

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

-=&<o>&=-

Book 1 - The Empty Twin

Ch 3.8 Into the Deep

Ryuu blinked.

The void, the goddesses, the ancient voices—gone. In their place: the arena's shattered stone beneath her knees, the stench of burnt chitin and ozone, and the Weapon standing reborn before her.

It towered on two legs now, its lower mass consumed and redistributed into a sleeker, taller frame. Plates of bone-white armour interlocked across its torso like cathedral buttresses. The seven-pointed-star sword hung at its side, still large, still intimidating. The dragonoid head cocked to one side. The secondary face embedded in its chest had gone still—maw sealed shut, the rainbow crystal between its eyes pulsing in a slow, deliberate rhythm.

It was watching her.

Not tracking. Not targeting. *Watching*—the way a duelist sized up an opponent before the salute. The magicite core sat exposed in the hollow of its chest, throbbing violet-black, and the pressure rolling off the creature pressed against Ryuu's sternum like a palm held flat against her chest. Greater than before. Denser. Yet stripped of the mindless voracity that had driven the quadruped. Something behind those ember-slitted eyes was *thinking*.

It amused itself with her stillness. She could feel that much.

Then—warmth.

It kindled beneath her ribs. Small at first—a coal someone had blown on. It spread outward through her veins in twin currents: one blazing, one steady. The hearth-fire and the wings of justice, woven together where her falna had once resided, where Astraea's and Hestia's boons had settled into the architecture of her soul.

Words rose to her lips unbidden. Not rehearsed, not remembered—*given*, the way breath was given to the newborn.

"May the hearth of home kindle the flame that shelters. May the scales find their balance in the hands that hold them."

The arena's broken stone hummed. Light gathered beneath her, pale gold laced with threads of deep violet, tracing a circle that expanded outward from her knees. Symbols etched themselves into the stone—a pair of wings outstretched, a set of scales suspended between them, and beneath both, the concentric rings of a hearthfire.

"I call forth the wings that bear both warmth and judgement. Let them carry us to what is just—"

Her voice dropped. Quiet. Final.

"—and bring us home."

The circle blazed.

Light swallowed her from the feet upward. Every wound unwound itself: the blistered ruin of her palms smoothed over with new skin; the hairline fractures in her forearms knit shut; the deep exhaustion that had hollowed out her limbs filled with something bright and fierce and whole. Her muscles re-knit. Her tendons tightened to their proper tension. Her magic flushed clear as though scoured by a mountain spring.

Ryuu stood. The light clung to her shoulders like a mantle, then dissipated into motes that orbited her body—not her old luminous green, but something new.

Something that hummed against her spine where the falna markings had once been.

She shifted the barbed red spear to her left hand. The curse-metal was no longer fused to her palm—the flesh had melted and re-formed around the haft during the healing, and the pain had gone with it. The weapon sat in her grip as though forged for it. As though the spear had decided, during those minutes when her blood and its barbs had been indistinguishable, that it belonged to her now.

"Tipsy—my wooden sword!"

"Yes, Mistress Ryuu!"

The crack of displaced air. The brownie appeared at her hip, already holding the weapon out handle-first, ears flat with determination. Ryuu's right hand closed around the familiar grip of Alf's Justitia—lighter than the spear, perfectly balanced, the weapon she had carried through a hundred descents of Orario's dungeon and beyond.

The magic circle still burned beneath her feet. She drew on it.

"Stellar Gale."

The world changed colour.

Where Luminous Wind had scattered wisps of pale green and spheres of white-gold light, something else answered now. Dust—fine as pollen, dark as the space between stars—billowed outward from Ryuu's body in expanding waves. Violet so deep it bordered on black, threaded with veins of midnight blue that pulsed like distant nebulae. The dust coiled, thickened, and condensed into orbiting masses: gaseous spheres the size of skulls, each one spinning on its own axis, trailing luminous tails of indigo and deep rose. They ringed the arena in a slow, deliberate orbit—around her, around the Weapon, around the shattered pillars and the infinite pit below.

Ryuu could feel them. Each sphere answered to her will the way her old orbs had, but these carried *weight*. Gravitational pull. The stone beneath the nearest one cracked and bowed inward, drawn toward the sphere's mass as though the small violet sun had decided the arena floor owed it tribute.

The Weapon tilted its head the other direction. Still amused.

Ryuu reached inward—past the justice, past the balance—to the hearth. She thought of her captain.

Not Alise.

The name surfaced like a stone thrown into still water, and the ripples it sent through her were older, rawer, harder to hold.

But the one who had both captured her heart and shattered it. The memory of a voice that could make a room go warm just by laughing, and the silence that had replaced it. The flame in the hearth guttered, then roared, fed by something that was not grief but not quite anything else. Love, maybe. Love and its wreckage, fused together into fuel.

Ryuu levelled the barbed spear at the Weapon's exposed magicite.

"Firebolt."

The spear's tip ignited—not Alise's white-gold, not the vermillion of wrath and hope. This was the colour of the hearth at its hottest: deep amber shot through with threads of violent red, compressed into a lance of fire that screamed from the spear's point in a tight, spiralling beam.

It crossed the distance in a heartbeat.

The Weapon moved faster.

Its legs bent at an angle that shouldn't have been possible for something that size, and it slid sideways—the firebolt tearing through the space it had occupied and punching a molten furrow into the arena wall behind it. Stone ran like candle wax.

Ryuu's eyes widened. Not because it dodged. Because it hadn't dodged *away*.

It had dodged *toward Rose and Shirou*.

The Weapon's attention had shifted entirely. It dismissed Ryuu—not even as a threat, not even as an inconvenience—its ember-slitted gaze fixed on the prone form of Shirou and the kneeling figure of Rose beside him. The seven-pointed-star sword rose to a guard position. Not defensive. Preparatory. The creature's legs coiled.

It charged.

Each footfall cracked stone. The pressure wave that preceded it sent loose debris skittering outward in expanding rings, and the arena floor shuddered with every impact—the creature's new bipedal form covering ground with a predator's economy, fast and wrong.

Ryuu called the wings.

They erupted from her shoulder blades and the backs of her heels—not feathered, not luminous, but *blazing*. Hearth-fire and justice fused into pinions of amber and violet that stretched two metres on each side, trailing sparks that hung in the air like dying stars. The heel-wings ignited. Ryuu launched.

Wind screamed past her ears. The stellar spheres orbiting the arena broke formation and streaked after her, drawn into her wake like comets caught in a planet's gravity well.

She was fast.

The Weapon was faster.

It ate the distance to Rose in massive, loping strides, its star-sword drawing back for an overhead cleave that would split stone and flesh alike.

"Rose, look out!"

Rose blinked once. Twice.

Cold.

Not the cold she knew—not Britain in February, not the Astronomy Tower at midnight, not the lake's surface during the Second Task. Those crept in from outside: fingers going numb, lips cracking, that particular ache in the bridge of the nose when the wind cut across it. This was different.

This radiated from inside.

It started in her marrow. The long bones of her legs, her arms, her spine—they hummed with it, a vibration pitched just below hearing. The cold spread outward through muscle and tendon and skin, and where it passed, it left a strange crystalline awareness. She could feel the boundaries of her own body with preternatural clarity: the exact border where Rose ended and cold began.

And beneath that awareness, something flowed.

It felt like a river. Not the Hogwarts lake, not the Thames, not any water she had ever touched. The surface was frozen—brittle, translucent, groaning under its own tension—and below that fragile membrane raged a current so cold it burned. Not water. Denser than water. The kind of cold that preceded absolute stillness, the temperature at which motion itself surrendered. It moved through her in a torrent that had no source and no mouth, circling back on itself in an endless loop, and everywhere it passed, her magic answered it. Her core lit up—not with heat, not with the familiar surge of a spell taking shape, but with something older. Something that had been waiting behind the scar beneath her breast since the night she'd walked into the Forbidden Forest and come back.

Passage, Hel had called it.

Rose knelt beside Shirou. His left side remained a ruin of char and exposed tissue, the rune on his back pulsing its stubborn amber-gold. His chest rose and fell in shallow, irregular hitches. Alive. Barely. The microscopic blades

ground against each other inside the wound with every breath—a faint metallic whisper she could hear only because the arena had gone quiet.

She reached for her wand. Diagnostic charms first, then—

"Rose, look out!"

Rose turned.

The Weapon filled her vision. Bipedal. Bone-white. Star-sword raised overhead in a two-handed grip. Its magicite pulsed in the hollow of its throat, violet-black and hungry. The ember eyes found hers.

Behind it—distant but closing fast—Ryuuz blazed across the arena on wings of fire and justice, trailing a constellation of violet spheres.

She wouldn't make it in time.

Rose looked down at Shirou. His eyes were closed. The amber glow from his chest had dimmed to a faint flicker. He couldn't move. Couldn't shield himself. Couldn't trace a weapon or project a barrier or do any of the impossible things she'd watched him do since they started their descent.

She couldn't move him. Not without risking the wound, not without a stretcher charm she didn't trust her control to cast cleanly. Not in the half-second she had before that sword fell.

So she didn't move.

She drew from the cold.

The frozen surface inside her cracked. Not shattered—cracked, a single fissure running from sternum to spine, and through that fissure the torrent beneath surged upward. It flooded her core with a sensation beyond temperature: the absolute certainty of an ending. The silence after the last heartbeat. The stillness at the bottom of everything. Her vision sharpened. Colours drained to their essentials—the Weapon's bone-white plates, the

violet pulse of its core, the amber ember of its eyes. Everything else greyed out. Irrelevant. Already dead.

The Elder Wand sang in her hand. Not the warm hum of a spell well-cast, not the eager vibration before a curse. A single, clear, sustained note—a bell struck in a cathedral of silence. The wand *knew* this power. It had been made for it.

The Weapon swung its star-sword.

Rose raised the Elder Wand and gathered the cold into her palm. It burned. It burned worse than the Cruciatus, worse than basilisk venom, worse than the Killing Curse striking her chest in the Forbidden Forest. The river surged through the crack in its frozen surface and poured into the wand, and the wand accepted it—drinking deep, the Hallowed wood conducting what no other focus could.

The star-sword descended.

Rose spoke no incantation. There was no spell for this. There was only the passage—Hel's gift, the thinning of the boundary between what lived and what did not—and Rose stood at the threshold and pushed.

Cold erupted from the Elder Wand's tip.

Not a beam. Not a bolt. A *front*—a wall of absolute zero that expanded outward from Rose in a perfect hemisphere, silent and colourless save for the frost that crystallised on every surface it touched. The air itself surrendered moisture; ice formed on the arena stones in fractal patterns that spread faster than the eye could track. The Weapon's star-sword struck the front and stopped.

Metal screamed. The seven-pointed blade's edge—still carrying the momentum of a creature that could shatter stone with a casual step—met something it could not cut. Frost raced up the sword from the point of contact, coating the blade in a sheath of black ice that crackled and popped as it thickened. The Weapon's arms shuddered. Its ember eyes narrowed.

Rose held her ground. The cold poured out of her in a continuous torrent, and the frozen river inside her dropped lower with every second, the crack widening, the reserves depleting. Her hands shook. Her teeth ached. Frost gathered on her eyelashes and in the roots of her hair, turning the vivid crimson to white at the temples.

The Weapon leaned into the barrier. Plates of bone-white armour fractured where the cold touched them, but beneath the fractures, new growth pushed outward—darker, denser, steaming where it met the frost. Regeneration fighting entropy. Life clawing against the silence.

The magicite in its chest pulsed faster.

Behind the Weapon, Ryuu's scream cut through the silence—wordless, furious—and the first of the violet spheres struck its back.

-=&<0>&=-

"Stellar Gale," Ryuu called forth.

The violet-black spheres descended upon the Weapon like dark stars collapsing inward, each one trailing gravitational distortion that warped the air around it. Ryuu dove in their wake, Gáe Bolg thrust forward in her left hand, Alf's Justitia slashing wide in her right. The cursed spear punched through the creature's reformed shoulder plate, ichor hissing where barbs caught flesh. Her wooden sword carved a line across its collar, spraying dark fluid that evaporated before it hit the ground.

She screamed, and the firebolt erupted from the spear's tip—hearth-coloured, amber-gold, warm as a campfire and devastating as a forge. It struck the Weapon's chest dead centre, detonating against bone-white armour in a shower of molten fragments.

The blessing Hestia's counterpart had granted her functioned identically to her Astraea Record. Both magics now lived inside her, stacked atop one another, twin flames fed by different hands but burning in the same hearth. She could feel them: Astraea's cool justice humming through her nerves like struck steel,

Hestia's warmth radiating outward from her sternum in steady pulses. Together they filled the hollow spaces left by her old falna, and for the first time since waking on this planet, Ryou felt whole.

The Weapon shrieked—a sound that vibrated in her teeth and pressed against the inside of her skull. It staggered, one clawed foot gouging a trench in the dark stone.

Then Rose moved.

She swept her wand overhead, and from the empty air above the arena an unkindness of ravens materialised—dozens strong, their wings translucent and frost-rimmed. They plunged downward in a screaming column. Every talon raked lines of cold across the Weapon's hide; every beak drove into joints between armour plates and left gashes crusted white with ice. The creature twisted, swiping at the birds, but they dissolved on contact and reformed behind it, diving again.

Rose's eyes blazed white, the green of her irises submerged entirely. She looked wrong—beautiful and terrible, standing on nothing, her crimson hair whipping in a wind that touched only her.

The Weapon's regeneration fired. Ichor bubbled up to seal cuts, armour plates ground together as they knitted. But the gashes Ryou had left with Gáe Bolg remained open, weeping black fluid, the barbed curse preventing any closure. The creature's dragonoid head turned from Rose to Ryou. It registered the threat differential in a single, calculating glance, and dismissed the raven-witch entirely.

It lunged for Ryou.

She crossed Gáe Bolg and Alf's Justitia in front of her, catching the descending star-sword between them. The impact buckled her arms to the elbows and sent cracks radiating through the stage beneath her feet. Her boots slid backward, twin furrows carved in stone. The Weapon bore down, its seven-pointed blade grinding against the cursed spear and the wooden sword, sparks cascading between them.

Ryuu's shoulders screamed. Her teeth clenched so hard her jaw ached.

Movement at the edge of her vision—Rose, airborne, the white glow of her eyes leaving afterimages. The Elder Wand was gone. In its place, Rose gripped a knife. Small. Simple. The kind of blade one might find beside a dinner plate—unremarkable except for the way Ryuu's skin prickled at the sight of it, as though the air itself recoiled.

Rose drove it into the joint where the Weapon's remaining wing-stump met its back.

"*Sultr.*"

The name hit Ryuu's ears as an invocation—a word that carried authority beyond its syllables. She could see its effect: the magicite in the creature's chest dimmed. Not much. A fraction. But the wing connected to the wound sagged, its membranes going slack, the bony struts losing their rigid tension.

Ryuu opened her mouth, drawing breath for the chant she needed. The words rose—channelled through Hestia's blessing, amplified by Astraea's warmth.

"I respectfully speak to you, her War God that can break through any—*oomph.*"

Rose slammed into her.

The collision drove every scrap of air from Ryuu's lungs. The Weapon had seized Rose by the head—its massive clawed hand encasing her skull entirely—and hurled her like a stone from a sling. Rose's body hit Ryuu square in the chest, and then they were both airborne, tumbling. The dark stone of the arena floor met them once, twice, three times, each impact jarring through Ryuu's spine as she and Rose bounced and skidded across the stage. Ryuu's wing-flames guttered and died. Her hip struck a ridge in the stone and something cracked—a rib, maybe two.

"Mistress Ryuu!"

"Mistress Rose!"

The brownies' voices cut through the ringing in her ears.

Ryuu planted Gáe Bolg's butt into the ground and arrested her slide, boots scraping, the stone shrieking beneath her heels. She hauled herself upright. Pain lanced through her left side. She ignored it.

Rose lay sprawled three metres away, already pushing herself to her hands and knees. Blood ran freely down the left side of her face.

"Don't mind us!" Ryuu barked toward the brownies. "Defend Shirou!"

Rose twisted in place—her body folded into nothing and reappeared at Ryuu's side in a crack of displaced air. The white still consumed her eyes. Blood dripped from the stump where her left ear had been, the flesh ragged and weeping red.

"Your ear is missing," Ryuu said.

Rose grunted. No quip. No joke. She reached up, fingers finding the bleeding wound, and pressed once as though confirming the damage by touch alone.

"I'll have it reattached later."

She twisted again. Gone. The crack of her reappearance echoed from across the arena—beside the Weapon, which had just backhanded Jolsey with a casual swipe of its fist. The brownie sailed through the air, limbs flailing, caught by Volkey's apparition mid-flight.

Ryuu gathered the twin flames at her shoulders and heels. Amber and violet fire erupted once more, lifting her from the ground. She launched herself upward, arcing high above the arena floor, and opened her mouth.

"I respectfully speak to you, her War God that can break through anything."

Below, Rose raised her wand. Fire poured from its tip—but wrong. Not the red-orange blaze she'd used before. These flames ran in shades of cobalt, cerulean, pale winter blue. They washed across the stage in a surging wave, and where they touched the Weapon's feet, they did not burn.

They froze.

Ice raced up the creature's ankles. Frost bloomed across its shins in crystalline fractals, locking its feet to the stage floor. The Weapon screeched and convulsed, muscles bunching beneath bone-white armour. Cracks spidered through the ice. It shattered.

The dragonoid maw opened. Light gathered behind its teeth—the same destructive beam that had nearly killed them earlier. It fired straight at Rose.

"Give my petty body divine power of your grand body."

Rose twisted. Gone. The beam carved a molten furrow across empty stone.

She reappeared behind the Weapon. The unkindness reformed around her—frost-rimmed ravens, screaming in voices that sounded almost human.

"Confringo!"

Blue-white light speared from her wand and detonated against the Weapon's spine. Armour plates blew outward. The ravens dove into the breach, tearing at exposed flesh, each wound crackling with frost.

The brownies surged forward. Mipsy hurled a boulder the size of a cart wheel. Grackle summoned a column of lightning that struck the creature's dragonoid maw. Tripsey threw ice in jagged lances that lodged between armour seams. They screamed as they attacked—not fear but fury, their small voices raw with it.

Ryuu dove.

She slashed with Gáe Bolg at the creature's left knee, the cursed tip tearing through the joint. Alf's Justitia followed, carving a line up its flank that sprayed ichor in a dark arc.

"Rescue them, light of purification—sword of crushing evil."

The Weapon parried Gáe Bolg with its star-sword, deflecting the spear wide, but Alf's Justitia was already past its guard. The wooden blade bit deep into its

neck, shearing through a gap in the reformed armour. Ichor fountained upward, black and steaming.

Rose came again. Airborne this time, the frost-knife clutched in both hands, aimed at the fresh wound Ryu had opened.

The Weapon had learned.

It sidestepped. One massive arm shot out and caught Rose by the throat. The sound of her body hitting the stage floor was flat and heavy—stone against meat. The creature raised its foot and brought it down on her torso.

Blood burst from Rose's mouth. The white bled from her eyes, emerald green flickering back into view. Her arms went limp.

"Mistress!" Mipsy materialised beside Rose, seized her wrist, and vanished with a crack before the Weapon's foot descended a second time. The stomp cratered the stage where Rose had been.

They reappeared forty metres away. Mipsy pressed a vial to Rose's lips. Another brownie—Tripsey—appeared with something cupped in her hands. Ryu caught a glimpse of bloodied cartilage and pale skin. Tripsey pressed it to the side of Rose's head, and brownie magic flared green-gold at the join.

Ryu climbed higher, the wings of amber and violet spreading wide.

"It arrives here now, by my order."

She dove. Gáe Bolg led, punching through the Weapon's right shoulder from above. The creature convulsed, head snapping back, and Ryu ripped the spear free in a spray of cursed ichor before banking hard left.

The Weapon screamed again.

Rose reappeared—pale, blood still wet on her chin, but standing. She drove the knife into the fresh wound at its neck before the flesh could knit, and spoke the name.

"Sultr."

The magicite in the creature's chest dimmed further. The Weapon buckled, one knee hitting the stage. Its dragonoid maw wheezed, the light behind its teeth flickering, sputtering.

Rose was too close.

Ryuu couldn't speak. She kicked Rose square between the shoulder blades, sending her tumbling backward and out of range as the Weapon's arm swept through the space she'd occupied. She heard Rose swear—something profane and British and deeply felt—as she hit the ground rolling.

Ryuu beat her wings and climbed. Higher. Higher still, until the arena floor was a dark disc below her and the Weapon a pale shape at its centre.

The words tore from her throat.

"Descend from heaven, rule the earth—*SHINBU TOUSE!!!*"

The magic crashed down.

Gravity multiplied. The air itself compressed, thickening, heavy. The stage cracked—not surface fractures but deep, structural splitting, fissures racing outward from the Weapon's position like veins in shattered glass. The creature buckled further, driven to both knees, its star-sword clanging against the stone as its arms gave way. Its armour plates groaned, warping under the invisible weight.

Ryuu rode the magic down.

She descended on the Weapon like a falling star, both weapons raised overhead—Gáe Bolg in her right, Alf's Justitia in her left. The twin flames at her shoulders and heels merged behind her into a single blazing trail of amber-violet. The gravitational pressure that pinned the creature to the stage pulled her downward faster, harder, the magic feeding her momentum until the wind stripped tears from her eyes.

The Weapon raised its head.

All four of its eyes—the humanoid pair and the dragonoid maw's—blazed with light. Not the steady glow of its magicite. Something deeper. Something old. The bone-white armour trembled, and the creature's body shook in resistance against the crushing weight, muscles bulging grotesquely beneath plates that buckled and reformed in real time.

It growled at her.

The sound was wrong. Not a roar or a shriek—a growl, low and deliberate, vibrating at a frequency that bypassed Ryuu's ears and resonated in her sternum. She felt it in her heartbeat. In the blessings that sat warm against her ribs.

All four eyes gleamed.



Then two voices, one melodious, another grating and wrong.

"Ahv'll-on'fhtagn!"

And all Ryuu could see was light.

Rose rose to her feet as she saw Ryuu climb higher and higher into the dark above the arena, wings of amber and violet trailing fire like a comet's tail against the void.

"Descend from heaven, rule the earth—*SHINBU TOUSEI!!!*"

The words hit Rose's chest before her ears registered them. She hadn't heard this incantation before. They'd spent the three days of preparation comparing arsenals over meals and marches—*I'll show you mine if you show me yours*—and this hadn't been among Ryuu's offerings. Something new. Something born of the blessings those goddesses had granted.

Rose wasn't about to let Ryuu face the thing alone.

She could see the Weapon buckle. Its knees cracked against the stage, armour groaning, the star-sword clanging flat as its arms failed. Gravity itself had become a fist, pressing the creature into the stone. Fissures raced outward from its position, the arena splitting in dark veins.

Rose twisted through space—one heel planted, one shoulder dropped, the Elder Wand already wreathed in cold blue light—and apparated directly behind the Weapon just as Ryuu's burning silhouette screamed downward.

She gritted her teeth. The gravity hit her like walking into deep water. Her bones protested. Her knees bent. Every organ in her torso shifted half a centimetre south.

Rose endured. She'd endured worse. She raised the wand.

But it was all for nothing.

The Weapon's four eyes blazed—not with its magicite's fading pulse but with something far older—and it spoke.



Meddoo Flames

The incomprehensible syllables raked through Rose's skull. Not sound—*invasion*. Her vision whited out. Her wand arm spasmed. The same words that had set Shirou ablaze now poured from the Weapon's maw like molten language, each syllable carrying heat and wrongness and something that felt like fingers pressing behind her eyes.

Fire erupted.

Not from the Weapon's mouth—from the air itself, from the stage, from every surface within the arena. Flames the colour of nothing natural—purple-black shot through with veins of searing white—rushed inward toward where she stood and where Ryu fell.

But just before the inferno consumed them—

Two voices.

One was melodious. Beautiful in a way that ached, the kind of voice that belonged to moonlit clearings and silver-leafed trees, a sound that resonated in her marrow.

The other was *wrong*.

Not merely grating. Rose's mind recoiled from it the way flesh recoiled from a hot iron. The voice existed at angles that shouldn't have been audible. It crawled beneath her thoughts. It scraped against the underside of reality like nails on the wrong side of a mirror. Every syllable occupied a space in her perception that human senses were never meant to fill—not painful, not frightening in any conventional way, but fundamentally, irreducibly *aberrant*.

Both voices spoke simultaneously, into her ears, into her head, into whatever she was beneath the meat and magic.

"Ahv'll-on'fhtagn!"

-=&<0>&=-

Light.

Bright, searing, all-consuming light. Rose's eyes flew open and she couldn't close them—the radiance poured in and found no resistance.

Ryuu knelt three metres to her left, Gáe Bolg braced against the stage, one hand pressed to her ribs. Their eyes met.

They were before Shirou. His ruined body lay behind them, the rune still glowing amber on his back, the lattice of exposed muscle and microscopic blades visible along his left flank. And surrounding all three of them—Rose, Ryuu, Shirou—the same purple-black flames that had nearly killed Shirou raged in a perfect sphere.

They did not burn.

Rose held her hand up. The fire licked across her fingers. She felt warmth, but distantly, the way you felt sunlight through glass. As if she occupied the same space as the inferno but existed one layer removed from it—present but untouchable.

Beyond the flames, the Weapon thrashed. Its four eyes blazed with fury. It drove its star-sword into the barrier of fire surrounding them once, twice, three times. Each blow sent shockwaves through the arena floor but failed to reach them. The creature screamed—a sound that cracked stone and shattered the remains of Ryuu's gravitational fissures into powder.

The two voices returned.

The melodious one led this time. Clear, ringing, authoritative. Beneath it the other voice coiled and scraped, its syllables moving in the spaces between the first voice's words like something slithering between the notes of a song.

"The toll has been paid. Passage was granted. I have also intervened, and it shall be the last—to preserve your Færing. All he needs is to build the bridge. He must pierce the veil that shines at the ends of worlds."

"N'gai n'ghft phlegeth. Shogg-gnsh n'gha. Ol-grak y'drn, f'goka y'gha-Færing. Vulgtm shogg-r'luh, mg-or'nazr zhro n'ghft fhtagn."

Rose's jaw clenched. The aberrant voice grated less when the melodious one spoke louder—as if the beautiful sound filed down the other's jagged edges. But it was still there. Still wrong. Still making her inner ear itch and her thoughts flinch sideways every time a syllable landed.

Behind them, Shirou's body lifted from the stage.

Rose spun. His arms extended outward, parallel to the ground, palms open. His head lolled back. The amber-gold light that had glowed from his chest earlier now blazed from every inch of his skin, pouring outward in sheets. He hung in the air like a figure nailed to nothing—cruciform and burning and utterly still.

Then his mouth opened. And the two voices came out of it.

"Little Hollow."

"Ah-Llo'glh."

Rose flinched.

The name found her the way a key found a lock—precise, inevitable, clicking into place in a part of her she hadn't known was waiting. It settled into the hollows of her body. Into the cold that lived beneath her sternum now, courtesy of Hel's boon. *Little Hollow*. As if she were a vessel. As if she'd always been one.

"Starlit Kindling."

"Ch'goka N'ghft-S'ah."

Ryuu stiffened. Rose watched the name land on her—watched the elf's shoulders draw tight and her breath catch. Something quiet moved behind Ryuu's eyes. Something that burned and ached in equal measure.

"Our Færing dreams. He forges within."

"Færing-n'gha throd fhtagn. 'Ahv'll-grakor mg-or'nazr."

Clang.

The sound rang out from everywhere and nowhere. Metal striking metal. Not the clash of weapons in battle—the measured, deliberate impact of a hammer on an anvil. Rose felt it vibrate through the soles of her boots and up through her spine.

"Keep the beast from him."

"Goka shogg-vulgtm 'ah-lh'fhtagn."

"Break what you can. We care not how."

"Y'grak-gnsh phlegeth. Ol-n'ghft shogg."

"Buy him time. The Færing's work is not yet done. What emerges from that fire will carry the light of victory."

"Zhro n'gha-zhro. Færing-fhtagn mglw'nafh. Ph'legeth-ch'goka mglw'nafh s'ah-n'ghft r'luh-fhtagn."

Clang.

The fire surrounding Shirou changed.

Rose whipped around. The purple-black flames that had cocooned them flared outward—and where they touched Shirou's floating body, they transmuted. Gold. White. Deep, saturated crimson. The colours of a forge at

full heat, of metal being born. The flames wrapped him tighter, tighter, until his form vanished entirely behind a pillar of resplendent fire that roared upward and struck the distant ceiling of the arena like a beacon.

Rose's heart lurched. Her feet moved before her brain caught up—two steps toward the pillar, hand outstretched.

Ryuu seized her wrist. Their eyes met. The same panic reflected back.

But the fire wasn't consuming. Rose could feel it now—radiating outward in waves that hit her chest and spread warmth through her limbs. Not the warmth of burning. The warmth of a smithy. Of something being made rather than destroyed.

Clang.

"Go!"

"Zhro!"

Rose looked at Ryuu.

Ryuu looked at Rose.

They nodded.

Clang.

Ryuu's wings erupted from her shoulders and heels—amber and violet flame feathered with motes of starlight. The golden-violet circle blazed beneath her feet and her wounds sealed, ribs snapping back into alignment with an audible crack. She kicked off the stage.

Rose reached inward. Past her magic. Past the warmth of the forge-fire still pressing against her ribs. Down, to the frozen river Hel had cracked open during the vision—cold and ancient and patient. She plunged into it. The chill flooded upward through her core and out through her extremities. Frost crystallised along the Elder Wand's length, crackling and spreading until it coated her fingers, her wrist, the cuff of her sleeve. Her breath misted silver.

"Mipsy! Grackle! Tripsey!"

Three cracks of displaced air. The brownies appeared—Mipsy clutching a repeating crossbow half her size, Grackle with a bandolier of vials, Tripsey with two Azoth daggers and murder in her enormous eyes.

"We is ready, Mistress Rose!"

"Distract it. Don't die. Go."

The brownies vanished.

Ryuu hit the Weapon like a thunderbolt.

She burst from the safety of Shirou's forge-light at full speed and crashed shoulder-first into the creature's chest. The impact drove it backward—two metres, three—before Ryuu twisted, planted the butt of Gáe Bolg against its sternum, and vaulted downward with the full extension of her wings.

The Weapon slammed into the stage. Stone cratered. Ryuu didn't let it settle. She summoned both Stellar Gale and Luminous Wind simultaneously—violet-black gravitational motes and green-gold wisps spiralling around her in a double helix.

"Firebolt!"

The hearth-coloured lance of flame struck the Weapon's right shoulder joint. Armour buckled. Ichor sprayed. The creature rolled sideways and came up swinging, its star-sword carving a horizontal arc that would have bisected Ryuu at the waist had she not already kicked higher, wings folding and spreading in a sharp vertical dodge.

Rose twisted through space.

She materialised in the Weapon's blind spot—behind and to the left, where its dragonoid maw couldn't track—and jabbed the Elder Wand downward. Not at the creature. At the stone.

She traced a jagged shape. Angular. Deliberate. A rune she'd never drawn before this day but somehow knew—a passage, a door, a crack between here and somewhere else.

The stone split.

A tear opened in the arena floor. Not a gap—a *wound* in the fabric of space, edges rippling and dark, frost billowing from its margins. From within came a sound like distant howling and the smell of iron and permafrost.

Something climbed out.

The hellhound was enormous—shoulder height with Rose's hip, its coat the blue-black of deep ice, its eyes burning with pale fire. Frost clung to its hackles. It shook itself once, scattering crystals of rime, and snarled at the Weapon.

It launched itself at the creature's flank without waiting for a command.

Rose raised the Elder Wand overhead and called the ravens. Frost-rimmed and shrieking, they coalesced from the cold pouring off her skin—dozens of spectral birds made of ice and shadow, each one trailing dark mist. They swept forward in a black wave and buried themselves in the Weapon's joints, their beaks tearing at the gaps between armour plates.

Clang.

The sound from the forge-pillar shuddered through the arena. Louder now. More insistent.

Rose slashed the wand horizontally. A crescent of freezing force left the tip—translucent blue-white, humming—and caught the Weapon full in the chest as it turned to swat the hellhound. The impact flung it backward, feet carving twin furrows in the stone.

Ryuu followed. She dove from above, Gáe Bolg extended, and drove the cursed spear into the Weapon's left hip joint where Rose's crescent had

cracked the armour. The creature convulsed, head snapping back, and Ryuu ripped the spear free before banking hard left.

The brownies struck next. Mipsy apparated onto the Weapon's right shoulder and discharged the repeating crossbow directly into its ear canal—*crack crack crack crack*—four bolts in rapid succession before vanishing. Grackle appeared at its ankle and smashed a vial of concentrated acid against the joint. Tripsey materialised on its back and stabbed both Azoth daggers into the base of its neck, wrenching them sideways before disappearing with a crack.

The Weapon screamed and spun, its star-sword sweeping in a full circle.

Rose ducked. The blade passed overhead, shearing through three of her ravens.

"Down!" she shouted.

Ryuu folded her wings and dropped. The second sweep passed over her.

Rose raised both hands. The cold surged. Above the Weapon, the air froze—moisture crystallising, compressing, sharpening into a hail of jagged ice shards the size of her forearm. Dozens of them. She directed each one individually, threading them through the gaps in its armour, around the patches where Gáe Bolg's curse still suppressed regeneration. The shards punched through weakened plate and buried themselves in flesh.

Clang.

The Weapon staggered. Ichor wept from a dozen punctures. The hellhound had its jaws locked around the creature's left calf, ice spreading from the bite in frozen veins. The ravens reformed and dove again.

The Weapon's dragonoid maw opened. Light gathered within—the beam weapon, charging.

"*Will-o'-Wisp!*"

Ryuu's shout came from directly above. A cluster of violet-black motes shot downward and detonated inside the creature's open mouth. The gathered energy backfired—the beam ignited within the maw instead of projecting outward. The explosion blew out both sides of the Weapon's jaw. Chunks of bone-white armour and blackened flesh sprayed across the stage.

The creature reeled.

Rose pressed the advantage. She twisted through space—apparated to its right flank, jabbed Sultr into the exposed neck wound, and spoke the knife's name. The magicite's light guttered. The Weapon convulsed and swung blindly. Rose pulled the knife free and rolled, but the backhand caught her shoulder, spinning her sideways.

Pain lanced down her arm. She landed hard, skidded, came up on one knee.

The Weapon turned on Ryuu.

It had learned their pattern—Rose from the blind spot, Ryuu from above. So it broke the pattern first. Instead of facing Rose's next attack, it lunged upward, star-sword driving toward Ryuu with explosive force. Its shattered jaw regenerated mid-lunge, bone and armour reforming in liquid motion.

Ryuu parried with Gáe Bolg. The impact sent her rocketing backward, wings flaring to arrest her momentum. She carved a furrow across the arena ceiling with her shoulder before stabilising.

The hellhound leapt at the Weapon's back. The creature's secondary face—the one embedded in its chest—opened and screamed. A concussive wave of sound hit the hellhound mid-air and shattered it into dispersing fragments of ice and shadow.

Rose snarled and drew the rune again—another tear, another howl from beyond the veil—and this time two hellhounds climbed free. Smaller, leaner, faster. They split and flanked.

Clang.

The forge-sound was growing urgent. A cadence now—building toward something.

Ryuu came screaming down from the ceiling. She launched a volley of Firebolts—three, four, five blazing lances of hearth-coloured flame—that hammered the Weapon's upper torso in rapid succession. The creature raised its star-sword to block, and the impacts drove it back step by step.

Rose saw the opening.

She twisted through space one final time. Appeared directly beneath the Weapon—between its legs, looking up at the chest where the magicite glowed behind cracked armour. She raised the Elder Wand and fired a Blasting Curse point-blank into the damaged plate.

The armour shattered. The magicite was further exposed—a crystal the size of Rose's head, pulsing with diminished but persistent light. Cracks spiderwebbed across its surface.

The Weapon looked down at her with all four eyes. She looked up at it.

"Bugger."

Its foot descended.

Mipsy snatched her wrist and the world folded.

They reappeared twenty metres distant and Rose was already firing—a Reductor Curse, a Cutting Curse, a wave of ice ravens—pouring everything she had at the Weapon's exposed core from range.

Ryuu dove to join her assault. Gáe Bolg's barbed tip found the magicite's edge and dragged across its surface, leaving a cursed furrow that wept dark energy. Alf's Justitia struck the opposite side, cracking the crystal further.

The Weapon caught Ryuu's arm. Squeezed. Rose heard bone creak.

Ryuu headbutted it.

The creature blinked—all four eyes, simultaneously—and Ryuu tore free, leaving skin behind on its grip. She flipped backward, wings catching air, and fired a point-blank Firebolt directly into the cracked magicite.

The crystal screamed. Not the creature—the *crystal*. A high, keening note that set Rose's teeth on edge.

The Weapon backhanded Ryuu out of the air. She hit the stage rolling and came up bleeding from both nostrils, one arm hanging wrong.

Rose charged.

Not smart. Not tactical. She charged because the Weapon was turning toward Ryuu's prone form and Rose had exactly zero patience left for watching people she'd fought beside get hit while she stood at range.

She drove Sultr into the cracked magicite with both hands.

"*SULTR!*"

The crystal dimmed. Flickered. The Weapon convulsed so hard its star-sword flew from its grip and embedded itself in the arena wall thirty metres away.

Rose wrenched the knife free and rolled clear as the Weapon collapsed to one knee. Grackle appeared, poured another acid vial into the magicite's cracks, and vanished. Tripsey followed—two daggers, in and out, gone before the creature could react.

CLANG.

The forge-sound detonated through the arena. Not a ring—a thunderclap of metal on metal that vibrated in Rose's skull and shook the world loose.

The air behind her displaced.

A shockwave of light erupted from where Shirou's pillar of flame had stood. Wind hit Rose from behind—hot, dry, carrying the scent of heated steel and something sweeter underneath. Something that smelled the way sunlight

tasted on a cold morning. She threw her arm across her face and squinted through the gaps in her fingers.

Shirou stood at the pillar's base.

The flames were gone. His body was whole—no charred flesh, no exposed ribs, no microscopic blades grinding beneath his skin. Bare from the waist up, scars mapping his torso in silver lines that caught the light like old rivers viewed from altitude. His auburn hair had grown back. His golden eyes burned with a focus Rose had not seen in them before—steady, absolute, clear as cut glass. No pain behind them. No hesitation. No confusion.

He looked like a man who had finished building something and was ready to use it.

In his hands, held in a two-handed grip, was a sword.

Rose's breath caught.

She'd seen Shirou Trace dozens of weapons over the past three days. Swords, spears, bows, shields—each one appearing in a flicker of blue light and dissolving when dismissed, impressive and disposable in equal measure. She'd grown accustomed to the cycle. Trace, use, break, replace. The weapons were tools. They served their purpose and vanished.

This was not a tool.

The blade was pale gold, almost white, and it shone with an inner radiance that had nothing to do with the chamber's blue-flame light or any reflection Rose could account for. The metal itself produced the glow—a warm, steady luminance that intensified near the edge and faded toward the fuller, as though the sword were lit from within by a fire that burned at exactly the temperature needed to illuminate without consuming. The crossguard was simple—two modest wings of gold, unadorned, inscribed with lettering Rose couldn't read but felt in her chest like a hymn half-remembered from a childhood she'd mostly lost. The pommel held a single blue gem that pulsed in time with Shirou's heartbeat.

It was the most beautiful weapon Rose had ever seen. And she owned the Elder Wand.

The sword's light filled the arena. Not harshly—the way dawn filled a room. Gradually, completely, without asking permission. The shadows retreated from the arena's edges. The infinite pit below the stage went from black to grey. The distant ceiling, lost in darkness for the entire fight, became visible—vaulted stone, cracked and scarred, but *there*. The sword illuminated. Not just the chamber—Rose felt it in her chest. Warmth. Courage. The absolute, unshakeable conviction that the dark did not get to win today.

Ryuu felt it too. Rose could see it—the elf straightening, her broken arm forgotten, her eyes wide and fixed on the blade with an expression Rose had never seen on her. Wonder. Not the composed, analytical assessment Ryuu brought to everything. *Wonder*.

The brownies went silent. Every one of them—Mipsy, Grackle, Tripsey, all of them—stood still with their enormous eyes reflecting the golden light, their tiny chests puffed with something that had nothing to do with orders or duty.

Shirou raised the sword overhead with both hands.

Rose looked at Ryuu. Ryuu looked at Rose. They moved simultaneously—Rose twisting through space, Ryuu launching herself on battered wings—clearing the path between Shirou and the kneeling Weapon.

Shirou drew back.

"Sword of selection—"

The light gathered. Concentrated. The blade's radiance collapsed inward, compressing from a room-filling glow into a single point of white-gold brilliance at the sword's tip. The air between Shirou and the Weapon rippled. The stone beneath his feet *sang*—a resonance that rose through the arena's foundations and made every surface hum.

"—**CALIBURN!**"

He thrust.

A beam of concentrated golden light erupted from the blade's tip and crossed the arena in the space between heartbeats. It struck the Weapon dead centre—through the cracked magicite, through the chest, through the creature's back—and continued. The beam bored a hole clean through the arena's far wall, and for one frozen instant Rose could see *beyond*—the stone of the dungeon's next floor, illuminated in gold, impossibly bright.

Rose squeezed her eyes shut. Even through her eyelids, the light was blinding—white-gold, absolute. She felt heat on her face and smelled ozone and scorched stone and something else. Something clean. Something that smelled like the first morning of the world.

When she opened them, spots danced across her vision. Green and gold afterimages swam and pulsed. She blinked. Blinked again.

The Weapon knelt at the arena's centre. Its entire front was gone—melted away, armour and flesh and bone reduced to slag that pooled around its knees. The dragonoid head was half a skull. The secondary face in its chest was obliterated. And there, buried in the ruin of its torso, the magicite sat fully exposed—cracked, dimmed, its light stuttering like a dying bulb.

Still alive. Still blinking.

"No you bloody well don't!" Rose shouted.

"Like hell!" Shirou snarled, already moving.

"Enough!" Ryuu's voice cut through them both.

All three rushed the Weapon together.

Shirou reached it first. He drove the golden sword downward into the top of the magicite. The blade bit into crystal with a shriek that set Rose's fillings vibrating. Ryuu arrived half a second later, Gáe Bolg and Alf's Justitia hacking at the regenerating flesh that clawed upward around the stone—severing tendons and muscle as they tried to re-encase the core. Rose poured Blasting

Hexes in a tight ring around the magicite's base—precise, controlled, each detonation shearing away another layer of sinew that anchored the crystal to the body.

The brownies joined without being asked. Mipsy's crossbow hammered bolts into the connective tissue. Grackle's acid ate through the last stubborn fibres. Tripsey's daggers sawed at the underside of the crystal where Rose's hexes couldn't reach.

The magicite pulsed. Faster. Brighter. Desperate.

Flesh climbed Shirou's blade. He burned it away with a pulse of golden light and pressed harder.

"Together!" he shouted. He shifted his grip, using the sword as a lever. Rose and Ryu understood instantly—Ryu wedged Gáe Bolg beneath the crystal's left edge, Rose shoved Sultr beneath the right, and all three of them wrenched.

The magicite resisted. The body beneath it screamed—a sound that came from the crystal, from the flesh, from the very stone of the arena. The Weapon's remaining arm spasmed. Its legs kicked. Its half-skull jaw worked soundlessly.

The crystal tore free.

It came loose with a wet, catastrophic *crack*—trailing streamers of black ichor and severed tendon—and the light within it winked out like a candle pinched between two fingers. The stone hit the arena floor with a heavy, final *thud* that Rose felt through her knees.

The Weapon stopped moving.

Its remaining arm dropped. Its legs went slack. The bone-white armour dulled to grey. What was left of its body slumped sideways and collapsed into the pool of its own slag with a sound like wet earth settling.

Then the sword in Shirou's hand fractured.

A single crack ran from the pommel to the tip—a hairline fissure, luminous, splitting the pale gold metal with a line of white light. Shirou's expression changed. The battle-focus, the absolute clarity, the unwavering certainty the sword had lent him—all of it drained away in a single breath. What replaced it was something Rose hadn't seen on his face before.

Loss.

Not surprise. Not confusion. He'd known this would happen. Rose could see it in the way his hands didn't tighten, the way his jaw didn't clench, the way he held the fracturing blade with the careful tenderness of someone holding something precious for the last time. He'd known the sword would break. He'd used it anyway.

But this was confusing. Couldn't he trace the sword again?

The cracks multiplied. The blue gem in the pommel flickered and went dark. The inscribed lettering on the crossguard—those words Rose had felt but couldn't read—glowed once, brightly, as if saying goodbye, and then faded.

The sword didn't shatter. It didn't explode into motes of light the way his Traced weapons did. It simply... came apart. Silently. The pale gold metal dissolved into fine dust that hung in the air around Shirou's hands—not falling, not drifting, just *suspended*, as though the particles themselves were reluctant to leave.

Shirou looked at the dust the way Rose had once looked at the Mirror of Erised. With the quiet, devastating understanding that what he was seeing was something he could never hold again.

He bowed his head. A slight inclination—barely perceptible, the kind of bow you'd give to a friend departing on a journey from which they would not return. The dust stirred. Drifted. And was gone.

His hands hung empty at his sides.

He turned toward them. The golden eyes were steady, but the light behind them was different now. Dimmer. Not from exhaustion or injury—from the particular weight of having used something irreplaceable and watching it leave.

Rose's throat tightened. She didn't understand what the sword had been. She didn't know its history, its legend, its name beyond the word he'd shouted as he thrust. But she understood loss. She'd held the Resurrection Stone and dropped it in the forest—of course, it later found itself in her person. She'd owned the Cloak of Invisibility since she was eleven and watched it mean less and less with every person it couldn't save.

She understood what it cost to let go of something you loved.

Silence.

True, absolute silence. The first since they'd opened the boss-room doors.

Rose stood there, wand raised, frost still crackling along her fingers, chest heaving. Ryuu stood beside her, Gáe Bolg braced against the floor, one arm cradled against her ribs, blood drying in twin trails from her nostrils. Shirou stood between them—bare-chested, scarred, his hands empty and still.

Nobody spoke.

Nobody moved.

Three seconds. Five. Ten.

Rose opened her mouth. Closed it. Opened it again.

And laughed.

She didn't know why. There was no joke. Nothing was funny. They'd nearly died—all three of them, multiple times, in increasingly creative and horrible ways—and Shirou had literally been on fire twice, and Rose had lost an ear, and Ryuu's arm was pointing in a direction arms shouldn't point, and the arena

was a smoking, cratered ruin, and the Weapon's corpse was still steaming, and none of it was funny.

She laughed anyway. Hard, ugly, raw laughter that came from somewhere beneath her ribs and wouldn't stop. It bent her double. It brought tears to her eyes. It made her sides ache worse than the Weapon's backhand.

Shirou's composure cracked next. A snort first—bitten back, strangled—and then a proper laugh, low and rough, shaking his shoulders. He pressed one hand over his eyes and laughed into his palm.

Ryuu held out the longest. Her lips pressed together. Her jaw set. She was *not* going to laugh. She was disciplined. She was an elf. She was—

She laughed. A startled, musical sound that seemed to surprise her more than anyone. She tried to stop and failed. Tried again. Failed again. Gave up and let it take her, leaning on the spear and shaking with it.

They stood there in the ruined arena, three battered, bloodied idiots laughing at nothing and everything while the Weapon's corpse cooled behind them.

The laughter faded in stages. Rose wiped her eyes with the back of her wrist. Drew a shaking breath. Her gaze drifted sideways, caught by movement—Shirou shifting his weight.

Her eyes travelled lower.

'Oh.'

The forge-fire had healed him. It had also, apparently, burned away every stitch of clothing he'd been wearing.

Rose's brain performed a rapid series of calculations that she was absolutely not proud of. Ollivander's voice ghosted through her memory, unbidden and entirely inappropriate: "*Ten and a quarter inches, unyielding.*"

'*Shut up, brain. Shut up right now.*'

She couldn't look away. She tried. She genuinely tried. Her eyes had other plans.

Ryuu's gaze traced the same path at the same moment—Rose caught the movement in her peripheral vision. The elf's face went from porcelain-pale to deep crimson in the space of a single heartbeat. The flush spread from her cheeks to her ears to the tips of those elegantly pointed ears—and given the length of those ears, that was considerable territory.

Ryuu made a sound. A small, strangled "eep" that Rose had never heard from her before and suspected she would deny making until her dying day.

Shirou frowned. Looked at Rose. Looked at Ryuu. Followed their eyelines downward.

His expression underwent a transformation that Rose would treasure for the rest of her natural life.

"WAGH—!"

He yelped. Not a manly shout, not a dignified exclamation—a *yelp*, high-pitched and mortified, the kind of sound that belonged to someone who'd stepped on a cat in the dark. He spun around so fast he nearly tripped over the dead magicite. One hand clamped over himself. The other snapped up—

"Trace on!"

Blue light flared. Fabric materialised—trousers, a tunic, a belt, shoes. He pulled them on with frantic, graceless urgency whilst Rose stared fixedly at the ceiling and Ryuu stared fixedly at the far wall and neither of them were breathing.

"That," Shirou said, his voice strangled, "did not happen."

Rose bit the inside of her cheek. Hard. "Are you sure? With how you like declaring about the *bone of your sword*."

Silence.

Shirou's ears turned a shade of crimson that rivalled Rose's hair.

"We will never speak of this."

Rose pouted.

Ryuu said nothing. Her ears were still the colour of ripe tomatoes.

-=&<o>&=-

End

**Follow me on my other socials
and stack additional voting
points on the story of your
choosing.**

[X Twitter X](#)

 [X Twitter X](#) 

 [Discord](#) 

 [BlueSky](#) 