

## The Empty Twin - Ch 0.3 Prologue

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*Stumbling into the final chamber with multiple blades jutting out through my body after that harrowing fight. Ignoring the feeling of loss, as we, together with Caster and Rider, finally defeated the corrupted Saber. "I probably shouldn't have left Tohsaka & Illya, and just followed what we originally planned." I grumbled to myself as I brace myself.*

*"Trace On" I said this as I projected that witch's dagger, an ornamental brittle looking thing. This dagger wasn't made to be a weapon. All it does is sever any type of sorcery it can cut. This is my final gamble. As I rush towards her, while those ribbon-like tentacles rush towards me.*

*With a final cry and stab, her connection to the corrupted greater grail was severed. Both of us fell into a crumpled heap of mess, as both of us succumbed to the damages done to our bodies. For her while her body looks pristine and undamaged, the grail has been a part of her being since childhood. The sudden severing of that connection and the feedback of channeling seemingly endless amounts of energy brought her into shock.*

*As for me I can no longer resist his arm's corruption of me, as I lay dying with countless swords protruding out of my back, I looked at her. I reach out to clasp my hand over hers, as I ponder whether or not my decisions were correct.*

*The last memory I had before waking in that sealing designate's lab was, "Rin, quick! Give me two containers or any vessel for me to trans..."*

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Light, that's what's been rudely barging into my closed eyes as I found myself lying in a tangled heap of randomly strewn arms and legs. Grumbling to myself, I open up my eyes to a picturesque blue sky with some clouds splattered across its canvas. As I tilt my head a bit I spy the curvature of a very large moon over the peaks of the forest to my left.

Looking around me, I quickly conclude that there's no real safe way for me to sit-up without causing any misunderstanding. *'Yeah, I've been a witness and/or been a victim to too many of those situations when I was in the clocktower and on the field.'* I sighed as I firmly crossed my arms and just looked up at the sky, enjoying this brief moment of relaxation before what could inevitably be a problematic situation.

"You look troubled there for a moment." A bright foxy sounding voice suddenly interjected at me.

I tilted my head back and slightly to the right towards the voice. I see grey hair, a forehead, grey brows and grey eyes. As for the rest of the person you ask me, my head can't tilt that far. "I can't seem to get up without any potential misunderstandings." I grumbled towards the floating forehead and eyes, well at least that's what it looks like from my perspective, honestly it looks kinda funny.

“You’re not thinking something rude right?” The eyes at the edge of my periphery seemingly reading my thoughts narrowed, while her greyed colored eyebrows furrowed.

‘Wait, was there mind reading skill in that dumb-mess of a purchasing store?’ I slightly panicked inwardly. As this was happening due to me shifting my body a little bit, one of the bodies beside me that was facing away from me turned around and is now hugging the lower part of my stomach area.

“Hmmm, looks like I was correct...”

“No, it’s just your imagination!” I quickly interjected. “I just woke up so my brain isn’t still catching-up to things.”, as I try to loosen the girl’s grip on me.

“Hey, wake-up.” I tried to silently whisper at the brown somewhat bushy-haired girl while tapping the top of her head with my index-finger.

The only effect my action created was for the girl to latch on to me tighter now with her leg draped over mine kicking another girl’s shoulder on the other side of my body.

The sleeping blonde girl that was kicked, groaned slightly and kicked out both her legs hitting me on the ribs and thankfully missing the face of a redhead being spooned by another blonde. She then lay spread out, grabbed one of the legs of the red-head with one arm and continued-on with her sleep.

“ARgh, would it be possible for you to help me wake-up the people surrounding us or at least help me get up?” is what I groaned out trying to change the flow of the conversation and directing it towards my predicament while trying to ignore the pain on my side.

“2,000 credits per person, and 20,000 credits for helping you get-up!”

As I sharply turned towards her, it was now my turn to narrow my eyes and furrow my brow. *‘Looks like she at least has the **General Knowledge** skill.’*

Despite the size of this galaxy, and the myriad amount of independent galactic nations, empires, federations, etc., there’s only one officially recognized currency, the galactic credit. This is due to an unaffiliated governing body called the Consortium Primaris, a galactic United Nations. This is a third-party that moderates between galactic nations, empires, federations, etc., anything for the greater good of the galaxy.

Having just one type of currency will prevent certain governing groups from trying to control and manipulate the value of their currency to their benefit. Especially when response time on information and communication is measured in light years, having a galactic currency controlled by an “unbiased” central government helps mitigate problems that may develop. Though there are some places which consider themselves outside of the consortium where valuable stones are used as currency.

“Could I open-up a tab?” I deadpanned at her, as she slightly tilted her head and gave me a wink.

“Senpai?”

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*\*POV Change\**

*‘Right now I’m just a floating ball of energy amongst a sea of fellow floating balls of energy.’*  
This fleeting mental declaration at least distracts me for a second from my current irritation.

In front of me is a mostly greyed out screen, and at the top left of the screen it says 0 as my karmic points and just underneath it, it just says “Get wrecked I’m team Bell x Ais all the way!”

Looking away from what obviously is a provocation as this portion of reincarnation obviously doesn’t concern me. As I look around I can easily identify citizens of Orario amongst the sea of souls. That attack by the Black Dragon was quick, devastating, and without warning. Unfortunately, the Hostess of Fertility was part of the first breath attack.

Judging by the souls that surround me, most of my familia that were guarding the restaurant are here, every employee of the hostess, a large majority Loki’s children, as well as Hestia’s children, and Ryuu. Well I guess she was one of Hestia’s children as well. Since she transferred to her after the war game.

Looking around I think it’s easier for me to list the ones whom I know that aren’t here.

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*‘He’s not here.’* and with that conclusion my mood immediately dipped. At least with my previous arrangement with Hestia, I can enjoy watching my “Odr”. As if pouring salt into my wounds, *‘She’s not here as well.’* The mocking words on my interface, flashes on my periphery as I mentally voiced out that added observation.

Now I am surveying beyond the dead from Orario. That’s when I saw it, a skip of a non-existent heartbeat, a hitch of my non-existent breath, a voice at the back of my head mentally giving itself an admonishment, *‘Here we go again.’*

A field of weapons plunged into the soil resembling grave markers of warriors past. As if to parallel the realm of which I hold authority over, the fields of the afterlife of those who were slain in combat.

“Looks like I caught myself an SSSR character.” A voice called out in an American south-western accent, he even emphasized this with a *“ptoo”* at the end of his declaration.

Without removing my gaze at my current interest and with some irritation escaping. “Ah Zelretch, how unfortunate to meet you in person. Your reputation precedes you, I didn’t know you’ve gained apotheosis?”

As I look around, I can see that the child-like Zelretch is still on his throne, self-praising and rambling about a hotel with infinite rooms. Returning my gaze to my current quarry, an older version of Zelretch is now blocking my line of sight.

*‘Judging by how no one’s paying attention to this new Zelretch, it looks like I’m the only one who can interact with this apparition.’* As if to answer me Zelretch did quirk his eyebrow and smirked lasciviously at the same time.

“Well just a little lie to grease the wheels a bit.” He shrugged slightly and continued. “This is just a domain where I somehow gained partial dominion over, so why not entertain myself.”

“If that’s the case does the Kaleidoscope now deal with giving out blessings?” As gestured towards the interface while scrolling through the greyed out list abilities.

The wider grin that he currently is sporting just gave me the shivers. “Oh, nothing that complicated, it’s pretty simple actually. Right now all their souls are anchored to this plane. As long as they haven’t been fully reincarnated, I can just drop their soul somewhere where they can learn or gain the ability they bought, wipe their memories, kill them, then they are back here. Rinse, repeat, and recycle.” He explained with a nonchalant shrug as if this was natural.

“I observed this phenomenon of souls getting trapped in this plane a few millennia ago, well a few millennia relative to me, and some higher power just sends them to random universes to fix this.” Pounding his arms towards his chest proudly. “I, the ever amazing magician that I am, deign to experiment with this phenomena. After a few trial and error, I now can hijack this event to my entertainment’s desire.”

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Catching myself from leaving my mouth open, the crazy guy kept on rambling about how he solved the difficulty of the direct transfer method.

Pinching the bridge of my nose, I held up my hand and waved it to get his attention. “Excuse me,” interrupting him mid explanation on how he’d set up the person who buys the heroic aptitude skill, of which apparently is always suggested to be added, to become what essentially is a trouble magnet. “I do need to ask a few questions about my status.” As I again gesture at my interface. “ I can’t even participate in this farce of a blessing ritual.”

Getting serious for a bit. “Well I did confer with the higher beings who does the transfer and help me with the other stuff and unfortunately,” he paused for a bit, turning slightly body to the left this allowed to glimpse at the soul with a graveyard of weapons. For some reason the soul has somewhat brightened and has gained some extra sheen to it, which isn’t unwelcome in her opinion. “Or fortunately from the looks of things.”

I shifted my gaze again to see the knowing grin on the universally known prankster. “You died in the mortal body that you have bargained for, so there was no higher authority that

has claim over your current soul. The one whom you have bestowed the blessings of divinity was the one who got reclaimed by Folkvanger.”

“Rejoice, Freyja of the Vanir, you will achieve your wish to live life as a human!” Zelretch loudly declared as a bible manifests on his left arm and a golden cross appears hanging upon his neck. “Terms and conditions apply.” He quickly added in a much softer and subdued voice.

“What was that last thing you said?” I asked as I narrowed my eyes on him.

“Well you will have most of your abilities but you will have to start from scratch.” He then continues, “Though you will still have some of your skills with a bow and a blade so that’s something going on for you.”

Catching what he said, “Most of my abilities?”

“Well you will have to give up your mastery of Seidr, your ability to perceive fate and manipulate it, and your Amokinesis, your ability to control love and desire.” As he quickly adds, stopping me from interjecting. “In return I shall grant you several boons, first in exchange for the two abilities you can grant two blessings onto someone, even yourself. One shall be available now and the other will be available once you reach a certain point in life.”

“The next boon I shall..”

“I want my first blessing to be given to that soul behind you, the one whose soul resembles the realm of which I once governed.” I sharply interrupted him mid-sentence.

“Granted!” Zelretch declared with a grin. “The first blessing shall be a minor one but still a blessing worthy of Freyja, goddess of love, fertility, war, death, and magic.”

Upon his declaration his soul flickered for a moment and is a little brighter. “Your ability to observe souls, while part of the Seidr, shall be granted to you at a limited scope.” Again as he interrupts my soul watching. “While your charm shall be replaced with **Charisma**.”

“As for your knowledge, as you were previously a god, you obviously know what goes on in the reality that you’ll be transported to. While your general knowledge of things in that world shall remain intact, your knowledge of events that will transpire or potentially transpire shall be removed.”

“Finally there’s a part in every isekai where you ask each other about your skills and abilities.” Old man Zelretch continued.

As this happens the younger looking Zelretch stood-up and shouted “Times-up!”

“But you as previously eternal beings might want to hide this fact, like your true name, so I’ll grant you the gamified AR version of the status screen, instead of the blood ritual one.” As he said this both the older and younger Zelretch snap their fingers at the same time.

One to bestow upon me a perk, while the other gives notice to more than half of the souls vanishing.

“Those are the ones who either didn’t set their transfer process or intentionally wanted a clean slate without their previous life’s memories.” The younger one stated.

“You can just call upon your status anytime then just copy it down if you want to share parts of it to those you trust.” The older one continued as he ignored what’s currently happening around us, as a quarter of the remaining souls now remain, after another forced deportation of a large majority of the remaining souls.

“Before we say goodbye I shall give you one final boon.” As he said this time seems to freeze around us, *‘No, time has slowed to a trickle.’* As I observed the younger Zelretch ever so slightly, millimetre by millimetre, slowly raised his hand.

“Shirou Emiya,” *‘Finally a name to associate with my quarry.’* is what I immediately thought, “isn’t someone that you can be selfish with and hog to yourself. There’s only three, well four if you count Alaya, souls that can truly selfishly hold his heart or soul.” As the sad fact slowly dawns upon me that this might mirror my previous predicament. “I did say that this was a boon, your Odr may not be just found in one soul. Again, don’t be selfish, enjoy your mortal life, and you may actually find your true happiness in this life.”

For once Zelretch actually looks sincere, right now he looks like a grandfather giving advice to his loving granddaughter. We locked eyes for a moment as I tried to express my gratitude in that very second as time ever so slowly returned to its original pace and his body slowly faded into motes of light.

Just before he completely vanishes. “Oh before I forget, you really need a strong group, especially at the start, otherwise you guys will die within the first year, such a gruesome, bloody, and very painful death.” He said this as he sticks out his tongue, and bonks his head and with a wink and a “Teehee” he vanishes.

“That’ll give the rest of you a goal if you get separated from your friends, families, and or loved ones.” The younger Zelretch interrupts my shock as time resumes its pace.

“Don’t fret as generally the souls near you will be sent to the same realities, so the possibility of a reunion is not 0%.”

“Again generally your destination has already been set but souls closest to you will be transported into the same place in the other reality so bunch-up.” As Zelretch raised his hands, ready to snap his fingers he began counting down.

*‘Fucking Zelretch!’* I internally seethed and panicked as I looked around me. *‘My dumb children got reincarnated from scratch.’* I frustratingly concluded after a quick scan around.

10....

9...

I looked around and quickly assessed the souls surrounding me. I quickly try to herd two of Hestia and one of Loki's children towards the now identified Shirou's group of four.

8...

Frustratingly, I see him trying to herd his group away from us. 'I can take advantage of this.' As I slightly change the angle of which I am herding my group. Making Shirou and his group towards another group of brightly coloured souls.

7...

6...

*'It looks like we aren't going to make it.'* As the three souls that I'm trying to herd were somewhat resisting me.

5...

Suddenly, the group of three paused for a split second and quickly backed away for some reason. Not looking a gift horse in the mouth and taking advantage of the situation, I easily guide them to my goal.

3...

2...

A sudden lurch pushed me from behind as another soul crashed into me. Taking me, and the three souls I've been herding, with it, crashing towards the now group of eight souls, one of which was my target.

1...

*'I guess that's the reason they were backing away.'* As darkness slowly claims my conscience.

"Trust in the 13. Develop the frontier planet. Your adventure will begin beneath the bottom of the dungeon."

"Fuck off Zelretch!"

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When I came to the first thing I saw was my close friend's face, the previously dyed hair and short haired elf, well hopefully she still considers me a close friend. *'I'd like to think that we were already past the troubles I have foisted upon her and her previous companions.'*

Looking around I spy a guy with auburn hair lying supine. My breath hitched as I spy the golden orbs he possesses as he looks around somewhat in a panic. He then slowly breathes

in and out, closes his eyes, crosses his arms, then starts to just look serenely at the sky. As if he knows what fate he begrudgingly accepts as he looks upon the beautiful sky.

With a sly smirk I called out. "You look troubled there for a moment."

For the first time, grey and gold met.

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*\*POV Change\**

"Trust in the 13. Develop the frontier planet. Your adventure will begin beneath the bottom of the dungeon."

That was the last thing that echoed in the darkness before I found myself in this unfortunate position. I feel myself being spooned by someone, judging by the hair that is strewn all over my face, my best guess would be Gabrielle. Unless there's another blonde that was in the group that barreled into us.

This position wasn't so bad. The problem was the foot that is currently a few centimetres away from my face. *'At least it isn't a shoe.'* Trying for some optimism after that weird reincarnation cycle.

*'At least it's better than an empty train station with a suspicious looking old guy that offers you sour treats.'* I mentally chuckled at my own joke as I discreetly tried to assess my surroundings.

Unfortunately due to my lateral recumbent position, *'That's lying side-ways for you kids'* I mentally addressed my imaginary audience, and the foot on my face all I see is someone's torso. *'Judging from the lack of noticeable peaks and valleys, the torso probably belongs to a guy.'* I mentally concluded.

The torso suddenly lurched but didn't sit-up, as I slightly closed my eye-lids, *'From this angle he probably won't see me awake, right?'*. Judging from what I can gauge from his torso's movement he was looking around.

*'Wonder why he is so tense?'*, but then he relaxed and folded his arms. As I slowly peaked upwards. I could see his jaw line, boy-ish facial features, his auburn hair, *'Thank god that it's not Weasley red.'* I interrupted my own observation, and those beautiful golden eyes that are just looking directly up at the sky.

"You look troubled there for a moment." A feminine voice interjected above us. The guy moved most likely to look at the one addressing him.

"I can't seem to get up without any potential misunderstandings." As the goldie-eyes guy shifted, the body that was facing away from me on the other side of his torso turned and held on to his stomach.

"You're not thinking something rude right?" the yet to be identified voice from above asked with a teasing tone.



*'Hermione?'* Mentally identifying the bushy-haired girl who is now using the goldie-eyes guy's stomach as a pillow.

"Hey, wake-up!" Goldie-eyes guy whispered towards Hermione as he poked the top of her head. This only served to make her hold on tighter as she now drapes her legs over goldie-eyes' legs. Unfortunately, this action concluded with an unintended kick against the body sleeping across from her.

The person whose toes are currently a few cm below my eye-level, and is one accident away from scratching or bludgeoning my face with said foot. This prediction nearly happened as a feminine sounding groan beneath me and kicked out for a bit hitting goldie-eyes guy in the chest, and narrowly missing my eyes as she lashed out in frustration.

The girl then lay spread out, with her legs spread out towards my body, grabbing one of my legs, as she continued sleeping.

"ARgh, would it be possible for you to help me wake-up the people surrounding us or at least help me get up?" the goldie-eye guy groaned at she-who-has-yet-to-be-identified from above in a somewhat pleading tone as I turned towards the lady who almost blinded me I froze.

"2,000 credits per person, and 20,000 credits for helping you get-up!"

*'Gabrielle?! If that's Gabrielle, who is the one behind me?'*

"Can I open up a tab?" The goldie-eyed guy replied with a flat and deadpanned tone.

"Senpai?"

As the guy sharply shifted his gaze towards Hermione's side of his body as he locked eyes with someone I can't see, *'Well that's what I'm assuming.'*, and with a shaking voice called out quite loudly. "Sakura?"

A full half-minute of silence permeated everyone, not even the voice from above interrupted what looked like something serious.

"Rose, what's with all the racket?" As all of the movement and the previous noise caught up with Hermione. Groggily, she scratched at her eyes and looked-up and froze. She then lowered her gaze to level with mine. As we locked eyes, I could see the internal panic she's feeling as she sharply looks up again and shouts.

"kyAAaAhhhh!" Not knowing she was interrupting what was supposed to be a heartfelt and very long awaited reunion between previous lovers.