

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 1.3 Gaining Trust in the Thirteen

(Syr Interlude)

[Part 3 of ?]

Syr let out a long and exhaustive—metaphysical—sigh, her thoughts mirroring those of her past self.

At least under her previous arrangement with Hestia, she could enjoy watching her Odr. As if pouring salt into her wounds: *'She's not here as well.'* The mocking words on her interface flashed on her periphery as she mentally voiced that added observation.

Now, her former self was observed beyond the deceased from Orario. That's when she witnessed it—synchronised hearts missing a phantom beat, both catching their absent breath, a voice at the back of their minds murmuring shared rebuke, *'Here we go again.'*

A vast field of blades thrust deep into the crimson-stained earth stretched endlessly before her, each weapon resembling pristine tombstones marking the graves of fallen warriors.

As if she were truly there, she could taste and feel it—metallic tang of old blood and distant hues of rust hung heavy in the air, whilst the whisper of wind

through countless steel edges created an ethereal dirge that seemed to mourn the myriad souls who had passed through this realm.

As if to mirror the sacred domain over which she had once wielded dominion, these endless plains of the hereafter served as the final resting place for those who had perished gloriously in battle. In this steel garden, every blade told the story of a warrior's last stand.

"Looks like I caught myself an SSSR character!" a voice drawled in an American South-Western accent, even punctuating it with a "ptoo" at the end.

Much to the strain on her ever-expanding patience—a virtue she was rapidly discovering the limits of—she heard the comedic beat from the decrepit old Dead Apostle Ancestor for the third time; three times more than necessary, if Syr were honest.

I mirrored the moment she'd met Zelretch by the cliff overlooking the planet Theta, only a few moments ago in this strange temporal dance. Her past self, without lifting her gaze from her current focus, let irritation escape like steam from a kettle—well, as far as metaphysical steam from a kettle could go.

"Ah, Zelretch, how unfortunate to meet you in person. Your reputation precedes you—and I didn't know you'd gained apotheosis?"

'*Apotheosis?*' she questioned herself, as, like clockwork, thoughts from her past self flew into her, giving her context.

Her vision shifted; she saw a child-like Zelretch seated upon a throne, self-praising and rambling about a hotel with infinite rooms. Her gaze returned to her past self's current quarry—an older version of Zelretch now blocking her line of sight.

'*Judging by how no one's paying attention to this new Zelretch, I'm the only one who can interact with this apparition,*' the thought surfaced in her mind. As

if to answer her unspoken thought, Zelretch raised a single eyebrow and smirked lasciviously.

"Well, just a little lie to grease the wheels a bit," he said, shrugging with practised nonchalance. His tone carried the easy confidence of someone who delighted in being deliberately obtuse. "This is merely a domain over which I've gained partial dominion—so why not entertain myself? Life's too short not to play god occasionally."

"If that's the case, does the Kaleidoscope now handle blessings too?" she asked, gesturing toward the interface as she scrolled through the greyed-out list of abilities—each locked option as mocking as the text above.

The wider grin that he was currently sporting just gave her the shivers, spreading across his features like oil on water.

"Oh, nothing that complicated—it's pretty simple, really. Child's play." Right now, all their souls are anchored to this plane like ships in harbour. As long as they haven't been fully reincarnated, I can simply drop their souls somewhere to learn or gain the abilities they purchased—wipe their memories clean as slate, kill them, and they're back here. Rinse, repeat, recycle." He explained with a nonchalant shrug as if this was as natural as breathing, his casual tone making the horror of it all the more disturbing.

"I observed this phenomenon of souls becoming trapped in this plane a few millennia ago—well, a few millennia relative to me; time's a funny thing when you're playing with realities. Some higher power just sends them to random universes to fix this cosmic hiccup." He pounded his fists against his chest proudly, like a peacock displaying its feathers. "I, the ever-amazing magician that I am, deigned to experiment with this phenomenon. After a few sessions of trial and error—and what delightful errors they were—I can now hijack this event for my entertainment."

"..."

"..."

"..."

Catching herself before her mouth could hang open in undignified shock, she watched the madman ramble on about how he'd solved the direct-transfer dilemma with the enthusiasm of a child showing off a favourite toy.

Of course, both she and her past self knew all of this was an elaborate lie wrapped in theatrical delivery. Still, what shocked her most was the blasé way he wove his deception—spinning tales to a goddess, no less. Former goddess, she corrected herself with a sharp pang, her dejection deepening.

Her past self pinched the bridge of her nose. She raised her hand and gave a small wave to get his attention. However, this was impossible, as her past self seemed to have forgotten her current state. Realising this, she called out, "Excuse me," she interjected, cutting through his explanation of how he'd designed the heroic aptitude skill—always 'recommended'—to turn its user into a walking trouble magnet.

"I do need to ask a few questions about my status." She again gestured at her interface, the words written still mocking her. "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 handle the transfers and assist with the other bits, and unfortunately..." he admitted, pausing as he turned slightly to the left—just enough for her to glimpse the soul whose inner world shimmered with countless blades, a boundless field of steel stretching endlessly within. For some reason, the soul had somewhat brightened and had gained some extra sheen to it, which wasn't unwelcome in her opinion.

Her gaze shifted again to see the knowing grin on the universally known prankster. "You died within the mortal body that you had bargained for, leaving no higher power with claim over your present soul. Folkvangr reclaimed the one upon whom you bestowed divinity."

"Rejoice, Freyja of the Vanir, you will achieve your wish to live life as a human!" Zelretch loudly declared, his voice booming with theatrical grandeur that made the very air vibrate. As he spoke, a leather-bound Bible appeared on his left arm with a sound like rustling parchment, its weight causing his sleeve to shift. Meanwhile, a golden cross hung around his neck, catching an impossible light and casting tiny rainbows across his robes. "Terms and conditions apply," he quickly added in a much softer and subdued voice, barely above a whisper, his eyes drifting sheepishly to the side.

"What was that last thing you said?" she asked, her tone clipped.

"Well, you'll keep most of your abilities, but you'll have to start from scratch," he continued, bulldozing through his explanations as if pressed for time. "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'd 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." He quickly added, stopping her from interjecting. "In return, I'll grant you several boons. In exchange for those abilities, you may bestow two blessings—upon another or upon yourself. One will be available now; the other, 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 essence mirrors the realm I once governed," she said, in full agreement with her forgotten past self—a decision she would keep in every iteration.

"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."

At his declaration, the soul flickered, glowing a little brighter for a moment.

"Your ability to observe souls, though once part of the Seidr, shall be restored to you in a limited scope," he added—interrupting her soul-watching, much to her irritation. "Whilst your charm shall be replaced with **Charisma**."

"As for your knowledge—since you were once a goddess, you already understand the world you'll be sent to, even if it lies beyond your purview. Your general understanding will remain intact, but knowledge of events—past, present, or potential—will be erased."

"Finally, there's always that part in every isekai where everyone compares their skills and abilities," the old man continued.

As he spoke, the younger-looking Zelretch sprang to his feet and shouted, "Times-up!"

"But you, as once-eternal beings, might want to hide that fact—like your true names—so I'll give you the gamified AR version of the status screen instead of the blood-ritual one." As he spoke, both the older and younger Zelretch snapped their fingers in unison.

One gesture bestowed a perk upon her; the other signalled more than half 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 summon your status anytime—copy it down if you wish to share it with those you trust," the older one continued, ignoring the chaos around them as another wave of souls vanished, leaving only a quarter remaining.

"Before we say goodbye, I shall give you one final boon." As he spoke, time seemed to freeze around them—no, slow to a trickle. She watched the younger Zelretch's hand lift by imperceptible degrees, millimetre by millimetre.

"Shirou Emiya." Finally a name to tie to her quarry, both iterations of Syr Flover—once Freyja—thought in unison. "He isn't someone you can be selfish with or keep to yourself. There are only three—four, if you count Alaya—souls that can truly claim his heart."

The sad realisation dawned upon her that this echoed her former plight. "I did say that this was a boon—your Odr may not be just found in one soul. Again, don't be selfish; live your mortal life fully, and you'll find your true happiness this time.

For once, Zelretch actually looked sincere. In that moment, he resembled a kindly grandfather counselling his wayward granddaughter. They locked eyes for a fleeting moment as her past self tried to convey gratitude. Time crept back to its normal rhythm, and his body dissolved into motes of light.

Just before he vanished, he added, "Oh—before I forget—you'll need a strong group, especially early on, otherwise you'll all die within the first year... in gruesome, bloody, excruciating fashion." He stuck out his tongue, bonked his head and with a wink and a cheeky '*Teehee*', disappeared.

"That'll give the rest of you a goal if you get separated from your friends, families, and or loved ones." The younger Zelretch interrupted her shock as time resumed 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 zero per cent."

"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." Zelretch lifted his hands, ready to snap his fingers as he began the count.

'Fucking Zelretch!' both Syrs internally seethed and panicked as her past self looked around her. *'My dumb children got reincarnated from scratch,'* she thought bitterly after a quick scan around—past and present selves echoing the same frustration.

10....

Even with the fact that she knew she had no control over the event, Syr still panicked inwardly.

9...

Her vision shifted as her past self assessed the cluster of souls nearby. Past-Syr swiftly tried to herd two of Hestia's and one of Loki's children toward the newly identified Shirou's group of four.

8...

To her frustration, she saw him steering his group away from her. I can take advantage of this, she thought—but their minds began to blur together; in her tense state, she could no longer tell where her thoughts ended and her past self's began. She altered her approach slightly, guiding Shirou and his companions toward another cluster of brightly coloured souls.

7...

6...

'It looks like we're not going to make it.' The three souls she was herding resisted, their movements sluggish and uncertain.

5...

The trio suddenly paused—then backed away for reasons unknown. Not one to look a gift horse in the mouth, she seized the moment and steered them toward her goal.

3...

2...

A sudden lurch struck from behind as another soul crashed with her, sweeping her—and the three she'd been guiding—into the cluster of eight souls, one of whom was her target.

1...

'I suppose that's why they were backing away.' came her final thought before darkness claimed her consciousness.

"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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The crash of waves against the jagged cliffs echoed through her consciousness, their rhythm mingling with the distant hush of wind over

sun-warmed stone and dry grass. The sky above glowed with the burnished hues of late afternoon—amber bleeding into rose—while just above the forested horizon beneath her, the curve of Theta loomed like an immense setting moon. Its oceans shimmered faintly beneath the fading light, and the faint silhouette of the Sacred Tree could still be discerned along its limb, golden branches catching the last rays of the sun before sinking from view.

These were the first things Syr Flover behld upon waking up. A smile touched her face as she turned to find her long-time friend sleeping peacefully beside her.

Glancing about, she quickly found the focus of her curiosity. True to Zelretch's words, her ability to perceive the beauty of souls had dulled—yet it remained keen enough to glimpse the essence within the extraordinary auburn-haired man lying supine upon the grass.

Her breath caught sharply as she met eyes of molten gold, flecked faintly with dull silver—eyes darting about in quiet panic.

Her heart was hammering against her ribs. The sound of her own pulse seemed deafening in the peaceful glow of the afternoon.

After a moment, he calmed down, breathing in and out slowly, the rise and fall of his chest steady and deliberate. He folded his arms across his chest and gazed serenely skyward, as though he'd already accepted—begrudgingly—the fate that awaited him in the picturesque orange-hued sky.

Taking a steadying breath, Syr centred herself. Then the corners of her mouth curved upward, mischief glinting in her eyes, reflecting the copper-gold of the waning light. With a sly smirk and a lilting tone edged with amusement—and the faintest thrill of excitement—she called out, “You looked troubled there for a moment.” The words drifted between them on the gentle morning air, light but edged with playful curiosity.

For the first time, grey and gold met.

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END

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