

The Empty Twin - Ch 1.1 New Beginnings

"So how are we going to do this?" Rin asked her partner in crime for the past 3 years.

"I already did some negotiations with her beforehand." As I opened up my small netbook and showed Tohsaka the string of emails I exchanged with the currently in hiding sealing designate. "Combining both my family's knowledge in alchemy, and her knowledge in human engineering we can transfer Shirou into a vessel that will assimilate his soul and mould it into its last peak condition."

"How about you and Sakura?" Rin asked after reading the string of emails I have presented her. 'She at least has learned to operate modern tech with the same efficiency as a Japanese salaryman in their 40's.' I inwardly chuckled at my own joke.

"Umm.. unfortunately", I awkwardly shifted in my seat as I broke eye-contact. "We don't exactly have the funds for more than one operation."

"So who here again was given advice on what to do by that troll of a supposed god?" As I say this I am currently hugging my sister, sandwiching her between me and Shirou. It has been about 16 years since I last treated her like a sister and hugged her like this and it has been about 8 years since I last saw her. Not since the end of the 5th Holy Grail war, inside the cave where the greater grail was supposed to be housed.

We expected the worst when we saw the room just before the chamber holding the Greater Grail, the aftermath of a fight between Shirou, Medusa, Medea and a Grail empowered and malignant Arturia Pendragon. The sheer destruction that surrounded us was made peculiar by the fact that the cave still was standing.

As we quickly rushed towards the next chamber, my heart fell when I saw Shirou's body riddled with blades holding onto Sakura's hand as she lay still with a serene expression. Luckily, Illya was there to transfer both their souls into a makeshift vessel, Shirou in a mannequin Illya made on the spot, while Sakura was transferred into the large family jewel I inherited from my father, a jewel that I regularly wear as a necklace.

Stalling and preventing the Aylesbury ritual from being completed was supposed to be our final freelance job before we meet Touko Aozaki again for a body adjustment for Illya and a compatible vessel for Sakura. Unfortunately everything went to shit when we not only failed to prevent the resurrection of The Dark Six, Primate Murder suddenly went on a rampage, killing almost everyone within 100 km from the ritual center.

We escaped through sheer luck but unfortunately when it rains it pours, ORT woke up from its slumber and made a beeline towards Europe. I'm guessing our group got caught in its first attack when it turned all our surroundings into a crystal wasteland.

Now we find ourselves here, me possessively clutching at my sister fearing she'll disappear any moment, my sister holding hands with Shirou, while Illya hangs on to his other arm like a limpet while he tries to raise that same hand.

Sakura raised her hand as did everyone else. "Danger lies at the bottom of the dungeon. Your group of 13 must suppress this within a year before it escapes. Amazing opportunities await your group beyond this event." is what one blonde haired gyaru looking japanese girl recited from memory.

'Wait, isn't she Japanese? Why does she still have blonde hair after reincarnation?' I ponder this as I wonder whether she actually spent points on her looks or maybe one of her parents was just foreign.

The lady in question introduced herself as Kitagawa Marin, and according to her she not only got that hint but she was also advised by Zelretch to group with us. Well that's putting it lightly, the actual advice was "Go that direction at full speed until you can no longer move forward."

She was one of the souls that barrelled into the group, which helped with the 13 of us ending up being reincarnated in the same place. *'Technically we were transferred, not reincarnated.'* As I corrected myself mentally the others who raised their hands introduced themselves.

The first one to introduce themselves was a girl with grey hair and eyes, she introduced herself as Syr Flover. The next one was a short haired girl with lengthened and pointy ears. I mentally paused for a moment as I scanned everyone and found 2 others with long pointy ears. *'Are they elves? And is that a kitsune?'*

"My name is Lefiya Viridis." The elf who raised her hands introduced herself with a formal tone. As did the foxlady, Sanjouno Haruhime, though she ended her introduction with a bow.

I also observe that while the 2 elves who sat together had lengthened ears that are pointed upwards the other one that sat beside the recently introduced Marin Kitagawa had longer ears and was pointed side-ways.

The two elves squinted their eyes a bit as they introduced themselves as Ryuu Astraea and Azuma Haruka. 'Oops, looks like I got caught.' as I mentally winced. *'One of them either has a god's name as their surname or they introduce themselves the same way Japanese do and they're named after the goddess of justice.'*

Looking at the one with the longer ears in question. *'I guess my question was obvious in my facial expression.'*, as the girl quickly explained that she changed her race into an elf. She further explained that she knew that one of her companions whom she's close to will probably change their race to elf so she did the same to match them.

Unfortunately, her companions vanished with the first wave. Meaning they actually got reincarnated without their memories. She was the other one who barrelled into the group as she detected 2 of her other close friends across the remaining sea of souls as she tried really hard to rush towards them.

With that explanation her ears drooped slightly as she probably feels alone here though Ms. Kitagawa did give her a consoling pat on the shoulder.

After my group's introductions, the final group introduced themselves. A tall, green-eyed, red-head, introduced herself as Rose Potter, busty, long-legged, blonde, with a noticeable French accent Gabrielle Delacour, and finally a bushy-haired brunette introduced herself as Hermione Granger.

"Now what to do, judging from how you characterized the being who sent us here you know of him?" The bushy haired Hermione addressed me.

"Yes, his name is Kischur Zelretch Schweinorg, one of the few Wizard Marshalls in the Clocktower in London." Thinking of the relevant things that best describes her headache-of-a-teacher. I detached myself from my sister, stood up, and dusted off my skirt.

Holding my hip with my right while gesticulating with my left. "To give further background, basically a Wizard Marshall holds military might within the Mage's Association, in which its first branch and headquarters lies within the Clocktower."

"To summarize, the mage's association is just an international organization whose main purpose is to control, conceal, and develop magecraft."

"Zelretch is best known for being one of the few beings to reach the Root of Akasha, which is basically the origin of all information, and every self-respecting magus' goal." As I smiled teasingly at Shirou, knowing he's what a lot of magus deem as heretical. "The knowledge that he gained from accessing the root was the 2nd true magic, The Kaleidoscope, which basically is the operation of parallel worlds and everything that entails within its domain."

The short-haired elf girl named Lefiya raised her hand. "This isn't a class." I amusedly interjected but I then urged her to go on.

"Is there a distinction between magecraft and true magic; as I have been hearing different terms related to magic?" She timidly asked.

"Hmmm.." I pondered how to explain it in a simpler and much more succinct way. "We'll be staying here for a very long time if I explain everything and put it into proper context."

"After the decline of the age of gods the age of man began and with it science proliferated amongst normal people." I began. "Magic in our reality is really strong due to its mystery, once the mystery is removed its efficacy is reduced greatly and is no longer considered magic." As I paced a bit to organize my thoughts.

"Basically, magecraft is any phenomena produced supernaturally but can be replicated through science or natural ways." Thinking of an example. "The ability to fly before was considered magic but with the advent of aircraft vehicles it has now lost its mystery and effectiveness. Magic or True Magic are phenomena or mysteries that aren't replicable by any scientific or natural means." Looking at the short-haired elf girl to see if my explanation was sufficient.

“Okay, just a few more things to add to Zelretch’s background he is also one of the few beings alive to witness the decline of the Age of Gods, and he was key to humanity’s survival as he challenged an ultimate being that was terrorizing humanity, Brunestud of the Crimson Moon, the King of Vampires and defeated it. He is also one of the founding members of the Clocktower and my part-time teacher.”

“So you also had gods interacting with you?” Ryuu asked.

“No.” Shaking my head. “The age of gods started declining during Gilgamesh’s era a few thousand years ago. In fact in my era you rarely got to see anything magical as most magical beings went to the reverse side of the world.”

“To answer the implied question, the last time I saw, or rather we saw, Zelretch was a few months before we died.”, I continued. “He didn’t possess an ounce of divinity, well the troubling thing is I didn’t feel any divinity from him, when he transferred us here so I may be wrong.”

“Am I to assume that gods interact with normal people in your reality?” I quickly added “Oh and are you like a demi-god since you have the goddess of justice as your surname?”

Ryuu then quickly flustered as the tips of her ears turned a shade of red. As she explained the circumstance of their reality.

POV Change

Trying to forget the slightly embarrassing way I woke up today. I looked around while looking at my surroundings and the supposed group of 13, well if I count myself in, and we do form ourselves quite an eclectic group.

Other than giving out names we haven’t really learned much of each other, as I listened to Ryuu describe the reality she and her 3 other comrades lived in which was quite fascinating. A dungeon terrorizing a whole continent, gods giving up most of their power and authority to grant their blessings upon their chosen ones.

Though it looks like that not all gods & goddesses do it out of the goodness of their hearts. In fact from what was described, most of them descend to Genkai, what the gods refer to as the lower world, for their own amusement or selfish reason.

As she proceeds to describe how the dungeon in their reality operates, she shows that she bought one of the knowledge skills that could be related to dungeons or monsters in this reality. I then turned my observation towards the other group. The one whose origins are tied with the being who transported us to this reality. *‘Judging from 3 of their names they’re of Japanese descent, while Illya sounds German to me.’* Peeking at the red-head as I pondered his roots. *‘We had a few people on our team that were graduates from Mahoutokoro. He doesn’t really look much like a Japanese person, especially with that red-hair.’*

From what Ms. Tohsaka described the being who transferred us, at the very least he is a being who is long lived, most likely even longer lived than our own Nicholas Flamel, and the fact that he could go toe-to-toe with what was described as an ultimate being and win.

What was intriguing was how they describe things from their world, the decline of the Age of Gods, how they titled the Kaleidoscope as the 2nd true magic, and the fact that most magical beings went to what they call as the reverse side of the world.

“Excuse me.” The red-headed guy whom I was using as a pillow a while ago interrupted Ryou’s lecture, while raising his hand. “Judging from the position of the sun we probably need to start making our temporary shelter, and gather something to eat.”

The red-head, who introduced himself as Shirou a while ago, then proceeds to apologize to Ryou for interrupting. While I do feel my cheeks heat-up due to me remembering my predicament when I woke up, I nudged both Gabby and Rose while making contact.

That brief moment of eye-contact was all it took for an understanding to be made. “Umm Shirou, was it?” Gabrielle started, “We probably have what we need for food and semi-permanent shelter.” as me, Gabby, and Rose took out our moleskin pouches.

‘It’s a good thing we learned how to communicate with each other non-verbally.’ as I mentally pat my own back. While we were stuck in that soul form we were able to communicate with each other by using our emotions as it changed our soul’s colour for a bit. We used that as a method to do morse code.

We were able to coordinate and optimize our purchases. A standard purchase for us all was **Inherit Previous Life’s Assets**. In which we did spend a bit of a time debating whether or not the equipment we were using in our last mission and all that entailed to be a previous life’s asset but to err on the safe side we also bought **Inherit Claimable, Unclaimed Inheritance**..

As I put my hand into my moleskin pouch I can easily assess whether or not our assumptions were true. One of the perks of a moleskin pouch is that you can direct the item that you want easily into your hand before you pull it out. With that trick you can easily cycle through a mental inventory of things you know that are in the bag.

It’s not really convenient if you think about but if you memorized a mental checklist you can easily double check everything. Especially when your team really needs to be on the move at a drop of a hat.

Judging from what I could feel nothing was really missing as I pulled out a hand sized chest. As I looked at Rose and Gabrielle, “From what I could feel nothing is missing from my moleskin pouch, well at least nothing from our last mission. I haven’t checked anything beyond that though.”

Both Rose and Gabrielle pulled out a hand sized chest of their own. “Yes, it looks like our assumptions were right.” Both Rose and Gabrielle confirmed what we expected.

Rose leaned over to me, "We need to later check the status of project Noah, as I didn't feel them during the reincarnation process." she whispered softly into my ear, though it was loud enough for Gabby to pick-up on.

I did notice that Mr. Emiya glanced over to our direction when Rose whispered into my ear. When I caught his eyes, he then got flustered as if he was caught doing something bad and looked away.

"Okay, I guess we should get started." Rose declared as she stood-up, raising her hand upwards grasping something that wasn't there. She then grinned and winked at me when her wand manifested between her fingers.

'*Show-off!*' I rolled my eyes as both me and Gabby did the same. This was a really amazing find, the list of skills or perks to be purchased from that soul. We can **Soul Bind** an item in which said item can only be truly destroyed once its owner is killed and it can be easily summonable at a moment's thought.

We then put the palm sized chest on the grass and proceeded to unshrink it. These chests are our standard field work kit. The best thing about a lot of the equipment in the shrunk chest is that it is pretty modular and can fit a lot of use cases. On top of this me and Rose did a bit of modification towards some of the equipment.

"Let's do a 7 bedroom, 7 bath, kitchen, dining room, and large living room set-up." I declared, as the three of us then raised our wands and guided the needed equipment into an open space near the edge of a forest just to our left.

Using our magic the equipment moved by itself and assembled into a 170cm by 170cm by 170cm cuboid tent. Both Gabby and Rose unhesitantly entered the tent. The others were slow to stand-up as they were quite perturbed on how everyone can fit inside the small tent.

'*God I love magic!*' Was what I thought as I urged them to follow me as I approached the tent I realised something weird. "Did we do something wrong or is the tent shorter than normal?" I muttered to myself.

As I came closer to the tent's entrance. Rose's head popped out of the flap with a somewhat panicked expression. "Hermione, I think we need to make a few more adjustments to everything."

"Yeah," Gabrielle acknowledged as she pushed past Rose and stood outside the entrance of the tent. "I remember bending down to enter the tent but I also remember the top of the tent was approximately a little lower than my eye-level."

'*Well both Gabby and Rose have blossomed-up to above average height.*' Much to my consternation, with Gabby due to her genetics and Rose when she got away from her horrid relatives and properly got the right amount of nutrition.

While they were tall before, now it's further emphasized as the top of the tent is now just about Gabby's chest and as for Rose, who also exited the tent and is standing beside Gabby, is now just below chest level with the top of the tent.

I then looked towards the ground as I also just realised that the ground is further than what I'm used to. *'At least a foot further.'* was my approximation.

I turned around towards my perplexed audience with a sheepish smile. "Umm," I succinctly started, "Certain adjustments need to be made so we'll probably fix our temporary housing in an hour or two. Haven't you guys noticed any changes in your body?" I asked as Rose and Gabrielle started with adjusting the tents and its interior furniture to our new sizes.

This question jostled everyone into several reactions as they compared with each other. Rin started laughing as she pointed at Shirou as he now is holding a pair of black and white eastern looking blades but the size of the blades seems off as it looks too big to be a pair of knives while it looks somewhat relatively small to be a pair of short swords. While their white haired companion was pouting and stomping her foot. Judging from her reaction she didn't get the height boost that affected everyone else.

*'Looks like he bought the ability to **Soul Bind** an item.'* I observed as I also now realised that while my wand still is the same size, it looks and feels somewhat smaller than before.

Shaking my head from distractions. "To facilitate an expedited procedure, I need everyone to line-up and provide me with your previous heights and if you remember any other body measurement." I started as I twirled my wand to conjure a table. I also pulled out a notebook, pen, a magically-shielded scientific calculator, and one of those magical measuring tape from my mokeskin pouch.

"Everything in the tent needs to be adjusted to fit everyone here, furniture, space, etc.," I began my explanation, "and if everyone here increased their size roughly by the same ratio then it'll be easier for us to adjust things in general, we can just do the personalized adjustments later."

As I sweep my eyes towards everyone, "On second thought, let's just do this in groups.", gesturing towards the "magecraft" group.

"Excuse me," one of the blonde elves interjected, *'Haruka is her name if I remember correctly.'*, "You guys implied that you also have food?" She asked me in which I acknowledged her question with an affirmative.

"Maybe we can start with the people who can cook? So some of us aren't idle while the shelter is being prepared." She then turns around towards everyone else, "Who here knows how to cook or would want to assist with dinner preparation?"

Haruhime, Sakura, and lastly Shirou raised their hands to show that they'll help with dinner preparations. As this happens one of the elf, Ryuu, is struggling with her grey-eyed friend as she tries hard to prevent her from raising her hand.

As I tried to ignore that particularly awkward scene we then started with our tasks as the afternoon later shifts towards evening.