

## **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 4.1 Depersonalization-Derealization**

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Grakkan Empire

System: Leafil | Planet: Unnamed Pair of Theta

Date: Grakkan Standard (GknS) | Local (Leafil) | Galactic Standard (GS)

'Revolution' / 'Prime Satellite' / 'Rotation' / 'Time'

GknS 34k6.rev-83% / 11.rev-93% / 301.rot-23% / 05:36:37

Local: 42k6.12.rev-63% / 9.rev-31% / 321.rot-20% / 07:39:00

GS 13k9.rev-51% / 9.rev-42% / 284.rot-83% / 31:31:54

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The ceiling greeted her the same way it had every morning for the past six weeks—wooden beams, faintly warped, catching the first grey light that seeped through the curtains. Sakura blinked. Blinked again. The grain of the timber was becoming familiar now, each knot and whorl a small landmark in the geography of waking.

She rubbed her eyes and swung her legs over the edge of the bed, taking care not to wake the warm body beside her. The wooden floor bit cold against

her bare soles, and she hissed through her teeth, curling her toes. Still rubbing the crust of sleep from the corners of her eyes, she fumbled blindly with her feet, searching for—

"Ms. Tohsaka, your inside slippers is being here."

The quiet voice rose from somewhere near her ankles. Sakura yawned, stretched both arms overhead, and arched her back until her spine gave a satisfying series of pops. Cuspey, small and precise, placed the fluffy white indoor slippers Rin had supplied directly in front of her feet. The brownie's enormous brown eyes blinked once, patient.

"Thank you, Cuspey." Another yawn swallowed the words halfway, her hand rising to cover her mouth out of reflex.

Sakura pulled out the stool tucked beneath the dresser she and Syr shared. The mirror above it caught her reflection—violet hair mussed from sleep, violet eyes still half-lidded, the collar of her silk camisole slightly askew. She watched the tips of her hair pale, bleeding from deep amethyst to bone-white in a slow tide that crept upward. Red tendrils—faintly luminous, like veins of heated glass—climbed from beneath the camisole's neckline, tracing the line of her throat and stopping just at its base.

Behind her, the air thickened.

A dark shape assembled itself from nothing. Ribbons of shadow knitted together into a silhouette that was almost humanoid, its edges limned in dull crimson. It stood a head shorter than Sakura and moved without sound. One tendril extended, delicate, and lifted the hairbrush from the dresser's surface.

The shadow began combing the left side of her hair. Gentle, methodical strokes.

Cuspey snapped her fingers. A small wooden stand materialised and floated into position behind Sakura, settling just beside the dark shape. The brownie teleported to its top in a blink, conjured a second brush, and set to work on the right side.

"Cuspey really be liking Ms. Tohsaka's soft hair."

In the mirror, the shadow paused mid-stroke. Its featureless head dipped—a slow, deliberate nod of agreement.

Sakura's lips curved. "Cuspey, you know, I've already told you several times to just call me Sakura, right?"

She kept her voice low. The reason stood—or rather, lay—reflected in the mirror behind the shadow.

Rin was sprawled across the bed in spectacular disarray, her sleeping body adapting to the fact that Sakura no longer occupied the other half. Her yellow pyjama top had ridden up during the night, baring her toned stomach and the sharp cut of one hipbone. One pant leg had bunched to mid-calf, exposing a long, slender leg that dangled off the mattress edge. Her mouth hung wide open. A thin white trail of dried drool traced a path from the corner of her lips to the pillow. Her sleep mask, which should have covered her eyes, perched uselessly on her forehead. Beneath it, her eyes were half-open—glassy, vacant, seeing nothing.

The snoring was impressive. Not loud, exactly, but persistent, with a wet rattle on the inhale that would have mortified Rin had she been conscious enough to hear it.

Sakura pressed her lips together against a laugh.

*'Probably another late night with Hermione.'*

Cuspey made a sound—a small, disapproving click of the tongue that carried decades of domestic authority despite coming from a creature barely sixty centimetres tall.

"Cuspey and Winky be finding the two sleeping in the laboratory." Cuspey's brush strokes did not falter, but her voice gained an edge. "We be floating them to their rooms and changing their clothes but Mistress Tohsaka told Cuspey that she be sleeping with other Mistress Tohsaka tonight."

An exasperated sigh punctuated the report.

"Thank you, Cuspey. You should scold them later when they wake up."

Half-joking. Only half.

Sakura sent a mental command to the shadow. It released the brush, drifted across the room in perfect silence, gathered the blanket Rin had kicked aside, and drew it up to her sister's chin with the care of someone tucking in a child. Rin's snoring hitched, resumed, deepened.

Cuspey gave Sakura an earnest nod and continued brushing.

In what the rest of the group had unanimously dubbed the "Unholy Alliance," Rin and Hermione regularly lost themselves in research for stretches that defied biological need. Rose and Shirou had both admitted—separately, wearing identical expressions of weary resignation—that leaving the two of them alone in a room with the inherited books and research materials had been a catastrophic miscalculation.

They had been alone at first, of course. Then they saw the sheer scale of the undertaking. Thousands of volumes. Centuries of accumulated magical theory from multiple traditions, multiple realities, multiple languages. Within a day they had recruited roughly a third of the available brownies to sort, document, and organise.

Even then, the project had taken more than twice the expected time. That was Marin's fault.

Marin, fresh from the advance team's expedition into the dungeon's next biome—mercifully lush grasslands, after weeks of spider-infested corridors—had mentioned offhandedly that she wished she could read the books. She didn't speak or understand English. Or French. Or any language from their native reality aside from *Nihongo*.

This had sparked another general meeting.

Which, like most of their unplanned meetings, had promptly devolved into a cascade of side-tracks, off-topic discussions, magical theory-crafting, three separate arguments about translation methodology, and a twenty-minute digression where Marin taught everyone how to say "I love eroge" in *Nihongo* whilst Lefiya went progressively redder.

It had also, somehow, resulted in everyone learning each other's favourite comfort foods. Sakura still wasn't sure how that particular tangent had started.

Through sheer collective effort, they had dragged the meeting back on track. The consensus: originals would be preserved by whoever had inherited them. Each book would then receive three translated copies—English, *Nihongo*, and Koine—available to all thirteen of them. A later phase would determine what could be shared more broadly.

Koine—the language spoken by Ryu, Syr, Haruhime, and Lefiya in their home reality—had been a fortunate discovery. It existed in Sakura's own reality too, though as a dead language. An ancient Greek dialect, essentially. The translation charm could work with it, but required a living speaker as a medium.

That speaker had been Vasia, one of the leaders of the sirens. The sirens maintained Koine as a living tongue through an unbroken tradition of oral history—elaborate song-cycles performed by the mother of each reigning matriarch. When the matriarch bore an heir, her own mother would begin training the new grandmother to serve as the coven's orator. The chain stretched back further than anyone could count.

With Vasia as the bridge, they had translated all of the Koine books—mostly from Lefiya's inherited familia library—into English, and all of the English books into Koine.

The problem lay in the further translations. Vasia's English was functional but imperfect, and a particular strain of colloquialism separated the Koine spoken by the sirens from the Koine spoken by the Orario contingent. The gap resembled the difference between British English and the English spoken in

Southeast Asia—the same language, technically, but shot through with divergent idiom and cadence. Everything had been roughly translated first. Optimisation could come later.

The translating work had consumed two and a half weeks of four-hour daily sessions. The rest of each day went to other projects—Gabrielle and Illya's portkey beacon, agricultural wards, dungeon operations, equipment fabrication. The usual.

Then Marin had, once again, lobbed a grenade into the Unholy Alliance's sense of accomplishment.

If colloquialism and double-translation were the problem, Marin had asked with perfect innocence, why hadn't they just translated everything into Galactic Basic first? Everyone understood it perfectly thanks to Zelretch's blessing. From that clean intermediary, they could produce flawless translations into English, *Nihongo*, and Koine. Then destroy the Galactic Basic versions.

The idea of keeping only a single Galactic Basic copy had been suggested at the very first meeting and had been immediately, violently vetoed by Rin and Hermione in one of their rare moments of complete accord.

Zelretch had blessed them with the ability to speak and understand every language in this reality. Every language in this dimension—which, unfortunately, confirmed that Earth was not part of this plane of existence.

Though during one of the meeting's many tangential spirals, Hermione had theorised a possible technicality. Perhaps the blessing applied to all currently existing languages. During their review of Ryuu's memories from the Weapon fight—harrowing footage, frankly traumatising to watch even second-hand—the goddess Hestia had mentioned the word Sloan. Hermione had seized on it immediately. The Sloan Great Wall was a known supercluster of galaxies in their home reality, spanning roughly 1.5 billion light-years. If the Sloan structure existed here, Hermione reasoned, then the Laniakea supercluster might exist as well. Which meant either they occupied the same

reality at a different point in time, or the cosmological architecture was shared between dimensions.

Either Earth had not yet begun, or it had long since ended. Either way, the languages of their home planet had not been included in Zelretch's gift.

Sakura slapped both hands against her cheeks.

The sharp sting snapped through her derailing thoughts. Cuspey leapt sideways on the wooden stand, enormous eyes going wider.

"S-sorry, Cuspey." Sakura lowered her hands, palms warm against her stinging skin. "Just keeping myself on track."

To conclude the thought properly: they had avoided Aurebesh—the writing system of Galactic Basic—as a security measure. If outsiders ever infiltrated their group, the secrets of their respective realities would remain locked behind languages no one in this galaxy could read. They also planned to learn each other's languages, creating additional layers of covert communication. That wouldn't protect against people who originated from their own realities, of course. But it was a start.

Meanwhile, a smaller team of brownies—mostly those recovering from minor injuries or between assignments—had begun re-translating everything using Marin's suggested method. The Unholy Alliance had accepted the correction with remarkably poor grace.

Sakura changed into the dark casual midi dress Cuspey laid out—collared, fastened with a column of buttons down the front, the fabric falling to just below her knees. She thanked both the brownie and the shadow, which inclined its head before dissolving back into formless ribbons that folded neatly into nothing. The white at her hair's tips bled back to violet. The red tendrils at the base of her neck dimmed and receded, sinking beneath her skin.

"Cuspey, let Rin sleep a few more hours. Just let her wake naturally."

"Yes, Ms. Toh—"

Sakura gave her a pointed look.

"Yes, Mistress Sakura." Cuspey's ears drooped with the correction.

Sakura sighed. *'Baby steps.'*

She stepped into the corridor and eased the door shut behind her. Turned. The kitchen was empty of people but not of evidence. The aroma of baking bread filled the space—yeasty, warm, rich enough to taste on the back of the tongue. Three pots sat on the hob, their contents simmering at various intensities. On the counter beside the stove, a stainless steel pan held cooked elbow macaroni in a light sheen of oil. Next to it, a sheet pan displayed crispy fried eggs alongside an assortment of processed meats—ham, spam, and sausages arranged in neat rows.

Sakura moved closer, examining each pot. The first held softly simmering crushed tomatoes, their surface barely trembling. The second was a tall stock pot filled with starchy water, steam still escaping in lazy curls though the burner beneath it had already been extinguished. The third contained a creamy white soup tinged faintly yellow—chicken, by the smell. Bits of carrot and peas bobbed gently in the broth.

She fished two teaspoons from the drawer below. The tomato tasted bright, well-seasoned, the acidity balanced. The soup was rich without heaviness, the chicken flavour clean. Both were done.

Sakura turned off the remaining heating hubs. Cuspey materialised beside her—silent, efficient—and applied stasis charms to all three pots and both pans. The gentle shimmer settled over each vessel like frost on glass.

"Oh good, no one was here to apply the stasis charm and I didn't want to interrupt the brownies outside who were cooking for the centaurs, merfolk, and other brownies. So I just placed the soup on the lowest setting."

Haruhime emerged from her room wearing a blue kimono, dabbing a hand towel against the perspiration at her temples and throat. Her golden fox ears were perked high, still flushed pink at their bases. The long plush tail behind her swayed with each step.

"Haruka, Marin, and I just finished our morning exercise and magecraft training," Haruhime explained as she set a kettle on the hob to boil.

"Where did you get the processed meat?" From what Sakura recalled, the only processed foods in the supplies Rose and the others had inherited were mainly ham, sausage, blood pudding, and baked beans. Spam and Vienna-style canned sausages were unexpected.

"Oh, that—Marin gave us the canned goods. She said she found them in her temporary bag of holding when she was organising her room."

Everyone except Sakura had purchased either *Inherit Previous Life's Assets*, *Inherit Claimable*, *Unclaimed Inheritance*, or both. Those without existing expandable storage—unlike the witches, who already owned mokeskin bags—had received temporary bags of holding. According to the others, these would last approximately eighteen galactic months.

Speaking of which.

Sakura prompted *General Knowledge*. The information arrived not as text or sound but as a pressure behind her eyes, unfolding in dense conceptual layers that her mind translated into understanding.

She mentally raised an eyebrow.

The galaxy's dating system was, to put it charitably, a convoluted mess. The galaxy itself was carved up amongst a myriad of governing bodies that ranged from interstellar empires to single-system polities. On a good day, these entities tolerated each other's existence. On a bad day, they conducted active military skirmishes against one another—whilst still maintaining membership in a centralised third-party body called the Consortium Primaris.

The Consortium Primaris functioned as the galaxy's equivalent to the United Nations. It possessed some authority over certain shared domains—trade routes, communication standards, border disputes—but could not claim absolute sovereignty over any member government. What it did possess was considerable military leverage: a tithe of genetic material collected from each member nation, which the Consortium used to manufacture test-tube-grown soldiers in the millions within months. They deployed this capacity whenever skirmishes between galactic nations threatened to escalate into actual war.

Back to the calendar. The system comprised four sections, always presented in the same order: Revolution / Satellite / Rotation / Time. Each section was divided into three or four parts depending on whether one was planet-locked or travelled between systems like military personnel, mercenaries, and merchants. The four parts, always in the same sequence: Galactic Standard | Capital Standard | Prime | Local. The Local section was redundant for anyone who never left their home system, as its values mirrored Prime.

Sakura let the example wash through her processing.

They were currently on the twin planet to Leafil Prime—or Theta, as the locals called it. The rightmost value in each section gave the Prime/Local date:

15k26.16 / 70.1k02.54 / 68.9k3.70 | 8.32 / 31.86 / 46.9 | 58.4 / 223.02 / 326.27  
| 05:36:37

Following the framework: Theta was in its 68,903rd revolution around its star. It had completed approximately seventy per cent of that current revolution. The primary satellite—which orbited both Theta and its twin—was on its forty-sixth revolution and about ninety per cent through its current cycle. And the planet itself was on its 326th rotation, roughly a quarter of the way through a full day.

Prime and Local dates always tracked the Prime planet of a given star system, following its actual revolutions and rotations. Galactic Standard and Capital Standard were fixed reference values—necessary because the flagship planets of both the Consortium and the Grakkan Empire were highly

developed ecumenopoleis. The mass of infrastructure stacked above sea level on those worlds had subtly slowed their rotation over millennia. Negligible on the scale of years. Devastating on the scale of thousands. Relativistic effects compounded the drift further.

Consistent timekeeping across a galaxy—especially for communications and logistics—demanded standardised baselines divorced from any single planet's wobble.

Sakura pinched the bridge of her nose. The headache arrived right on schedule.

"Sakura?"

A hand waved in front of her face. Sakura's eyes refocused. Haruhime stood close, green eyes concerned, one fox ear canted sideways.

"Oh—sorry. I was assimilating something from *General Knowledge*." Sakura shook her head, trying to dislodge the dense tangle of temporal mathematics. "Do you know who'll be joining us? Cuspey and Winky found Rin and Hermione passed out again in their lab, so they'll probably wake up late."

"Shirou, together with Rose, Marin, Gabrielle, Ryuu, and Syr went to the dungeon to challenge the Weapon on the twentieth floor just as it spawns. Rin and Hermione were demanding more of those blackstones the stage and pillars were made of." Haruhime ticked off names on her fingers. "Maybe Haruka and Lefiya? I'm not sure about Illya—she's been busy in her lab as well, tending to her surprise guest. She too was demanding more blackstones."

"Good morning, Sakura."

A freshly showered Haruka emerged from her room, a towel wrapped around her head whilst her long, pointed elvish ears jutted out from the sides. Behind her, Lefiya—also looking freshly washed, her pale gold hair still slightly damp at the ends—raised a hand in greeting.

Haruhime stood and brought out four bowls from the cupboard. "Is Cuspey still here?"

A faintly visible shimmer passed over the stove and trays as the stasis charms dissolved.

"Thank you, Cuspey!" Haruhime called out, already turning the hob on beneath the still-hot stock pot of starchy water.

"I heard something about assimilating from *General Knowledge*." Haruka settled onto a stool, her elven ears—which Sakura now suspected could pick up a whisper through solid walls—swivelling slightly.

The telltale sign followed immediately. Haruka's gaze drifted upward, her expression going distant. Lefiya's did the same. Haruhime's fox ears flattened as her eyes glazed.

One by one, they all pinched the bridge of their nose.

"I hate that," Lefiya declared, her voice carrying genuine grievance.

Grunts of agreement from every corner of the kitchen.

"Anyway, Sakura—are you finally joining us in next week's raid?" Haruka asked as Haruhime ladled portions of the creamy chicken soup into each bowl, then used a smaller ladle to add a heap of the crushed tomatoes.

"Yes, actually. Rin cleared me two weeks ago. I even accompanied her to the sixth floor a few days ago."

Haruhime filled a stainless steel basket with the cooked macaroni and dunked it into the pot of starchy water to reheat. Once warmed, she divided portions equally amongst the four bowls. One placed in front of each of them, the tray of fried items set in the middle where everyone could reach.

Haruhime was about to sit when she remembered the bread. She pulled the two loaves from the oven—golden, crusted, fragrant—and placed them on a wire rack to cool before finally settling into her chair.

The reason for Sakura's extended inactivity sat in the hollow of her chest. Not metaphorically—the Tohsaka-Edelfelt crest, its circuits branching through her like a second nervous system, still sent the occasional pulse of heat through her sternum when she moved too quickly.

Rin had inherited the Edelfelt family's sorcery trait—Ore Scales—which allowed her to duplicate her family crest in its entirety and transplant the copy into another family member. Technically she could place the copy into anyone. The rejection rate would simply skyrocket. Blood mattered. Shared magical lineage mattered more.

Shirou had been lucky. The Emiya family crest had been applied to him during the transfer, integrated by Zelretch's system rather than placed into a temporary bag of holding. Lucky, because Shirou was only Kiritsugu's adoptive son. The crest should have rejected him outright.

They had also discovered that Shirou was originally from the Muramasa family—he had inherited that crest too. No one in Sakura's family records showed any Muramasa clan member requesting permission from the Second Owner—the Tohsaka head—to establish a workshop within Fuyuki. Why Shirou and his birth family had been in the city during the Fourth Holy Grail War remained a mystery.

It also explained the abnormal number of natural circuits within him. Twenty-seven circuits was not normal for a first-generation magus. Even Aoko Aozaki, the Fifth Magic wielder herself, possessed only ten natural circuits, and she came from an established lineage.

"Good. I think we're planning on pushing through until the forty-first this time, though we might push further." Lefiya speared a piece of ham with her fork.

"Yes, the Weapon on the twentieth is a troubling sign. And it never fails to respawn every week." Haruka added, her voice measured.

A month and a half had passed since Shirou, Rose, and Ryou faced that particular horror. The memory footage alone—reviewed during the

debriefing—had been enough to turn Sakura's stomach cold. Shirou's left torso charred to the bone. The Weapon reforming itself. The voices.

At least subsequent respawns of the Weapon were not as strong as the original. The creature that greeted each weekly challenge team was dangerous, certainly, but it lacked the raw intelligence and adaptive fury of that first incarnation. Rose, Shirou, and Ryuuk had refined the encounter into something approaching routine—if anything involving a dungeon-born abomination with regenerative capability and area-denial magic could be called routine.

The troubling part was what the Weapon's existence implied. *General Knowledge* was unambiguous: Weapons were biological defence mechanisms birthed only in dungeons exceeding one hundred floors, and only in those artificially prevented from entering a dungeon break state. This dungeon's first Weapon had appeared on floor twenty.

Something was down there. Deep beneath them. Something that simultaneously fed the dungeon energy and held it in check, preventing the catastrophic overflow that should have occurred long ago.

Silence settled over breakfast. Spoons clinked against bowls. Haruhime's fox tail had gone still, curled around the leg of her stool. Haruka's elvish ears drooped. Lefiya stared into her soup.

Sakura chewed a piece of sausage and swallowed without tasting it. The creamy chicken broth cooled in her bowl.

None of them spoke the thought aloud. None of them needed to.

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End

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