

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 2.2 Development and Delving

(Rose Lily Potter)

[Part 2 of ?]

"Argh!" With a desperate thrust, muscles burning from the extended combat, Marin Kitagawa planted a firm stomp on the shoulder of the bipedal boar and kicked off with all her might. The force of her movement dislodged the massive sword she'd been wielding from the boar's grotesque face, the blade so impossibly sharp that it cleaved its skull cleanly in two. The wet, sickening sound of splitting flesh and bone made her stomach churn slightly—not from disgust, surprisingly, but from the sheer exhilaration coursing through her veins.

'Combo finisher,' some part of her brain supplied unhelpfully, as if she were still sitting in her apartment with a controller in hand.

With a large, graceful swing that felt almost choreographed—like something straight out of her favourite action games—she cleaved another monster from shoulder to hip, watching with grim satisfaction as it crumpled to the stone floor. The motion flowed naturally, her body remembering patterns she'd only ever executed with thumbsticks and buttons before. Except now she could *feel* it—the weight of the blade, the resistance of flesh, the momentum carrying her forward into the next strike.

Then she pivoted, her body moving on pure instinct now, something akin to muscle memory assisted by the aptitude skills she'd purchased, combined with memories of countless hours of gaming and epic scenes from manga and anime that she'd always wanted to try. With a theatrical twirl—because if you're going to fight monsters in a dungeon, you might as well look absolutely brilliant doing it—she smashed a large metal club with wickedly sharpened edges into the face of the long-necked bird creature squawking loudly at her.

The impact reverberated up her arms, sending delicious shivers of power through her entire frame. The creature's waist-high body crumpled, its head and upper torso violently embedded into the dungeon floor in a gruesome display that could have been ripped straight from the pages of Miura-sensei or Hirano-sensei. Though with her dual-wielding two massive weapons like this, it was probably closer to something from Yagi-sensei's *Claymore*—all she needed was the short blonde hair and the silver eyes, and she'd fit right in with the warriors of the Organisation.

Which she could actually do now, come to think of it. She hadn't tested it yet—the ability had been immediately forgotten in the whirlwind of excitement as she was thrust headlong into this incredible fantasy-sci-fi galaxy of epicness and adventure. It had seemed so important at the time, a priority purchase, but then everything else had happened so fast.

Metamorphagi. The ability to change her physical form, within reason. She'd bought it the absolute second after she'd purchased *Auto-sort Skill* and realised how brilliantly useful the Catalogue could be—it had shot straight to the very top of her priority list. No more endless hours spent patiently applying layer after painstaking layer of make-up, trying to perfectly match the distinctive looks of her favourite characters. The sheer convenience alone made it worth every credit she'd spent, never mind how utterly amazing the possibilities were for cosplay accuracy.

'*Later,*' she promised herself, flicking her blade in that dramatic gesture she'd seen in countless manga and anime. '*Definitely testing that later.*'

With that final, decisive blow delivered with theatrical flair, the fighting around her died down into an eerie silence, broken only by the harsh sound of heavy breathing echoing off stone walls and the occasional slow, wet drip of something thick and viscous hitting the dungeon floor.

"I think I'm beginning to regret tracing that second sword for you." The familiar baritone of Shirou Emiya drifted from behind her, carrying that tone of permanent exasperation laced with dry sarcasm—something he liberally employed when bantering with the three women who'd arrived in this reality alongside him.

She turned towards the sole human male in their eclectic group, her amber-brown eyes finding him as he wiped his face with what looked like someone's discarded cloth. Blood and viscera coated one side of his body.

Marin looked around, suddenly becoming acutely aware of the aftermath of her enthusiastic combat style. There was quite a large perimeter of conspicuously empty space around her, as if she'd become the eye of a particularly violent storm. Goblins, house-elves, and centaurs kept their distance, their expressions ranging from impressed to mildly terrified. One goblin—she thought his name was Griphook, or maybe Gornuk?—was staring at her with the kind of calculating respect usually reserved for apex predators. A house-elf had actually hidden behind a centaur's foreleg, enormous eyes peeking out with a mixture of awe and alarm.

'Oops,' she thought cheerfully. 'Maybe I got a teensy bit carried away there.'

She looked down at herself to properly assess the damage. Her clothes—well, she was wearing her normal jogging outfit, the comfortable one she used daily. It was something she'd started mid-first year at university, after her doctor had given her that mortifying lecture about how she wouldn't be able to maintain her figure on a daily diet of convenience store bentos and energy drinks. The memory still stung her pride a little, but the results had been worth it.

Of course, she had some leather and plated armour protecting her chest, shins, and forearms—practical pieces that didn't restrict her movement too

much. Like her two weapons—well, one was definitely a sword, while the other looked like what would happen if a baseball bat had a torrid affair with a mediaeval mace and produced an absolutely evil-looking offspring—Shirou had traced these for her with his fascinating magic.

Right before entering the dungeon, Shirou had asked everyone who didn't have equipment what they needed.

Actually, it had been quite the spectacular sight to behold. He'd first recited a three-line poem in what sounded like English—though with his Japanese accent, it came out delightfully different. Very *chuuni-ppoi*, in Marin's opinion—like something straight from those edgy anime she'd binged in middle school. Then, as if reality itself was bending to his will, a veritable mountain of swords, axes, spears, shields, bows, and arrows had appeared from thin air, each weapon gleaming with deadly promise.

The gleaming steel was beautiful, certainly, and the craftsmanship was undeniable—each edge honed to perfection, each balance point precisely calculated. But Marin's heart yearned for something more dramatic, something that would make her feel like she'd stepped straight out of one of her favourite games.

Because during that purchasing event with that elderly child—the one everyone referred to as the "evil god" or Zelretch, who was also very *chuuni-ppoi* with his theatrical gestures and cryptic pronouncements that reminded her of every isekai trope, mad scientist, and senile wizard wrapped into one—Marin had realised exactly what she wanted. Not just regular swords or standard axes, but the kind of oversized implements of destruction that would make Guts jealous. Gigantic weapons. Statement pieces. The sort of armaments that announced "I am here to ruin your day" before you even swung them.

So she'd purchased aptitude skills with bastard swords, giant axes, and maces, spending her points with the giddy excitement of a child in a sweet shop. The system had been surprisingly accommodating, letting her stack proficiencies like she was min-maxing a character build.

She'd also purchased '**Monstrous Strength**,' which—like its name implied—gave her tremendous physical power. The kind of raw strength that made her muscles sing with potential, that let her lift weapons that should have been impossible for someone her size whilst maintaining her lithe form. It was quite necessary when wielding enormous weapons, after all. The sensation still thrilled her every time she flexed her fingers, feeling that supernatural power coiled beneath her skin like a sleeping dragon.

But combat wasn't the only thing she'd invested in. Alongside the martial aptitudes, she'd picked up *Magitech Fabrication*, *Composite Materials*, and *Wearable Systems Design*—skills that would let her blend cloth, leather, and metal with both technological and magical enhancements. The crafting side of her soul, the part that had spent countless hours hand-stitching cosplay costumes until her fingers bled, had practically vibrated with anticipation when she'd seen those options. Plus, the '**Monstrous Strength**' would probably come in handy when she started forging. Hammering metal required serious muscle, after all.

When she'd approached Shirou about it, bouncing on her heels with barely contained enthusiasm as she'd described her vision of wielding something truly spectacular, Illya had—for reasons utterly beyond Marin's comprehension—cried out 'Berserker' with peculiar enthusiasm. The word had burst from the silver-haired woman's lips like a battle cry, her crimson eyes gleaming with an intensity that made Marin's skin prickle. There was something in that gaze, something loaded with meaning that danced just beyond her understanding, as if Illya was seeing not Marin but someone else entirely, someone from a memory that carried fondness.

Whatever it signified, it made Shirou visibly shudder, his golden eyes darkening with what looked like remembered pain before he issued a forceful, emphatic rejection. The word 'No' had come out almost as a growl, his usual calm demeanour breaking for a second as he raised his brow at the clearly teasing Illya.

In the meantime, Shirou had traced the two weapons she was currently using, Prototype Hrunting and Prototype Naegling. The names alone had made her squeal internally—proper legendary weapon names! According to Shirou, speaking in that quietly knowledgeable way of his that made everything sound like ancient history come to life, these would later be the basis of the weapons the Legendary Hero Beowulf wielded. The thought made her grip them tighter, imagining herself as part of that grand tradition—

Though according to Shirou, she wouldn't be able to activate their abilities yet. They could explore something custom eventually—something suited to her combat style once she'd developed it further. He'd expressed that he planned to do the same for everyone. Their conversation had been pivoting to something of mutual interest when—

"Marin," Lefiya's gentle voice pulled her from her reverie, the blonde elf approaching with Rose at her side. Both women moved with that particular grace that came from experience, though Lefiya's seemed more practised, more deliberate—the economy of movement that came from years of dungeon delving. "I think it would be helpful if you use the mace to stun the opponent and use the sword's length to take advantage of the distance it could provide."

Marin nodded eagerly, her mind already spinning through combat scenarios like she was planning a particularly difficult raid encounter. The weight of the weapons in her hands felt right, felt powerful—but Lefiya was right. She'd been swinging with enthusiasm rather than strategy, treating this like a hack-and-slash game rather than a tactical encounter.

"Plus," Lefiya continued—she was currently assigned to train both her and Haruka, and also oversee everyone's overall team coordination, as she had the most dungeon-delving experience aside from Ryuu—"whenever certain organs get ruptured, it spoils the meat."

The practical consideration caught Marin off-guard for a moment. Right, they were harvesting these monsters, not just defeating them for experience points. Not that there was a levelling system here—though there had been those EXP-modifier options in the shop. From what she'd read in their descriptions,

they came with significant drawbacks, making everything more difficult in exchange for accelerated growth. She'd passed on those, as it seemed like a pointless purchase.

"And maybe try not to blurt out lines like 'Combo Finisher' mid-battle," Shirou added, a teasing lilt creeping into his voice.

Marin felt heat rush to her cheeks. She'd said that out loud? *She'd said that out loud.*

"Oh—oh yeah, that makes sense," she managed, knocking at her head with her knuckles in a gesture she'd picked up from too many anime, her blush deepening as the full embarrassment of the situation sank in. She grinned widely anyway, refusing to let it dampen her spirits, and continued to listen to whatever advice Lefiya provided. The elf's shoulders relaxed slightly at her enthusiasm, and Marin mentally congratulated herself on putting her at ease. She nodded along with regard to form and economy of movement, especially important for prolonged dungeon dives—storing each tip in her memory like she was downloading a strategy guide directly into her brain.

Out of the corner of her eye, Marin caught Shirou and Rose locking gazes, their heads shaking in perfect synchronisation—some kind of silent communication passing between them that she couldn't quite parse. Rose waved her wand in the group's general direction, the motion casual but precise, and Marin felt a strange tingling sensation wash over her skin.

She looked down at herself, a gasp of delight escaping as she realised her body was now completely clear of the blood and gore from the monsters she'd slain. The leather and plate that had been splattered with unspeakable fluids just moments ago now gleamed as if freshly polished. Even her skin felt clean, refreshed, as if she'd just stepped out of a shower.

"Oh, thank you, Rose!" Marin said brightly, her voice carrying that particular warmth she couldn't help but express when genuinely grateful.

Rose brushed at her bangs, looking away with pink dusting her pale cheeks. "It was no problem. I also applied an Impervious Charm to everyone."

Marin tilted her head to the side, her amber-brown eyes still locked with Rose's bright green, waiting expectantly.

"It's a spell that prevents liquid or dust from sticking to you," Rose clarified, and Marin could hear the fond exasperation creeping into her voice.

Marin's eyes practically sparkled as the implications hit her all at once. She bounced on her heels, the massive weapons suddenly forgotten as she closed the distance between herself and Rose with alarming speed, her body moving with that new supernatural grace she was still getting used to.

"Wait, wait, wait—can you make spells permanent on clothing? Or can clothing enchanted with this spell extend the effect towards the whole body? What happens if you jump into a body of water? What happens if you jump into a pool of dust?" The words tumbled out in an excited rush as Marin invaded Rose's personal space, grabbing both her hands. Rose's hands were surprisingly calloused for someone who looked so elegant, and warm—so wonderfully warm. "Like, actually enchant gear? Because I've been thinking—I bought all these crafting aptitudes, right? And I already made cute sketches for Ryuu. Would you also want me to send you ideas?"

Her mind was already racing ahead to possibilities. Enchanted fabric that never tore. Temperature-regulating leather for desert floors and frozen caverns alike. Self-cleaning mail that would save hours of maintenance. Cloaks with built-in notice-me-not effects for the scouts. Boots that muffled footsteps automatically. Gloves that enhanced grip strength. The potential was *endless*, and she hadn't even started considering what Shirou's magical metallurgy could add to the mix!

Rose took a half-step back, clearly overwhelmed by the sudden barrage of enthusiasm. Her emerald eyes darted to Shirou, seeking rescue perhaps, but he merely shrugged with that particular brand of unhelpfulness men seemed to perfect. The corner of his mouth twitched in what might have been amusement as he continued picking up the several bodies of the slain monsters, his movements efficient and practised.

Everyone had already started laying out tarpaulins on the dungeon floor—these were mostly conjured, Marin had learned, as they needed materials to physically separate the dead monster bodies from the dungeon's surface. Something about preventing the dungeon from reclaiming the materials too quickly, though the exact mechanics still escaped her. Apparently dungeons were possessive about their contents.

"I mean," Rose started carefully, her voice taking on that teaching tone Marin recognised from when she explained magic theory, "there are ways to make enchantments more permanent—or at least theoretically permanent—but—"

"Amazing!" Marin spun around, unable to contain her excitement, her honey-blonde hair whipping behind her in what she hoped was a suitably dramatic fashion as she gestured wildly at their ragtag group. "Because look at us! We're wearing whatever we could scrounge together. Shirou's been brilliant with the weapons and basic armour, but we need proper *inspired* adventure gear!"

Her mind was already cataloguing everyone's current equipment, noting where improvements could be made, where style could merge with function. The goblins were wearing serviceable but drab leather. The centaurs had practically nothing protecting their flanks. And don't even get her started on the house-elves—though admittedly, their magic seemed to protect them well enough.

She pulled out from her temporary bag of holding—another marvel that still made her giggle with delight every time she used it—what looked like a leather-bound journal. The pages were covered in sketches and notes, margins filled with measurements and material considerations. "See, I've been designing concepts based on everyone's aesthetics—of course, we'll integrate considerations for fighting styles later. But here are some preliminary sketches. Most are for Ryuu, since she's my roommate."

She'd spent hours on these designs as they'd talked that night—Marin explaining one of the manga Ryuu had inquired about, while Ryuu shared her experiences as an adventurer. The elf had been a surprisingly engaged

audience, asking thoughtful questions about both the stories and the sketches, and Marin had found herself warming to her reserved roommate more with every passing hour.

"You've been designing clothes for everyone?" Lefiya interrupted, her voice caught between bewilderment and something that sounded suspiciously like delight. There was a sparkle in her blue eyes that Marin recognised—the look of someone who'd just discovered a kindred spirit in unexpected places.

"Not just clothes—*adventure gear*." Marin's grin widened, feeling like she was finally able to contribute something uniquely hers to this insane situation.

"Think about it! Back home, I made cosplay outfits that had to look perfect *and* be functional enough to wear all day at Comiket in the August heat. This is just... the next level! And quite luckily, there's a lot of inspiration available."

The memories of those sweltering summer days flooded back—the press of bodies in crowded convention halls, the weight of elaborate costumes, the constant battle against sweat and structural failure. She'd learned through painful trial and error which fabrics breathed and which became portable saunas. Which adhesives held up under humidity and which gave up after an hour? How to reinforce seams that would be stressed by movement, how to hide practical elements beneath aesthetic flourishes. If she could make a Celestial Being pilot uniform survive twelve hours of summer Comiket while still looking camera-ready, she could *definitely* handle some dungeon gear—probably.

She was happy that all of her collection had travelled across dimensions with her—all her reference materials, her tools, her fabric samples. All she needed was a reliable power source, and she could start finding elements to mix and match from her existing designs.

She whirled back to Rose, practically vibrating with enthusiasm, her whole body thrumming with creative energy. "So what other spells could work? Temperature regulation? Self-repair? Oh! What about that Shield Charm you mentioned earlier—could that be woven into the fabric itself?"

"Theoretically..." Rose seemed to be warming to the idea despite herself. Marin could see it in the way her posture shifted, becoming less defensive and more engaged, her analytical mind clearly running through possibilities. "There are runic arrays that could be etched into armour, though I wouldn't really recommend placing them in woven material, as the array might fail if the threads fray or the weave stretches—"

Then Rose seemed to freeze, her words cutting off abruptly as her eyes locked onto a particular page in Marin's notebook. Her emerald gaze widened slightly, something flickering across her expression too fast for Marin to identify.

Marin didn't notice, too caught up in her enthusiasm as she babbled on with more ideas—something about incorporating colour-changing charms for camouflage, maybe some notice-me-not effects for the scouts, possibly even temperature-reactive dyes that could indicate environmental hazards—

"Rose, Shirou," Ryuu's calm voice cut through her rambling. "I've found the stairs to the next floor."

Marin stopped her babbling, her attention immediately shifting as she smiled and waved at Ryuu, genuine concern mixing with her enthusiasm. "Looks like you'll be scouting ahead again. Stay safe!"

As this was the first day of dungeon delving, they hadn't planned on tackling too many floors. In fact, today was just supposed to be a training day back at camp—Lefiya had been very clear about pacing themselves, about the dangers of overconfidence in unknown dungeons. Plus, this expedition was last-minute; there was little preparation, particularly for provisions.

But they'd wanted to map and scout out the first few floors for the following days, gathering information like this was an MMO and they were preparing for a serious raid. Rose, Shirou, and Ryuu would serve as their scouts, gathering information so the rest of them wouldn't be blindsided, while the rest would concentrate on clearing the floor of the monsters. Something about forcing the dungeon to invest enough energy to restore it later, lessening the chance of a

dungeon break—the explanation had involved a lot of terms Marin was still wrapping her head around.

Shirou straightened from his task of organising monster bodies onto the tarpaulins, the house-elves working alongside him with surprising efficiency. The fact that she was here, surrounded by fantastical creatures and slaying monsters with legendary weapons—it probably still hadn't fully sunk in for her. Part of her kept expecting to wake up back in her apartment, controller in hand, realising this had all been an incredibly vivid dream.

But the ache in her muscles was real. The weight of the weapons was real. And the excitement bubbling in her chest? That was definitely, absolutely, wonderfully real.

As the scouting trio headed towards the stairs to begin their reconnaissance, Marin turned her attention to Lefiya. The elf was smiling at her with what looked like fond resignation, her blue eyes darting left and right as if checking whether escape was possible.

Marin grabbed her arm before she could flee, her grip gentle but insistent, steering her towards a relatively clean section of floor. "So, I was thinking—for your combat gear specifically, we could do something that complements your magic casting. Loose sleeves for wand movement, but reinforced shoulders in case something gets close. And the colour scheme! We should absolutely work with greens and golds to complement your colouring—"

If she couldn't go exploring the dangerous lower floors yet, she could at least plan how to make everyone look absolutely fantastic while doing it. And judging by the way Lefiya's protests were becoming increasingly half-hearted, her captive audience might even be enjoying the experience.

This was going to be *so much fun*.

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END

Glossary: -ppoi (っぽい)

A Japanese suffix meaning "-ish," "-like," or "gives off the vibe of." It's casual, observational slang that suggests something resembles or has the feel of something else, without fully committing to saying it is that thing.

Examples:

- Ero-ppoi (エロっぽい) = "Seems erotic / has that lewd vibe"
- Chuuni-ppoi (中二っぽい) = "Seems chuuni / has that edgy eighth-grader vibe"
- Otona-ppoi (大人っぽい) = "Seems mature / adult-like"

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