

Fate/Charm of the Devil Fae

*This fic is inspired by **Sticky Situation** by **Professor Quill**, **In Bloom** by **Flight of Fancy**, and to a certain extent **Benefits of Saving a Veela** by **WD_Oneill**. Please check them out.*

Story Starts

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Ch 2.2 - The Ladies'

Remedy

Disclaimer: Everyone here is at least 18 years of age.

"I wasn't brooding," Shirou said, then took a sip of the tea. Jasmine, with undertones of something he couldn't quite place—green and wild, like moss after rain. Vivian's personal blend, the one she never shared the recipe for despite his asking. Repeatedly.

"You were out of it again." Lady Avalon swung her legs off the couch, bare feet meeting the stone floor with a soft *pat*.

"I've seen Merlin do the same," Lady Vivian observed, her tone carefully neutral. "When he was banished to the reverse side by my human counterpart. Though the end of that particular Grail War set him free." A pause, deliberate. "The circumstances of which are not relevant at present."

"I was remembering." Shirou kept his eyes on the tea. "There's a difference."

"The difference being?"

"Brooding implies self-pity. I was just... thinking about the day I met the two of you." He turned the cup in his hands. "And everything you've done for me since."

Something flickered behind Lady Avalon's eyes—there and gone, too fast to name. She smoothed it away with a smile that was all surface. "Well. Speaking of things we're doing for you."

She looked at Vivian. Vivian looked at Shirou. Then, without a word, the Lady of the Lake turned and walked to the far end of the workbench.

She waved her hand across the surface.

And there, as though it had always been there—because, in all likelihood, it *had* always been there—lay a velvet cloth draped over an arrangement of objects that hadn't existed in Shirou's awareness a moment before.

Vivian had always possessed a particular talent for this. It wasn't invisibility. It wasn't concealment, not truly. She didn't hide things and then reveal them—she simply... withheld your permission to notice. The object existed. It occupied space. Light struck it and bounced back in all the correct wavelengths. But your mind slid around it the way water slid around a stone in a stream, and it wasn't until Vivian decided you were ready that the stone suddenly became visible. Not because it had changed, but because *you* had.

It was, Shirou reflected, deeply unsettling when you thought about it for too long.

She drew the velvet away in a single, practised motion.

Beneath it lay an array of materials arranged with the obsessive precision Shirou had come to associate with Vivian's work. Glass vials stoppered with wax seals. Bundles of hair—some lustrous, some coarse, some that seemed to shift colour when he wasn't looking directly at them. Scales that threw iridescent light across the ceiling. Small jars of luminescent fluid. Feathers. Bone fragments wrapped in silk. A dozen other items, each separated by careful distances, each resting on its own square of treated linen.

The workbench looked like a museum exhibit curated by something that didn't think in human categories.

Lady Avalon drifted over from the couch, her curiosity too bright and sharp to be anything but genuine. Shirou set down his tea and joined them.

"I spent the better part of your unnecessary isolation—and, in Avalon's words, *brooding*—"

"It wasn't—"

Vivian caught him with an amused smile and a single raised brow. Shirou's protest died in his throat. He couldn't help but pout.

"—sourcing these." Vivian's gaze didn't leave the materials. Her fingers hovered over the arrangement, not quite touching, as though confirming each piece was still precisely where she'd placed it. "Some required calling up debts I've held in reserve for longer than your civilisation has had written language. Others required favours asked of beings who don't grant them lightly, or cheaply, or without extracting a price that would make most weep."

The corner of Shirou's mouth tugged upward. She delivered it all flatly, without emphasis or self-congratulation—the same tone she used when reporting the weather or critiquing the structural integrity of his latest blade. Pure clinical detachment.

It fooled nobody. Not him, not Lady Avalon, not anyone in the household who'd spent more than a week under the same roof as Vivian. Beneath that glacial composure lived something fierce and protective that Shirou had never quite found the right word for. Motherly, perhaps—except Vivian predated the concept of motherhood as humans understood it. She was a child of the planet, a being woven from true ether and the dreaming will of Gaia, and she had existed before the first human hand struck the first human flint.

Older-sisterly felt closer—the way she balanced care with cutting honesty, affection with merciless expectation.

She'd gone to considerable trouble. For him.

Shirou's smile deepened, and he said nothing, because saying something would only make her deny it.

"May I?" he asked, raising his hand over the array.

Vivian inclined her head. A fraction of a degree. Permission.

Shirou closed his eyes.

Structural Analysis was, in the parlance of the Clock Tower, a foundational magecraft—basic, rudimentary, the sort of thing first-year students practised on copper ingots before moving on to supposedly more impressive disciplines. Most magi used it to determine material composition: the percentage of carbon in a steel alloy, the density of a gemstone, the purity of a reagent.

Shirou's version bore the same relationship to that elementary technique as a supernova bore to a struck match.

When his circuits fired—twenty-seven primary, each one a branching river of light that forked and split into tributaries no sane magical architecture should have permitted—the world peeled open. Not just the surface. Not just the molecular lattice. The *truth* of every object within the field of his perception laid itself bare. Material composition, yes—but also history. Provenance. The hands that had gathered each piece, the conditions under which it had been harvested, the ambient mana density of the environment in which it had grown or lived or died. Attributes. Resonances. Conceptual weight—the *idea* each material embodied, the narrative it carried encoded in its structure, like text written in the grain of ancient wood.

It was, in essence, a form of comprehension that bypassed analysis entirely and arrived at understanding through a shortcut that shouldn't have existed.

Muramasa's inheritance. The old swordsmith's eye for the soul of a material, wedded to Shirou's own monstrous affinity for grasping the essence of things.

The results hit him like a wave.

His breath caught.

Every item on that workbench was, individually, the sort of material that would make a magus at the height of their power commit acts of staggering depravity

for the mere chance to work with. Any one of these components, presented at a Clock Tower auction, would spark bidding wars that ended in duels. In assassinations. In the quiet disappearance of entire bloodlines. A wand-wizard of the other tradition—the hidden schools, the castles, the ministries—would sacrifice children, fortunes, legacies, *anything* for access to what lay spread across his workbench like ingredients for a Tuesday afternoon project.

The sheer breadth of what Vivian had gathered staggered him. Not because the materials were rare—though they were, obscenely so—but because of where they'd come from.

When the Age of Gods waned and true ether began its long recession from the surface of the planet, the phantasmal species had retreated. That much was common knowledge—textbook material for any student of either magical tradition. What the textbooks generally omitted, or at best glossed over with comfortable vagueness, was the nature of that retreat.

The reverse side of the world was not a sealed vault. It had never been.

The phantasmal beings—the dragons and the divine beasts, the fae courts and the old gods—had not fled. They'd *relocated*. The distinction mattered enormously and was almost universally misunderstood. Humanity's great champion, the King of Heroes, had sought to sever the ties between mankind and divinity, to force the species to stand on its own two feet and grow or perish by its own merits. A noble goal, in its way. Also, in its way, a failure.

Gilgamesh had drawn a line. The phantasmal beings had simply stepped to the other side of it and continued doing business through the gap. Trade. Diplomacy. The occasional war.

What had actually happened was more fundamental than a migration. In the old world—the world that had existed before humanity's cognition began reshaping reality in its own image—the great dominions had been anchored to this side. Heaven, Hell, the fae courts, Olympus, Asgard—all of them had existed *here*, tethered to the fabric of a reality saturated with true ether. The domains were not just where these beings lived. They were the conceptual

foundations of their existence. Heaven wasn't merely the angels' home; it was the root from which the very concept of *angel* drew meaning. The fae lands didn't just house the fae—they *defined* them, sustained them, gave shape and substance to what they were at the deepest level of being.

When the ether thinned, those anchors failed. The domains could no longer maintain themselves on a side of reality increasingly hostile to mystery, and so they'd been re-tethered—transplanted, root and branch—to the reverse side, where the old power still ran deep and dense and true.

The beings themselves, however, were a different matter. Most phantasmal creatures could exist on this side of reality perfectly well. Vivian was standing in Shirou's forge right now. Runeas held property in the human world. Rias attended a Japanese high school, for reasons Shirou had never entirely understood. The thinning of ether made this side less comfortable, certainly—like living in Japan's humid summer heat when one was accustomed to a cool, temperate climate—but it was entirely survivable. Their *homes* had moved. They themselves could come and go as they pleased.

The exceptions were creatures whose very biology depended on true ether the way a human's depended on oxygen. True dragons, for instance—beings that literally breathed the stuff, whose metabolisms ran on concentrations of mystery so dense that the air on this side of reality would starve them as surely as vacuum would starve a man. For them, the reverse side wasn't a preference. It was the only place left that could sustain their existence.

And the reverse side itself was vaster than any mortal cartography could encompass.

Deep within that territory—if "deep" meant anything in a space that didn't conform to three-dimensional geometry—lay domains that made human nations look like sketches on napkins.

Those were the dominions Shirou knew best. The Summer Court of the fae blazed with light that had never known a sun. The Winter Court breathed its slow, glacial patience in halls of black ice and silver birch. The Wylde,

ungoverned and feral, sprawled between them like a forest that had swallowed continents. And beyond the fae territories—yet connected by paths that shifted with the seasons and the stars—lay Avalon itself, the Ever-Distant Utopia, where apple trees bore fruit that could heal any wound and mend any soul, so long as the supplicant was deemed worthy.

Further still: Hell, the territory of the devils, with its ancient houses and tiered hierarchies. Heaven, with its choirs. Valhalla's mead-halls and Asgard's golden spires. Alfheimr, where the light elves wove reality from raw inspiration. The peaks of Olympus, where gods who should have faded sat in diminished splendour and nursed grudges older than recorded history. The River Styx, whose waters still carried their ancient price. Svarga, brilliant beyond mortal sight, where Indra's court held sway over storms and valour. A hundred more. A thousand. Each a pocket of concentrated mystery, of true ether in densities that would kill an unprepared mortal in seconds.

The materials on this workbench had been drawn from those places. From beings that lived in those places. From creatures whose very existence was saturated with the old power that humanity had largely forgotten.

Shirou opened his eyes.

The results of his analysis crystallised, and the materials sorted themselves in his mind into two distinct categories—two conceptual families, each unified by a common thread of purpose.

The first category sang of misdirection. Of confusion. Of things that existed in the peripheral vision and vanished when you turned your head.

Hairs and scales from the creatures of the Garden of Hesperides—those phantasmal guardians that had protected the golden apples not through brute force but through an elaborate architecture of deception. Their physical remnants carried that conceptual DNA: *what you see is not what is. What is cannot be seen.* Each scale threw Shirou's analysis into momentary recursion, his magecraft insisting it was examining one thing whilst simultaneously confirming it was examining something else entirely.

Beside them, sealed in a vial of pale blue glass, the essence of will-o'-the-wisps flickered with a light that seemed to exist slightly behind the present moment—always receding, always just departed, drawing the eye forward into pursuit of something that was never quite there. The concept was pure: ungraspable proximity. To perceive it was to chase it. To chase it was to lose it.

Hair from a Leanan Sídh—three strands, impossibly fine, the colour of autumn leaves at the instant they separated from the branch. The analysis returned a cascade of associated concepts: obsession, glamour, the ability to reshape how others perceived beauty and worth. A creature that didn't hide from perception so much as *hijack* it, replacing what was truly there with what the observer most wanted to see.

Doppelgänger skin, paper-thin and translucent, folded into a square no larger than his thumbnail. Wendigo bone, dense and cold, radiating a hunger that his analysis registered as a conceptual void—an absence where identity should have been. Materials harvested from fext, those impenetrable revenants of Slavic legend whose bodies rejected the reality of their own death. A pinch of dust from a Fetch, the fae death-omen that appeared as a perfect replica of its target—the self that is not the self, seen by those who should not see it.

Each material in this first category orbited the same conceptual centre: perception. The manipulation of it. The subversion of it. The fundamental disruption of the link between what exists and what is observed.

The second category carried a different charge entirely, and Shirou felt his cheeks warm as the analysis resolved.

Succubus saliva, sealed in a vial of smoked glass—not the killing kind, but the refined extract that targeted vitality, that drained masculine essence through pleasure rather than violence. His Structural Analysis returned a concept so explicit he nearly terminated the spell: *the consumption of virility through willing surrender*.

Mara essence. Churel nails, curved and dark, carrying the weight of betrayed desire. Langsuir hair—long, black, and heavy with the grief of women who'd died in childbirth and returned hungry for what they'd lost. Lamia scales, sun-warm even in their sealed container, patterned with designs that his eye insisted on following in ways that led nowhere productive. Jiangshi dust, grey and dry, smelling faintly of funeral incense and stale wanting.

Yakshini sap, golden and viscous, from those nature spirits of the subcontinent whose beauty was legendary precisely because it served as a delivery mechanism for draining everything their targets had to give.

And finally—

Baobhan Sith blood. Dark. Almost black. Sealed in a vial etched with protective sigils that Shirou recognised as Vivian's personal work.

That one, he'd encountered in person. A visit to the Garden of Avalon, years ago—a story for another time, and not one he was eager to revisit. The memory of those pale, dancing figures and the hunger behind their smiles was enough to make his hand drift unconsciously to the side of his neck.

Interspersed amongst both categories—and, in some cases, comprising them—were materials drawn from across the full spectrum of supernatural existence. Not all of the components were phantasmal in origin. The Hesperides guardians, the Leanan Sídh, the Baobhan Sith—those were true phantasmal beings, creatures of mystery and old ether whose existence predated humanity entirely.

But others—the Jiangshi dust, the Langsuir hair, the Churel nails, the doppelgänger skin—belonged to a different order. These were beings whose existence paralleled humanity's own, born from human death, human grief, human hunger. They weren't lesser, necessarily, but their conceptual roots grew from different soil.

And woven throughout were materials from magical creatures proper—the diminished descendants of phantasmal beings that had adapted to the

thinning mana of the surface world. Lesser in potency, but structurally compatible. Materials that could function as bridges for incompatible materials.

"Well?" Vivian's voice drew him back. She watched him with that particular quality of attention she reserved for moments of evaluation—not cold, exactly, but precise. A teacher waiting to see what the student had grasped. "What do you think we'll create?"

Shirou looked at the materials. Ran his tongue over his lower lip, tasting the ghost of jasmine tea. The two categories sat side by side in his mind, and the second one—the virility materials—pointed in an obvious direction.

"A conceptual item," he said slowly, tracing the logic. "The Mara, the Churel, the Langsuir—they all share a common attribute. They drain vitality. Sexual energy, specifically. The Lamia and Yakshini materials reinforce that vector, and the succubus essence plus the Baobhan Sith blood..." He glanced at the dark vial. "Those are the anchors, aren't they? The components most compatible with my current state." He tapped his sternum—the place where a queen piece had once sunk into his flesh and been spat back out. "Devil-fae with a human origin. A succubus is one of the daughters of the Progenitor—demonic, tied to lust at the fundamental level. And a Baobhan Sith is essentially the fae counterpart. Between them, they bracket what I am."

He paused, ordering his thoughts.

"So the item would target my curse. Not suppress it—the Silene feather did that, and we've seen how well that held up long-term. Though even if we manage to tip the scales of equivalence, we can't drain everything."

"What? Do you want your very own Baobhan Sith and succubus as companions?" Lady Avalon whispered into his ear. "Are we not enough?"

Shirou gave her a deadpan stare, but Lady Avalon just stuck her tongue out.

Vivian cleared her throat—a single, sharp sound that carried the weight of a judge's gavel. Continue.

Shirou rolled his eyes while Avalon arranged her features into a mask of perfect innocence.

"Ahem." He straightened. "So—are we going to bleed off the energy so that I won't reach a critical state?" His brow furrowed. "That half makes sense—and like you said, I need to train myself to live in this state. Learn self-control."

He fell silent. Looked at the first category—the Hesperides scales, the wisp essence, the Leanan Sídhé hair, all of it—and shook his head.

"But I can't see what the other half does. Misdirection, perception manipulation, conceptual camouflage—none of that has an obvious application to curse mitigation. Are we trying to conceal its effect? Maybe conceal my aura?" He turned his palms upward, a gesture of concession.

His tone carried honest doubt. The analysis was sound as far as it went, but it only went halfway, and the gap nagged at him the way an unfinished blade nagged—something fundamental missing from the design, an absence he could sense but not define.

"The perception materials. What are they—"

Movement at the edge of his vision. Lady Avalon had drifted closer during his analysis and now stood at his shoulder—closer than his shoulder, in fact, close enough that when she shifted her weight, her chest pressed against his arm, which derailed his train of thought with the efficiency of a thrown switch.

She didn't move away. If anything, she leaned in further, her chin nearly resting on his shoulder as she gazed down at the materials with an expression of exaggerated scholarly interest., her warm breath tickling his ear.

"Fascinating," she murmured, her breath warm against his ear. "Do go on."

Shirou's mouth opened. Closed. The sentence he'd been constructing evaporated. Lady Avalon was warm—unreasonably, distractingly warm, the kind of warmth that seeped through fabric and skin and settled somewhere beneath conscious thought. The faint scent of apple blossoms that always

accompanied her had intensified, filling his awareness until there was room for very little else.

"Avalon." Vivian's voice could have frozen the surface of her own lake.

"Behave."

Lady Avalon drew back with a pout. "I was merely—"

"You were merely demonstrating precisely why this project is necessary. Sit down."

A moment's standoff. Lady Avalon held Vivian's stare with the bright defiance of someone who'd spent her existence doing exactly as she pleased, then broke into a grin and retreated to the couch with her hands raised in mock surrender.

Shirou exhaled. Shook his head to clear the fog that had settled behind his eyes—residual curse-influence amplified by proximity, nothing more.

Except it never felt like *nothing more* when it was happening.

"Right." He refocused on Vivian. "The other materials. The perception set. What are they for?"

Vivian regarded him for a long moment. Then she placed both hands flat on the workbench, fingers spread, and spoke with the careful deliberation of someone who had rehearsed this explanation.

"The virility-draining materials are not the primary function."

Shirou frowned. "Then what—"

"They are the power source."

The words landed in the silence of the forge like a stone dropped into deep water. Shirou's frown deepened. He looked at the array, then back at Vivian, the pieces rearranging themselves in his mind with an almost audible click.

"The item we will create," Vivian continued, "is a conceptual shroud. When activated, it will target the perception, common sense, and sensory awareness of any entity that observes the wearer. Not merely obscure—*dismiss*. Anything that peers in the direction of the one wearing this item will perceive what it sees as nothing. As irrelevant. As something beneath the threshold of attention—a blank space in the visual field, an absence where curiosity should be."

She let that settle.

"Reality itself will look at the wearer and decide that what it sees is not worth the effort of registering."

From the couch, Lady Avalon let out a low whistle. "You're not building a veil. You're building a *blind spot*."

Vivian inclined her head—the barest acknowledgement. "Precisely."

Shirou's mind was already racing, pulling apart the implications. "The Hesperides materials—"

"Provide the framework for sensory misdirection," Vivian confirmed, a faint note of approval entering her voice. He was keeping up. Good. "The wisp essence supplies the conceptual engine—the quality of being always just outside the boundary of true perception. The Leanan Sídhé hair allows the shroud to actively reshape what observers *think* they're perceiving, replacing the reality with something their minds are comfortable dismissing."

"And the doppelgänger and Fetch materials?" Shirou asked.

"Identity confusion. The observer's brain encounters conflicting signals—*something is there, nothing is there, something is there but it isn't what I think it is*—and defaults to the simplest resolution, which is to conclude that something is there and it is never worth noting." She gestured toward the last of the perception materials. "The fext and wendigo components provide resilience. The shroud will resist attempts to pierce it, the way a fext's body resists any penetration that should kill it."

Lady Avalon tilted her head from the couch. "So it's not invisibility. It's... irrelevance."

"Conceptual irrelevance," Vivian corrected. "A critical distinction. Invisibility can be detected—the absence itself can be noticeable. This shroud doesn't create an absence. It creates an absolute conviction that nothing is worth attending to, and that reality agrees with this. There is no misdirection to unravel, no concealment to detect, because the observer has already perceived what is there and simply... moved on. The way your eye passes over a crack in a familiar wall. You've seen it a thousand times. It doesn't register."

Shirou's mouth had gone dry. "And the virility materials—"

"Power the entire construction. Your lust, Shirou." Vivian's gaze held his without flinching. "Your curse generates an extraordinary volume of sexual energy—energy that currently builds until it affects everyone around you, energy that your body cannot contain or redirect. This item would harvest that energy as it manifests and channel it directly into maintaining the shroud."

A beat of silence.

"We should have begun training you when you were a child," Vivian said, and something in her voice shifted—a hairline fracture in the composure, quickly sealed. "Instead of relying on the Silene feather to suppress what was growing inside you, we should have taught you to master it. To control the output, to modulate the intensity, to direct it rather than dam it. That was... an error in judgement. One I share responsibility for."

The forge felt very quiet.

From the couch, Lady Avalon's playfulness had evaporated. She watched Vivian with an expression that Shirou couldn't quite read—something careful, something old, something that suggested this was not the first time these words had been spoken between the two of them, only the first time they'd been spoken in front of him.

Shirou opened his mouth—to deflect, probably, to say it was fine, to shoulder the blame the way he shouldered everything—but Vivian raised a hand. A small gesture. *Don't.*

He closed his mouth.

Vivian straightened, and the clinical tone returned like armour sliding back into place.

"We believe—Lady Avalon and I—that given sufficient time and training, you will achieve conscious control over your lust. It may never be absent, but control is what matters." She paused, recalibrating. "The human capacity for adaptation is... considerable. Well—you were fully human at one point, at least. But in the meantime, Shirou, you require a practical solution. When the curse flares—and it *will* flare, unpredictably and without warning—you need the ability to find relief without transforming your immediate vicinity into a bacchanal."

Lady Avalon snorted from the couch. "She's been practising that line."

"I have not."

"You might not have been saying the words out loud, but I watched you pacing back and forth in your room for half an hour, presenting to nobody, mouthing something you clearly thought was very compelling."

Vivian's left eye twitched—barely, almost imperceptibly, but Shirou caught it. He fought down a smile.

"As I was *saying*," Vivian continued, her composure recovering with the speed of someone who had centuries of practice at ignoring Avalon, "this artefact would shroud your sexual activities from the perception of reality itself. If you need relief, you could seek it—wherever you happen to be—with minimal effect on those around you."

"Minimal effect," Shirou repeated, his voice carefully neutral.

"Your partners would need to be within the immediate vicinity of the shroud's influence—though I've been considering whether a subsidiary artefact could extend the boundary to specific individuals. A paired item, perhaps. Worn by the partner." She filed the thought away with a slight shake of her head—a problem for later. "But anyone outside that boundary would simply... not perceive what was occurring. Their eyes would slide past it. Their ears would dismiss the sounds. Their minds would fill the gap with whatever mundane explanation required the least cognitive effort."

She paused. Her gaze was steady. Unblinking.

"We cannot have random orgies happening in public, Shirou. What everyone so indelicately calls the 'sheathing protocols' addresses the residence. This addresses everything else."

Heat flooded Shirou's face. A deep, thorough crimson that started at his collar and climbed to the roots of his hair. His mouth worked silently for several seconds before sound emerged.

"What? Relief—*anywhere*?"

"That is what I said."

"You're suggesting that if my curse acts up in the middle of—of a lesson, or a meeting, or—"

"Then Rin or Sakura could attend to you." Vivian's expression didn't flicker. Not a single muscle. "Mid-class, if necessary. Without a care in the world. The shroud would ensure that no one in the room registered what was happening. To their perception, you and whichever partner was assisting you would simply... not be doing anything of note."

She considered her next words.

"Background noise. Furniture. The sort of thing the eye passes over on its way to something more interesting."

"Furniture," Shirou repeated faintly.

From the couch, Lady Avalon had pressed both hands over her mouth. Her shoulders shook. She was making a sound that might have been a cough if coughs came in staccato bursts and were accompanied by tears forming at the corners of one's eyes.

Shirou ignored her with the dignity of a man who had no dignity left to protect.

"What—" He swallowed. "What if it's recorded? Cameras. Video. Someone films the room and reviews the footage later."

Vivian tilted her head—a fraction, barely perceptible, but in her vocabulary of movement it constituted genuine acknowledgement of a worthwhile question.

"The shroud operates on the principle of conceptual irrelevance. If reality itself has already dismissed what is occurring, then any device that merely *records* reality should inherit that dismissal. A camera captures what is there. If what is there has already been deemed—" She caught herself, weighed the word, discarded it. "If what is there has already been *accepted* as beneath notice, then the recording carries that same quality. The observer of the footage would experience the same non-registration as someone standing in the room."

She paused, letting him catch up.

"Though I will note that this remains theoretical. The interaction between conceptual magecraft and recorded media is an area with limited empirical data. We would need to test it. Extensively."

Shirou pinched his thigh under the workbench. Hard. The image that *test it extensively* conjured was vivid and immediate and absolutely not something he needed in his head right now.

Shirou stared at her. His face still burned. Lady Avalon had given up all pretence of composure and was now laughing openly into a cushion, her shoulders heaving, bare feet kicking against the arm of the couch in helpless, silent convulsions.

"You want to build me," Shirou said slowly, each word arriving individually as his brain fought to process, "a magical artefact... powered by my own lust... that lets me have sex in public... and makes reality not notice."

"A reductive summary," Vivian said. "But essentially correct."

Lady Avalon made a sound that was only partially muffled by the cushion she'd buried her face in.

Shirou looked at the workbench. Looked at Vivian. Looked at the vibrating heap of silver-white hair and shaking shoulders on the couch.

He picked up his tea and took a very long sip.

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End

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