothes to dry.

The **Weapon** started vibrating trying to break the enchantments from the black keys; pointing my sword at the monster with blade facing the sky, "Hiken" I said.

At the same time as Ryuu's battou I myself slashed at the monster, "Tsubame Gaeshi". A technique that momentarily uses the 2nd magic as it disregards space and time to perform 3 slashes at the same time.

While this technique is at the border of true magic, the one performed by Ryuu is incomparable as she produces 5 god slashes at the same time. I then followed this by removing Gae Bolg from the eye and detonating all the Kanshou and Bakuya as they hit the monster's body.

I smelt it again, magic of pure destruction emanating from the weapon. "Ryuu, Volkey, and Jolkey fall back, stay behind me."

I ordered as a surge of energy emanated from the **Weapon** as a violent burst of magic exploded from the monster, dislodging the embedded black keys from the floor. Lifting its left arm which holds a rainbow coloured gem.

I stabbed Gae Bolg at the floor and extended my right arm forward with palms facing the monster as I braced my wrist with my left arm. "Rho Aias" I shouted just as a sea of flames burst out of the orb towards us.

A pink seven petal flower appeared right in front of us as 7 magical barriers sprung forth. At the same time as the sea of flames bombards my shield.

"Mistress Ryuu behind you." Mipsey shouts as Ryuu dodges a swipe from a monster that looks like the lower half of the **Weapon**, it is also far smaller compared to the monster. As Ryuu engages 3 monsters behind me I can also see various monsters clawing their way towards the stage in front of me.

I tried to concentrate as I planned to restart the bombardment of swords but I held myself back as another beam coming from the maw of the lower half of the **Weapon**. Because of that the first layer of my shield shattered.

As my body experiences the backlash coming from the shattering of the first layer. I look around me to assess our current predicament and it's not looking well. We have Ryu behind me dealing with the sudden swarm of monsters and me locked in a temporary stalemate with the **Weapon** as the flames coming from the orb are endless and its lower half charging another beam of destructive energy.

Unbeknownst to Shirou and Ryu some of the glyphs that represent his abilities, blessings, and status on Shirou's back began to glow.