

## **These Tragic Souls and a Sword Reborn in an Intergalactic Space Opera**

Story Intro: "Welcome! I'm an evil god, though not that evil of a god!" is what they woke up to. Join our heroes and heroines, having just met their demise, displaced by an extradimensional event."

### **Story Starts**

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### **Book 1 - The Empty Twin**

### **Ch 1.2 Gaining Trust in the Thirteen**

**(Syr Interlude)**

**[Part 2 of ?]**

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The air thrummed with life—the dull clatter of pewter mugs against wood sent muffled echoes through the bustling tavern. Loud interjection cut through the din; chorused murmurs, cheers, and merriment wove together like a tapestry of conversation that rose and fell with each fresh round of drinks, and the rhythmic thunk of a cleaver against a well-worn chopping block echoing from the kitchen with mechanical precision.

The rich aroma of roasted meat and ale clung to the warm air—heavy and inviting—while the tang of wood smoke and the musk of spilt ale mingled above the creaking floorboards.

From the kitchen came the savoury breath of frying grease, threading through it all with the faint, musical clink of valis passing changing hands. The Hostess was packed to bursting—every table claimed by dungeon delvers flushed with victory and drink.

But tonight carried a different energy. The daughters of Orario's top families had taken over the tavern once more—a pseudo-monthly tradition born of

their alliance in dungeon expeditions, most notably the perilous deep dives undertaken by the Loki and Hestia families.

“Syr! I don’t care if you sit down with your friends, but when orders are up, I need you to deliver them immediately.”

A whiny voice replied melodiously, carrying a familiar foxy lilt. “But Ryuu and—”

“Syr!”

“Yes, Mama mia!” Syr’s chair screeched across the worn wooden floor, the ear-splitting sound making half the tavern wince. With theatrical resignation painted across her delicate features, Syr Flover quickly snatched up her crisp white apron, which had been resting carelessly on the back of her chair, the fabric still warm from where it had been pressed against her back.

“You really have to tell me the details later, Lefiya,” Syr said to the Thousand Elf of the Loki familia as she skipped to the counter, where two platters waited. One held a large, heaving roast of beef laid on a bed of potatoes, onions, and peppers; the scent—rich with rendered fat, black pepper, garlic, and rosemary—made the grey-haired waitress salivate involuntarily.

The second dish featured an entire fish that had been deep-fried, its flesh pulled away from the skeleton and crisped, making the meat curl and bunch into formations reminiscent of elaborate frills—or perhaps a pair of arms poised for combat.

“Ottar, would you be so kind—” Syr turned towards the large, imposing boaz standing to the left of the counter, arms crossed just as he had been since the start of her shift.

Yet something in him was off. The familiar calm of her most loyal child had faltered—his gaze had drifted, ears taut in attention, eyes distant, brow drawn

tight in concentration. For one whose devotion to her seldom wavered, such distraction was rare indeed—and it hinted at trouble quietly taking root.

As if on cue, the bustling crowd slowly began to quieten. There was an almost imperceptible shift in the atmosphere—tension that hung in the air like an unanswered question.

Syr noticed Anya—her fellow waitress and previously banished child—carrying a precarious bunch of empty mugs by their handles in one hand and a tray of plates balanced on her shoulder. She paused mid-step, her feline ears twitching with curiosity; her cheerful eyes narrowing as she followed Ottar's gaze. Whatever he sensed, she felt it too.

As the noise faded, Syr caught the faint rumble of something far beyond the walls of the Hostess of Fertility—a deep, reverberating tremor that vibrated through the floorboards beneath her feet. The distant, high-pitched noises grew sharper, slicing through the silence like shards of glass. They became louder, faster, carrying an unsettling resonance that prickled the fine hairs along her arms.

Syr turned, the silk of her apron whispering against her skirt as she craned her neck towards the sound. She leaned forward, her silver hair spilling over one shoulder, as if the movement might sharpen her hearing. Her fingers tensed against the smooth wood of the counter, feeling its subtle tremors as she held her breath. The scent of ale and hearth-smoke receded—forgotten—as she focused entirely on the approaching sounds that carried the unmistakable tenor of impending trouble.

*Bang!*

The tavern door slammed open with a thunderous impact, sending vibrations shooting up through the floorboards. The wooden panels shuddered against the wall, the hinges screaming in protest. In stumbled one of her trusted

children—Hedin Selland—his usually composed features twisted into raw panic. Sweat beaded his brow as he gasped for breath.

Hedin's wild eyes darted around the room before locking—not on Syr herself—but somewhere just beyond her shoulder. The chill of fear rolling off him raised goosebumps along her arms as she followed his gaze to Ottar—tall, imposing, imperious—his massive frame casting a long shadow across the tavern floor.

The tension thickened to something almost physical as conversation died. Behind Hedin, the crowd was already fleeing. Syr's heart quickened, her immortal instincts screaming warnings even as her mortal body tensed for the calamity that had driven Hedin to such terror.

“Ottar! The One-Eyed—”

Then—darkness.

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*“Looks like I caught myself an SSSR character!”* someone hollered in a drawling Texan accent, accompanied by the sound of spitting.

The next thing Syr noticed was the place where she was standing. It was a lush, empty island with waves of the sea battering against the cliffs from where she stood. Above was a large moon—no, it was a planet—and even from her distant perspective, she could vaguely see the canopy of a giant tree.

"Yes, the Sacred Tree of Theta is such a wondrous site—though not the same as the tree that tethers Vanaheim to the greater plane.

With a sigh, Syr said, "What is it, Keleidoscope?" Her tone was as cold as the number of times she had encountered the pseudo-immortal was... she couldn't seem to—

"Fifty-three times, indeed, as you've likely deduced, you've been severed from your past, future, and assorted present selves, nor can you commune with any of your other incarnations. You perished, after all, within your mortal form whilst a Stall bifurcated."

Syr could feel her eye twitch in irritation at the revelation.

"And at this point, little Horn would have learn what to do—unlike the first time we met. We can't really have her acknowledge you."

Before Syr, a translucent screen suddenly filled her vision, backdropped by the planet Theta, otherwise known as Leafil IV.

'So it's true—I'm in the planes Beyond,' she thought, and as if he'd read her mind, Zelretch said, "Indeed you are."

With a wave, the screen shifted to reveal a chamber filled with countless floating orbs, backdropped by what seemed to be a view of the known universe—or at least the one known to mortals. It was merely one of the many empty corners of the Greater Planes.

"So, here—let me show you our fifty-second meeting. Um, let's skip the pleasantries, go straight to the meat and potatoes," said the elderly manipulator of parallel dimensions.

Time within the screen flowed, but it seemed to pass at a rapid pace.

"Ah, here we go. That cute little blob there is and was you," the Kaleidoscope explained.

"Looks like I caught myself an SSSR character." a voice called out—the same line he'd used when Syr woke in this new reality. He even repeated the 'ptoo' at the end of his declaration.

“Oh, oops, I think I forwarded it a little too much.”

Syr just gave the man beside her a deadpanned stare.

“What? It’s hard coming up with entertaining lines—it’s not like I have eternity... oh wait, maybe I do? In a roundabout kind of way. Please, leave all feedback after all the entertainment is done,” the seemingly senile old man began to rant.

“And before you ask, your beloved Odr wasn’t caught in the Bifurcated Stall, but fret not, fret not! Everything shall be right as rain in the end, and hope and love might still blossom,” Zelretch said, as he frowned, but then his face lightened up as if he thought of an idea.

“You know what—let’s scrap the screen system, VR will soon be popular on my side of reality, and through this, you can experience it first-hand without Horn having the reach to acknowledge you.”

He then raised his hand, fingers poised, and called out, “Staff do your thing!” before snapping his fingers.

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*'Right now I'm just a floating ball of energy among a sea of fellow floating balls of energy.'* She could feel her other self think this, the sensation strange and ethereal—like being aware of breathing whilst simultaneously drowning in something thicker than air but lighter than water.

The famous troll hadn’t exactly explained this part well; it felt like she was being forced to possess herself—utterly disjointed, stripped of all agency. Her consciousness felt fractured, split between observer and participant, watching herself experience this bizarre ritual whilst having no control over the process.

In front of her floated a mostly grey screen; at the top left, the number ‘zero’ glowed in stark, unforgiving numerals—her karmic points. Just underneath it,

in what she could only describe as smugly cheerful font, appeared the words: 'Get wrecked, I'm team Bell x Ais all the way!' The words seemed to pulse with barely contained glee, as if the very interface was mocking her predicament.

*'Of course,'* she thought with no small amount of irritation, feeling a phantom eye twitch that shouldn't even be possible in her current bodiless state. She looked away from what was clearly a deliberate provocation—this portion of reincarnation obviously didn't concern her. The screen's glow left phantom afterimages dancing across her consciousness, adding to the already disorienting experience.

*'So, at this point, my past self hasn't been disconnected from Akasha,'* Syr thought, as information flooded into her present self about what this reincarnation ritual actually entailed. The knowledge came in waves, each revelation accompanied by a strange tingling sensation that rippled through her energy form like stones dropped into still water. However, it abruptly ceased—she was only allowed to think within the limitations of her past self's thoughts.

As she looked around, she could easily identify citizens of Orario among the sea of souls, their familiar spiritual signatures glowing like dim candles in the ethereal darkness. That attack by the Black Dragon had been quick, devastating, and without warning—she could still sense the echoes of terror and confusion that had marked their final moments. The air itself seemed to carry the weight of their collective shock, a heavy blanket of disbelief that pressed against her consciousness. Unfortunately, the Hostess of Fertility had been among the devastation, and she felt a sharp pang of loss pierce her otherwise detached state.

Every employee of the Hostess floated nearby, while most of Loki's children drifted in loose clusters, their adventurer's pride still radiating from their spiritual forms. Similarly, Hestia's children drifted nearby—their warmth dimmed but not extinguished.

*'Well, of course they did reserve the Hostess for the night,'* she thought with bitter irony, remembering how excited everyone had been about the private celebration.

Her vision began to shift as her past self's thoughts entered her mind—as though she were listening to herself speak from across a vast chasm. The sensation was deeply unsettling, like having a conversation with an echo that knew things she'd forgotten. As her past self had assessed, it would be easier to name those who aren't here—the realisation struck her with the force of a physical blow.

"..."

"..."

"..."

*'He's not here,'* and with that conclusion, the mood of her past self instantly dipped, and she did so at the confirmation of what Zelretch already said.

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END

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