

Is it Wrong for a Sword to Remain Sheathed Against Injustice?

Story Starts

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Chapter 4.3

Descent, and Escalation

The eighteenth floor opened before him as it always did—impossibly, generously, like a held breath finally released.

Shirou had seen it dozens of times now, but the sight never quite settled into banality. A cavern so vast that it possessed its own weather—clouds drifting beneath a ceiling studded with crystals that mimicked starlight, rolling green hills descending from the entrance passages toward a distant treeline. The air here carried none of the Dungeon's usual mineral staleness. It smelt of grass, of earth, of something almost like rain.

Rivira sprawled across a series of rocky outcroppings near the centre of the floor—a ramshackle settlement of semi-permanent structures, market stalls, and lodging houses that charged extortionate rates for beds barely fit for cattle. The town existed in a state of perpetual reconstruction. Monster surges from the nineteenth floor destroyed it with depressing regularity, and the merchants and squatters who called it home simply rebuilt each time, raising prices to recoup their losses. The architecture reflected this philosophy—nothing was built to last, only to function until the next wave knocked it down.

Shirou's establishment occupied a narrow two-storey building on the settlement's eastern edge, facing outward toward the rolling hills where the larger families typically made camp. The location had been deliberate. No familia with twenty or thirty members would pay Rivira's lodging fees when flat ground and clean water existed within a hundred medr of the settlement's perimeter. They'd pitch tents, build fires, and settle in for the night before their push deeper.

And they'd need to eat.

Emiya-ya wasn't much to look at from outside. A wooden facade with a sliding screen door, lanterns hung from the eaves that Shirou lit with a whispered aria each evening. Inside: five tables, a long counter with six stools, and a kitchen that occupied nearly a third of the ground floor. His room above was spartan—a futon, a low table, a single window overlooking the hills. He kept his stock in the Gate of Avalon, pulling ingredients as needed and maintaining the fiction of a well-stocked pantry behind the kitchen's closed shelving.

Shirou set down his carrying pole and baskets inside the kitchen, rolling his shoulders to work out the ache. The establishment had been closed during his absence—three days topside this time—but he'd left the interior clean and the counter wiped. He unlocked the shutters facing the hills, pushing them open to let the ever-present luminescence of the crystal ceiling flood the space. The air that drifted in carried the clean green scent of the floor's impossible grasslands—a smell that still struck him as fundamentally wrong for a place buried beneath thousands of tonnes of stone.

Then he began his routine.

Charcoal into the grill pit. Dashi stock set to warm. Rice into the cooker—the one luxury piece of equipment he'd splurged on, a magic-stone-powered device that Shakti had sourced from a retired Goibniu Familia smith. The vegetables emerged from the Gate one at a time as he moved between the kitchen's stations: shishito peppers, shiitake mushrooms, lotus root cut into rounds, asparagus trimmed and blanched. Fish followed—mackerel from Njord Familia's latest delivery, their silver scales still gleaming as though they'd been pulled from the water moments ago rather than preserved in temporal stasis.

The grill caught. Shirou fanned the coals with practised efficiency, watching the edges glow white before settling into the steady orange that produced even heat without excessive smoke.

He was midway through skewering his first batch of vegetables when movement outside caught his attention through the open shutters.

Tents. Perhaps thirty meters from his back wall. The Dionysus Familia had made excellent time—or perhaps they'd simply been less cautious on the transition route than he'd been, unencumbered by a carrying pole and commercial goods. Their camp was taking shape with military efficiency: canvas shelters arranged in a defensive semicircle, gear sorted into communal piles, a firepit being dug at the centre.

Shirou continued his preparations. If they came, they came. If they didn't—

The screen door slid open.

Rienne stood in the entrance, her pale hair catching the crystal-light from outside. She'd removed her combat gear, wearing only the light tunic and trousers that served as her base layer. Without the armour, she looked younger. Thinner. The faint lines around her eyes suggested she was older than most of her companions, though with elves, age remained a guessing game.

"You're already set up." Her tone carried something between admiration and incredulity.

"Force of habit." Shirou reached beneath the counter and produced a sheet of paper—his menu, written in both common script and a rough approximation of the elven alphabet that Sophie had helped him transliterate. "If your Familia decides to eat here tonight, I can extend first-time patron rates to the group."

Rienne took the menu. Her eyes moved down the columns with deliberate attention, pausing at certain items. The vegetable section was extensive—Shirou had learnt early that his elf customers appreciated variety in preparation methods rather than protein options.

"All of us?" She glanced up. "That's twenty-three mouths."

"I've handled larger parties. Ganesha Familia brought thirty-eight through last month." Shirou flipped a skewer on the grill, the tare sauce sizzling as it kissed the heat. "You'll be descending tomorrow, I assume. Deeper floors. If payment tonight would be a concern, I accept IOUs settled in magic stones and drops from the nineteenth and twentieth floors. Standard Guild valuation rates."

Rienne's eyebrows rose slightly. "You trust us for that?"

"Your god's wine funds half of Orario's taverns. I'm not worried about solvency."

A breath of laughter escaped her—quiet, almost surprised, as though she hadn't expected to produce the sound. "Fair enough." She studied the menu again. "I'll bring this to the group. Give us—twenty minutes?"

"Take your time. The grill's not going anywhere."

She left. The screen door whispered shut behind her.

Shirou watched her cross the distance to the Dionysus Familia camp, menu in hand. The wheat-haired frontliner spotted her first, raising a hand in greeting. Others gathered. Heads bent over the menu.

Twenty minutes later, Rienne returned with seventeen of her twenty-three companions in tow.

The evening settled into a rhythm that Shirou knew well.

He'd pulled three tables outside to accommodate the overflow, arranging them on the packed earth facing the Dionysus Familia's camp. The crystal-ceiling above cycled through its approximation of twilight—the light dimming to a soft amber that cast long shadows across the hills. Inside, the remaining two interior tables were occupied, and three elves sat at the counter. Outside, the larger group had pushed the tables together into a single long surface, their voices rising and falling in the cadence of people unwinding after hard work.

Shirou moved between grill, fryer, and counter with mechanical precision. Skewers of chicken thigh glazed in tare. Whole mackerel scored and salted,

their skin crisping over the coals. Tempura vegetables—lotus root, sweet potato, shishito pepper—emerging from the oil in golden shells. Udon for those who wanted something more substantial. Jagamarukun for the ones who wanted something heavy and filling.

The elves ate vegetables as their staple, but they weren't exclusively herbivorous. Several had ordered the grilled chicken without hesitation. Others picked at shared platters, taking a piece of fish here, a skewer of mushroom there. Their relationship with meat seemed less about prohibition and more about preference—the way some humans avoided shellfish or offal without moral objection.

Rienne had settled into an ease that surprised him. During their brief exchange on the seventeenth floor, she'd been professional. Measured. Now, seated at the counter with a cup of warm sake—his own stock, purchased from a brewer in the fifth district who'd learnt the craft from his father and had brought it to Orario—she spoke freely. Not about sensitive Familia matters, but about the journey down, about the Goliath fight, about Sophie's tendency to talk too much when she was excited.

Shirou listened whilst he cooked. He offered nothing of himself beyond what was necessary—a nod here, a short response there. Rienne didn't seem to mind. Some people needed an audience more than a conversation partner.

He'd already considered why the Dionysus Familia captain seemed so at ease around him. The obvious answer was professional courtesy—he'd provided potions at fair rates during their expedition, demonstrated no hostility, and ran a legitimate business that catered to their dietary needs. The less obvious answer sat inside his chest, just beneath the sternum.

Avalon.

The sheath of the King of Knights emanated something. Not magic, exactly—not in any way his circuits could quantify or control. It was more like a resonance. A frequency that certain beings were attuned to without conscious awareness. Elves—beings of nature and old magic, closer to the fae than any

other mortal race—seemed particularly susceptible. Around Shirou, they relaxed. Their guard lowered by degrees they likely didn't notice. The wariness that characterised elven interactions with humans softened into something approaching openness.

It was useful. Shirou acknowledged this without guilt. Elves were notoriously difficult customers—judgemental, particular about preparation methods, quick to take offence at perceived cultural insensitivity. Avalon's passive influence smoothed those edges. Sophie had described it once, unprompted, halfway through her third cup of tea: it made her feel like she was home.

Though it didn't explain Ryu Lion.

Shirou shook his head as he flipped three skewers simultaneously, brushing tare across the chicken with quick strokes of his basting brush. The sauce caramelised on contact, sending up wisps of fragrant smoke. Ryu's hostility toward him operated in direct opposition to what Avalon should have produced. Perhaps her suspicion was simply that strong—or perhaps she didn't share the same relationship most elves had with their forests.

He didn't know. It didn't matter tonight.

His attention shifted to the counter.

She sat at the far end, separated from Rienne by two empty stools. The black-haired elf. Shirou still hadn't caught her name—she hadn't offered it, and he hadn't asked. She was reading. The book was leather-bound, its spine cracked with use, pages soft at the edges from repeated handling. Her eyes moved across the text with the unhurried pace of someone rereading a familiar passage rather than consuming new material.

Before her sat an empty platter. Shirou had served her grilled vegetable skewers—shiitake, asparagus, bell pepper, shishito—alongside a small selection of tempura vegetables. She'd eaten methodically, never looking up from her book, her chopsticks moving with unconscious precision.

"Would you like some grilled fish as well?" Shirou asked, already reaching for a mackerel. "The preparation is simple—salt and heat."

Her eyes lifted from the page. Dark. Nearly black. They held his gaze for precisely one second before returning to the text.

"No. Thank you."

Her voice was low. Controlled. The same flatness he'd observed on the seventeenth floor, but without the edge of hostility. She simply had nothing to say and saw no reason to manufacture something.

Shirou moved on. He respected the boundary. Some people ate to socialise. Others ate because the body required fuel, and they happened to find a quiet place to read whilst administering it.

Outside, someone had produced bottles of wine. Several, in fact—Dionysus vintages, from the labels Shirou could glimpse through the open shutters. The group's volume increased by a noticeable degree as cups were filled and refilled. Laughter spilled into the amber half-light.

Shirou's jaw tightened briefly. He sold wine himself—vintages from Merem's stock, along with several Dionysus labels he'd acquired through legitimate wholesale channels. Ordinarily, he'd object to outside alcohol being consumed on his premises. It undercut his margins and established a precedent.

But the Dionysus Familia had already spent more in a single evening than most groups managed in three visits. The skewer platters alone accounted for a substantial sum, and several members had ordered full udon sets on top. Rienne's sake consumption wasn't insignificant either.

He shrugged internally. Let them drink their own wine. The food sales more than compensated.

"Another round!" The wheat-haired frontliner—Shirou had caught the name Cael from someone's shout—raised her cup toward the kitchen window.

"Mixed platter! Chicken, fish, and the—what's it called—the lotus root things!"

Shirou acknowledged the order with a raised hand. He pulled more skewers from his prep station, threading chicken thigh pieces onto bamboo sticks with quick, efficient movements. Three mackerel went onto the grill whole. Lotus root rounds entered the tempura oil with a hiss and bubble.

Movement at the counter's edge.

The black-haired elf placed her empty platter on the wood in front of him. The gesture was precise—she positioned it exactly where Shirou would find it most convenient to collect without interrupting his current task. Then her eyes returned to her book.

"Another of the same?"

A nod. Nothing else. She turned a page.

Shirou exhaled through his nose. "Right. Vegetable skewers and tempura. Coming up."

He loaded fresh vegetables onto bamboo sticks—shishito peppers, thick slices of king oyster mushroom, quartered onion held together with the skewer's tension. These went onto the section of the grill he kept at lower heat for vegetables, which needed time rather than intensity. He prepared her tempura batter fresh—cold water, a bare minimum of flour, barely mixed to preserve the lumps that would fry into that distinctive craggy texture.

The first asparagus spear was descending toward the oil when his ears caught it.

Distant. Below the threshold of the group's revelry outside. A rhythmic percussion—dozens, perhaps hundreds of impacts against earth, growing in frequency. Stampeding. Not the regular drift of monsters that occasionally wandered up from the nineteenth floor's entrance or down from the seventeenth. Those came in ones and twos, disoriented and easily dispatched by Rivira's resident adventurers.

This was different.

Shirou tilted his head. His fingers stilled above the fryer. The oil bubbled and spat, but he didn't lower the asparagus. He was listening.

The stampeding wasn't unidirectional. It came from multiple vectors—south, where the nineteenth floor's passages opened into the safe zone, and north, from the transition route they'd all descended hours ago. And beneath those heavy footfalls, threading through the percussion like a discordant melody: voices. Screams. The particular quality of terror that meant people were running *from* something rather than toward it.

His stomach hardened into a cold knot.

"What's wrong?"

The black-haired elf was looking up from her book. Her dark eyes were fixed on his face with sudden intensity—she'd noticed his stillness, read the tension in his posture, and drawn her conclusion in the span of a breath.

"We have company."

Shirou set the asparagus down. He turned off the flame beneath his tempura oil with a sharp twist of the valve. The dashi stock followed—another twist, another flame dying. He moved to the grill and lifted the heavy iron cover he kept beneath the counter, settling it over the coals. The lack of oxygen would suffocate them slowly, but more importantly, it would prevent the charcoal from scattering if the building took an impact.

Each action was deliberate. Unhurried. The hands of someone who had shut down kitchens in worse circumstances than this.

The black-haired elf had already closed her book. She rose from her stool with fluid grace, her hand moving to the weapon Shirou hadn't noticed leaning against the counter's base—a slender blade in a dark lacquered scabbard. She hadn't drawn it during the Goliath fight, but then, she'd been operating as a mage. The blade suggested a second discipline.

Shirou was already moving toward the stairs. He took them three at a time, his circuits flaring to life beneath his skin, the warmth spreading through him as twenty-seven divinely improved pathways thrummed in response. In his room above, he seized the large wicker basket that stood against the far wall—nearly waist-height, its interior lined with cloth. He'd prepared it two months ago, after the last time monsters from both the higher and lower floors had surged into the settlement simultaneously. That incursion had been contained without serious damage. He didn't expect the same tonight.

Trace on.

The first blade materialised in his grip. A longsword—single-edged, its geometry altered from the original Noble Phantasm's profile. He'd shaved weight from the pommel, narrowed the crossguard, and elongated the blade's tip into something approaching a bodkin point. Aerodynamic. Purpose-built for distance rather than melee. It went into the basket.

The second followed. The third. The fourth. Each one a variation on the same theme—swords reshaped into arrows, their steel dense enough to maintain trajectory over hundreds of meters, their edges irrelevant compared to the kinetic energy they'd carry at terminal velocity.

Thirteen. Fourteen. Twenty. He didn't stop until the basket bristled with steel. Noble Phantasms alongside mystic codes alongside mundane blades—anything that could be altered and launched. Quality varied. It didn't matter. At the velocities his bow produced, even a mediocre sword hit like a ballista bolt.

EMIYA's bow materialised in his left hand. The black recurve, forged from an alloy that existed only in a Counter Guardian's future—cold, familiar, an extension of his arm rather than a tool held by it.

Shirou lifted the basket with one hand and descended. The pub's interior had shifted—the black-haired elf was on her feet, speaking with Rienne in rapid, low tones. The captain's expression had hardened into something operational. They'd heard it too.

He noted them, filed the information, and stepped outside.

Vice-captain Maren appeared before him as he cleared the doorway, bow in one hand and the basket of blades hoisted against his hip. Her face held the particular tightness of someone who'd assessed a situation and didn't like her conclusions.

"What are you—"

"The eighteenth floor is under attack." Shirou's voice was flat. Declarative. He didn't slow his movement. "Multiple directions. The stampede isn't natural—monsters don't coordinate across vectors and attack from all angles. Tell your Familia to form up."

Maren's eyes dropped to the basket. To the bow. To the blades jutting from the wicker like a steel hedgehog. Her lips pressed thin.

"How do you—"

"Listen."

She did. The colour drained from her face in increments as the sound resolved through the fading echoes of their disrupted celebration—the thunder of hooves, the guttural bellowing of something large, and beneath it all, the screaming.

Maren turned and ran.

With a heave, Shirou tossed the basket. It arced upward, cleared the eave of his establishment's roof, and landed with a heavy thud on the flat surface above. He bent his knees and jumped after it—a single explosive movement that carried him three meters vertically, his fingers catching the roof's edge before he pulled himself up and over.

The vantage point transformed the situation from sound into sight.

They came in waves.

From the south—the nineteenth floor passage—a tide of dark shapes poured across the rolling hills like spilt ink. Minotaurs. Dozens of them. Their forms were unmistakable even at distance: the hulking silhouettes, the forward-hunched posture of creatures built for charging, the glint of ambient crystal-light on horn and hide. Mixed amongst them, smaller shapes moved with feline speed—liger fangs, perhaps, or the war shadows that occasionally spawned on the lower middle floors.

From the west, a different composition. Shirou's eyes narrowed against the false twilight. Hellhounds loping alongside firebirds, their flames casting orange streaks across the green hills. Behind them, the heavier silhouettes of bugbears, lizardmen, and battleboars—monsters from the lower floors that had no business being on the eighteenth.

And from the east—from the forest that occupied the floor's central basin—shapes emerged between the trees. Larger. The canopy shook as they shouldered through, and Shirou caught glimpses of grey skin, of tusked faces, of clubs hewn from Dungeon-stone gripped in massive fists.

Trolls.

From the north, still more. Monsters spilling from the seventeenth-floor transition route—mammoth fools charging through the passage entrance alongside sword stags, their antlers lowered like battering rams.

Hundreds. From all four directions simultaneously.

This wasn't a surge. Surges were random—the Dungeon vomiting excess spawn in undirected waves. This was orchestrated. These monsters had been herded, guided, pushed toward a convergence point.

Toward Rivira.

Toward the adventurers camped around it.

Below him, Captain Rienne's voice cut through the chaos with the precision of a blade.

"Dionysus Familia—arms! Defensive formation around the camp! Mages to centre—barriers first, then suppression! Cael, take the forward line with—"

Shirou stopped listening.

He knelt beside his basket and drew the first sword-arrow. The blade sat across his bow's rest—too large for any conventional archer, too heavy for any conventional string. But Shirou's bow wasn't conventional, and neither was its string, drawn from the same impossible alloy as the limbs themselves. Most adventurers avoided ranged weapons in the Dungeon. Arrows ran out. Their penetrating power dropped to nothing against the hides of anything below the upper floors. Sensible reasoning, under normal circumstances.

Shirou's circumstances had never been normal.

He sighted down the length of altered steel. A minotaur—the largest of the southern wave, a full head taller than its companions, its horns curved and yellowed with age. A strengthened species. One that had fed on other monsters' magic stones and grown far beyond its standard threat profile.

He could see several of those scattered across the charging ranks.

Six hundred medr.

Shirou released.

The blade left his bow with a sound like tearing silk. It crossed six hundred medr in under two seconds—a dark line against the amber light, visible only as a flicker before it struck. The minotaur's chest caved inward. The force of impact lifted the creature bodily from the ground, hurling it backward into three of its followers. They went down in a tangle of limbs and horns. The sword continued through the minotaur's torso, burying itself in the hillside behind the collapsing bodies.

The second arrow was already on his string.

He killed another. Then a third. Each shot precise, each target selected for maximum disruption—the leaders, the largest, the ones whose momentum

would carry the charge forward. Without them, the pack's coherence fractured. He rotated between vectors—south, west, east, north—not limiting his support to the Dionysus Familia alone. Rivira's defence was everyone's problem.

Monsters stumbled over fallen bodies. The ones behind crashed into the ones ahead. For a brief, critical moment, the southern wave's advance stuttered.

But there were only so many adventurers.

The hellhounds and the firebirds reached Rivira's perimeter first. Their fire touched the outermost structures—a storage shed, a merchant's stall—and both ignited with disturbing speed. The dry wood and canvas of the settlement's construction offered no resistance. Smoke billowed upward, dark against the crystal-ceiling's glow.

Shirou pivoted on his knee. Drew. Released. A hellhound mid-leap dissolved around the blade that punched through its skull, its fire guttering out as the magic stone in its chest shattered. He killed two more before they reached the Dionysus Familia's position, but there were too many. A dozen. Two dozen. They flowed around the camp's edges like water around stone, their flames licking at the canvas tents.

Below, Rienne's voice again: "Mages—barrier NOW!"

A shimmer of green light erupted around the Dionysus Familia's camp. The barrier caught three hellhounds mid-lunge, their bodies impacting the translucent wall and rebounding with yelps of pain. Inside the perimeter, the combat members formed their line.

Shirou turned his attention eastward. The trolls were slower but vastly more dangerous—their bulk meant each one required multiple arrows, and their thick hides resisted penetration at anything less than optimal angles. He pulled two sword-arrows from the basket and nocked both simultaneously on the oversized bow. The string groaned under the doubled weight.

Release.

He should have stocked more pre-altered projectiles in the Gate. A lesson for next time. But his circuits' output had improved since Chaldea—divinely reinforced pathways that could sustain this rate of tracing for hours if necessary. And if his od ran low, the Gate still held blades he could retrieve and alter after the fact. It was simply more efficient to trace them pre-shaped.

Both blades flew in parallel arcs, diverging slightly before striking two trolls in their exposed throats—one of the few areas where their grey skin thinned enough for penetration. The first toppled forward, its club gouging a trench in the hillside as it fell. The second clutched at its neck, staggered three steps, and collapsed onto a copse of trees that splintered beneath its weight.

The others kept coming.

Shirou reached into the basket.

He drew, sighted, released. Drew, sighted, released. Each motion compressed into the smallest possible interval—the breathing pattern of a machine rather than a person, inhale-exhale synchronised with the mechanical cycle of nock-draw-release until the rhythm became autonomous, his conscious mind freed to calculate trajectories and prioritise targets.

A minotaur breaking through toward the camp's southern flank—killed. A troll raising its club above a burning structure where a figure scrambled from a window—killed. Two hellhounds circling behind the Dionysus Familia's barrier, searching for a gap in the mages' concentration—killed, both, with a single arrow that punched through the first and lodged in the second. A bugbear, a firebird, one of the sword stags—Shirou didn't stop.

Between shots, his eyes caught movement at the treeline. Not monsters. Figures. Hooded, moving with purpose rather than panic, emerging from the eastern forest in the wake of the trolls they'd driven before them.

His jaw tightened. He filed it. Kept shooting.

The Dionysus Familia was holding. Their barrier flickered under repeated impacts from the hellhound pack, but the mages rotated their chanting—two

sustaining whilst two rested, cycling every thirty seconds. The melee fighters had pushed outside the barrier in a controlled advance, Cael's wheat-bright hair visible at the forward point as she cleaved a hellhound from shoulder to hip. Rienne moved along the perimeter's edge, her blade tracing silver arcs that left afterimages in the amber light.

But Rivira itself was burning.

The settlement's interior had no such coordinated defence. Individual adventurers fought in isolated pockets—a pair of dwarves back-to-back against three minotaurs, a human mage launching fire bolts from a rooftop that was itself on fire, a group of pallums retreating toward the settlement's centre where the stone structures offered more protection.

Shirou's jaw clenched as he provided support where he could.

The black-haired elf appeared below.

She'd emerged from the Dionysus Familia's formation—or rather, she'd never been inside it. Shirou spotted her fifty meters east of the camp, moving alone toward the advancing trolls. Her blade was drawn, its edge catching the light from the burning buildings behind her. She moved without urgency, without the frantic energy that characterised the other defenders. Each step was measured. Deliberate.

A troll swung its club in a horizontal arc that should have pulverised her. She stepped inside the swing's radius—a movement so precise it seemed choreographed—and her blade opened the creature's inner thigh from knee to hip. The troll bellowed. Its leg buckled. Before it hit the ground, she'd already moved past it, her attention on the next.

Fast. Her movements carried an efficiency that spoke of extensive combat experience—no wasted motion, no theatrical flourishes, just the clean geometry of someone who understood exactly how much force was required and refused to expend more.

But there were nine trolls remaining on the eastern approach. She couldn't hold them alone.

Shirou drew another arrow. Sighted. The troll closest to the black-haired elf—thirty medr behind her, approaching from her blind spot whilst she engaged the one ahead. He released.

The blade took the troll through its left eye socket. It dropped without sound.

The black-haired elf didn't turn. Didn't flinch. She'd heard the impact—she must have—but she offered no acknowledgement. Simply continued her advance, her blade opening the next troll's hamstring before she pivoted and drove the point through the base of its skull. Her off-hand came up in a sharp gesture—staff levelled—and lightning arced from its tip into the creature behind, throwing it backwards in a spasm of white-blue light.

Then reinforcements poured from the seventeenth-floor entrance.

Adventurers. Dozens of them—parties who'd probably been on the upper middle floors when the stampede began, now descending into the chaos with weapons drawn and spells already forming. And amongst them, unmistakable even at distance, the crest of Astraea Familia.

Shirou's shoulders eased a fraction at the sight. He didn't stop shooting.

With luck, no one would notice that his supply of arrows never seemed to diminish.

He could already see the hooded figures moving closer to the settlement's edge.

'This'll be a long night.'

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End

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