

Fate/Knights of the Heroic Throne

Chapter Intro

Human order: Restored.

History: Preserved.

But what of the ones who made it possible?

Heroic Spirits—echoes of legends, bound to vessels, fated to fade without remembrance.

But a wish was made.

One last miracle from humanity's saviour—
that her fallen companions might live once more.

Story Starts

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Chapter 7.2 -

The Weight of a Name

The door clicked shut behind him with the faintest whisper of plasteel against frame. Shirou stood in the corridor for a moment, barefoot on cool tile, letting the stillness settle over him like cold water. The hallway stretched in both directions—four bedrooms on this floor, the fresher at the far end, the stairwell down to the kitchen at the other. Pale light from the corridor's single glowpanel cast everything in amber half-tones.

A door opened to his left.

Rabbine emerged from her room with the gracelessness of someone who had been conscious for far too long. Her hair, usually arranged in precise twin buns, hung loose around her shoulders in dark waves. She wore an oversized tunic that fell past her thighs—one of Padmé's, if the embroidered hem was anything to go by—and her amber-gold eyes carried the glazed luminosity of sustained sleeplessness.

She stretched. Both arms overhead, spine arching, a yawn splitting her face wide enough that Shirou heard her jaw pop. Her bare feet padded against the tile as she shuffled sideways, registering his presence with the delayed processing of the truly exhausted.

"Emiya."

"Ondel."

Both were delivered in monotone. Both were followed by the same quiet snort that had punctuated this exchange for the better part of two years. It had started as genuine awkwardness—Shirou's ingrained habit of reaching for the family name first, a reflex from a country that no longer existed in a reality that had never contained it—and Rabbine had found it endlessly amusing. The formality had calcified into ritual, the ritual into affection. Neither of them bothered to explain it to anyone else.

She smiled at him. Then looked down at herself. Then back at him. Her expression cycled through several options before settling on something approximating sheepish acknowledgement.

"Long night?"

"Mmm." Another yawn. "The Senator's office runs on Coruscant time. Three-hour differential with Theed, which means his legislative briefings end at—" She squinted, performing arithmetic that clearly pained her. "—roughly now."

Rabbine suppressed another yawn. "I can't wait for the Coruscant Senate Building's day cycle to coincide with Theed's day cycle again."

Shirou nodded. The coordination work with Palpatine's office had been Padmé's responsibility once, handled during the late hours when the rest of the household slept. Since her transition into full-time Amidala duties—public appearances, council sessions, the endless machinery of governance—the burden had shifted to Rabbine. A natural handoff. Palpatine had been the one to recommend her to Padmé's circle in the first place, and the Senator

apparently trusted her with sensitive scheduling and legislative correspondence.

Shirou moved towards the small caf machine they kept running at all hours—everyone's schedules were too erratic for anything less than constant readiness.

"You should sleep."

"Probably." Rabbine rubbed one eye with her knuckle, then dropped her hand. "But if I sleep now, I'll wake at fourteen hundred, and then I won't sleep tonight, and then tomorrow I'll be useless for the onboarding sessions." She tilted her head, a loose curl falling across her cheek. "I'd rather just... take it easy today. Reset the cycle. Could I have a caf?"

"No milk, no sugar," Shirou said, already reaching for a second cup. The machine dispensed both in quick succession—Rabbine's black, his own with a measure of milk. He handed her the mug without looking.

She brightened—marginally, in the way that only the promise of caffeine could illuminate a face running on fumes. She took a sip, set the mug on the living area table, and disappeared back into her room. Thirty seconds later she emerged wearing sandals, reclaimed her caf, and fell into step beside him as they descended the stairwell.

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The kitchen was already alive.

Isar Pellan stood at the far prep station, running a blade through a mound of fresh herbs with the metronomic precision Shirou had spent three weeks drilling into him. Tirsa Calven occupied the station nearest the walk-in cooler, portioning protein into standardised cuts, her datapad propped against a container of brine.

"Morning," Shirou said.

Isar raised the knife in brief salute without breaking rhythm. "Boss."

"Ovens are at temp," Tirsa added, not looking up from her portioning.

"Checked the yeast cultures. Batch three's ahead of schedule."

"Good. I'll proof the main doughs and get first bread in."

Shirou moved through the kitchen with the fluid economy of long practice. Apron from the hook by the door—the grey one, not the black; the black one had a grease stain he hadn't yet attacked with solvent. Hands washed. Station cleared and wiped. He pulled the fermented doughs from the proofer, pressing fingertips into each to test elasticity. Two were perfect—the spring-back that meant the gluten had developed just so. The third needed another twenty minutes. He shaped the first two into loaves, scoring the tops with a lame in quick, decisive strokes, and slid them into the preheated oven.

The heat bloomed against his face. Familiar. Grounding.

He pulled out his holopad and began the morning inventory. Flour stocks—adequate for four days. Tip-yip shipment due tomorrow from the southern farms. Tuber reserves running lower than he liked; he'd need to adjust the order with Garron. Spice rack: thysse bark, portaak leaf, tyruun, and lammas were running thin; whole peppercorns were adequate; the imported basil analogue he'd sourced from an offworld supplier was nearly depleted. He made notes, cross-referencing yesterday's sales data and adjusting quantities with small, precise taps.

Rabbine had settled herself at one of the unused prep stations near the corridor entrance, legs crossed on the stool, both hands wrapped around her caf. She watched him work over the rim of her mug with the contented stillness of a cat that had found the warmest spot in the house.

He also needed to contact that botanist — the offworld specialist who'd visited last month, the one who'd claimed she could bioengineer plants to produce whatever flavour compound, aroma, or fat-soluble extract he required. She'd offered to make the resulting cultivars proprietary to The Empty Pantry. Shirou

had been sceptical. Then she'd handed him a leaf that tasted exactly like basil and he'd asked for her contact details on the spot.

"Are you doing a supply run this morning?"

"Riverside market. Need to restock a few things and drop provisions at our stalls." He swiped to the logistics screen. "Also have a delivery for Garron. He's running product to the Keren and Moenia outlets today."

"Can I come?"

Shirou glanced up from the holopad. Rabbine's expression had shifted—still tired, but something warmer and more deliberate had entered her eyes.

"You're running on no sleep."

"I told you, I'm resetting. Fresh air helps." She took a sip of caf. "Besides, I haven't been to the riverside market since Tsabin dragged me there three weeks ago, and she spent the entire time arguing with a spice merchant about pepper grades. I'd like to actually enjoy it."

"It's a supply run, not a sightseeing trip."

"It can be both." The dimple appeared on her left cheek. "Call it a date."

Shirou held her gaze for a beat longer than necessary. Rabbine held it right back, amber eyes steady above the rim of her mug, the steam curling between them.

"Get dressed properly. We leave in fifteen minutes. I'll bring the speeder round—no need for you to walk to the bay."

"Excellent." She slid off the stool. "But I think the walk might help with my wakefulness."

She padded back towards the stairwell, caf in hand, and Shirou returned to his dough.

The third batch was ready.

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Pre-dawn had painted the river in shades of teal by the time they reached the market. Shirou guided the laden speeder through the waking streets of Theed, the cargo bed stacked with sealed thermocrates and supply containers. Rabbine sat in the passenger seat with her second caf, hair pinned up in a loose knot that bore no resemblance to her usual precise styling. She wore a simple blue wrap dress and flat boots—practical, understated, the kind of outfit that made her look younger than her years rather than older.

She'd been quiet for the first few minutes of the drive, content to watch the city slide past. Then, as they turned along the canal road and the market's colourful awnings came into view:

"Do you ever miss it?"

"Miss what?"

"The silence. Just you and Arturia, cooking for two."

Shirou considered the question. The speeder hummed beneath them.

"No."

Rabbine waited. Patient. One of her better qualities—she understood that silence after a monosyllable often yielded more than a follow-up question.

"Before Naboo, I used to cook for a far larger group. And they were far noisier than you lot."

"Oh—that group. What was it called again? Chaldea?"

"Mm."

They'd agreed—he and Arturia—that the specifics of their origin needn't be shared, even with those closest to them. But the people they'd known, the bonds they'd forged, the shape of the life they'd lived before the wish delivered them here—those they spoke about freely. The stories only required editing,

not erasure. Strip away the Noble Phantasms and the Singularities, replace "Heroic Spirit" with "colleague," and most of it translated well enough. Cú Chulainn became a sparring partner with a bad attitude and a talent for fishing. Musashi became a swordswoman with an insatiable appetite, reminding everyone of Arturia. Mash became the youngest member of the team who'd grown up faster than anyone had wanted her to.

The rest—the impossible parts—took care of themselves. Everyone on Naboo already assumed that Shirou and Arturia were Force-sensitive. The Jedi were public knowledge, their abilities well known if shrouded in mystery, and when people witnessed feats that defied normal explanation, the Force was the only framework available. Even Arturia's mana burst—the one that had grounded a slaver's vessel during the festival—had been folded into that assumption without resistance. An unusually powerful Force ability, people said. Rare, certainly. Unheard of, perhaps. But not impossible.

Shirou and Arturia had let the misunderstanding stand. It was easier than the truth, and infinitely more believable.

"Do you miss them? Do you think they also escaped your planet's destruction?"

Shirou smiled. "I'm sure they're fine, wherever they are."

"Wait—did you imply we are noisy?"

Shirou could already see Rabbine puffing her cheeks in his peripheral vision.

"I invoke my right against self-incrimination."

Pinch.

They pulled into the market's loading zone. Shirou killed the engine and began unloading thermocrates onto a repulsor cart—ten credits to rent, which he still considered extortionate—whilst Rabbine helped where she could, steadying containers as he stacked them. She lacked the physical strength for the heavier crates, but her spatial awareness was sharp. She anticipated where

he'd place each one and positioned herself accordingly, clearing paths and holding lids.

Competent. Always competent. That was the thing about Rabbine that made it easy to forget she was the youngest of the group.

He delivered the first batch to their riverside stall, where the morning shift workers received the goods with practised efficiency. Rabbine lingered at the counter, sampling a flatbread that had come out of the overnight proof.

Then they walked the market together.

Shirou purchased herbs and spices from a Gungan trader—one of several who'd begun setting up in Theed's markets since Padmé had made rebuilding relations with the Gungans a priority early in her reign. Rabbine haggled—successfully, to Shirou's surprise—for a crate of freshwater greens. When he raised an eyebrow, she shrugged.

"Coruscant. When you're a broke university student, you pick up a few skills."

"Noted. I'll bring you along next time."

The dimple reappeared.

At the far end of the market, Garron Velassis waited beside his repulsorlift vessel with the punctuality Shirou had come to expect. The older man stood with his arms folded across his broad chest, greying hair raked back from his weathered face, a cup of caf in hand.

"Shirou." Garron clasped his forearm in greeting. "And you've brought company."

"Garron, you know Rabbine."

"I do." Garron's expression warmed a fraction. "How's my daughter doing?"

It had been Arturia, of all people, who'd made the connection. When Lessa had expressed interest in public service—inspired, Shirou suspected, by too many late-night conversations with Arturia about duty and purpose—Arturia

had introduced her to the handmaidens. Lessa had enrolled at the academy, begun volunteering with Padmé's staff, and proven herself capable enough that the others had started positioning her for a formal role. With Padmé's re-election looking increasingly likely, they needed to expand the corps. The girls had taken to Lessa quickly—it helped that she was bright, eager, and had inherited her father's stubborn work ethic.

Her parents knew she worked for the palace, closely with the Queen's retinue. They did not know the Queen's true identity beneath the paint—that knowledge was restricted to those inside the circle. But Garron and Miala had been told enough to give informed consent when Lessa moved into palace quarters. Garron had taken some convincing.

Rabbine's face brightened.

"Lessa's been brilliant. She's been shadowing our operations team, and she picks things up faster than anyone I've seen."

"She's been happy," Garron said, finding his words carefully. "I hear it in our nightly holocalls. Happier than we've seen in a long while. All she talks about is the work and the girls."

"She's being formally onboarded this week," Rabbine continued, and there was genuine warmth in her voice that Shirou didn't think was manufactured. "As a full handmaiden."

"Oh—I thought that wasn't happening for another few weeks?" Shirou glanced over as he transferred thermocrates to a secured cargo container on Garron's vessel. The stock the other riverside outlets would need.

"Moved up the timeline. She's ready."

Garron's wife, Miala, waved from the vessel's cabin and offered them both breakfast. Shirou declined with genuine regret, though he told them the standing invitation held—come by the restaurant whenever, food was on him.

Meanwhile, Garron's jaw tightened—not with displeasure, but with the strain of a father processing that his youngest was no longer entirely his.

"She'll do well," Garron said, gruff. "Stubborn enough for three people and twice as clever. Just..." He met Shirou's eyes. "If something happens—"

"Arturia and I will always have their backs."

Garron held the look for a moment, then nodded—a single downward motion that carried the full weight of paternal trust reluctantly extended. He clapped Shirou on the shoulder and turned to his vessel.

Shirou understood the worry. Politics made enemies.

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The Empty Pantry came into view as they rounded the final corner. The morning sun had climbed high enough to catch the restaurant's signage, warm light spilling across the polished exterior and throwing long, clean shadows against the pavement. Through the front windows, Shirou could see movement—blonde hair catching the light, the precise choreography of someone setting tables with military efficiency.

Arturia was already on the floor.

She wore the frilled black-and-white uniform that Tessari and Shirou's alleged "hidden preferences" had conspired to create, her hair pinned back with meticulous care, her posture radiating the severity that preceded opening hours. Chairs were aligned at identical angles to their tables. Settings were squared—fork tines parallel, napkins folded into precise triangles, water glasses centred on their coasters with the kind of geometric exactitude that would have made a military surveyor weep.

The chalk menu board by the entrance had been updated in her precise hand, each letter weighted and deliberate, the specials listed with the gravitas of royal decrees.

Rabbine quickened her step. She pushed through the entrance before Shirou had finished parking the speeder, the door chiming softly as it swung inward. He heard the sound through the open frame—the soft impact of a body colliding with another, and Arturia's startled exhale, sharp and clipped, the noise of someone whose breath had been squeezed out of them by affection rather than violence.

Shirou left the staff to handle the inventory and entered through the back.

By the time he came through the service door, Rabbine had wrapped herself around Arturia from behind, chin hooked over the shorter woman's shoulder.

Arturia stood rigid for precisely two seconds. Her spine locked, her weight shifted to the balls of her feet, and her golden-yellow eyes flicked sideways with the flat, evaluative clarity of a predator identifying threat. Then her shoulders dropped a fraction of an inch. Her jaw unclenched. The fingers that had twitched toward a blade that was no longer there relaxed against the edge of a table setting she had just perfected.

"Good morning, Rabbine."

"Morning, Ria." Rabbine squeezed tighter, pressing her cheek into the stiff fabric of the uniform's collar. "You'll be opening in a minute, right? I want to order breakfast for the staff and the girls."

"Fifteen minutes. And you will order properly, at a table, like a civilised person." There was, Shirou noted, no real bite in Arturia's voice. Just the shape of authority, worn smooth by repetition, comfortable as an old glove.

"Obviously." Rabbine released her and dropped into the nearest booth with the boneless relief of someone whose legs had finally filed a formal complaint. She sank against the cushion, her body folding into the seat as though the booth had been specifically designed to receive the weight of exhausted young women. Her amber-gold eyes were half-lidded, and she smiled up at Arturia. "The usual spread? And extra of those little egg things Shirou does? Tsabin inhaled four of them last time."

"I shall relay your request." Arturia smoothed her apron where Rabbine's embrace had creased it, her fingers pressing the fabric flat with precise, prim strokes—the small restoration of order that she performed instinctively, the way another person might tuck a strand of hair behind their ear. She turned to Shirou, who nodded.

Then, noticing the shadows beneath Rabbine's eyes, Arturia set a cup of caf on the table without comment. Rabbine received it with a smile wide enough to crease her whole face.

Shirou moved into the kitchen. The warmth hit him first—the dry, yeasty heat of bread pulled from the oven not long ago, underlaid with the sharper scent of fresh herbs and citrus. Isar and Tirsa had the stations humming: bread cooling on racks in neat golden rows, prep containers filled and labelled in Tirsa's careful script, the morning's mise en place laid out with the precision he demanded.

Everything in its place. Everything accounted for. This, at least, was exactly as it should be.

The fryer in the dining area was a few minutes from optimal temperature. Shirou washed his hands, tied a fresh apron over his chest, retrieved the container of frozen scotch eggs—half-cooked, needing only a flash fry—and carried them out to the front.

The employee entrance swung open.

Tsabin entered sideways, shoulder-first, juggling a travel mug and a stack of datapads that threatened to cascade from the crook of her elbow with every step. Her short brunette hair was still damp from the fresher, darker at the temples where the water hadn't fully evaporated, and she'd dressed in one of her functional-yet-stylish combinations—dark trousers cut close at the ankle, a fitted jacket in charcoal that sat across her toned shoulders with deliberate precision, boots with enough heel to suggest authority without sacrificing the ability to sprint.

She looked, Shirou thought distantly, like someone who had gotten exactly four hours of sleep and had decided through sheer force of will that this would be sufficient.

"Morning, Ria."

Arturia inclined her head. "Tsabin."

"Rabbine." Tsabin's gaze swept over the booth where Rabbine was melting into the cushion, and her brow arched with the practised cruelty of someone who loved you enough to be honest. "You look awful."

"Love you too, Tsabin." Rabbine didn't open her eyes. The words came out muffled, half-swallowed by the sleeve she'd draped across her face.

Tsabin deposited her datapads on the service counter with a controlled clatter, took a long sip from her travel mug—savouring it, eyes closing for just a moment in private communion with whatever was in that cup—and turned toward the kitchen pass-through. Her gaze found Shirou placing scotch eggs into the fryer.

She smiled.

It was not the polished smile she wore in political meetings, the one calibrated to disarm and redirect. Nor the sharp grin she deployed when winning arguments, all teeth and triumph.

This one was slower. Sly. It crept into her features by degrees, pulling at the corner of her mouth first, then spreading outward until it reached her eyes—those clever, dark eyes that missed nothing, that catalogued and filed and weighed every detail of every room she entered—and carried with it the weight of a shared secret.

The memory of a leg positioned with surgical accuracy across his hip. The knowledge of his fingers lifting it away with careful, deliberate restraint. The forehead flick. All of it compressed into a single expression that lingered on her face like a challenge, or an invitation, or simply the quiet amusement of

someone who had found a person she couldn't quite predict and had decided this was interesting.

She winked.

"It's Arturia's turn this week."

Both she and Rabbine winced.

Shirou and Arturia rotated the handmaidens' self-defence sessions on a weekly basis—part of the security arrangement they'd established with Panaka after the Veruna crisis. The difference between their teaching styles was, by now, well documented. Shirou corrected form and built technique with patience. Arturia corrected form by demonstrating what happened when it was wrong.

She pulled her punches. Technically. The bruises suggested the margin was academic.

"Well, I call first dibs on massages tonight!" Tsabin declared.

"Second!" Rabbine's hand shot up from the booth without her eyes opening.

Arturia regarded them both with the serene indifference of a woman who had not yet begun to make them suffer.

Shirou lowered the scotch eggs into the oil. The kitchen filled with the steady, honest sound of food being made.

Another morning at The Empty Pantry.

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End

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