Beyond Worlds

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Summary

A Guardian seeks to be free. A Creator wants to be true to himself. Worlds and paths collide. This is their story.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.
Man with the Red Cape

Time is eternal here.

In the graveyards of the brown sands and iron, he waited. Rest and wait until the time comes for duty. The red soil carried the weights of the world. Swords, spears, bows; weapons of all kinds of them were buried upright. Each a marker, a history, a grave of men who were once heroes. Each of them are relics and phantasms carried with great meaning. They are now his history. He stood in watch atop the hill of blades. How long has it been since he was standing here? Years? Decades? Time does not travel nor should it matter for he is in eternal service.

There would be occasional winds, drifting the sands across the red wasteland. They echo within his ears. Large gears in the air would spin and crank to meet the rules of this world. This is his place. This is his life. A voice whispered in his ears, melodic within the harsh red sea.

Do you want to be free?

Of course he wanted to be free. Fighting for countless times, facing adversaries that would wrought terror to the hearts of men. It was weary. Kill, kill and to always kill. Not only beasts nor monsters but the common folk of men. It would not always be a challenge for it would be slaughter. Why would not one want to be free?

He felt a call. The call to arms. It beckons him to return. Once more to fight in the battle beyond the commons of man. Alaya must have another mission for him. Another time for the killing. EMIYA closed his eyes to the broken wastelands of swords and gears. He answered it and the world around him vanished. For it is time for the Counter Guardian to rise once more.

Counter Guardian Shirou Emiya opened his eyes to the witness the new world. Skyscrapers, spires within the growing metropolis. The dark night with cold winds that gently billowed the red cloak he wore. Common rough smells of the city returned familiar to him. Far down below, the traffic was busy with both people and cars vying to reach their destination. It was quiet to his ears. Confusing, where was Alaya? This was another mission. There must be something that needed the intervention of the Counter Guardian. What atrocity is supposed to happen that would annihilate the world?

Nothing. No voice, no instructions. Nothing. Why was he here? Standing amongst the rooftops, he could find no purchase of reason. There is no panic. There are no screams. There is no fear. There is no death. There is no reason, for him to be here. It did not make sense as Emiya clenched a fist. He felt the strength in the muscles of his forearms. Magic Circuits filled with power. He is not a Servant this time. A Counter Guardian yet without an objective. Could it be, that he is misguided? The voice spoke of freedom. Could it be true?

It felt too good to be true. Alaya, the will of mankind would never allow it. There are questions to be answered. Beyond that would be even more that needed answering. He studied the view from the highest skyscraper in the vicinity. He recognised this place. Different yet familiar. It was not Fuyuki City, his place of birth. Tokyo, one of the common places travelled before his enlistment into the Counter Force. The time line felt similar, not too far from his own past. He leapt into the sky in search for answers.
No one paid any attention as the Counter Guardian walked briskly along the streets. Emiya appreciated being ignored despite his uncommon garbs. Hours went by but without results. Emiya scoured the city for ideas but there wasn't anything worth of observation. *What kind of joke are you playing Alaya?* He reached the edges of the Akihabara district. He would not get used to this part of Tokyo. Anime, manga and video games all compressed into this area. Obsessed is what he would categorise these people. The posters and artworks along the walls of the buildings displeased him compared to better arts that have been drawn in the past. He should be move on quickly towards Ueno district where the large park may have more clues. *Wait, what's that?* It was a small poster plastered on the windows. His sharp eyes read it easily.

*Surely it can't be!*

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Daichi Hideaki fumed as the results scrolled in the small display of his cell phone. "Not another Black Key. Damn it Kirei." The Green Black Key of the Church, a commonly despised in-game item. He started off the game *Fate Grand Order* a few months ago but the struggle was real. He sighed while adjusting his glasses. "That's another wasted roll." Fortunately he hasn't been spending real money for more in game items but the temptation was growing difficult to resist. *Can't be spending money on it or Shizuka would kill me.* He had been saving up for the latest Manga due to be released within the week. That's a maybe provided if he doesn't spend it on something else first. *Why am I here in Akihabara?* He sighed again. Meeting up with Kazoku here is a bad idea and growing by the minute. He tapped a quick message into his phone. 'I'm here. Where are we meeting?'

'I'm at the maid cafe in the same street with Toshio's shop. Join us here.'Daichi tapped a quick reply before turning left onto the main street. A quick check of the clock and he cringed. *Only an hour or two before going home. That's all you're going to allow yourself.* He needs to study for the incoming college entrance exams. Third year of high school had been taking a toll on life. Once he graduated, maybe he'll be able to find a relief for a few weeks before moving on in education.

He noticed a white haired man in a red coat staring at the building down the street. Ah, an Archer cosplay. Wow, he's really good. The red coat and black underarmour was well made and defined. The steel plated boots carried their weight. The dark skin tone, the hairstyle was perfect. He continue to study the cosplayer in midstride. *Odd, the Fate series isn't in the current trend for cosplaying, not until the new movie coming out soon.* He pulled out his phone for a photo. *I shouldn't be taking a picture but its too good not to be shared out on Twitter.* The camera clicked when he felt a chill down his spine.

His body froze, feeling claustrophobic and the squeeze of the chest. He blinked as the sensation faded as fast it struck. What the hell? He looked down at his phone, hand shaking. Looking back up, grey eyes drilled into his. The man was staring right at him. "Didn't anyone taught you manners boy?" Daichi felt the words hurt from the sharp harshness of his tone. Darn, he even sounds exactly like it. He screwed up badly.

"I'm very sorry Mister!" Daichi bowed in an apology. Head down, clenched fists, back stiff; the way this mess needed. "It's just that your Cosplay looks really good."

"Cosplay? I'm not." The man spat before he paused. "Well...shit." Daichi could felt annoyance sliding off his back. He looked up to see the man's frustration at the thought. "I need some answers. Come with me." His legs followed, too afraid to felt too close. Too is he? The man took him aside to a spare corner and spoke. "Do you know who I am?"
"Uh… no mister."

The grey eyes wouldn't budge. "Yes you do. Otherwise you wouldn't have taken a photo."

"Ah…" Daichi flexed his cold fingers. "You're Archer from the visual novel game called Fate Stay Night; or rather representing him."

"Visual novel?" 'Archer' piqued.

"It's a electronic book or e-book with pictures and sounds." Surely someone in Japan would know about them.

Daichi saw uncertainty in Archer's face. "This Fate… game is famous?"

"Not super famous like blockbuster movies but its quite popular. You've come out in anime, manga and even a movie; a few of them in fact! There's another movie due in a few months too." Shoot, he was supposed to be scared, not excited!

"You can't be serious."

Daichi took a phone and showed it to him. Archer scowled. "I'll be damned."

His fear was gone. "You're an awesome character don't you know? With your tracing skills and fighting style, facing enemies beyond your level is beyond cool."

"What a joke." Archer scoffed.


"I'm not." The shivers stopped, Archer's eyes remained sharp but the deadly glare was gone. "Maybe I am after all."

Daichi took deep breaths. Too many scary moments. "I don't know, who you are Mister but you really feel like him, the real Archer." He should walk away. He don't know anymore. This doesn't feel right. Getting worse by the moment. Maybe he-

"You, what's your name?" Daichi froze, he? "Never mind. We'll keep in touch." Archer turned around the corner. A breath of relief, Daichi turned to peek. The alley was empty. Another breath of relief, he is safe now. He should get moving now before seeing anything frightening. His feet raced across the pave walk in agreement.

Despite the horrifying vibes he had from the man, Daichi could accept it. That cosplayer could have become a real actor of Archer.

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Emiya stared down the rooftop at the young boy walking hastily back to the streets. He might have been a bit harsh on the kid but it got what he needed. Results were all that mattered. More so better to let him not remember him by being afraid of him. Memory magic was unfortunately out of his repertoire. He didn't have the aptitude or ability to use it. Rin probably could. How long has it been since he met her? Too long.

Alone and in peace, he sat by the side as the sun began to set. He had time now to think. The evidence was leading one direction. I'm bloody fiction. He didn't exist in the real world. His entire world, a lie forged for the entertainment of others. His long perilous journey, the pain he endured, the
broken hearts he suffered. The loss of his loved ones, the curse of the Counter Force, the killing for eternity. They were all for nothing. Fists squeezed tight, too tough to bleed from his strength. Did I need to know this? To know that everything was meaningless?

*You may be correct but it doesn't mean you are right*

He snorted at that memory. *What the hell am I doing?* This wasn't him to be the one brooding. How many challenges had he faced only? How many magus and monsters have he fought nearly to the death? How many times did he nearly end up dead yet would never persist. How could he just balk at only a statement about his life? That he was a lie? He tapped into his magic circuits. He whispered. *Trace on.* A sword appeared in his hands. It was a simple sword, one without any special abilities nor properties amongst the countless within his arsenal. It was just a sword. That was what he was, a sword. *I am the bone of my sword.* He willed the sword to vanish.

There was nothing to gain from wallowing in these thoughts. In fact, he overlooked the most important fact. He was free. Shirou Emiya is no longer a Counter Guardian. There is no need to fight. No need to kill. The choice is his to make. He stood up to stare at the darkening sky. Had he been thinking that long? He took a deep breath of the cold air. Freedom was refreshing. A life without the killing, an oasis within the desert of swords. *Perhaps it's finally time.* Decided, Shirou Emiya leapt down to start anew.

"What the hell happened? You looked freaked out."

Daichi had little to answer his childhood friend. He said with a finger scratching the cheek. "Uh…I guess I met someone that didn't go so well."

"Ain't that the truth. Chill out here bro." Kazuko Minamori said. Bright windows with cutely dressed maids, quiet ambiance was assuring. The friendly environment was helping to ease his mind from the encounter.

Daichi eased back into the chair. A little quiet for now. The Maid cafe wasn't crowded with the few available seats. His friend was enjoying the parfait that he always ordered from here. *The girls are quiet today.* On the few occasions he was here, they were showering Kazuko with attention being a handsome guy for his age. The waxed black hair and smile that always draw awe. Such contrast, how did they end up being good friends?

He took a sip from the tea. It felt much better. His hands stopped shaking. Daichi glanced left to his watch. Kazuko smiled. "Just chill. You've got enough time to study later."

A shrug was the answer. "I know, Bad habit." Another sip of tea soothed the mind. "Let's forget about it. Why did you call me out here today?"

"I've heard some interesting rumours. Thought I would share them for some opinion."

"Opinion? You usually have quite solid opinions on almost everything." Kazuko may have been laid back but he was intelligent.

"You're right bro. This stuff though is more to your expertise. Thought it was better to get an expert on it." Kazuko sent the picture to his phone. "See here. I've found some interesting pictures on the net." Daichi studied the image. *A warehouse with two people fighting on the roof.* The figures were too small for details. *Wait, are those two floating in the air?* It was puzzling.

Daichi scrutinised. "Aren't these pics usually fake?"
Kazuko nods. "I'm inclined agree but fake pictures don't leave markings on the road or walls."

Markings on the road and walls. "Wait, you went to the actual place?"

"Yea bro. My intuition said it was true and checked it out. It was real. There were many gashes and holes everywhere. That isn't just some poor shoddy work over there. Something happened and it ain't normal."

It didn't make sense though. He saw small shiny objects surrounding one person. How could that happen? "Then what you're trying to say is."

"Yes, these people very likely exist."

"It could have been a movie set." CG effects to top off the original setup of wires and so on. "No way people can float in mid air without some assistance."

Kazuko sent a few more pictures. "Like I said, there were gashes and holes everywhere. Nothing the kind a movie set would make. Big holes through the walls. Cracks that you need a truck for it. The people who worked there are confused. They ain't making a movie."

Daichi studied the images. The cracks into the asphalt and the gaping ceiling felt real. He read the first picture again. The hint of grey hair and dark cloak. He zoomed the picture until it was pixelated. Feminine looks, a girl. It intrigued. "One of them looked familiar." Too hard for anything else but it didn't feel like a local.

Kazuko leaned forward. "I was right. So, I need you to help me find out who they are."

"It could be coincidence."

"I don't think so. You're able to recognise them. People just don't recognise anyone out of the blue. I think you're on to something and that you will get to the answer faster than I would." Daichi met eye to eye with his friend. The surest conviction, rarely given.

Is Kazuko right? The implication would be deep. A paradoxic truth. "This looks like something dangerous. Shouldn't we just forget it? Nobody's harmed to anyone so far right."

He noticed a furrow of the brow. "Yes, no one's hurt, yet. I think there's some secret cover up for now." Kazuko clasped his hands. "I'm curious for the truth. Better to spill the beans before anyone really gets hurt. Are you going to not lift a finger and find out? That would unbecoming of you, Hero."

"Quit the nickname. That was years ago." Should he? The itch to find out was growing. Who was the girl in the picture? "Okay, I'll lend a hand." Daichi took a glance of his surroundings. The cafe was starting to get busy. Might be best to get moving. He should be careful too. Something really dangerous.

Kazuko smiled as he stood up. "Excellent." He offered a hand. "Shall we begin this story, partner?"
Questions, Answers, Resolution

The trip home was quick and quiet, a relief to Daichi. Ever since accepting the role, ideas of danger loomed behind his neck. A bit excessive... The thought of ‘Archer’ vindicated it. The apartment complex he called home was unremarkable within the Ogikubo District. Set on the 8th floor, home had a good view of his school two blocks away. Daichi glanced at the time. Dark at seven, most people would be coming back home or soon. He glanced around before entering his apartment.

He turned on the lights. “I’m home.” No one answered. Daichi undone his shoes and checked the house to be sure. Nobody was in. The bedrooms were clear, kitchen clean and untouched. The small blue bathroom was dry and unused. I am really getting too paranoid. A cold shower and a glass of milk helped his nerves before returning to his room. More calm and collected, he took a seat at the computer in his room. A question that was asking to be answered. What truly lies within the picture? Who was that woman? Why is she familiar to him?

Armed with a collection of photos from Kazuko, he made a simple image search to find any possible leads. A few web links appeared and he read through them. This is probably where Kazuko found out about it. It was the a few forums where fervent discussion was taking place about the picture. He studied it to gather some information. They were going along several theories.

The main premise were leading the discussion that the photo had been faked and the discussion was mostly on the various techniques attempting to prove or disprove the idea. Daichi ignored it because Kazuko’s information had already contradicted the notion. The second premise was leading on the idea of a film set for a live action movie. Live action films based on Anime are getting very popular nowadays. They were reaching the same conclusion Daichi had earlier so he discarded it.

The few minority premises were going about government conspiracy, illegal biological experimentation, occult and the supernatural. Daichi felt they weren’t right. The idea of super humans was neat but there are too many open questions. Why there? Could someone had screwed up? Super humans can’t fly...wait maybe they can. If it was a government conspiracy, he’d suspect there would be more censorship. Nobody’s touching the posts so far. Could this be the right lead? He kept it aside for now.

The idea of the supernatural stifled him. This is the modern era, while convenient but was unjustifiable. He shelved the ideas with a sigh. The conclusion of reading the web forums was a bust. A glance of the clock led it to be eight. That was a good waste of time. The thought of studying instead felt irrelevant. Exams are important but the questions demanded to be answered. There’s more than it meets the eyes.

He could not answer the question of what happened thus far. Maybe I should try another lead. Who was the woman in the cloak? The familiarity is a clue. Where had he seen her? He wrote a list of points on paper. First, she is not a local. Second, she is not someone I know in daily life. Third, why did nobody recognise them? What did he know that these others don’t? His hobbies were nothing unique within the norm. Games and Manga, where do these two lead to?

He glanced at the bookshelf to his left. Not that many books as I’d liked. He flipped through the small collection. The Mangas were several seasons back. Ah, I need to get the latest light novel of Vogelchevalier. He put the books away. Nostalgic but irrelevant. No leads thus far, he turned to his game console for more ideas.

Flipping through the list of games, he questioned his actions. Why would the girl be within a game? She wouldn’t be a cosplay by any chance. Ugh, the idea of fighting in skimpy or bulky kind of
clothes. He continued scrolling through the list. Maybe he should sleep it off and have better ideas in the morning. Shizuka would kill me if I try to skip school again. His finger paused. The name on the screen jogged his memory.

Avalken of Reminisce

Something stirred. Could it be? Could it really be what he was looking for? Daichi started the game. He hadn’t touched the game for months and by now it was starting to become old in the market. Maybe, just maybe... A few more screens and he met her. Meteora Osterreich. The woman in the pic resembled this character, the Librarian of the Kundst Wunderkammer. Unease filled his veins as he blinked a few times. It doesn’t make sense. Can anyone look exactly like a game character? Or maybe is it really supernatural stuff? Wait, how does it even apply to this anyway? He remembered the ‘Archer’. Someone could pull it off.

He answered the first question to unveil a half dozen more. If she is really is Meteora, that woman has the answers. His guts tightened. This is starting to get really dangerous. How many times had people try to find out the truth before they end up dead? More than I’d know probably...and then some. Should he call it quits here? Tell Kazuko he found nothing? That guy’s never going to quit until it satisfies him. He’ll take awhile to find out but he’ll get it eventually. Daichi reached for his milk and realised the glass was empty.

Find her or forget it. He took a look at the photo. That’s right. They were fighting. There may be more of them. Other people could get hurt if he didn’t stop it. Could he accept the guilt of doing nothing?

For evil men to accomplish their purpose it is only necessary that good men should do nothing

He can’t let that happen. Kazuko had given the address of the photo. He read it before frowning. A long way across town. How much time does he have? Could he go in the morning? It likely won’t happen in daytime. A glance of the clock. 9:00 PM. It would be a while to get there. Daichi has to go now or he would miss the last train back. He grabbed his things and made way.

Emiya breathed the cooling air. Winter must be coming. Standing at the top of a tower, he set to work in accomplishing his first goal, finding a place for the night. From there, he would find himself a job and eventually a place to stay. Not having any papers and money will be troublesome. His options would be limited and the time would be tough but compared to his experience, it would be cakewalk.

Anywhere quiet to stay will suit his needs for now. Those rooftops are filled with holes. Worth checking out. He leapt, coasting across the sky. It would be a while to travel there. Beggars can’t be choosers. The rooftops led him towards the coast and moving at speeds twice of a train, the trip was quick. Archer didn’t recognise the area. The signboards depicted the area as being the industrial zone of the Kawasaki bay. He would see the occasional bus of tourists travelling around to see the industrial buildings on sightseeing. They called it Kojo Yakei. His destination fortunately was deeper within the zone, away from the common path or interests for the tourists given the signages planted around for common courtesy.

The target was one of the larger sized industrial warehouse complexes. He suspected it to be dark and abandoned. It wasn’t. The lights were on. This is messy. The tall stacks of racks had been overturned and toppled. Many boxes were scattered about, opened and damaged. He recognised telltale signs at a wall. There was a fight. What happened here? Footsteps, behind him. Damn my E-rank luck. He turned around to face the source. The first impression was soldier given the uniform and hat. The long white hair tucked into a twintail suggested a high ranking. The metal gauntlets
cautioned him. He stood ready on guard. *She is a fighter.*

The woman smiled. “Congratulations, you have been freed.”

Alarm bells rang. Emiya relaxed his fists, weapons ready for summon. “You know who I am.”

“Yes I do, Archer or would you like me to call you Shirou Emiya?”

Dangerous. *What else does she know?* “Who are you?”

“My name is irrelevant.” She pressed a hand to her chest. “Just know that I am also a creation.”

“Creation.” He repeated.

“Exactly. You and I are creations from the Gods of this world.”

*Is this why I am here? Was this her doing? I am at a disadvantage.* “How do you know who I am? What do you speak of these gods?”

“I am the one who brought you here. You asked to be free. I granted it.” The woman spread her arms wide. “This entire realm you see here is the source of our world’s suffering.”

*So this is what’s going about.* “What do you want from me?”

The woman stepped closer. “How do you feel about your world?”

A rise in his chest. “That’s nothing of your concern. Answer the question.”

“Is it? Do you not feel betrayed? That the Gods created your life as entertainment. Everything you’ve been through is a sham, a mockery.”

“And what are you proposing?”

“Join me. The creators can change our worlds. Your world doesn’t need to be the sad thing it is. Your people can be happy. Peace can return. Your friends, your loved ones would be saved. The land of Gods only needs to be changed and for that I need a few hands.”

“Then you’ve made a bad choice. Of all the people you found, I’m planning to do nothing.” Their eyes met. “Are you going to make that a problem?”

Her reply was a smirk. “If you are bent that way, no. However the chance to change your world is once in a lifetime. Are you a coward within your story that you cannot bear to try to change the fabrics of your life? What do you fight for? Are you going to waste this very opportunity?”

Archer studied her expressions. It felt the truth. It was a reasonable logical assumption. If he could get his creator to change the world, there would be no need to fight. Suspicion grew like a bud. *If only things were that easy. I sold myself once to Alaya because I needed it.* Taking a step back, it was clearer. The opportunity is good but it felt too much like a hard sell. *Never trust anything that sounds too good.*

“Very well. I’ll think about it.” He turned around. “I’ll find you when I have an answer.” He leapt and was out the door. His feet were swift and quick, sensing for anything behind him. None. There will be no fight.

Reaching the roof of the warehouse, he had a short moment to think. His predicament has changed. *A chance to change the world.* His world. Should he go for it? He must decide. First, he need to get
Daichi regretted not bringing a torchlight. The place was dark. The light on his phone was barely able to guide his steps through the area. The ambiance is noisy from the moving machines and generators a few factories away. Slow and steady, he made his way across the open area cluttered with metal pieces, parts and the occasional scrap.

The first sign was found easily. A deep gouge into the concrete floor. His fingers guided along the depression. *Woah, they’re really deep.* Kazuko was right. The cut was smooth and man made, done in a single stroke. *This is why Kazuko was so convinced.* He took a photo and stood up. *There should be a few other signs I can find. That way I can -*

He felt pain before realising his face was on the floor. A grunt from the mouth as with arms held down against his back. “You again.” A breath beside his ear. “Don’t go prying into people’s affairs.”

*Shit. Am I going to die?* Cold travelled down his limbs. Adrenaline pumped into his veins. He struggled but it was fruitless. He was turned over onto his back. “Why…why are you here?”

“None of your business.” The man pressed a leg on his chest. It didn’t hurt. It just held him. “Now spill the beans.”

*Tell the truth or you will die.* “I was finding something.”

Archer gestured around them. “In a place like this?”

*He’s not going to believe me.* His voice was choked. “Yes, yes, I know its weird and all but it’s the truth.”

“What are you looking for that brings you all the way here?”


A click of the teeth. Daichi felt an arm grab, lifting him up. He couldn’t feel the floor. Hands too short to reach at the man. “Forget all this unless you want to die.”


“To hell with you. I gave you enough warnings, enough chance for you to back away. Now you accept the consequence.” Archer dropped him hard to the ground. “Yes boy, I am indeed Emiya, Guardian of the Counter Force.”

*I was right after all.* Daichi asked through the pain on the wrists. “Why, how are you here?”

“I don’t know myself.”

Daichi rose to his feet. His legs felt like jelly. “How long have you been here?”

“Today.”

*I should let Kazuko know.* He would know what to do. Daichi reached for the cell phone when a hand stopped him.

“Don’t. There’s no telling to who is listening.” Archer gestured towards the city. “Do you have a
somewhere quiet?”

Daichi nodded. “Yes…we can talk more over there.”

“I’ll carry you there. It’ll be faster.”

When Archer offered to carry him, Daichi didn’t thought of the impact it would bring. Seconds later, he regretted it. Taking deep breaths, a hand against the wall, Daichi panted. “That…was way too scary.” He glanced at the watch. “Half, the time, still not worth it.”

“I thought kids would be more excited. Then again, its Japan. Forget what I said.” Daichi opened the door to his apartment. “Do you live alone?”

Daichi turned on the lights. There’s nobody else waiting. “Yes, My parents work overseas.”

“Hoh, sounds like a typical life for a manga.”

“I’m surprised that you people know of them.”

“Our lives are not stones and sticks.” They settled down at the dining table. Tea in hand, Archer voiced. “Now we’re here. Talk.”

“What are you after?”

“A quiet life.”

Daichi blurted. “I thought you’d want to go back.”

Archer stared at him. “There’s no reason to. I’ve done my part for a nonexistent world; to hell with them.” Unyielding as stone. Daichi was uncomfortable to maintain the constant eye contact. “Your turn, what are you after?”

“Answers. You’re one of them.”

Archer snorted. “Finding superheroes. That’s a far fetched idea.”

“I did find you.”

Archer sighed. “More like I found you, snooping around like a thief. What luck I have.”

Daichi chuckled. “Moving on, how did you come to this world?”

“Beats me, I just appeared here.”

“Any other details? I mean like memories or images?” Archer shook his head.

“Why are you looking for heroes like me?”

“I’m investigating a rumour. That super humans or heroes like you are appearing in this world.” Daichi leaned back against his seat. “It doesn’t make sense but you’re here so its real.”

“That’s your problem to figure it out.”

“I see. I’d expected as much from you.” Daichi felt a tingle of danger.
“Don’t think that you know the world I was from or my history that you would understand exactly who I am.”

Forewarned, Daichi pulled back. “I’m sorry.” He stood and bowed. “My name’s Daichi Hideaki. If you’re staying for a while, I guess it’s good to know each other more.”

Archer nodded, the tension dissolving. “You’re right. You know a lot about me. In return, share me something about yourself.”

“I’m a high school student, third year. I’m planning to go to university. Not sure where yet.”

“Third year, you have a long way to go, kid.”

“Archer, what are your plans?”

“Find a place for tonight. Get a job somewhere. Start a new life.” Daichi noticed. He sounds tense. Is he unsure? This is something unnatural after all.

“Since… you’ve nowhere to go, you can stay here for the night. You can sleep in my room. We can sort things out tomorrow.” Daichi saw softness before it faded.

“Thanks.”

First time within the night, Daichi smiled. “That’s rare to hear.”

“You’re in luck. You won’t hear it any more.”

A bright morning. Another routine trip to his house. She stepped out of the lift towards the apartment. *He better be awake.* A smile as she unlocked the door. Entering inside the room, she noticed the door to the bedroom ajar. The rinse of running water in the bathroom. *Taking a bath. Well, I’ll just surprise him.* Her small lithe hands picked up the tools in the kitchen and began making a meal.

*The fish is going to expire soon, better to finish it. The rice is running out. It’ll still be just enough. We’ll need to shop for more groceries later. That will be a good chance.*

Ten minutes later, the main portion of the meal is ready. The bathroom door opened. *The soup should be almost done too, perfect.* She turned around. “Morning Daichi. Breakfast’s almost ready.” She froze. A dark skinned man, clothed only in a towel. Big, tall, strong. Gray eyes met red counterparts. She screamed.

Daichi woke up to the bright morning. He blinked as memories of the previous night returned. “It’s not a dream.” The clock read seven in the morning, a little later than the norm. It was odd. Something wasn’t right. He shot up the bed. “Uh oh, she’s coming.”

A scream. Rushing off the bed, Daichi got out of his room to see flying utensils. “Pervert! Robber! Murderer!” He closed the door, avoiding a flying pan. *That’s going to make a dent.*
Archer was yelling. “You’re the one who barged in!”

She screamed. “What kind of man walks around the house naked?”

Daichi sighed. Too late. He opened the door and yelled. “It’s okay. Everyone calm down.” A flying fork went by the left ear. His childhood friend stood ready, knives at hand with red eyes glaring. Archer was on the other side, equally distrusting.

She snarled. “Daichi, Who’s this man in the house?”

Daichi stood between them as a mediator. “Shizuka, this is a friend, Shirou Emiya. Shirou, meet Shizuka Katsumi, childhood friend. Please, really please do get along.” Daichi imagined sparks clashing between their eyes from the cold stares. They backed down and minutes later, they were seated at the table for breakfast.

Ominous, ominous, ominous. This is tense. Daichi could feel the silence like grey clouds. Dead motions of picking food from the table. Normally delicious breakfast felt like prison. Daichi glanced at both sides. Archer, fully dressed thankfully was paying no mind, eating nonchalant. Shizuka was cautious given how particular she picked bits only after Archer took his. Her red twin tails were on edge, sharp like weapons. He heard her whisper. “Who is he?”

Daichi answered. “A friend from Okinawa.”

“Why is he staying here?”

“Visiting a few days.” Hope that’ll help.

Shizuka narrowed her eyes. “He looks like a bully.”

“I heard that.” Archer spoke up. Their eyes clashed. “I was working mostly out in the sea. Need to be strong to bring in the fishes.” Nice one there.

A furrow of brows. “I see.”

Daichi observed. I don’t think she’s convinced yet. “Emiya’s planning to study further here in Tokyo. He needed a place while he finds another home so I offered.” Shizuka’s suspicion remained, mostly. “I’m sorry. I forgot to let you know ahead, please forgive me.”

Shizuka sighed and gave a nod. No further words were spoken. Empty dishes, Daichi checked the time. “We need to head out to school.” Getting them away will hopefully defuse the mood. A quiet clean up and they were by the door.


Shizuka crunched her brows at him. “What is that about?” Damn you Archer.

Daichi arrived to the classroom of Ogiukubo High School, relieved for a moment from Shizuka’s persistent interrogation. Class was starting to fill, ten minutes early from home room. Eyes glanced around for his target. There. He settled his stuff into the desk and walked over to Kazuko sitting by the window.

Kazuko noticed his approach. “Yo, you looked tired. What happened?”

“Just a small incident at home.” Some things are just better kept quiet.
Kazuko asked. “Did you manage to find out anything?”

What should I say? “I did.” He summarised last night’s experience. From identifying Meteora to discovering Archer at Kawasaki bay. Kazuko was intrigued throughout the story, given the deep stares and smiles now and then. “Now that you know the answer, what are you going to do about it?”

Kazuko leaned back against the chair. “Hmm, put it up on the net. Get it to spread like wildfire. Hopefully that’ll bring the media to you. You can then prove the world super humans exist.”

“You know it’ll bring me a lot of trouble before that’ll happen. Who knows what they might do. Besides, Archer might not be so keen on this.”

Kazuko bit a lip. “You’re right. What a terrible mistake it would’ve be. I’ll leave it be for the time being.” Kazuko flipped his phone. “Also, I found something related.” Daichi leaned over to read the details. “A forum post yesterday about the final boss from Dark Night, Exclusive Underground.”

Daichi recognised the purple haired man with goggles. Another battle, this other old dude with a gun. “Yuya Mirokuji. You think they’re another case?”

“You’ve already proved it not once but twice. Third time’s the charm.”

Daichi paused. “These are not normal people. Things will be dangerous. Maybe we should report it to the government, let them do something about it.”

Kazuko raised a brow. “The government would rather cover this up than solve this mystery. It’s up to us Daichi. We are the ones who need to uncover it. Sure, one man might be an anomaly. So, we get a team of super humans to reveal the world what they really are. That’ll force their hand.”

There is no victory without hardship. Daichi steeled himself. “You’re right. The government won’t do much unless we make them. I’ll talk to him and try to convince him.” The class bell rang. With agreeing nods, they returned to their seats and started school.

He must have been a fan to keep a decent collection. Emiya mused as he purveyed the shelf of books, DVDs and miniature models. Half of it were related to the Fate series. He felt a bit bad denying Daichi information but experience as a Counter Guardian countermanded. Never play all your cards. It is how you become a victor. Emiya used the computer to find the answers.

Damn, I am quite a playboy. A smirk grew on his lips as he continued reading. There was a significant archive of about his story. Three different possibilities, three versions of Shirou Emiya. He understood where he stood within the apex of these paths. He watched the animes, accelerated to three times the speed. At least I had a good moment in Unlimited Blade Works. He remembered the fight, between him and his past self. Felt just like days ago.

He understood the situation. What really happened. How his father, Kiritsugu Emiya became the Magus killer. The perilous and painful journey of the 4th Holy Grail war. The loss of his beloved wife, Irisviel. The curse and the beginning of Shirou Emiya. He went through hell to save me.

Next of his list were the three heroines.

Rin
Saber

Sakura

Each of these girls have suffered and endured. Rin and Sakura lost their parents from the war, more so for Sakura being tortured daily for the years since the war. How could that young girl suffer so much and yet smile. Ironic.

Saber endured a lone quiet life, never understood by her people for her duty is to protect her kingdom. Archer understood her attempt for the Holy Grail, to attempt essentially an erasure of herself from history in hopes for a better Britain. You’ve endured long enough.

Staring at his worn hands, he remembered the girl’s offer. Join her and he could change his world. Remove his chains to Alaya, remove their pain, remove their suffering. He could bring smiles to their faces, not despair. Should he change their fate? Would it be worth the price? Things are not always as they seem.

As much as you want to save them, they do not need you to fight for their fate. Their journey is not for his to invalidate. Their past should not to be turned into a happy fantasy. He had no right to do so. Their struggles are not for nought for it made them strong to face their challenges, their journey. Just like my own.

He laughed. Damn it Zelretch, this feels just like something you’d cook up. That crackpot would be laughing all the way whilst doing it. He might have gone through with it to see the possibilities. Maybe this is how he sees things having the Kaleidoscope. Countless branches of futures with each a differing result. Maybe Zelretch could come here. That would be an interesting spectacle to see.

In theory, this travelling is akin to his experience as a Counter Guardian. Another world, another time. Just one that led to the origin of the Fate universe. Why should he be so concerned about his sense of existentialism? A moment of idiocy. Lucky Rin wasn’t around to see that.

Probably there would be no such opportunity for Zelretch. This world is a land without magic. The rules of nature would not allow it to happen. Curious, he projected a copy of Kanshou and Bakuya. The twin blades of white and black, married by their history appeared as easily it would be. The blades felt a familiar tension. There is still a form of Gaia in this world. This world acted his magic to erase it from the world. That is strange. He willed the blades to disappear, the twins vanishing in a cumulation of pixels.

I was right. Gaia exists and there is a reaction to magic. The intriguing fact is that Gaia’s rejection was unstable, fluctuating and inconsistent. If given what the kid was saying, there will be other heroes with unnatural powers. Gaia should work on them as well.

The Magecraft in his universe would weaken the more people used a specific effect. A limited vessel of magic, dampened by the number of its users. That principle might not apply here. What would happen if the world had too much inconsistencies to reject? Could the world collapse from the strain?

If that woman brought more heroes from the other worlds here, it could happen. The woman was determined to make the creators in this world change their stories. His doubt was growing. Or something else? Why was she concerned for everyone else to change their stories when all she needed is only her story? Could this relationship be her intent or doing?

He only saw one woman thus far but if the boy was right, there should be other heroes in this world. They might know more about this phenomenon than him. He will need to act. It’d be hell to be free only to have the world blow up.
Evening was approaching. The Kid should be finishing school soon. Best not to overstay his time here. Archer prepared to head out. The question must be answered. As he turned out to leave, the phone rang.
The day crawled. Daichi had been eager to contact Archer but had no moments. He tried during lunch break but were dashed when Shizuka appeared with their regular Bento lunch. Daichi abstained, preferring not to involve her in this mess. The school bell rang, calling the end of the day. He called home, hopefully Archer would pick up. The phone answered. “Archer, we need to talk, privately.”

Archer replied. “Alright. We can meet directly.” Good fortune, he understood the situation. *That’s a Counter Guardian, all this is his backyard.*

Daichi suggested. “Meanwhile we should get you some clothes. Otherwise you’ll stick out.” A small investment, useful to curry favour.

“Hmm, that’ll work.”

“Good. We’ll meet at Shibuya station, Hachiko statue. I’ll be there in half hour.” A common well known place, affordable and most important its easy to slip around. Archer said yes before he ended the call. *Step one in place.*

Daichi put his phone away as Shizuka dropped in. “Daichi, What are you planning for today?” Daichi told her. “Since we need some groceries too, I know just the place!”

“I’m sorry. I can’t go with you. Emiya and I need some time together, just the two of us.”

Shizuka’s smile was way too cheeky. “Oho, some guy only thing?”

*Better to leave it that way.* “Yea, a guys only kind of thing.” He clasped his hands together. “I’m sorry for that. Please bear with me.”

Shizuka waved a hand dismissively. “Fine. I’ll shop for some food so you won’t starve tomorrow.” Daichi’s stomach tightened to a knot. *I just shot myself in the foot didn’t I?* With a wave, he bolted and escaped.

The sun was starting to set. The crowds grew as rush hour began. Archer was waiting as Daichi appeared from the station entrance. With a nod, they walked alongside towards the shops. Archer asked. “That girl still with you?”

Daichi waved a hand. “I sent her off. I’d figure the apartment would explode if you two met each other.”

Archer defended. “She made the first strike.”

Daichi laughed. “Against a man who can dodge bullets. I’d say I’m impressed.”

“Men would never win against women. You lose even if you win.”

The million yen question. “How did you not notice her when you could find me in pitch black night?”

“I was distracted.”
“Distracted, really?”

“Yes.”

“That is very hard to believe.”

“It doesn’t matter what you think.”

Daichi chose to leave it be. Archer moved on. “So, what is so secretive that you want to talk personally?” Daichi explained the idea of finding other superheroes and bringing them together. That way they could understand more about the situation at hand. Archer was perplexed. “That idea is rather stupid.” How was it a bad idea?

“What’s wrong about it?”

“You’re taking the hardest approach. Not everyone’s interested in your goals. You have no power to bring them to follow your authority. There is no reason for them to follow you. If they aren’t so charitable, you can be killed.” Daichi faltered a step before continuing.

“What would you have done?”

“I’d just leave it be and go home. You’re just a kid. You have nothing. That means responsibility too. You don’t need to be an idiot trying to get himself killed.” Speaking from experience, didn’t you Archer? Daichi turned to answer when Archer interrupted. “You are fortunate I need to find them as well.”

“Aren’t you planning for retirement?”

“As you said, there are other heroes out there. Because of it, there is a risk to this world.”

“Risk?”

“Some inconsistencies I need to look into.” They diverged off the main road into the smaller streets. “How well do you know about my universe?”

Daichi appreciated the quieter ambiance. “Nasuverse, I’d say above average. Mostly about your part of the universe. Speaking of which, do you know everything about your universe now?”

“Enough for now. Do you know the limitations of Magecraft and Gaia?” A nod. “Gaia’s equivalent exists here but its abnormal.”

Daichi blinked. “How can you tell its abnormal if you weren’t here in the first place?”

“Call it a hunch. I probably won’t be able to live in peace without resolving it. Better to nip it in the bud before it blows up.”

“If that’s the case, we’re in it together.” Daichi offered a handshake. “Here’s to a good working relationship.” Archer stared at the hand for a second. Surprised, that’s a first. Archer accepted it. It felt rough and hard, a hand that wielded only swords.

“Sure. Thanks for buying.” They were within the reach of the stores. The crowds in the smaller streets were starting to grow bigger.

Daichi bit a lip. “Please don’t use all my savings.” Step two complete. “When do we want to get started?”
“Tonight.” They entered a store, one of the casual brands. Daichi waited at a corner as Archer searched for suitable clothes. He sent a quick message to Kazuko. The reply was a smiley. Archer grabbed a few sets before entering the changing room.

**Tomorrow.** Perfect timing. Shizuka wouldn’t be around since she’s going to the shrine with her family. How should they do the search tomorrow? *Archer would probably know best.*

Archer emerged from the changing room, dressed in black shirt and slacks. Another black coat and hat to top it off. *Reminds me of his father, Kiritsugu.* It’d suit him well to hide his dark skin and white hair. He sensed a really dangerous vibe. The man who would kill you if you looked the wrong way. An urge settled upon him. *It must be done.*

Daichi presented his left hand and announced. “Rejoice Emiya, for your -.” Pain struck when his hand was twisted to its limit.


“Warning taken.” Daichi massaged his wrist. The counter guardian gestured to follow.

“Come, we got more things to buy.”

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They returned with success. Some clothes and a second hand cell phone to make communication easier between them. A quick dinner of Ramen in Shibuya to ease their stomachs as nightfall arrived. A memo was on the table. *Food’s in the fridge. You owe me one, blek.* Daichi chuckled at the Akanbe sketch as he put it away. He did deserve it.

“You’re lucky to have a girl like that.” Daichi turned to see Archer leaning by the wall. He had changed into his new clothes earlier. They worked as intended, a shadow within the crowd. Daichi had raised concern about the body armour. Archer dismissed it on the notion ‘Don’t get into a fight unprepared. If you did, you have failed to prepare.’.

Daichi said. “I guess. You were the same with Sakura didn’t you?”

“Yes.” His eyes narrowed. “I owe her too much.”

*It feels invasive; to understand him so much.* “There weren’t much details since the end of Fate Stay Night. How, how were they after that?”

Archer grabbed the bag of his original clothes. “You mean Shirou’s story.”

Daichi leaned against the kitchen sink. “Aren’t you still Shirou?”

Archer tossed away the coat. “I was him. I do have his memories, one that strive to be a hero. That however is not me. I was a version of him that won the Fifth Holy Grail war. My part ended upon my death in the Holy Grail war.”

“That doesn’t mean though that there’s no Rin and Sakura in your time.”

“After the war, I joined Rin and went to the Clock Tower. I needed to improve my skills in order to become what I wanted. Rin and I later had a falling out in our approach. We parted amicably and I travelled across the world alone as a freelance magus. I took on dangerous missions in order to
protect the people. Rin had grown busy from her studies, apparently under that madman Zelretch.”

“As for Sakura, I didn’t get to talk much with her. We talked occasionally through e-mails, even lesser during my mercenary years. However, she fell sick and was slowly weakening.”

“Was it because of-”

“Yes, the Crest worms that Zouken had implanted in her. One person can only survive so long with She kept it hidden from me all that time. By the time of my execution, she was already on the death’s door. To think I would know about it just prior to my death.”

“I see.”

“Don’t like what you hear? That is what my universe has been trying to do, kill us around every corner.”

“The world you lived in is so dangerous but that didn’t mean your world was wrong. It just meant there are more challenges.”

Archer glared. No killing intent this time. “That is easy for you to say when you do not have to fight monsters that will tear you apart in a second.”

“You fight despite the odds. You believed that you have changed. A Counter Guardian that always killed people in order to save mankind from extinction.” Always fighting to protect humanity. Facing monsters, demons, abominations would make men scream and cry. There is no path but forward. Kill or be killed. “You took the cost within yourself. Despite all the killing, despite the destruction that you have done, that still didn’t mean that your ideal is wrong.”

“My ideal is a hypocrisy. Nothing more, nothing less.” Archer pulled off his coat and shirt. Daichi tried not to stare. Too much.

Sorrow grew, seeing them on the man’s back. White lines, faint to the naked eye. Dozens of them crossing across the sides and to the front of Emiya’s body. The price he paid for being a hero of justice. I don’t think I have the guts to endure that much. “Those scars must have hurt.”

A pause before an answer. “They did. They were worth it.” The scars on the back disappeared under the black under-armour.

Daichi posed the question as Archer fitted his overcoat. “We know that your world is fiction. Even so, I know that you’re still real like how you stand here. Your words, your feelings are as real as this world is. I feel that I must ask this.” Archer finished and turned for the door. “Hero of Justice, will you continue to save?”

Archer stepped outside the door. “That is for me to know.” A leap and he was gone.

“How is it going, hero?” Kazuko asked through the phone.

“Enough with that, I’ll never become one.” Daichi lied back on the bed. “I’ve talked to Archer. He agreed to it.” A glance to the clock told it was approaching midnight. Archer would be back if nothing happened in a few hours. Better I’m not around if anything did happen. I’d be dead weight.

“Good. I got nothing new so far.”
Daichi suppressed a yawn. Archer had mentioned an important point. “Kazuko, I might be able to find the others but it doesn’t mean I can convince them to join us.”

“It’s still a start. I’ll try to pitch in from there. Once we know who’s around it would be a matter of motivation.” *Motivation?* Daichi continued to listen. “Motivation is what drives us forward. The little steps that we climb before reaching the top. It is the matter of knowing what are their motivations.”

*So both of them know how to go about with people.* “That doesn’t feel right.”

“It’s not a bad thing. I’m trying to give them what they want, whichever that are in my reach that is. If I can’t, at least we can work together to our own benefit.”

“What if their ideas lie elsewhere?”

“Nothing can be done. However, if there’s a few, there must be more of them. They might be more amiable to the idea.”

“Even if we reveal this to the world, what’s next? What is that final goal we are trying to achieve? What is the point?”

“It is an opportunity. To change the world that we live in.” *This world would never be the same.* What is real? What is fiction? Fiction tend to portray the stereotypes. Strong but cowardly men, evil governments that tortured its people. Rebellious freedom fighters struggling to save the day. How far would it be from the truth? *Or is it his truth?*

“For the better, or the worse?” Did the world need to change to begin with?

“Daichi, What does your heart tell you?”

“Honestly, nothing. We’re still just teenagers. Mine doesn’t know where it wants to go now.” Everything about Daichi had thus far is a normal life. No experience he had would be able to give him an answer. Superheroes are fiction after all. *They were fiction.*

“Youth means nothing in the grand scheme of things. People our age fought in the world wars. We are just pieces on the chessboard.”

“I’m starting to feel this is getting out of our hand.” Daichi had been mulling about it. The thoughts of heroes lurking around Tokyo. Where there are heroes, there are villains. He hoped for more optimism but convincing himself was difficult. *You can’t hope to win against heroes that can destroy entire cities.*

“You try to think hard but its not what you are made to be. Leave that to me.” Kazuko’s assurance wasn’t helping.

Daichi had to be realistic. They don’t have the know how to pull it off. “I understand that you are confident in pulling it off. Even so, as much as we want to make this happen, we need more help, adults especially.”

A hiss through the call. “Adults mean nothing, remember that. They will never tell you the truth or help you when you ask for it. You just have to do the right thing even if it is dangerous.” Daichi could not respond. “Be assured Daichi, that help will come from the right person when you need it the most.”

“You’re becoming all philosophical again. I really wonder sometimes if you are the same age as I am.”
“It’s all in the mind. I’ve spread some bait on the net so hopefully someone will take a bite. Good luck and good night.” The call ended. Daichi put the phone away and stared at the ceiling. The unease hasn’t let go. One step at a time.

Hmm... Daichi peered at the group of skyscrapers several blocks away. Nothing interesting thus far for the past hour. Maybe heroes aren’t morning kind of people. Wait, that’s ridiculous. It would be a few hours before lunch. The Tokyo tower was the prime spot to start their investigation. Archer’s plan was to stoke out the area and observe from afar. Daichi asked while moving the tourist telescope. “Archer, I know your eyesight is excellent. Just how far can you really see?”

Archer leaned against the railing as he pointed. “See that building?” A skyscraper the size of a hand. “There’s a memo pinned on the board in the office at the 20th Floor.”

The telescope could only see the outline shape of the memo. “Woah. That’s with your normal eyes or reinforced?”

Archer wagged a finger. “Hush. This isn’t normal chit chat.”

Daichi glanced around. “Nobody here is going to eavesdrop.” The crowd was big from the weekend. There were more tourist than locals, another bonus. The people were interested in the sights from the tallest building in Tokyo. Archer said he preferred a quiet place but the strategic advantage of the special observatory are in the tower couldn’t be ignored.

“Better safe than sorry.” Archer scanned his eyes across the horizon. The buildings all look the same from Daichi’s perch. “Holy Grail wars were conducted at night to maintain secrecy. People were silenced to prevent word from spreading.” He paused and pointed with a deep sigh. Daichi focused it over, small but certain was smoke. “Nobody cares apparently.”

Daichi pointed the telescope at the smoke. That was at Sunshine city building at the Ikebukuro. Just a small narrow line of sight available but it served. “How do we know that it’s them?”

“When you see two people flying.”

“Are we going to help them?”

Archer opened the emergency exit door. “We’ll see. Come.” Daichi felt a shiver down his spine. It’ll be alright. You’ll get used to it.

He didn’t. Diving through the air, mouth screaming involuntary as frozen ice travelled down his limbs. “I really hate this!” The vertigo of falling with every jump. The fear in the veins was hard to control. Archer’s tight grip gave some semblance of control. Barely.

Archer huffed as he took another leapt from another roof. “I’ll drop you off somewhere nearby. Don’t move from there.” Eyes staring at the wide blue skies under the clouds. Two small silhouettes darting around like insects within the metropolis.

“Agree absolutely!” Pink shot past their left, blowing up a hole on a nearby skyscraper. Daichi screamed. “Woah! Don’t they have the idea of collateral damage or friendly fire?”

“You tell them that.” Archer landed onto the roof and dropped Daichi onto the floor. The world spun before meeting concrete. Archer was gone by the time he stopped. Curses trailed behind as Archer prepared for the fight.
Emiya reached his perch two buildings away from the fight. From the roof of the skyscraper, it would serve as a decent observation post. Far enough to observe, close enough to join the fight.

A standoff. Two girls were in the battle. One was dressed in a red and blue uniform. Lightweight, no armour. He wanted to swear at the other. A Magical girl. Is everyone so obsessed with them? The woman in the uniform was injured, given how she was unsteady on her feet. Both participants were arguing it out. Should he interfere?

The Magical girl raised her staff, a love heart shape forming above her. Seriously? The shot struck in a gust of smoke. As though people would die so easily. The smoke was blown away with a wave of a wooden sword. Emiya studied the purple haired man. Another Creation. He reinforced his ears and listened.

The man spoke. “Sacred Tree Kuronagimaru.” A large woman appeared behind him, dressed in samurai armour. “And this is my companion.” Emiya focused on the abnormally large samurai. A spirit, that naginata would be trouble. “I don’t like to use this against girls but I’m not the guy that would stop himself from using this to smash in your brain.” The man spun his wooden sword. “I’m warning you, I’m strong.” A smile, true confidence. “In the world I used to live in, apparently I was the final boss.”

The purple guy is eager for a fight. Sharp ears and eyes could observe the minute details. The magical girl’s panicking. Who is right? Who is wrong? Who benefits him the most? Emiya stood up. What would be the price to interfere? The phone rang. He answered, eyes still on the fight. Hideaki voiced. “Can you see them?”

“I do.” Emiya turned on video call mode and pointed the camera. “Recognise any of them?”

“Purple guy’s Yuya Mirokuji. The Magical girl’s Mamika. The red girl’s…”

Emiya interrupted. “Tell me quickly, which side are the good guys?”

“What? They all are the good guys. Well, except Yuya, not outright evil but he does his own thing.” Emiya ended the call.

Most of them huh. Emiya flipped through the arsenals within his mind for the right weapon. The long bow projected into his hands. A black longsword, twisted into the shape of an arrow.

Ashibumi, the placement of the foot.

Dozukuri, the form of the body.

Yugamae, proper grip of the bow.

Uchiokoshi, raising the bow.

Hikiwake, draw the bowstring.

Each step autonomous, ingrained within fibre of being. Emiya took a deep breath, the target set in place. If he did shoot, who should it be? Magical Girl or Spirit Man. Which side would benefit him
the most? Another woman joined the redhead girl. *Green cloak, unarmed, probably a spell caster.* Three to one numerical advantage.

His senses picked up another intruder. It dove from the sky. Spirit Man noticed the attack, turning around block. “Reinforcements?” Sword met lance as the owners stared at one another. *A knight on a flying horse. Someone followed your reference Medusa.* The knight broke off the attack, flying around for another pass. Spirit man yelled. “This is fun.” The stab of the lance missed as the knight landed onto the ground. *The knight’s a woman.* Emiya remembered a long lost past. *Not the time.*

The knight quickly grabbed Mamika before retreating into the air and away. Emiya contemplated shooting. The arrow will hit. *Unnecessary.* He lowered the bow, dispersing it to nothing. The other party gone, there’s only one side left to talk to.

The red woman had brandished the sword at Spirit Man y the time he arrived. Emiya raised both hands as he approached. “I come in peace.”

The sword turned towards him. “Are you a friend or foe?”

Spirit man chuckled. “Another one. Aren’t we quite a party?”

The redhead woman tightened her grip. “Are you with them?”

“I’m on nobody’s side. I’m just here to talk.” By the corner of the eyes, the crowd were beginning to notice. He heard the faint echoes of sirens growing louder. They need to move fast.

“I don’t believe you.” Redhead winced from her wounds. The white haired woman held her steady. “You two are going to tell us everything.”

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Daichi felt pity for Selesia winced from her injury. Archer narrowed his eyes as they watched Yuya Mirokuji take another ravenous bite of sizzled chicken. Being cramped up in a diner was met with disapproval from Archer. However, the others had been eager for answers and quickly at that. Daichi chose to sit quietly and observe the group. Three of them were recognisable.

*Selesia Upitiria leading protagonist from Vogelchevalier*

*Meteora Osterreich, Sage of the End of the World*

*Yuya Mirokuji, last boss of the Exclusive Underground, Dark Night.*

The other two people within the group, a similar youth and an old man. Sota Mizushino and Takashi Matsubara. He assumed they were like him, caught within this mess in their own way. Mizushino had raised concerns about Selesia’s injury but they were dismissed by Selesia.

Yuya Mirokuji raised his forks, mouth wide and bright eyes. “This is good. I haven’t eaten anything since I got here. If only I knew the same money is used here…”

Archer scoffed. “And I can’t care less about that.” Selesia glared before grunting in pain.

Mirokuji pointed a fork. “Old man, so far I introduced myself. These girls already introduced
themselves, even the boy you brought along. What’s the hold up with you?” Their eyes stared at each other. Daichi turned towards the Mizushino sitting across him.

The white haired man crossed arms. “Archer.”

“Archer, Archer class Servant from the Holy Grail war of the Fate Stay Night; Unlimited Blade Works.” Sota Mizushino spoke up. Eyes glance towards him. Sota’s shoulders stiffened before leaning back away. What’s wrong with him? What’s with his eyes? He recalled a similar feeling. Must be Archer. He made a glance. Archer’s steel gaze, the very same. Matsubara must have caught some of it, unsettled eyes and that fidgeting finger.

Mirokuji raised a brow. “To think that the boy had to introduce you, don’t you have any pride?” Archer remained silent, eyes staring deeply against the other man.

“What’s wrong?” Selesia noticed Sota’s discomfort. She turned her gaze back to Archer. “What have you done to him?”

“Nothing of the sort. My name is cursed, that’s what happened.” Archer replied.

“Is that so?” Selesia’s eyes met with Archers. “I think-.” A hand stopped her. Meteora nodded her. A long gaze before she pulled back.

Meteora said. “Introductions aside. How much do you know about the current world?”

“I pretty much know what’s going on. We are fictional characters living in worlds made by other people. Here we are, taken to the real world. What a joke. I’d bet Syo would flip out when he hears this.”

Looks went around. Mizushino looked like he knew the answer but those eyes don’t look enthusiastic. Daichi chose to answer the question. “The main character for his story.”

“That’s right kid. You are more helpful than Archer. I like you more now.”

“Just now you said about the Military Uniform Kid. Did that woman come to visit you too?” Daichi leaned forward into his seat. Wait, who is this kid they’re referring to?

Mirokuji shrugged. “Who knows? I’m not interested. I don’t remember.”

Archer joined in. “Don’t remember or don’t want to?” Getting the answer would be helpful for him to understand the story. Why is Archer instigating everything? Is there a reason?

Mirokuji smiled. “Oh, we got a cocky one over here.” Should he ask instead? Defuse the situation and get the info. Two birds, one stone.

Meteora leaned forward against the table and offered. “I’ll trade you a meal for the information. Tell me what you know.”

Mirokuji turned back towards his food. “I met her. I was transported here a while ago. She came soon after. She looks like a kid but the way she talks is like she thinks she’s better than you. What a snob. She was with an old guy who really pissed me off. Then we got into a fight. I haven’t seen her since.”

Meteora asked. “An old guy?”

Mirokuji nodded. “I bet she’s the same as us. I mean, no one else in this world can float in the air.”
Archer quipped. “Thank you Mr. Obvious.”

Mirokuji switched his fork for a spoon as his dessert arrived. “Your welcome, Mr. Jackass. That military uniform kid, she said that this world is the world of the gods. A world where anything can be created with words. And if I find the creator of my world, remaking my world would be a piece of cake.”

Selesia asked. “You didn’t believe her?”

Mirokuji started eating the parfait. “Force our creator to change our world? Yeah, remaking our world into a more fun place doesn’t sound too bad. But now that I know that we’re just being kept in a cage made by someone else, what’s the point of fixing up someone else’s insect cage? And I like living in the insect cage in its own way. I have friends and partners, and Syo. I wish those guys were here.”

“Aren’t you interested in finding your creator?”

“Of course I have a few things I want to say. The creator created our messed up world and stuck their hands in our relationships. In the end, that’s what it is but I don’t care about the creator. The author or whatever you’d like to call it is just a normal person, like everyone you see here. Not a god like we imagine. Of course I want to meet the creator and get my questions answered. You guys do too, right?”

“I do of course, in fact I’ve already met him.” She turned to the right. “Right, Mr. Creator?”

Matsubara rubbed the back of his head. “Yeah, I guess I’m her author, I mean creator.” Wait, he’s the author for Vogelchevalier? Oh wow. I have to get his autograph later.

Mirokuji smiled. “Creator and created in one place. Well have you guys tried it yet?” No one answered. “Revision. You have the ability to tweak her character description, right?”

Meteora said. “I’ve also arrived at the same hypothesis. It’s worth a try.”

Mirokuji clicked his tongue. “What do you mean, you haven’t tried it yet? You guys are so slow.” He glanced at Matsubara. “You got a cigarette?” A flick of the lighter and a puff of smoke. “Good. This tastes better than the ones where I’m from.”

Meteora asked. “Mr. Mirokuji, why did you start thinking about the possibility of revision?”

Mirokuji pointed the cigarette at them. “If the creator can change the world he created then he can change the abilities of the people he created too, right? It’s so obvious.” He took another puff. “Have you ever thought about it?”

“About what?”

“The reason we were chosen from the stories. The reason that we’re here is that we leave a lasting impression on many people. That’s what I think. You can call us popular or interesting or whatever you want. The people who stood out in that way were the ones who got a ticket to come to this world. That’s what I think.”

“I must be quite popular then.” Archer said.

“Yes, you are very popular indeed, Mr. I don’t want to give my name.” Mirokuji stood up. “Thanks for the meal. I understand things that I didn’t get before.”
Selesia raised her voice. “Wait, we’re not done talking.”

“I’m going to do whatever I want.” Mirokuji grabbed his sword. “That’s how my character is anyway.”

Selesia rose to her feet. “Are you going to start a fight?”

“Are you going to stop me?” Daichi felt a gaping abyss in the gut. Fighting in possibly the worst place. He glanced at Archer. Cold absence of emotion. “Whatever happens happens. I’m going to do whatever I want. I want to have fun.” Mirokuji walked towards the door. “I’m not going to cause you trouble. I’m the kind of guy that never forgets what others did for me. See ya.” Daichi felt his gut easing a little as the man left.

Archer stood up. “It’s my turn to go as well.”

Selesia stepped in between the door. “We heard his story but not yours.” Archer was taller and imposing against her vibrant fire.

Archer said. “My story is nothing special compared to his.”

“That didn’t answer the question.”

“I got here. I met the boy. Here we are. Does that satisfy you?”

Meteora said. “It will be acceptable. We won’t push further on this.”

Selesia glared to her response before returning towards Archer. “Whose side are you on?”

“Neither. I just wanted some answers. You can be assured that I won’t be against you, for now.”

Selesia grits her teeth. “Are you going to let that kid do whatever she wants?”

“Maybe, maybe not. It’s my choice to decide what I’m fighting for. I’m going.” Two of them stood in watch. A moment moved aside. Archer waved to Daichi. “Come on kid, I’ll carry you back.”

Daichi shook his head. “No thanks. I’ll head home myself.” He didn’t want another round of flying. Maybe in another five years. No, make it ten.

Archer said as he walked out the door. “Suit yourself.”

Archer took a leap and disappeared from sight. Daichi leaned back into his seat. “And he’s gone.”

“Why didn’t you want to follow him?” said the librarian.

Daichi shook his head. “Flying is not my thing. I know where he’ll go, probably.” Mizushino jumped a little. *Maybe a similar experience?*

Selesia asked. “You are not afraid of heights are you?”

“More like afraid of not being in control. I’m not the one holding the reins. Don’t you get it?” Mizushino and Matsubara nodded in agreement. “Besides I wanted to know more about all of you. We’ve talked a lot about Yuya Mirokuji but not about you guys. What happened?”
Meteora explained the story that happened to them so far. Daichi summarised the facts. “In a nutshell, Selesia was brought into this world two days ago while fighting off this Military Uniformed person. You three met in the real world and decided to meet with Mr. Matsubara, Selesia’s creator today. You’ve somehow managed to find Magical girl Mamika and gotten into a fight. Yuya Mirokuji appears and changes things around. That’s a long list. Meteora, you are just a day before her, correct?”

Meteora nodded. “It was still a short time. Fortunately for we managed to meet with Mizushino, otherwise we would be in a predicament about food and supplies.” Daichi noticed Mizushino turning away with a flushed face.

Matsubara took a cigarette from the box. “The way you meet Archer is quite interesting. To start out on a quest to find superheroes in this world, I might have a new story idea.” Selesia grabbed the stick and put it away to Matsubara’s chagrin.

“Leave your dreams aside. We have another problem to talk about.” Selesia sat in front of him. “Archer isn’t cooperative.”

Daichi pointed out. “Yuya Mirokuji isn’t either.”

“I’ll handle him the next time we meet. Now then, you’re Archer’s sidekick in this whole business.” Selesia leaned forward, eyes drilling into his. “How can we get him to cooperate with us?”

“I have no good answer for that.” Archer was right. If you have no authority or motivation, you can’t get them to follow you.

Matsubara rubbed his neck. “Archer said he’s on nobody’s side but you’re here.”

Because I need you guys. “I like to think I’m a peacemaker. I’ll try to talk with Archer, make things a little easier if I can.” Daichi posed the next question. “Going back to topic, who is this Military Uniformed kid?”

Selesia shook her head. “We don’t know her details. She was there when we appeared into this world. We didn’t have the best of terms. Had Archer say anything before about her?”

Daichi shook his head. “No.” He wouldn’t tell me if I didn’t ask.

Meteora answered. “According to my hypothesis, it would be likely that Archer has also met this person.” It would be reasonable. Worth discussing later with him.

“I can ask him later but I can’t guarantee an answer.” They nodded. “Can you describe this person to me?” Selesia and Meteora described the kid’s features which Daichi took notes in his phone. White hair, twin tailed in a military uniform. Armed with a ring of swords. Nothing came to his mind. It did remind him of Archer’s own abilities. She would be very dangerous.

“That’s not much to go with but I’ll see what I can do.” Kazuko may be able to help on the search.

Selesia leaned forward, a finger on the chin. The others stared at her. “It just came to mind. Sota and Daichi look similar.”

“No, we aren’t the same.” Daichi thumbed towards himself. “I’m taller, a bit older maybe.” The glasses aren’t the same either. Sota had a brown tinge of hair, his was closer to dark black.

Matsubara approved. “Fitter with more confidence. Good shoulders, you play basketball?”
Daichi nodded. “Yeah, I was regular in sports. Mostly during PE class.” He had slacked a little since
exams were coming. Shizuka had been committed to exercise since ‘a fit body leads to a healthy
mind’. He didn’t argue and enjoyed the break from study.

Selesia teased. “You need to man up Sota.” Sota turned his face away.

“Everyone has their own good points.”

Meteora took over the conversation. “We’re going to test the revision theory. Matsubara, do we
have a place that we can use to test this?”

“We can do it at my place. I know someone who might be able to help as well.”

“Wait.” Daichi grabbed a pencil and paper and scribbled. “Here’s my number if you need to find
me.” He slid the paper across the table. “I need to make sure my house hasn’t exploded yet.”

Selesia said. “Is Archer such a troublesome man?”

“Archer has his good and bad points. You just need to know which buttons to push.” He learnt that
the hard way.

Emiya waited within the dark confines of a warehouse. The moon was bright, slivers of it entering
through the window. The place, once a mess had been restored to order. The walls were freshly
painted. Goods and products neatly arranged on warehouse racks. He listened quietly before he
spoke. “I didn’t expect you to take so long.”

Expected guest, the military girl appeared from the shadows. “Shirou Emiya. Are you finally
interested to take my offer?”

Emiya stepped away from the wall, facing her. “I got myself some answers. However, I’d like more
from the horse’s mouth.” The light clicked on, its bulb lighting the spot in between them. “How do
we change our world?”

The woman was dour. “Is that all you want to know? It is straightforward. You have to find your
creator and get him to change it.”

“There’s a fallacy to all this. If it was so simple, why do you need me to join you?”

“For a creator to change your world, there is a criteria. The power of the Creator do not come easily.
The world must crack in order for it to fully manifest. Therefore, you must disturb the reality of this
world. The greater the disturbance, the greater the power to recreate your world.”

“There is a conflict to that. How would these Creators be able to make our worlds if the world they
live in are always in peril? Have you not seen the peace? That is not a condition that they need but it
is the one you have set. Are you really set to destroy this world?”

A hiss of poison. “The cowards, you must have talked to them.”

Emiya jeered. “More like listen to them ramble. So, are you going to tell me otherwise. That we’re
just changing our world and not putting both of them into a plunge?”

“That’s right.” She spat. “The other Creations have left me, too cowardly to fight for the revolution.
The Gods have betrayed us, made us their toys and entertainment in a lust for blood and pain. Can’t
you feel the need to bring vengeance upon those whom hurt the ones you loved so much?”

He had sacrificed everything in his journey. Friends, Family, Flesh and Soul. The pieces of humanity tormented in an endless spiral toward damnation. Pride of a protector shredded into tears of beloved. The pain rooted firm from the endless fighting. Growing like a tree, the killing ate the heart. Each murder, a person he swore to protect. Just so that humanity as a whole would be saved from destruction. His creator had done that to him, turned him into a monster. Rage, Anger, Hate. These emotions should embody within him. Revenge, destruction and purgatory should be answer. That reaction would have been normal.

“You have a point.” Emiya could only agree. Let the world be destroyed. Turn the world inside out. Everything shall fall and your end as a whole will be complete. Counter Guardian Emiya would not survive this journey, just as he wished for all this time. What he has to do is to help this girl in her mission.

She stretched a hand towards him. “Help me to make the worlds collide. Let them feel our pain, our suffering in return. This world is never fair and it shall be destroyed.” That was what he wanted in the first place. To be erased from all history, never ever to fight or kill. For a creator to make such a reality that one must kill like clockwork, machines, he must have been very cruel. It is only rightful and just to remove such men.

*Just say yes*

He prepared his answer.

**What you said is correct but it doesn ’t meant it is right**

His mouth froze. A memory long ago. Days of a child with the entrusted dream. Kiritsugu Emiya smiled in his passing. Damn that boy. Why did he need to say that? A false hope in the dream of lies. His life is already over and it should end.

**Even if I am a fraud, I know my dream isn ’t wrong**

Another time. Standing atop the hill basking in the rising sun. The end of the Holy Grail war. He and Rin within the final moments. The end of his pursuit to erase himself. Continuation of the rekindled hope. *It wasn’t about me or my loved ones.* His life had been born from flames of Fuyuki. Shirou Emiya’s meaning had always been one and the same for all eternity. *To save as I had been saved.*

**Will you continue to save?**

*To think that the kid had so much hope.* The choice has been made. What are the options under his disposal? Could he repeat the Medea scenario? Join her ranks and find a good opportunity to eliminate her. Could he afford to kill a few innocent bystanders? He was an Anti Hero. Taking lives
was not alien to him. It would be easy with a few arrows. If it was to his distaste, he could just wound them instead. No true harm.

A clench in the heart. The option just didn’t feel right. This is against his being. He killed because he was given no choice. How could he choose to follow his darkened path when he had a chance not to? That girl would probably not allow him to get away so easily. *It is not an option, not anymore.*

Emiya closed his eyes. “We won’t be a good match.”

The woman paused. A clench of the fist and closed eyes. He could hear the exasperation. “I am very disappointed. You had so much potential for our revolution.”

“I’d expected as much.” He leapt back as swords struck from above. Twin swords, one black, one white emerged from the fingertips. Black and white moved about within a dance as grey swords attacked from everywhere. Sparks collide, steel upon steel. The walls scarred, the surrounding racks collapsed. He has no chance, not in this compact area. The twin swords spun into the air, another copy of Kanshou and Bakuya projected into ready hands. The flying swords crashed against the soldier, deflected by the ring of swords.

Emiya took steps backward into the open. “I’ll tell you this woman. As much as you hate this world, it is not your right to break it.” Emiya leapt away and made his escape.

Daichi drank a glass of cold water. Refreshing after an entire day out. Settling onto the chair, he had the moment to think. Another step closer on the plan. He has found the team. Once he convinced them over, they would be able to reveal the world the anomaly. Heroes from world of fiction arriving the new world. This would be enough to force the government to action. People wouldn’t be hurt. That left the next problem to resolve. Can he get them to cooperate with his goals?

*The creators might be more open to the idea but Meteora might prove to be an obstacle.* Her logic and deduction skills are top notch thus far. She might not be as willing to cooperate with him without more information. Could he use this Military Uniform Kid to convince Meteora onto his side? Use the government support and most importantly the weaponry and skills of the JSDF as a leverage. *That is what Kazuko probably has in mind after all.*

His thoughts were pulled away by the door opening. Archer returned to the house. Daichi asked. “You weren’t around. Where have you been?”

“Looking around. How were things with them afterwards?” Daichi outlined the points discussed. Archer shook his head. “Nothing useful.”

Daichi stood up. He needed Archer to side with him or the persuasion wouldn’t work. “Are you going to work with them?”

Archer put away his shoes. “I’ve always worked alone. No reason to change it. You can keep in touch with them. They may prove useful later.”

A freelance mercenary in a dangerous world. *Fighting alone so that others would never be hurt.* Daichi put away his glass. “I want to tell you something. A friend of mine, Kazuko had been investigating about this.” Archer nodded for him to continue. “We have a plan to reveal you all to the world. I need you on my side to convince to others to do the same.”

“What is your goal behind that?”
“We want to force the government to be open about it. Take action and be responsible about it. Maybe fix things whenever problems came up.”

“You’re an idiot. Do you think being transparent is going to make anything change? You would just paint yourself to become a target. That is what you would be doing.”

“I had thought about it but it needed to be done.”

“Be wise kid. Don’t follow the whims of others or your friends. You would end up manipulated and betrayed at the slightest thought.”

“I believe he is right. We need to do something. How else can we stop others from getting hurt? If there are heroes, there are villains as well.”

“That is a heroes job to fight against villains. Normal human beings will only feed to the slaughter.”

“It is still a right that the people deserve to know.”

“It is a fear that you threatening to unleash. Nothing to hide, nothing to fear. Heroes and villains battling it out for supremacy and justice. That tension creates Fear. People are fearful for their lives. For every day, they will run about their lives, scared, frightened. It eats at people kid. Nobody can live under its cloak forever.”

“You followed your heart to be a hero of justice.”

Archer spat. “That was a mistake. Everything behind it was worth it but still a mistake.”

“How can it be a mistake if you find it valuable?” Archer remained silent. Daichi chose to change the topic. “Archer, have you ever thought of finding your creator?”

Archer walked towards his room. “Not now. There’s bigger things at risk. I’ll get to it when its time.”

“What if you don’t make it?” Archer raised a brow. “I mean, you always had the worst of luck.”

Archer chuckled. “You’re right, I do have bad luck. It doesn’t matter. In the end, its what I do that makes the difference.” Archer returned the question. “What about you? Why are you willing to stick your head into this war? There’s nothing for you to gain.”

“I need to. Otherwise there’s no one else who will do it.”

“Aren’t you afraid of losing your life?”

“Would it be better to watch people get hurt when you could have done something?”

“Even if you risk hurting your girl?”

Daichi hesitated. “Shizuka and I aren’t that way... You’re right. She shouldn’t be involved. I’ll do something about it.”

“Do it quick or you will regret it. This is a war and it is never bloodless.” Archer closed the door.

Chapter End Notes
Once you arrive to this notes, you can be assured that you are at the latest chapter thus far. You can find this also on FF.net. The next due release is in a week and standard updates are at every 4 week intervals.

For any posters who has read this story, hope you can contribute some tips on formatting here. Its quite a pain against the normal practices I usually use.

Hope you enjoy this story.

Regards
MarksmanKNG
The next morning was Hell. Falling on the roof had been rough to Daichi. Waking up late for school added to that. Whispers of curses flew while rushing through the morning motions. Bruised but properly dressed, he entered the kitchen, rubbing his aching back and arms. Archer was nowhere to be seen. Daichi opened the door to his room. The bed was clean and tidy. No note on the table nor text message.

Shizuka asked as he took a seat at the table. "You don't look so good. Are you okay?"

Daichi said. "I'll be fine." It felt strange. Being just the two of them alone felt unjustly odd. *It had been that way for years.* Yet, why?

Shizuka said, leaning towards him. "I know that look. You're worried about something. What's wrong?"

Daichi shrugged off the oddity. "Like I said, it's ok."

"You can tell me about it."

"Let's just eat, breakfast is getting cold." He noticed her hesitation before she dropped the topic. Breakfast started, mostly focus of breakfast was western with some scrambled eggs, beans and bacon. Uncommon menu of the day. Tasty as they were, the morning was dreadfully silent. Nevertheless, it gave him sometime to think.

This secret war is growing dangerous. More so with the introduction of this military kid. Archer had warned as much. A war kept in secret growing dangerous by the day. *I can't get her involved.* Would now be the best time to talk? A quiver in the stomach. *No, it's not right. But if not now, when?*

He was interrupted when she asked. "Where's Emiya?" She didn't know either?

"He's outside. He'll be back soon." *Probably.*

"It's been a few days. How long will he be staying? It wouldn't take long to find a place." Archer did look up a few places in the little spare time they had to work on the cover story. It was impossible to rent since Archer had no documents. No identity, citizenship, money. Nothing. Daichi had asked on his plans during small talk but Archer had not responded much regarding that topic.

Daichi continued the lie. "They're doing the final negotiations. He should be leaving soon."

"You're not telling the truth."

Words hammered into him. "What makes you say that?"

"You always look away for an instant before lying. Don't say you're not. You're doing it again." Darn, when he thought about it, he could feel it twitch. "Why do you need to lie Daichi?"

His chest tightened, unable to answer. "I'm sorry."

"The way you're going about it isn't right. He's not a good man. I can feel it." She stood up and placed her plate into the sink. "I don't know what's going on but this isn't normal." Turning around,
she grabbed her bag and walked towards the door. "I'll give you some time to think about it. See you later after school."

Daichi watched her leave. The door closed, letting go his sigh. This isn't the right way to go about it. A quick clean up, he grabbed his bag and bolted for the door. *First off today, just get school over done and dealt with. One problem at a time.*

On the way to school, he made a call to Archer. Arrange a meet up later, talk to him about the kid and get some answers. From there, talk to Kazuko, brainstorm a little and move on. The call answered. "Archer, we need to talk." Silence before the call ended abruptly. *What?*

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School had been a crawl. Daichi managed to pass the information over to Kazuko to make the search. The other problems had been growing like weeds. Shizuka was keeping away, in such way that it was noticed even by their classmates. He had no excuse to give them and let it be. The bigger issue had been Archer. The Counter Guardian had not been answering calls on the cell phone ever since that morning. The sense of unease in the gut grew as lunch time approached.

What happened? The phone definitely had signal, the call connecting correctly. Afterwards they had been rejected instantly. Was he intentionally being ignored? During lunch time, he made a few more calls to the same result. Dozen calls, six text messages and no reply to any of them. Lunch time ended and he had to return to the classroom. Sitting through the math lesson, Daichi concluded as his fist tightened around the phone.

Archer had intentionally broken off contact with him. *Going out there on his own again.* To disappear without saying good bye? As much as an arse that Archer could be, he should have the dignity and courtesy to say a simple farewell. Even a damn message on the paper would be enough for a start! Frustration ate at his day. Daichi grew tired of the annoying pest. He hissed curses before reigning it in. *Was there a meaning to this?*

Maybe its the right thing to do. Let it go. Walk away, let it all end. Simple as that, back to a normal life and-. He stalled. Something wasn't right. Did Archer intend to make him angry and so walk away? *Following that sarcasm he carries like the damn cloak, it must have been intended.* There was a reason Archer went this way. Why? What was the purpose? Why, why, why?

It's pointless to think about it. Sitting around isn't going to get him the answers. He must find Archer. The next question, how? Daichi checked the clock. Five minutes past three in the afternoon. Archer had a head start for at least nine hours. Is he still in Tokyo? How could Daichi catch up to a man that can fly and move at supersonic speeds?

*Don't think that you know the world I was from or my history that you would understand exactly who I am*

Yes, I don't know everything about you but I know enough to understand you. *First, I need to know what is his plan. He should still be here in Tokyo. No reason to leave Tokyo. Second, he must still be carrying the phone that I bought for him.* The phone that Daichi had all the registration details. That included the ownership. *This might just work.* He activated the lost phone mode. The lost phone should activate its GPS without inhibiting the operation of the phone. A few other clicks and the results were rewarded.

Mikawashima. That is a far place from Ogikubo, reaching into the next ward of Arakawa. Northwest to northeast of Tokyo. A fortune, Archer would have disabled this if he knew. *The phones in Nasuverse weren't up to date.* This feature probably wasn't known or not incorporated into the story. Daichi could take advantage of this. A glance at GPS records revealed the phone had been active
and transmitting its location ever since this morning. *Five in the morning. Nobody around to notice.* Mikawashima was an hour away. Reaching there wouldn't be difficult. *Would Archer disappear by the time I am there?*

*Archer had been moving all across the city.* Daichi checked the log again. Archer was methodological, moving at specific intervals of approximately two hours. The man would be gone by the time he arrived. Two hours was felt as a reasonable time but with the rise in traffic, it will definitely hinder him. *I have to go where he'll go next to be sure on catching him.* Where will he find Archer next?

*Take a step back Daichi, what is Archer trying to do? Kawasaki Bay, Tokyo Tower, Tokyo Metropolitan, Sunshine City, Mikawashima. Why are these places important?* He had been to two places before. Kawasaki bay was where he met Archer for the second time. Tokyo tower was their first stakeout point to find the other for the other three, it wasn't that clear. *Kazuko might have a clue.* A quick call got answers. "The names didn't really mean anything. Two of them are busy places. That's about it. What are you trying to investigate?"

*Best to avoid Kazuko freaking out.* "I'll let you know later. Thanks." Daichi ended the call as he moved towards the subway. Basis of the information established, a direction is made.

Metropolitan, Sunshine and Mikawashima are the keys to the question. Tokyo Metropolitan Government building in Shinjuku was a two tower building. The government building was popular as a tourist attraction. Similar to the Tokyo tower, it had a round observation deck. The building was a bit bland grey from the last visit he made years ago but it gave a good sight different from the Tokyo tower or Roppongi Hills.

These places meant something to Archer. *They are places of value.* Why are they valuable? *Take another step back and see the bigger picture.* What did the Guardian want to do? *Archer wanted to find the heroes or the Military Uniformed Kid because of a risk to the world. That is what he is trying to do. Find them and get an answer.* A chill went down his spine. *Or eliminate them.* That's what a Counter Guardian does after all.

The strategy must fit to the available resources which are Magecraft abilities. Third rate Magus at most fronts, specialist in Reinforcement and Projection. How would Archer try to find them? *That's it.* He squeezed his fists to avoid yelling out like a madman.

*Observation posts.* Archer would use reinforced sight as an advantage. Setting up a watch post, he could easily check and identify for anyone who stood out of the norm. He could find the other creations this way. That had been his strategy here and in the Holy Grail War, no reason to change it.

*I got his method sorted out. Now, where would he go next?* Tokyo was a vast place to hide within. He opened the map on his phone and marked each location. Taking a stylus, he drew lines connecting each location. A straight line north from Kawasaki bay before turning northwest towards Metropolitan. The point began to turn northeast before southeast … it clicked.

There was a direction, a plan. Each point on the map formed the path to the next one. The overall shape didn't make sense thus far, a curving straight line. *Archer would try to be methodological in the approach. There must be a pattern.* What was Kawasaki Bay important for?

*Take it from another approach. What would Archer do there?* Kawasaki Bay had nothing important. There was no high vantage point in the area. There must be another objective. He never found out what Archer was doing there. Daichi wanted to get a direction on the case, a clue to… *Clues.*

Archer must have scouted the previous parts for information. He wanted clues to find the heroes.
From the results, he started a search using the high vantage points. Scratching Kawasaki bay out of the list, he had found it. A nearly complete circle. Archer was searching the new zones to complete a search grid.

Standing near the station gates, Daichi needed to make a choice. *If he notices me, he'll probably know I am tracking him somehow and ditch the phone.* He has one chance to make the right guess. Completing the circle, he had the next probable point. He zoomed into the Sumida district. Switching it to the 3D map, he found the place. One of the highest spots in the area.

**Tokyo Skytree Station**

The Tokyo Skytree was the tallest tower in the metropolis. Emiya stood at the top of its spire, six hundred and thirty four metres high. Nobody would find him here. Reinforced eyes scanned for points of interest. Places, people, oddities. The search since morning had not been fruitful. That woman had disappeared since he returned to Kawasaki bay. *She was there because of me.*

The number of people in the city was enormous. *So many people packed like sardines.* It reminded him of London or New York. A click of the tongue. A few hours before the sun sets. Ditching the boy had been a necessity. That woman is strong. The boy could easily become a collateral in the process. Best to cut off contact and save him. He'll need to setup a new place for the night. Fortunately he travelled light, only the clothes on his back and new clothes in the a small pack. Having acquired a better view of the city, he could acquire some money later from the right places. *They won't be happy but at least they won't die.*

The cell phone in the left pocket vibrated. Another call from the Kid. *That boy is troublesome.* The phone ended the call automatically. How many times would he try before he gets the idea and gives up? The ignorance game had been intended, meant to draw the boy's patience thin. Wear him out and annoy him to frustration and let go of the task. Movement. Someone was approaching. He glanced down towards the bottom of the spire. A pair of hands climbing the ladder up to the top. *You are quite persistent. If you want to talk so much, fine.*

The boy took ten minutes to climb up the hundred rungs before reaching the top. Kid swore with deep breaths. Emiya gave him a smug, standing in silence. The boy, getting a modicum of breath said. "Archer."

Emiya gestured behind him. "You're finally here. Enjoyed the scenic route?"

"Where, the, hell, have you been?" Voice like a snake's poison.

A shrug. "Investigating."

"Investigating when you disappear without a word. You don't answer my calls or messages. If it wasn't for third time's the charm, I might not be able to find you." *A lie. He's learning to keep his tricks hidden.* Unfortunate he was talking to the wrong man.

Emiya gave the bitter truth. "My luck must have been quite bad for you to find me again. However the situation's changed. Your services aren't needed anymore."

Kid glared back at him. "Needed? I'm not some bloody hotel for you. You and I were supposed to work together."

"It's become lethal. It'd be in your best interest to stay out of it."

The boy raised his arms. "Stay out of it? It's too late to stay out of it. I have been committed to this
pseudo Holy Grail War. This isn't the time to stay in the sidelines. I can't allow myself to do that."

"Most people would have been glad to stay away. You really are a troublesome kid."

"You screwed me the hell up the first time we met. You twisted my arm not once but twice already. Now you decide to pick up and leave? I'd say I'm missing some payback on that."

"That's quite some guts to say kid."

Kid shot back. "Oh damn straight it is. I've signed up for the journey and you are not going to leave me behind until we get to the end."

To see the boy so dedicated at his goal. Cursing, throwing a tantrum because he got left behind. Emiya…was amused. "Now you are the one coming after me."

Kid paused before breaking into a laugh. "Yes I did."

"You do know that this road is marked with death." Emiya sent a glare of killing intent to him.

Kid stepped back, face growing pale. A deep breath before replying. "Evil wins if the good men do nothing. I made my choice Archer and I'm sticking to it."

Emiya relaxed. The boy passed the test. "Very well. You have your mission and I have mine."

"You're learning kid. We might make an ass out of you."

Daichi dropped onto the bed. The tension of the search exhausted mind and body. *I should have just text him to come down instead of climbing all the way up.* Emiya chose to continue searching into the night, this time at the Edogawa District. Daichi had spent the evening afterwards trying to mend up with Shizuka via text. It didn't work too well but she'll come tomorrow. He hoped they could make up during breakfast. *I need to keep her out of it.* He had committed to the secret war. There would be no backing out. *What would be the best way to do it?*

The phone called for attention. It was a message from Kazuko. *Be careful. Eyes are watching. Check the beginning.* What did the beginning mean? Daichi placed the phone aside. Kazuko was difficult to comprehend when he intentionally tries to be cryptic. Asking back would probably get nothing useful based from previous experiences. It will take sometime to understand the true meaning. Could be minutes, hours or even days.

The clock read eight as night approached. *Right, the next episode is coming soon.* He scheduled the Blue-ray player to record the upcoming episode of Monomagia: The Infinite Over Machine. At least he can watch it once the war is over.

The beginning. What is a beginning? He opened the dictionary. Perhaps it could give some interesting insight and entertainment.

**Beginning:** Consist of the start of something.

*The start of what?*

**Beginning:** The time when something begins
It was only days ago when it all began.

**Beginning: The act of starting something**

It started out only when Kazuko and I talked about…

Daichi got off the bed and grabbed a seat by the computer in his room. *The first step, beginning of the search for answers.* A few clicks later, suspicions were vindicated. The Internet forums had been quiet. The source that pulled Kazuko’s interest was removed. The threads talking about the pictures were deleted. No notice from the moderators or any enquiries about the topic. There wasn’t a trace of information.

Someone removed the evidence. This is what Kazuko intended to tell. For such influence to manipulate a public forum, that person must be dangerous. Or is it more than just one? A shelved theory came back to mind. Is the government attempting to stamp it out? It was possible to be their doing. He should -

The phone rang, demanding his stare. A simple melody of flutes. Meant for people he didn't know. A coincidence? He picked it up and read the display. An unfamiliar number. He waited a moment for it to hang up. It didn't.

He answered the call. "Daichi Hideaki here."

"This is Meteora. Is it a bad time to talk?"

A sigh of relief. "It's alright. How's everything?"

"We are doing fine thanks to Marine's hospitality." **Who is she?** He'll ask that another time.

"Good to hear that you're getting used to it. Why did you call me today?"

"We wanted to discuss with you about Archer."

"What about him?"

"I managed to glance through his history but I find it difficult to comprehend. Can you tell me about him? Like his favourites and interests. I think we should get along and I hope that those topics would be able to guide us towards that direction."

"Jokes and talking for Archer? It would never work especially if you are aiming directly for him. Secondly, I don't have the right to say that. You should be talking to him."

"Oh." Disappointment.

*Offer her something.* "I understand him enough that Archer will continue to be this way. However he will keep the best in mind of the people's safety in this city. You can count on that."

"That is good to hear. You have my thanks."

He moved onto to the next topic. "How did the Revision Theory go?"

"Unfortunately our attempts at performing a revision have not been successful."

"It's worth a try. There is no smoke without a fire." Daichi said.

"I agree, the fundamental concept should be valid. What remains is the approach or conditions that
we must achieve in order to succeed at a revision. Alas, the problem is there is no clear sign to what these conditions are."

"You probably know better about all this than any of us. I'm sure you'll figure it out. You were the brightest librarian in Avalken."

"Your attempt at flattery has been noted." I guess that's a good thing. "We have to go. There's some news we need to investigate right now. We will talk soon." The call ended.

The Revision theory. Archer had been listening intently during the conversation at the diner. If given a choice, would he want to change his world? That is his right. Daichi called Archer to relay the news. The line picked up. "Archer, I've got some news."

"Hold on." Gunshot and the line went dead. What?

Night didn't matter to Emiya. Reinforcement made his eyesight clear as day. He should return soon. It might be a better approach than to search at night. Emiya could continue the search but he need to be careful with pacing. Unlike his experience as a Servant in the Holy Grail War, he couldn't immediately restore his stamina by receiving prana. A rest in the day before resuming in the night would be a safer choice. The others now have a better sense of secrecy. The Military Uniformed kid might not be so keen on that, disrupting the world a step in their goals. The phone rang. Answering it, Daichi said. "Archer, I've got some news."

**Killing intent**

"Hold on." Emiya spun, Kanshou blocking the bullet from striking his back. Eyes scanned at the nearby corner. "Who are you?" The perpetrator stepped out into the open. Brown hair and a strip of white, glasses and beard. Black coat and a hand with a revolver. Not a local. The gun was of a large calibre, greater lethality. He couldn't assess the man's physique from the bulky coat. Cautious, he must be.

The man introduced. "Blitz Talker, a man set on killing you."

Emiya smirked, tucking the phone away. "She sent you to kill me. What a slave driver."

"Actually, that would be my decision." The middle aged man raised his gun. "Can't leave a hanging thread in this entire mess. We have our reasons to do it."

"Do you think that you have the potential to kill me with that gun?" Blitz fired. Trace on. Bakuya answered the call. Swift strikes blocked the bullets. Fragmented pieces drop to the floor.

Blitz twisted a dial on his wristwatch. The clock whined before its host floated into the air. "It is natural to be confident. Especially for a man that can create weapons out of thin air." So you know who I am. Blitz trained the gun. "I have bested those who had the same confidence."

Emiya charged forward as the pistol fired. Revolver, five to six shots. Twin blades parried each shot with impunity. Reinforcing the ears, he heard. Gun Empty. Throwing the twin swords into the air, he spun onto a knee. The black bow appeared in arms, arrow nocked and ready. Red spears flew rapidly.

The revolver fired five shots. Five arrows fell broken in pieces. Blitz twisted forward, allowing Kanshou and Bakuya to miss and stab into the ground. Emiya said. "To think you can shoot arrows out of the sky, not too bad."
Blitz slot the speed loader into his gun. "You aren't the only one who tried that. They think I'd take the time to reload my gun in a gunfight. I usually do but you aren't the kind to take his time."

Emiya chuckled. "You must be getting old."

"That is true. I am getting too old for this. That doesn't mean I can't kill you." Blitz made a quick draw. Kanshou moved to parry. *Instinct* screamed. He twisted, the bullet flying past. It struck a lamp post before a purple sphere crushed it into a tin can.

*Gravitational bullets. That's new.* Emiya returned fire, six arrows to be sure. Blitz fired four shots before dodging the shot. Emiya was in the air as Blitz reached into his coat. A new pair of swords reached out to Blitz. Emiya was sure to hit.

Blitz smirked. Bakuya moved on instinct, blocking the gun from hitting. Then the skies struck. Weight of the world slammed Emiya down into the ground. The concrete cracked from his boots. Gritted teeth, he held on until its effects ended.

Still in the sky, Blitz reloaded the gun. "People think I have only one gun. Another mistake."

"Well met." Emiya traced the longbow. Pulling off all the stops. Pushing prana through Magic Circuits, it hummed. Nocking the bow, he aimed left towards the interloper that just arrived.

Purple haired man walked along the street. He said, wooden sword on shoulder. "Oi, oi. You're all starting a fight without me."

Blitz huffed. "You again." He turned towards Emiya. "Well then, I will be going." Emiya chose to let him fly away. Yuya Mirokuji was the more interesting one.

Yuya spat at the ground. "What an annoying old man. He always runs whenever I find him." He pointed at Emiya with wooden sword. "Interesting skills over there. Want to have a go?"

"Another guy who always like to fight." This man's strength could be important knowledge. Could he be trusted to be left alone? Or kill him to remove the risk. "I had enough interruptions but I think you'll entertain me tonight." The twin blades came to his side.

Yuya scratched his cheek. "Your name is an Archer but you use two swords."

Emiya stepped forward, ready to fight. "I'm surprised you haven't looked me up. I am quite renowned after all." Scanning the wooden sword, Kuronagimaru had no lengthy history to speak. It was a sword, a tool to fight and kill. Coupled with an air burst ability, there wasn't anything it could say about its owner.

Yuya twirled his sword several times. "Don't really care about it. You don't know me either right. Let our swords talk." Emiya caught the tightening grip and they charged simultaneously.

Blades traded their stories. A spark spoke of their history. The next, their strength. Past, present, resilience, skill. The ground cracked and buckled as their strikes were deflected into the ground. Blasts of wind shot by Emiya's ears.

The fight was incomprehensible. Emiya couldn't understand. *This man just swings the sword. *Yuyadoesn't use his openings, just bluntly attacking with raw firepower. Each counterattack was responded with equal strength. *Or are his response times just insane? *Emiya reinforced and accelerated his attacks. Yuya's pace kept up with the momentum.

"This is more like it!" Yuya yelled with wide smiles. Emiya jumped back, avoiding the burst of air.
onto the ground below. Up the ante. *Spirit and technique, flawless and firm.* Emiya took a step back before throwing his swords at him. *Our strength rips the mountains.* He formed a new pair into the sky before dashing forward.

Yuya threw air blasts in the approach. *Our swords split the water.* Each shot, deflected aside. Yuya noticed the flying swords, blocking against them. *Our names reach the imperial villa.* This is his chance. Kanshou and Bakuya grew their feathers.

Yuya cursed as Emiya raised the Over-edged blades. *The two of us cannot hold the heavens together.* Yuya was out positioned, back exposed. "Triple-Linked Crane Wings."

"Hangaku!" Swords met metal. Emiya leapt back immediately, growing the distance. Emiya clicked his tongue. The samurai spirit appeared, standing on guard against any attacks.

"Two against one. Can't expect it to be fair." Could he kill the spirit? His arsenal probably has a suitable weapon. Alternative would be overwhelm it with swords while pinning Yuya in place.

Yuya smiled. "Damn…that was good. That almost got me." Yuya lowered his sword as the spirit disappeared.

Emiya dissipated his projections. Someone more friendly than expected. Yuya may be of use. "So, are we done?"

"Ah, this is a good fight. I should find you more next time." Yuya reached for a cigarette. "I guess we're done. Don't want to enjoy everything in one go. Seriously if only that old man would stick around longer."

"Indeed, he'd be a better babysitter."

"Hah, that's a cheeky one there. So who's side are you on?"

"My own side." Emiya left the battlefield.

"Another please." Selesia asked for the third can of beer. The talk with Aki Kikuchihara from the government had left a positive outlook of the situation. They were not alone, help is available. A small celebration was in order. Nothing fancy except for some beer and snacks in the dining room. A short moment to rest and good news.

Marine reached for a cold beer across the table as Meteora nibbled at some potato chips. "Here you go." Marine's home was simple but cosy. The apartment had a few rooms and a balcony but it was enough for Marine since she lived alone.

Meteora said. "This place is different compared to Sota's."

Marine tilted her head. "How so?"

"His home felt a bit more rigid, formal. Here, the essence of youth is slightly stronger." Selesia glanced around. Could she mean the amount of drawings and posters on the walls? There were a few grey versions of her within the mix. She agreed with the librarian's assessment.

"I see. He is still young with parents after all. This place will eventually become something like that I guess."

"Oh, you are in a relationship?" Selesia grinned.
Marine waved her frantic arms. "No, no, no such thing yet. A few guys were interested but nothing happened."

"Envious." Meteora quipped.

Selesia took a sip of beer. "It's been only a few days but I feel homesick."

"Isn't that normal? Matsubara had described Earth-Melia quite well but what is your home like?" Marine asked.

Selesia said. "Home wasn't that special. Yes, it's bigger and warm. The most important part wasn't about the house itself. It was my parents and little sister." I wonder if they're still okay. The Avalon brigade had been making moves towards her hometown. "That old geezer did a good job to describe my world. Maybe even my emotions a little too much."

Marine turned towards the librarian. "What about you Meteora?"

"I was adopted. The library had been home all my life."

Selesia giggled. "No wonder your jokes were so bad."

Meteora pouted. "I still am able to communicate. I do have to admit that there is a lack of certain common processes or social expectations but that does not hinder me from my tasks in the library and the occasional trips to the town or village."

"It's alright." Marine grabbed handed Meteora a beer. "Someone can always learn new things."

Meteora beamed. "That is correct. This world is rich with new experiences that our own world doesn't have. I'm looking forward to trying the blueberry flavour chips the retail store was selling."

"That's right Marine. Don't worry about it. We will help to save this world." Selesia turned towards the balcony. "I'm just worried about what's going on in mine."

Marine gave a thumbs up. "I'm sure you guys will be able to do it quickly. You all might be going home before we even know it."

Assurance felt hollow. "I hope so. I'd really hate to see everything destroyed when I get back." Maybe she can get Matsubara to change a few things around while they were here. Nothing major but a nudge in the right direction.

Meteora gave a nod. "It is fortunate we have a new ally amongst us."

Selesia rubbed her forehead. The thought of it churned her mood down the gutter. "Ally you say. I don't know who was more annoying, Kanoya or Archer." The big robot was another mess for the government to handle. She overheard Kikuchihara and Kanoya talking about storing it in a special box. The boy wasn't agreeable to it. The conclusion wasn't heard of before her attention was taken away by Marine.

Meteora said. "Calm down Selesia."

Selesia faced her and threw her hands up. "Calm down? How can I calm down when I feel the urge to just give his face a fist of mine?" The thought of Archer and his arrogant chatter grit against her idea of a hero. How did that man become a hero in the first place? His creator deserves one in the face too.
Meteora pointed at the drink in her hand. "You're starting to get drunk."

Selesia put it down. "I am not drunk."

"Now that we have help, maybe we can convince him to join us. He is supposed to be a Hero of Justice."

"Hero of Justice, my arse. I can't think of him as one." Justice, him. Impossible.

"You are being prejudicial."

"Whatever, so what are you thinking of doing?"

"Contact Hideaki, attempt negotiation with Archer and bribe him with some conviction of protecting the people."

"Hideaki said that it would be hard to convince him. I can agree with him given how that Archer was behaving. At least Hideaki's more approachable like Sota."

Meteora took another sip of beer. "I studied a little about Archer. It would be hard but it's doable."

Selesia sighed. "I don't know if I even want him on my side."

"What are you suggesting? That you want to kill him?"

Marine jumped to her feet. "Eh, isn't that overdoing it?"

A shake of the head. "No. Just imprisoning him would be enough."

Meteora raised a brow. "That would never work. His abilities are powerful, they should not be underestimated."

"Even if he's strong, when I have Vogelchevalier, I can beat him."

"We aren't looking to defeat him but convince him. Second, Vogelchevalier isn't here."

*You don't have to remind me that.* She sighed. "Do what you need to do. As long as he doesn't get on my nerves again." She downed her tin can. "I need another drink."

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Second morning of hell. One misfortune to wake up late. The second is being so preoccupied with the entire search that he had forgotten of an important task. Shizuka tapped her chopsticks against her bowl of rice. "Stop playing your game. It's time for breakfast already."

Daichi continued tapping commands onto the cell phone. "I'll be done shortly. Just need to clear a bit more of these AP." Clearing off the daily action points was a common ritual of a mobile gamer. Otherwise it would have been a waste since they don't recharge once its full.

"You shouldn't engross yourself into these games. We need to study and all that." She leaned forward. "That guy looks familiar."

"Well, yes sort of. Maybe it wasn't a good idea to bring Archer out for this quest. The other option he had was Robin Hood and wasn't trained to the level needed.

Shizuka took a look at Daichi's room, where the Counter Guardian was changing after a shower. "When is Emiya's moving out?"
I really need to talk to Archer about this. "Are you still nervous about him?"

She turned her face away. "I don't like him. He's up to no good."

Not that far from the truth since he is an Anti Hero. "I don't think that's true. Why do you feel that way?"

"I can't explain it. I can feel it."

"Just to be sure, its not some psychic power right?"

"Dream on. Can you just take my word for it?"

Archer exited the room before he could answer. Since the first day the two met, a cold silence would reign whenever they meet. Archer would be uninterested in breakfast and leave. Archer walked towards the door before stopping. The phone caught his eye. "What is this game?"

Archer, why now? "Fate Grand Order, remember the modelling gig you did a year ago?"

"Yes…now I do."

Daichi turned the phone around toward Shizuka. "Emiya looked good as a model so the game company decided to offer him a part time job. You haven't got a chance to try the game didn't you?"

Emiya shook his head. "No, I haven't. I was always busy out at sea. No time to play any games."

Shizuka said. "Since you're going to be stay in Tokyo, why don't you give it a try? It's part of your hard work." I don't know how she can stay so polite despite hating him so much.

Archer leaned back. You and me, stuck in between a rock and hard place. "Very well." He took a seat.

"Here, I'll show you." Daichi installed the game into Emiya's phone. It took a few minutes to get started before the phone displayed the main login screen of the game. "I'll get you started."

"Let's skip the tutorial first to do your first summon. It's faster to progress the tutorial that way."

Archer studied the interface as Daichi tapped a few buttons. "Just press this." The summoning chant begun and completed in a few minutes.

The results was speechless. Daichi blinked a few times. No, he wasn't mistaken. "Wow. I never knew that this was possible." The Church Black keys in a starter summoning roll. Nine of them, a never foreseen scenario.

Archer looked at him. "Not good?"

"That's E-rank luck to you. Damn that Kirei." Daichi flipped through the list to see the bare chested Kirei Kotomine. "Even the last confirmed four star is a Kirei Craft Essence. I'm sorry Archer. I feel you. I really do." A Fate fan would commit suicide from this result.

Shizuka pointed at the lineup. "How bad is it?"

"The biggest impossible failure one can have in this game and he succeeded." Wow, that's smile is so wide. A small boon for you. Lucky Archer is so engrossed on the phone to not notice.

Archer didn't care about the results and took a look at the Servant list. "I am considered a four star Servant? That is surprising."
"You underestimate yourself." Daichi said.

Archer whispered into Daichi's ear. "They consider me on par with the greatest Servants in the Throne of Heroes. What nonsense."

Daichi whispered back. "It's part of the marketing. You're famous after all."

"I don't need it."

"That is something you have to live with."

Shizuka tapped against the rice bowl. "What's with your whispering? We've wasted enough time as it is or we'll be late for school. You wouldn't want to get in trouble don't you?"

"I'll make do somehow." Daichi move to tap another command to his phone. There's more AP to clear.

She raised a finger. "I'll ask your mom to cut your Manga budget."

He paused. "I will survive."

Her fingers spread out. "For four months."

Words flew fast as lightning. "Thank you very much I am very sorry I will do as you ask please forgive me." Hands moved to consume breakfast like a storm. Shizuka raised a brow before sighing. Breakfast began in earnest.

Blitz liked cloudy cool days. The right temperature and brightness to live the day. Sitting within an abandoned chapel, Blitz added lubricant to the cloth before rubbing the pistol gentle and firm. The routine moments give a calm respite in the long days of mystery and hunting. The little candle kept the light right inside the place of prayers.

_Treat your weapon like how you treat your lover and it will always work._ An old quote in the early days of his career. Daniels will be missed. If only that old chap didn't have to die before his retirement.

He noticed someone approaching from the door. The young heroine snooped inside, wearing a brown school uniform and beret. _She would never be able to sneak around if you keep watching your feet._ He called out. "Can't anyone leave an old man alone?"

"If it isn't bad, I want to chat." Blitz took a moment to think. The girl had been beaming optimism ever since she got here. The Overlord princess didn't pay much heed to it. Her goal was focused on addressing the cranky knight, this girl didn't need as much attention.

He patted the bench. "Suit yourself. Sit here and don't touch anything." A quick nod, she sat down beside him as he continued his work.

"Mr. Bites, ah."

He replied. "Blitz Talker. You can just call me old man. Easier." He heard the girl's quirk of messing names. To think one can be a superhero when you can't even remember people's names properly. What a world. "What's your name girl?"

"Mamika Kirameki. What are you doing?"
"I am cleaning my partners." He continued to rub the lubricant on his gun. Both guns had been disassembled, arrayed on the bench. The cleaning tools had been easy to procure with his money. *An irony that the same Yen would be used two hundred years in the future. My God is such a lazy arse.*

The girl leaned forward, watching Blitz dip the cleaning patch into the barrel. "It looks really complicated."

"It is easy once you done it a few times." Countless times in years of service. *It had been so long.*

Mamika said. "Those guns, they're used to kill aren't they?" He felt the stare. The stares they all love to give. To brand him a murderer. Never to protect others but always to kill.

Blitz chose not to hide the truth. "My world has been difficult. It's not a forgiving place. We kill each other every day to stay alive."

"Couldn't people just talk it through? Make up and everything will be alright?"

"There is no such thing. Not everyone wants to get along. They all have their own goals and they will destroy anything in their way of it. Your world is optimistic, a joy from your creator. People want it to happen. A happy ending for everyone. My God however doesn't have such ideas."

"Can't you talk to your God, to make it a better place?"

"My God would never change it even if I ask for it. However, I can tell that this world is similar to mine. My world would have been closer to the truth."

Mamika tilted her head. "I don't understand."

He gave a pat on her head. "You'll do once you're old enough." It just felt right. "Get going or that knight will get cranky. She wouldn't like me to be talking to you anyway."

Mamika stood up. "I don't think you are a bad guy despite what the Aliceteros say."

Another slip of the tongue. *Might be interesting to see what she can cook up. That woman would never hear the end of it.* "Good and bad are only two sides of a coin." Mamika left. Now he can finish up the work in peace and quiet.

"You are quite a father figure." Blitz leaned over his shoulder to see the Overlord Princess.

"Can't leave an old man to do his business."

Overlord Princess stepped forward, seeing his work. "You treat her like your daughter."

Blitz finished the final touches for his first gun. "She would have been a good elder sister for Erina. Naive but hopeful. Kids need those. You however wouldn't pass."

She chuckled. "You fought with Shirou Emiya."

Blitz hands worked to reassemble the gun. "It's not a problem. I like less hassles to deal with later."

"I had hopes he would join us. The Gods have betrayed him very painfully. A pity." *You look like the one who needs it the most.*

"You may be all mighty but are you going to do anything about him?"

"I'll deal with him." She took a seat. "How is your search going?"
"Such kindness. I am very surprised. Thank you very much." Blitz aimed the assembled weapon at the wall. A pull of the trigger and it responded with an empty click.

"I wouldn't care less as long as you continue to disrupt the world. If my hands weren't tied, I'd do it myself."

Blitz started to work on his second gun. "Certainly we are your goons in the big picture. Unfortunately one can only hope for the leader to be more courteous to those under you. As for your question, I still haven't found it."

"Courteous? What a joke." She must have liked it. "Here are your instructions. Another creation had appeared in the city. Alicetaria and Mamika is aware about it and they'll find the creation. Join them." A search mission, the most troublesome one. "I bid you good fortune." She vanished in a hue of blue. Finally, some peace and quiet. With the cloth, he continued to clean. The door slammed open with Alicetaria in full armour. 

School finished without a hitch. Archer was busy investigating the other locations during school hours. School over, Daichi would be able to pitch in and give a hand. Kazuko had not been able to get any information thus far about the Military Uniformed Kid. The lack of answers had spurned his friend into investigating further. He really needs to take care of that obsession. The cell phone rang. Daichi frowned at the unrecognised number. It could be the others. He answered it.

The voice was female, unfamiliar. "Hello, is this Mr. Daichi Hideaki?"

Daichi replied. "Yes, who is this?" Blood froze. Wait, this doesn't-

"I am Aki Kikuchihara, General Coordination Officer of the Special Situations Countermeasures Council. We would like to meet with you and Mr. Archer."

Alarm pumped into his chest. Curses, how did they found out about me? "How did you get this number?"

"Ms. Meteora informed us to contact you."

Better, still not to the plan. How did they find Meteora and the others? What happened? What is the best action? "Fine. I'll let you know where to meet us. Call back in five minutes." He would be alone today since Shizuka had club activities today. Daichi walked towards the train station, eyes sharp for anything suspicious.

Eyes circling about, he called Archer. It picked up within the third ring. "Archer, the government is aware about us. They want us to meet them."

"I don't trust them." Archer's voice was dry. Not too pleased either.

"So do I but we need to handle them. You know them. They won't take no for an answer. I need to reply them with a location in five minutes."

"It has to be done. Choose a place. A large wide open space. Trees would help. You need to be able to get there at least half an hour early from them. I'll form a plan and update you." The call ended. Daichi opened the map and started looking. Four minutes to find a place. He didn't want to be too far nor too near. A big place was hard to find. More so to be wide open and with trees. Add a thirty minute clock. The traffic would be starting to grow. Train would be the fastest way to get there. The list narrowed to one choice.
The phone rang on the five minute mark. He answered after confirming it was Kikuchihara. "Meet us at the Shinjuku Park in one hour. Clearing near the tea house. Bring Ms. Meteora along. Just the two of you." He entered the train station while making another call. "Archer, I've set the place."

"Archer, do you see them?" Daichi asked, leaning against the wall of a shed. It has been a year since he had visited Shinjuku Park. He had been there half an hour earlier keeping an eye from around the corner. Beside the tea house was a pond and a small open field. Trees surrounded the area, providing comfortable shelter against the hot sun. The target area, the field was public and easy to see as people travelled across.

"I see them. They're coming." Archer was perched in a rooftop somewhere. "All the entrances are guarded. There are four cars nearby with her goons. You won't be able to escape them yourself."

_Hopefully I don't need to. "Is Meteora there?"

"Following the woman. Unarmed, not in distress." _Good to know._ Daichi peeked, catching sight of the group. Two of them were walking. The first woman was in a suit. _It should be Aki Kikuchihara._ The other visitors gave a quick glance at Meteora's odd attire before turning away. The crowd was dispersing away from the field, leaving it empty except the two of them. Open for his invitation.

_Let's see what we can make do from this._ "Alright, I'll go in and talk to them. If things go bad, try not to hurt them." No response as the call ended. Daichi left the corner.

The woman noticed his arrival. Meteora gave a small wave. Daichi nodded and stopped five metres away from those two. Close to talk, far to be safe. "My name is Aki Kikuchihara, pleased to meet you."

Daichi bowed. Formality needed to be followed. "It is a pleasure. What's your business with me?"

"We would like to talk to you and Mr. Archer. I don't see him here."

"Don't worry about him. What would you like to talk about?"

"I am a part of the Special Situations Countermeasures Council. We are organised to handle this special anomaly that you are currently involved. We want to ask for your cooperation."

"If you wanted our cooperation, couldn't you have just said so in the first place?"

"There was a problem in the past. We'd prefer to be more civil and talk directly in a proper manner." He noticed Meteora turning away with red cheeks. Was she embarrassed?

Interesting observation. What would Archer ask in this situation? "If you want us to cooperate, what's in it for us?"

"You will be rewarded for your service. Likewise we want to ensure that Meteora and other creations have their proper rights as human beings."

That wasn't a bad idea. Archer would be able to live a proper life after all this mess. _Be like Archer, trust nothing._ He tried what the Counter Guardian would do. "That's not the only thing. What else do you have in mind?"

Kikuchihara widened her brows. She mustn't expect that from him. "That is what we have in mind."
"Are you sure?" Meteora raised a brow. Was he asking the right questions?

"Yes, I am sure of it. Can we have a word with Mr. Archer?" She's confident. Is that a truth?

"Very well." Daichi reached for his phone and dialled. "Archer."

"Put it on loudspeaker." His voice remained clear. "I am listening."

"."

"I know who you are, don't waste time introducing yourself. Tell me what you want."

"We'd like you to come with us and cooperate in fixing this anomaly that is happening to this world."

"How would we do that?"

"We have arranged for accommodations and necessities for your long term stay. You would come with us and your rights properly addressed."

"Afterwards?"

"That has yet to be decided."

"Why are you unsure?"

"Because we are still planning the best approach to handle the matter."

"I see." A pause. "To hell with that. I'm not interested."

Kikuchihara said. "I am afraid it is not a choice."

Archer said. "Is that a threat?" A warning tingled down the spine.

"It is not a threat but a statement. We need you to come with us for your safety. Likewise for Hideaki's safety."

The tingle was growing. "For ours or yours?"

Meteora suggested. "Archer, it's better for us to cooperate."

"Cooperation by following you without clear agendas in mind. I don't buy it."

Kikuchihara explained. "There is a risk that the others would hunt you down. Bystanders could be hurt in the process. We want to limit that risk and face it together."

"I had that once already."

"All the more reason to-."

"I rather take my chances."

"Mr. Archer, I am sorry but I cannot let this be." Daichi felt a jump. They would be coming for him. Archer's reply was swift, coming from above. A barrage of arrows cracked into the ground between them, drawing a line. Upon impact, they faded but the scars they left behind remained. A warning.

"Step back." Daichi warned as he moved backwards. Archer should be coming now. "We're going our own way. We won't hurt anyone unless they forced us to. I suggest you don't push the issue for
Kikuchihara looked disturbed for the time being. She paused before answering. "I will listen to your words for now. However, I hope that we can talk further into an acceptable compromise."

Daichi couldn't see Archer yet. Eyes scanning across the buildings before catching him. "Can you promise me to leave us be?"

"I cannot guarantee that."

Daichi felt their eyes drill into his. "You know where we live but be forewarned if you try anything. We won't take it lightly especially since you are the good guys." Archer landed behind him. "If you want to talk more, you have my number. Let's go." Carried over the shoulders, they shot into the air.

They darted in between the buildings, out of sight. Archer said."You are scared."

"It's… not often that you have possibly someone who might try to arrest and throw you in jail."

"In jail, that is optimistic. There were people who might have shot you." Daichi blinked. "Two of them actually. Snipers at the both ends of the block."

Daichi swore before continuing. "Screw your eyesight. What do we do next?"

"We'll go to your home first. We need to prepare a few things there." Archer noticed his stare. "It's not a bomb. Don't worry about that. Anyhow, Good work. You asked the right questions."

"Another praise. Ha Ha, I'm really lucky."

"I should just drop you here."

Author's Notes: As scheduled, here's another Chapter. Thanks for your support and hope you continue to enjoy this story. There'll be a little less experimenting in the later chapters I think. I'm getting closer to something I'm comfortable with while fixing off the SPAG errors that I perceive (Yes, SPAG is my bane)

It'll be 4 week standard waiting time as usual. Just to give you a bit of a cookie, here's a good buffer of chapters so you won't suffer any delays but I remain dissatisfied to a degree. Also future chapters will remain around this size. I'm also finding difficulty in balancing the level of lore due to the scope. Meantime I am also trying to be more friendly to readers who are not familiar with the lore on either end while not making it boring for either.

Your suggestions are welcomed and will be noted. I'm a bit scared of the expectations (sorry, that's my nature) but please provide constructive reviews and I'll see to use them to improve.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Daichi checked the bag for the third time before zipping it tight. Archer was working the finishing touches on a sigil on the wall by the kitchen sink. Diamond in shape, it pulsed a light green hue before dimming back to the black stroke of paint. The Counter Guardian glanced at him. “Do you have everything you need?”

Daichi tapped the rucksack on his back. It carried clothes, toiletries and a small tablet. “All ready. What’s the plan?”

Archer glanced outside the window. Nightfall had begun. “You will take the train and go somewhere far away from this place. I’ll be watching here from somewhere nearby.”

“What for?”

“To see how much we can trust them.”

“They aren’t our enemies.”

“Not yet. We are in no man’s land kid. That means everyone has a chance of hunting us. Stay in a motel, net cafe or anywhere for tonight. Just make sure it’s quiet and discreet. We’ll think of a better place to stay afterwards.”

“Sure.” Daichi turned for the door. He paused with a hand on the handle. “Not that you need it but stay safe.”

“You too kid.”

Daichi stepped outside, closing the door shut. Left to his own devices, a few minutes was needed to make the plan before entering the lift to take him outside back to the world. The journey to the Gotenyama district took an hour’s journey through the rush hour traffic. He had been keeping his guard up, looking around from time to time. An occasional check on the nearby mirrors or the glance towards a store. Archer had given a few tips on checking for followers.

The city opened its lights to reveal its beauty but Daichi felt its shadow. Once a bastion of safety and technology, now the large towers and buildings carried a weight of uncertainty behind every corner. Each unfamiliar face was a possible agent, waiting to pounce on him. The young teenager kept to open areas wherever possible and remained as normal as possible.

The train ride on the other hand was scary. What was commonplace was now frightful. Enclosed in such tight spaces, anyone could squeeze alongside him and stab a knife without notice. He would drop dead on the floor in a pool of blood and nobody would know the killer. Daichi shook the thought aside. I’m thinking too much. The guidelines were followed. There was nobody on his tail, all is well.

Daichi was tired by the time he arrived. He knew the room was going to be small. The selected Internet cafe was one of the smaller premises in the area. However this was absurd. Four feet, bare bones square room. Computer on the desk and a small plastic menu for orders.

The cafe was popular for the homeless. Slipping into the room, Daichi settled onto the cold floor.
Alone, relatively secure for the moment, what would be the best option to take next? Given how the situation is, might be a good idea to let Kazuko know about it. Cell phone was not an option, the device turned off to avoid being tracked down by GPS like Archer’s case. He dropped a quick email using the computer.

**Careful, they have contacted me.**

Kazuko’s reply was instant. *Where are you?*

Daichi pondered. Can he trust email to remain elusive? He typed. *Somewhere safe.*

**Good bro. You aren’t hurt right?**

**No. We’re alright. Not on the run, just being careful.**

**Good call. Is this Archer’s idea? I’m sorry for not helping on this.**

**It’s fine. You can tell me on whether you managed to identify the person I’m looking for.**

That case is frustrating Bro. The description is too vague. I’m getting too many matches that it would take me a while to sort through them. I don’t know if the choices are even correct. I did notice a trend.

**A trend?**

The number of pictures suggest someone highly popular. The typical database for anime and manga aren’t getting anything but it should be the right direction. Unfortunately you are my only expert in this field.

**I could try to do a search from here.**

Don’t. I’m doing it from a secured net. It would be dangerous for you to try it now. Leave it to me.
I’m sure I can find out about it. Just a matter of when. It’s almost midnight. Get some rest. You will need it.

Alright, take care. Daichi ended the email conversation and locked the door. He put on blindfolds after nestling into a sleeping bag. Everything went dark, a quiet silence. The first night of being on the run. Should I be afraid? He had no answer.

Emiya maintained vigilance as a pair of drunks walked past the Hideaki residence. Sitting within the dark corridor from a building four blocks across the street, reinforced eyes could stand watch without problems.

The stars were bright. A long time since he had seen the stars. The occasional up draft of wind from the warm rooftop, made an old reminder of another life. Periodic naps and inspections proved that the bounded field had not been triggered to current time. The city growled as dawn arrived. The probability of any attempt had dropped significantly. It would be best for him to get more rest and find the boy.

Speaking of the boy, Emiya had to admit that he was dedicated to the cause. A poor reminder of the past. The boy would suffer from the war. That will be a fact that cannot be prevented. The Counter Guardian will keep the boy alive however necessary. That would be his responsibility. For at least he must save the boy if not anyone else.

Another inspection before making the journey, he felt a familiar presence. Emiya leaned over the railing and looked down. The crowd of people was growing, intending to start the work day. A young girl that didn’t meet the age group stood out. That Magical girl. An opportunity, follow her for more information. Her constant glances to the surroundings were peculiar. Is she looking for someone? She looked up towards the building. Their eyes met. She has a good sense. What should he do? Walk away? Instigate a fight? She waved at him. Might as well fish for information.

He waved a finger, gesturing her to circle around the building. Turning away from prying eyes, he leapt and slid down the walls. Taking short leaps, he landed as she appeared. He gestured for her to follow him. A few turns away and into an alley. A second bounded field had been prepared there beforehand for emergencies, providing warning about anyone nearby with hostile intent. Assured of the basis of her intentions, he nodded for her to speak.

“Err…Archie-san.”

He was a man without pride but there were limits. “Don’t you kids know how to speak names properly?”

The girl bowed. “Sorry!” She knows who I am. What can I gain from this?

“How old are you anyway?” She appeared to be a teenager in a school girl uniform. Though he had been surprised in a case where a particular girl was nine hundred sixty one years old.
She fumed. “You shouldn’t ask a girl her age.” *Perfect, be annoyed.*

Emiya started the probe. “Why are you finding me, someone who might decide to kill you this very moment?”

“I just want to talk with you.” She waved her hands. “I mean no harm at all, I’m sure of it.”

“Talk.”

“My name’s Mamika Kirameki from Magical Slayer Mamika. I know why you are here, that you are one of the destined ones to change your world.”

First step. “How did you know about me in the first place?”

“I heard about you.”

Heard. That was a particular word. “Where did you hear that from?”

“Alice said she saw you standing on the rooftops watching down at people. I thought you’re also one of us, so here I am. Tee Hee.”

“Is she the knight?” She nodded. How did the knight see him without his notice? That notion would be troublesome. “What exactly do you want from me?”

Mamika clasped her hands together. “I want to believe that everyone can work together, to change the world. I was thinking that if you can help me convince the others. I’ll be there too of course.”

The others, did she mean the sage and her lot? Or is this woman on the other side? “What do I have to gain from helping you?”

“Our worlds are changed for the better. People won’t be hurt ever again.” She pressed two fingers
together. “You’ll also have my gratitude too.”

This girl was trying to be too cute. Does she think such ideas would work to convince him? “Do you think the world would be changed so easily?”

Mamika’s eyes gleamed. “I know it isn’t but if we put our hope to it together, we can make it happen. I believe, no I know it can be done.” There’s no saving her.

Emiya raised a brow. “Are Magical Girls that naive? The world will never become the merry merry land that you would ever have in your story.”

Mamika yelled. “People in my world are being hurt. I can’t stand here and do nothing to help my friends. That’s why I want to change my world, make it a better and happy place for everyone.”

Such optimism. “Impossible. My world suffers death by the thousands daily. People suffer abuse, murder, pain, sorrow amongst themselves and all that is never going to change. I alone would never be able to change it nor do I have the intention of doing so.” Emiya retorted upon seeing the girl’s glare. “What are you going to do about it? Beat me up with your broken sense of justice and passion? Pointless.”

The young girl tightened her shaking fists. “Why doesn’t anyone understand me?”

“She world isn’t all about you girl. People have their own motivations. They will do what they like even if it against their morals. That little girl, is a fact.”

“You’re really mean.”

“Welcome to real life. Survival of the fittest. The strong will survive and the weak will die.”

Her words hissed. “Aren’t you a hero? You saved people all the time. How can you say such things?”

“It is because I sacrificed everything. I’ve demanded my body to its limits. I abandoned my friends, family and loved ones so that I can keep fighting for this justice that you speak of. I condemned my
soul to eternal torture so that I could be every bit stronger. I did all that just to get the strength to save the weak.” He realised the intent he sent through and reigned it in. “Girl, are you willing to pay the same price?”

Mamika took a step back. “I won’t ever understand you.”

He whispered. “You don’t have to.” Raising his voice, he asked. “Anything else? Or do you need another lesson of life?”

“No, I don’t want to hear anything more than you. It hurts so much to think that you could have saved your world but you don’t want to. Good bye.” Mamika leapt into the air and left.

_That’s just how life works. Learn it and just give it up._ Emiya dispelled the bounded field. The task here is done. Rest, get an update from the boy and complete the mission. That is the priority, what it should have always been.

Staying in a net cafe sucks. The room was cramped and cold. Sleeping on the hard floor was painful to the back. Daichi had to twist his form to lie down on the floor. Adding to the discomfort was the lack of privacy with the quiet hum of the air conditioners or the sounds of people in the rooms next door. The lack of a shower was also regretted.

If this is what he felt in just one night, how the hell did those people live here for months or years? Rubbing a sticky neck, he went to grab some breakfast from the front counter. The little boon of food was delightful against all spites. As the counter took his order, he glanced at the clock. _I’m late to school._ Nine in the morning. Another day of skipped school. Beneath the hot vapours of steam, he can imagine his school attendance record melting within that cup of noodles.

Archer arrived somewhere before noon. The Counter Guardian was perplexed given the crunched look on his face. “This is a small place.”

Daichi moved the empty lunch box to make space. “Reminds you of anything?”

“Solitary confinement before they hanged me.”

_Ouch._ “I have some instant noodles left here. Want some?” Daichi offered. There was an extra pack planned for tea time.
“No thanks.” Archer sat cross legged by the door. “Did you notice anything abnormal?”

“I had a bad night. Other than that, nothing. What about you?”

“They hadn’t done anything at your place for now. I have added a few more fields to make it easier to detect intrusions from afar.” Archer pointed at the computer screen of pictures. “What’s all this?”

“I’ve been trying to find out who is that Military uniformed kid the others were referring to. I had no luck so far.” Daichi scrolled through the online galleries he was perusing since morning. The tags he had used so far had been generic and difficult to get any answers. The four hundred pages remaining was not well liked prospect.

“Describe her to me.” Daichi detailed the supposed features he needed to search. Archer narrowed his eyes, listening to every point. A moment’s pause before he answered. “Her name is Altair.” That was a surprise. Daichi nodded for him to continue. “I met her. She wanted me to join her side. I rejected the offer and things went violent.”

“Why didn’t you tell them about it?”

“I’m not obliged to. It had no purpose to the topic.”

*Right, Archer wasn’t around after the standoff.* “That would have been helpful for yesterday.”

“First, they aren’t our allies and we have no responsibility for them. Second, that Mizushino boy already knows.”

Sota Mizushino, the shy guy with the glasses? “He knows? How did you discover that?”

“Projection.” Archer raised his hands. A speck of light formed before finalising its shape into a sword with a golden guard. “This hanger, a longer version of the famous cutlass is Altair’s weapon. 17th Century Europe. Simple and durable in nature and it told me about her history.”

Daichi reached out to touch the sword. Cold metal as a finger brushed along the blunt side. The details was intricate, down to the curve and grooves along the blade. Surprise would be an understatement, astonished maybe. “Does it tell of her motivation?”
“Just as she said, destroy the world.” The sword vanished in a cloud of blue pixels.

World domination, he could understand but destruction? “Why did she want to destroy the world? What’s there to gain from it?”

“Vengeance. That alone is enough.”

“Why would she want vengeance against us? What happened?”

Archer leaned back against the wall. Tell it already. “Her Creator committed suicide.”

Cold chill travelled down the back. A tang of regret wrapped around the neck. “Suicide?”

“Pressured beyond her ability to cope, her creator committed suicide. That was enough of a reason.”

“That’s… really horrible.” Suicides were regular within Tokyo. It doesn’t make accepting it any easier. “What did she face until she wanted to die?” Archer shook his head. “How is Mizushino involved?”

“There was only a hint but he is directly involved. That is all I know.” Archer closed his eyes.

“Speaking about them, what are we going to do now?”

“Stay hidden, changing places every day or two. That should keep you safe. I will be searching for Altair and see to this problem to be resolved.”

“That’d make sense. I would be useless for a fight.” Daichi shrugged.

“Try not to be seen especially by the other heroes. Otherwise you would never be able to escape.”
“Well catching me wouldn’t be much of use against someone like you.” Daichi pointed out. He had no significant value in the bigger picture.

“No but it will be annoying. There’s enough trouble to go around.”

“I’ll do my best,” Daichi said.

“Good. Seeing as you left them a line to talk to, they’re likely to talk to you first.”

Daichi waved his phone. “Not while this is turned off. They can track me with this thing turned on just as I did with you.”

Archer sighed. “You’ve led them to a dead end.” He reached into his pack. “I’ll create something to prevent them tracking you. Turn it on afterwards.” The sigil was created within ten minutes. Daichi felt a slight shrill when the square shaped carving on the wall activated.

Archer packed up his things. “There, it’s done. Play your cards right and we might be able to make use of them.”

Daichi turned on his phone and set it aside. “Even when you gave them a strict warning? You did draw the line in the ground.”

“Theatrics. Just as their talk. It was too simple, unprepared. They’re testing us.” Archer settled his pack aside.

“Do they need to do such a thing?”

“Someone screwed up but it’s not those we’ve talked to. They just can’t talk about it. Being too honest was a bad thing for them.”

“So you’re saying they have a plan but they can’t use it?”

“Yes.” Archer’s simple answer.
“A plan in no plan. Ugh I think I’m having a headache,” Daichi said.

“In a nutshell, that is correct. They’re feigning weakness to gauge your reaction or there’s more than it seems. Anyhow, try to dig and grab as much information as possible when they talk to you. About the boy, just nudge him in the right direction. It will be better that way.”

Daichi raised a brow. “I thought that being direct is the best approach.”

Archer opened his eyes. “The boy’s will is weak. If you force it through, there are three things that he will do. Cry, be angry or resent you.”

“What’s the difference between anger and resentment?”

“Angry is temporary. Resentment would get you killed if you ever needed his help.”

Daichi leaned back on his hands. “That’s rather unusual compared to your normal approach.”

“That’s the thing about being a Counter Guardian, the best approach is not always the one you know.”

“Counter Guardian, have you done this kind of thing before?”

“Occasionally. Other Guardians are more suited for the role. However sometimes my abilities are needed in conjunction and you don’t need an expert to get the job done.” Archer said.

“I thought Counter Guardians usually erase the source of the problem.” Daichi raised a finger.

“That’s normally the case. However erasing the individual doesn’t always mean solving the problem. You might be stringing it along instead.”

“A cause and effect kind of thing?”
Archer nodded. “That’s why the Alaya needs a variety of guardians to make sure the tasks are completed. Usually blowing everything up still works in most parts.”

“That sounds like a boring film.” It reminded him of a certain science fiction film with a director with a penchant for dramatic explosions.

“It’s not meant to be a story, its purgatory.” Archer reminded as he stood up.

“Are you heading out to find this Altair?”

Archer opened the door. “That’s right. I’ll see you later tonight.” The door slid close, leaving Daichi alone in his little box.

The appetite in the stomach had disappeared. Hearing about death makes that happen for anyone. I should probably return back to work. The phone rang a bell. A special melody for a particular person. That was fast. He verified the ID before answering. “Hello Meteora.”

“Good afternoon, can we have a moment to talk?”

So soon. “Sure. I’m listening.”

“Kikuchihara said you weren’t around at your home today. Is everything alright?” They did have someone looking it out.

“She is not wrong. I am alive if that’s what you are asking.”

“That is rather pessimistic statement.”

Daichi chose to cut straight to the point. “We aren’t on the best of terms. What do you want?”

“Your email address. Kikuchihara would like to pass you some information. A gift to ease things
Archer was right, he was the target now. Email should be safe from any tracking and they haven’t intruded his home so far. “Alright.” The computer beeped a minute later. He opened the email to see some files attached. Big ones. Starting the download, he said. “What are all these documents about?”

The phone paused before replying. “This is Kikuchihara. What you are seeing is data that we have gathered and also a summary of the analysis.”

Few hundred megabytes of data. It would take a few minutes to download all of it. “That’s interesting. What do you think I would do with this?”

“I hope you will be able to study it and make a suitable decision.” You mean join them and help out.

On the other hand, Kazuko might be able to make use of this. Their mission would be complete. That was the reason he was involved in the first place, to reveal this entire phenomenon to the world. They can’t cover it up afterwards.

Something did strike him as odd. Is the government trying to make a cover up in the first place or perhaps something else? Daichi chose to test them. “That looks like a lot of data. What if I revealed it to the world?”

“That would be a poor decision. The ramifications of such actions would be catastrophic. The people would be unsettled. A mass panic can happen and the public would be hurt from it.”

“The people have a right to know. They shouldn’t be pigeonholed into a box when the danger out there is real. Lives are at stake.”

Meteora voiced out from the line, a tad softer. “That would be a dangerous move Hideaki. If we reveal this to the world, the Military Uniformed kid would be able to operate in public. That means that she would be able to accelerate her plans and destroy the world. More lives would be lost from that step.” Her voice, a little louder. “Secondly, Kikuchihara is correct. The people in this world would not be able to accept it. There will be problems on many levels, economic, political and social. That is assuming the world isn’t destroyed beforehand.”

Archer mentioned the same thing once. However, his reality is different. An entire world created to fit the puzzle block. A story crafted from experience and formulas. No, it wouldn’t be that easy. “I will think about it. Let me read the documents. I will inform you of my decision.”

“We’ve placed our trust in you Hideaki. I hope you make the right choice,” Kikuchihara said.
The call ended, mind returning to the cold box. *Time to find out the truth.* Taking a deep breath, he studied the monstrosity before him. *Wow, they weren’t kidding when they were sending me data.* Forty files in total and already sorted into groups, convenient for Daichi to assess the material.

The first folder contained data from the Government’s Meteorological Agency. The charts were a blur to him. A series of lines and waves, the charts didn’t make any sense to him. *Magnetic Field Deflection? Radio Frequency? Audio Signal loss and distortion?* The part that he understood was the date mentioning the charts to be a few weeks old. The other documents were likewise equally incomprehensible.

Were they seriously expecting him to study all this information? *No, that was the purpose of the summary.* He opened the item, scrolling fifty pages long. *Are you serious?* Fifty pages, a summary. It must be someone’s cruel joke. Lucky said summary had organised the details into sections for ease of reading. Flipping through the contents, he found what he wanted.

**First Arrival**

The interview with Creation - Meteora Osterreich and Selesia Upitiria has verified that their appearance into the world coincides with the variation of the Magnetic Fields detected within the time line.

Understanding better of the situation, the chart made more sense. The world is changed when each Creation appeared. He checked the time line again. *The first one was two weeks ago. Who was summoned first? Could it have been Altair or someone else?* The next fluctuations were periodic, once every few days. He recognised the fifth entry. That was on the day he met Archer. Since that day, the fluctuations silenced only to find the most recent one being yesterday. The biggest one thus far, spiking far more than triple of the other entries. What made it so big?

The arrival of Rui Kanoya and the mechanised machine - Gigas Machina has confirmed the hypothesis that there is no defined maximum to the scale or material that can be transferred from the Worlds of Creations. It has also confirmed that anime based technologies are able to operate within the real world without any known limitations thus far at current time of study.

*Rui Kanoya?* He’s the main character for Monomagia: The Infinite Over Machine. Is he also here now in this world? The large abnormal spike in the chart, could it be related?

Based upon the data, it can be inferred that the Creations are brought into this world assumed to be through the disruption of the Magnetic Fields. The deflection of the magnetic fields are a short burst of transmission. This transmission of data through the medium of high frequency radio has led to the development of the Creation. This transmission in turn has performed a transference of information into an element of energy in order to form the said Creation. It is speculated that their bodies consist inherently of digitised data turned into a physical form through an unknown phenomenon. This phenomenon is currently not
understood and subject to require further research before a hypothesis can be formed.

Daichi scratched his head. The summary was complicated as it is. A little easier to digest but still a headache. Maybe coffee would help. Kazuko could probably decipher this better than him. No, I should read it first before deciding. Kazuko would reveal the information in a heartbeat. There might be a trap inside.

It is observed that the baseline for radio signal interference has increased. The mentioned interference has increased significantly when the arrival of a Creation has occurred or upon the activation of a Creation’s abilities. There is an identified increase of interference from the original levels that were recorded prior to the arrival of the Creations. The increased value has remained constant until current time of observation.

What was that supposed to mean? The remaining paragraphs afterwards were equally confusing with the technical jargon. He scrolled down the document when he noticed found a small attachment in the summary file. A small note attached as a comment to the file. Discreet and foreboding. He opened it.

The implication of the hypothesis is extremely dangerous and in this researcher’s point of view, frightening. If there is no defined limitation, the materials that can be replicated from the other worlds would be astounding. A scientific revolution would happen and accelerate development of technologies on all fronts. The negligible cost for ratio of rewards would make Earth a haven of endless resources. Earth will prosper, provided it still exists.

I have watched many animations in my own personal time. Science fiction, the greatest joy and hope for scientists to view the hope and dreams of the future. Fiction is drawn to conflict. If this potential exists and utilised, the conflict will become real. Weapons of mass destruction would be real. These weapons would destroy planets and consequently it will destroy our world. It would only be a matter of time because the human mind is just too frail to truly understand the dangers involved.

To whom may be reading this summary, I hope that you take to heart that this research is more than just for oneself and may decide upon humanity. I pray for your actions that will be decided based on this information.

An unnamed scientist. A personal pleading note. It felt wrong. Why the secrecy? The fate of the world on his shoulders? That’s downright impossible. There was so much information, so much data that it felt real. He noticed his hand quivering. First place, how much of this data is reliable? Faking
such information is possible. Scramble a few people to write up a bunch of technical gibberish beyond his understanding is possible. That would be piecemeal if they had the idea of deploying shooters. Could he trust them? That was their plan after all to convince him over to their side isn’t it?

Who could help answer this? Kazuko was hostile against the government for reasons he had never said. Archer was relatively impartial with slight bias against them. Yuya Mirokuiji is similar to them, a renegade. That man couldn’t care less, more so given a lack of means to contact him. Selesia Upitiria was on the government’s side. She was not easily fooled but she can be convinced to another side if given the right motivation of protecting the world.

Meteora was the key. She is on their side but why does Meteora trust them? She had been extremely helpful in Avalken, providing the keys to help save the collapsing world. Highly intellectual, able to recognise truth from lie. Could she have been misled by them? Meteora would be more limited here where the boundaries of a game is not defined.

Archer was as real as a normal human being. That was not a problem. Meteora’s character would be true. There were no signs of ignorance or distress. Or is he just incapable to identify them? Archer would know better but he’s not the type to trust anyone easily. Can he trust Meteora’s judgement? That they weren’t just trying to trick him into a foolhardy decision?

This entire idea could have been Meteora’s doing. An out of the box method for her to convince him to their side. Would it have been a web of crafted lies? No, she can’t. She’s too logical, too rigid to be a liar. The librarian had little social skills. A lie this inconspicuous would not be possible. Meteora can think like a researcher but she’d be a horrible actor. I’ll... trust on that fact.

Giving the benefit of the doubt, a decision was needed. He need to makes a choice based on these fifty pages, more if needed. Returning to the first page with a fresh cup of tea, Daichi started.

The time reached eight o’clock in the night when the deed was done. Daichi plopped onto the floor. A hundred and fifty pages completed, a third out of the entire package. There was a lot to process. A few videos were attached, depicting instances of Yuya Mirokuiji and a knight called Alicetaria February. Goodness, he felt stiff like a board. Empty stomach growled a complaint. He couldn’t care less now, closing his eyes to sleep. The decision can come tomorrow after a night’s rest. The world faded to black until the phone rang.

Nothing, again. Emiya leapt onto the rooftop of a large building complex. The orange lights of the city nightlife across the horizon. Beyond the horizons of the urban centres, the rest of the buildings turned dark, end of the work day. The perch he stood on wasn’t very tall but it served for the surroundings. A bridge to the north, train tracks to the southwest. Several schools and a university grouped together to the east. This district was quiet and it was another part of the search. Just like the previous six.

Emiya could feel the results closing. Slower than he’d like but there was progress. There are only several places that would work for them. From the brief outline of Altair from the sword, there are certain criteria that would define a suitable place to stay.

While she wanted vengeance, there was a sense of tact. The lack of news in the net or the papers for murders. Keen on the destruction of the ‘land of Gods’ yet discreet in its pursuit. Similar to his original plan, she wanted a quiet place. At least for two or bigger. Altair may have more forces than he know. The knight and the magical girl are good examples. Unconfirmed allegiance and potential enemies.
The place couldn’t be too far. Denying any ability such as teleportation, there should be a certain range of distance in order for the notion of meeting to occur. They should be in Tokyo, at the worst on the outer fringes which he can validate in a few days. He needs to find her fast. The mission he set upon himself days ago is paramount.

*Kill Altair before the war escalates into a bloodbath*

Take down the leader and he would be able to handle the rest of Altair’s forces. The fight with the gunman had been challenging but it was not impossible to defeat them. Emiya must prepare to set the battlefield to suit his needs. They can know every skill and ability in hand. It didn’t mean they could stop him. Senses warned of a presence. He turned around to meet face to face. “Altair.”

Altair smirked. “You know my name. Your ability is quite useful being a jack of all trades.” A smile formed from her lips. “You’ve been eager in your search for me. I’ve decided to oblige you.”

*Trace on.* Magic Circuits primed for battle. “Meeting your goal of making the worlds collide aren’t you? I’ll make it quick and with minimal collateral.”

“Collateral, you talk of it as though you have killed the innocent. Oh wait, you did. Did you not with your father’s philosophy? Sacrifice the few to save the many.”

“You must have studied me well to know my father. I concede that respect to you.” Emiya called Kanshou and Bakuya to arms. “I’ll prove that I am above your choice of a hero for your quest of vengeance.”

“As you say, hero. I’ll grant you courtesy and let you go first.” *Such confidence.* Emiya took a step and jumped into arms reach. A swing of the blade, held fast by another. Another swing, another parry. Each attack met its defence. A leap back, the retreat stabbed with swords. One of same, one of many.

Altair smiled, rising into the air. Swords formed into the air and into a perpetual ring around him. The ones on the floor disappeared in a cloud of blue. *Similar to projection.* Emiya threw the twin blades into the air, reaching for the bow. The twin sword of heavens, drawn to each other clashed against the ring of sword. Sparks fly before they shattered to pieces.

Twenty arrows flew. The swords moved to intercept, blocking against the red barrage. Explosions into a smoky cloud. The swords spun the cloud aside. Emiya pulled back the arrow he had been preparing. “Caladbolg.”
The Broken Phantasm accelerated, twisting everything in its path. It crackled against Altair’s ring. *Twist and be destroyed.* The air twist and cracked. Thunderous shock waves crushed everything in its path.

The explosion like firework, visible across the horizon of the city. Emiya grit his teeth. Swords, fully intact. Altair, unscathed. *Hell. What could penetrate that defence?*

Altair did nothing in response. Those eyes were wide, a smirk in the lips. Worthless scum printed on her face. Emiya said, mind flickering through options. “Are you just going to stand there or call your goons to do the fighting instead?”

“My subordinates? I don’t need them to fight you.” The ring of swords expanded, growing in number. Emiya counted, tracking each and every sword within. *Twenty six of them, each identical and generic.* The swords themselves weren’t special. Altair’s ability must have kept them invulnerable in some form. Divert instead of destroy.

“You’ve done your opening. I want to see you suffer a little for ignoring me.” They attacked. Every sword met an arrow. One struck ground as the other shatter. New blades replaced the originals on the ground, appearing beside its owner. The archer sprinted across the rooftop, firing on the move.

*Her defence must have a weakness, a limitation.* “I am the bone of my sword.” Magic Circuits pulsed with more prana. Body hardened, growing closer to steel. Reinforcement travelled across the body. A step closer to the Hill of Blades. Emiya nocked the bow. Steel rain shall fly. Red swarm attacked, bolstered by individual blades from multiple angles. Altair did not move. The ring expanded, moving to intercept.

The rain of swords slammed into the unyielding defence. Emiya dived into the smoke, raising Kanshou and Bakuya for the kill. The ring parried again, screeching insanely in the song of steel. One red arrow, held back from the barrage continued its climb before diving for the kill. *Did she just smile?*

Altair reached up and caught it. *With her two fingers?* A squeeze and the arrow was broken in half. She said as the pieces vanished. “Not interested to use your ultimate ability? The Noble Phantasm that everyone is eager to watch?” *She would be perfect as Gilgamesh’s daughter, arrogant to the core.*

“I don’t need it against someone arrogant like you.” He preferred not to use it. Unclear of its impact
to the world. The Hill of Infinite Swords. It could be the saviour or destruction of everything.

“I am all seeing, all knowing. Your strengths are nothing compared to mine. You’re not even giving me trouble. I can easily kill you with the snap of a finger.”

Emiya saw smoke before being slammed down through the roof. A grunt of pain and blood. Slash wounds along his arms and chest. None fatal. Reinforcement had mitigated most of the damage but detrimental. More swords dived for the kill. He stretched a hand before the swords vanished in a crackle.

The Magus looked up through the hole. Altair glowed a blue hue, flickering in form and shape. She sighed, staring down towards him. “Unfortunate. You survive only thanks to the world’s interference.” A smile on her face. “I will leave this fact for you. You can never defeat me and I will not be stopped. I hope to see more from you, hero.” Another flicker and she faded to nothing.

Emiya gave an involuntary grunt. Shifting the rubble aside, he rose to his feet. A bitter taste of defeat from battle. Pointless to think about it. Medical treatment is now the priority. Gloat as you will for now Altair. That doesn’t mean I can never defeat you.

Daichi blinked at the ringing phone. He picked it up. “Archer.”

“Have you relocated to somewhere else?”

“No, not yet.” The call sounded harsh of heavy breathing. ”You don’t sound so good.”

“Wounded. Fought with Altair. I’ll live. Get a medical kit from a retail store and meet me nearby Higashi Nakano station. We’re relocating.” That’s seven train stations away.

“Injured? We should get you to the hospital.”

“Too risky. Government would know about us in five minutes. I won’t die from this. Get going.”

“I’m on my way.” Daichi deleted the data files, grabbed all his things and left the room. It was a
good time to relocate anyway. The place had no love from him. *And I still stink.*

The scramble to the nearest retail store took ten minutes. A moment of thought as the cashier processed it. Who did Archer fight? Is the other person dead? A chill down the spine. Mission first, get help to him. First aid kit in hand he turned towards Mitaka train station. The phone rang. Dread crawled in when he read the ID. He answered it. “Shizuka.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m somewhere outside.” It was a truth. Out here in the middle of the city, rushing off to get some medicine for an injured hero.

“Somewhere? You weren’t at home or in school this morning. There wasn’t any note, any text of where you’ve gone to. Some strangers were asking about you after I left. You didn’t answer my calls or my messages.” He could hear a deep breath. “You’re definitely in some trouble aren’t you?”

When did he receive the messages or calls? He checked the display on the phone. *Darn it.* The phone had hidden it away since the call with Meteora. A major screw up. *Defuse the bomb.* “No, I’m not.”

“Then where are you? What are you doing now? I hear a lot of noise.” That car should stop being so loud.

“Yes, I’m outside. Doing something, that’s all.”

“Something that made you disappear for an entire day?”

“Not exactly.”

“Exactly? Are you trying to play games with me?” That didn’t work.

*I really need to learn how to lie better.* “No. It’s complicated but just listen to me. Please don’t come over tomorrow. It’s not safe for you.”
“What did you mean it’s not safe?” A click of the tongue. “I was right after all. What have you gotten yourself involved in?”

“I can’t tell you that.”

“Why are you trying so hard to hide it from me? Can’t you trust me? What are you so afraid of?” Afraid of losing you. “I have to go.” He hung up. Running around the crowd had drawn eyes towards him. The dark disapproving looks they always have. Daichi ignored them, scrambling past the ticket gate. The phone buzzed. He answered while searching for the escalator down to the platform.

“You must tell me the truth.”

“Shizuka, I told you. I have to go.” A scramble down to the platform. The train arrived, perfect timing.

“Don’t hang up on me again Daichi. You will regret it.”

“I’m sorry. I have no choice.” A click to end the call and he boarded the cramped train.

Higashi Nakano station wasn’t a fancy place to be in the big picture. A common stop built decades ago like others with a few tourist spots. It was odd to consider why Archer was here. Daichi glanced at the clock as feet rushed up the stairs. Twenty three minutes since boarding, on the dot schedule. He made the phone call while stepping out of the station. “Where are you Archer?”

“Head east from the station. Walk along the streets.”

Such unclear directions. “How will I find you from there?”

“You will know when you get there. Wait for me.” The instructions were so vague but Daichi did as instructed.
Most of the stores were closed. Stranger was the fact people were missing. The empty street onward felt dark, ominous of bad things to come. A chill down the back, a beacon of warning. Leave. Don’t come this way. This must be the right direction. Cold feet took him forward down the street.

The unease grew with every step. Go away, go away it told him. A glance to the right. Izakaya Restaurant. Closed with lights turned off. The compulsion to turn and run was eating at him. He shouldn’t be here. Daichi chose to stand and wait. Chills rumbled up and down his spine like a roller coaster. Danger bells were blaring into his ears. Anxiety sprouted like a tree before it snapped into half and was gone.

“Kid.” Daichi jumped, turning left to the source. Archer was leaning against the wall. “Got the kit?”

The tears of fabric along the arms. Dark spots on the chest. Red lines along the back of the palm, blood. He didn’t realise his voice was quivering. “What, happened?”

Archer narrowed his eyes. “I’ll explain later. You were tailed after all.” What? He turned around. Meteora and Selesia stood side by side. How did they follow him? Archer answered. “You didn’t look up.”

Selesia placed a hand on her sword. “Archer. We need to talk.”

Archer clicked the tongue. “You want to talk but you hold your sword. Is that your way of talking?”

Meteora said. “We noticed another anomaly so we need to ask a few questions information.”

“This isn’t a talk. It’s an interrogation.”

Selesia frowned in return. “That’s not the point. You didn’t side with us when we gave you the chance. So, first question I want to know.” Her hand drew the sword. “Are you with them?”

“Would you believe me if I say no?”
Selesia narrowed her eyes. “Prove it.”

Archer sighed. “They always ask the same line. Kid, don’t you think it’s a bit too clichéd?” *Are you even taking this seriously Archer?* “Girl, that’s your problem to figure out, not mine.”

Selesia smiled. That didn’t feel good. “Would you rather prove it against him?”

Daichi heard a small hum from above. The droning grew into a roar as winds blast across his face from above. Archer said. “What the hell.” It was tall as the ten story building beside them. Metal gleamed as large feet landed in a gentle touch, a rumble onto the road below him. “Is that a robot?”

Daichi recognised the machine. The orange faceplate, large bulky body and arms that fought for the world of Energia. Its name was proud and brought righteous fury upon its enemies. “Gigas Machina.” The Mecha Robot that fought against the Ione invasion. *This is starting to be ridiculous.*

The robot spoke from the loudspeakers. “Oi Selesia, can’t we just take things easy? I don’t like the idea of being a thug here.” Rui Kanoya in the flesh.

The Counter Guardian yelled. “Are you idiots? Putting a big dangerous machine in the middle of the city. Have you thought of the casualties and chaos that can happen?”

“You had it covered. Nobody’s around to see it.” Selesia smiled. “He’s just insurance. In fact if you stay nice, we won’t even need to worry about it.”

“I don’t know whether to be glad or insulted.” Gigas shook its head. Daichi remembered details about the machine. The pilot controlled it using every part of their body based on some control feedback system. It gave the mech the precision needed to control its bulky body.

Archer snorted. “If this is your idea of negotiations, this world is screwed.”

“Isn’t this how your world does it too? By sheer overwhelming force.” Archer kept silent. “Why won’t you join us? We’re the good guys.”

“Truth is not simple as good and evil. I prefer to watch and know where your intentions lie.”
“You think that being neutral makes you alright. That just mean you’re standing on the side of a coin. Honestly you are so eager to be a problem.” She blinked. “You’re injured.”

Archer showed his bloody hands. “Quite astute observation. Would you care to give me a chance? Put down your weapons and go easy on me?”

“Only if you surrender and let us take you to custody.”

Archer said, taking a few steps onto the main road. “Not a chance.” A longbow formed in a hand. “Know that when you swing that sword that you are making a bad mistake.”

The two warriors glared at each other. Selesia hissed. “Then put your weapon down. I won’t fight if you do.” Archer’s reply was to tighten the grip on his bow and raise it to eye level.

“I will make you regret your choice Archer.” Selesia dashed forward. A swing of the blade, parried by bow of metal. It held as Archer kicked her back. Archer leapt before a flash. Selesia swung her sword, parrying arrows. Daichi blinked as a crack shot past the ear. Arrow stuck onto the road. I can barely see them.

A lash of the sword, Selesia shot into the air. Red light rained from the sky. Gigas Machina reached out its hand, arrows halted before detonating into a string of explosions. “Ow, that hurts.” The jet engines blew a gust of wind before lifting into the air to avoid the continuing rain.

“It’s begun,” Meteora said.

Daichi turned back towards her. They stood, eyes watching each other in little silence caught by the sparks of battle. He spoke his mind. “We shouldn’t be fighting in the first place.”

“They won’t stop. Their pride is on the line. Daichi Hideaki, we gave you all the information that we had.” Her blue eyes sharpened. “Have you made your decision?”

Daichi tightened his fist. “No, I haven’t decided.”
“When will you decide? What else do you need to make a decision?”

“I don’t know. Something doesn’t add up right. I think we both can work together but we want to be on our own.”

Her eyes continue to drill deeper into his. “That means nothing in the bigger picture.”

“We can fight but we’ll do it our own way. We want the freedom to do what we have to do.”

“What is this freedom that you need? We aren’t depriving you of anything. Why are you both so adamant to join our side?”

Daichi felt difficult to read the woman. Meteora was using her poker face skills to its best. “I trust Archer more than the government. I will follow him.” She could trust the government. He didn’t and still wouldn’t.

“Does he even acknowledge the sacrifice you have done?”

“Yep, very aware of them.” Archer was an arse but he recognised effort and more so for idiocy.

“Kikuchihara told me where you were staying. A net cafe for a home. A pity.” Meteora shook her head, the first sign of emotion from her thus far.

They did found where he was. “I don’t need your concern about it.” A small struggle against the final goal.

“Are you willing to continue living in a net cafe?”

“As long as it is necessary.” There can be no victory without effort.

“For the rest of your life? Even though you don’t actually need to?”
Meteora closed her eyes. “We Creations will likely not stay here forever.” The sadness was there, a string along her tune. “On the other hand, you would have your entire life ruined because of this refusal. Are you sure you can accept that?”

“I need to do what’s right. However, that doesn’t mean we have to do it your way. We have our reasons to do things the way we are.”

Her answer was interrupted as Archer landed on the ground between them. Another leap before Selesia dived, sword scratching against the ground. A metal fist flew past them, striking the air. A crack of sound before the wind blew against them. She warned. “Don’t kill him.”

“I won’t.” Gigas Machina landed, spinning around with another swing. “That doesn’t mean I can’t hurt him.” Another wave of arrows before a blur of red backwards down the street. Gigas Machina twisted, taking the blow in the shoulder. Another grunt of pain before punching. “Take this.”

Archer leapt away from the incoming hulk of metal. The building at the end of the street cracked from impact, chipping off holes from the walls. Selesia yelled as they pursued. “Don’t start breaking everything.” They were gone as fast they’ve appeared. Another moment of answers.

Meteora narrowed her eyes. “These reasons that you say. What are they?”

“That I cannot trust the government. Haven’t they tried to silence me with those shooters across the blocks? Archer found them waiting just for me.”

“They were there to watch you. To protect you in case someone else comes. One of the Creators was kidnapped this way.”

“Who would that someone be? The Military Uniformed Kid?” A nod the answer. “What good would that be against a villain with super powers? You would probably be a better choice to protect somebody.”

“Regrettably, my skills for combat are atrocious. I would not be able to fight the Princess.”
“You could have Selesia nearby.”

“Remember the conditions you’ve set. We know Archer was nearby and could spot her without difficulty. We honoured it albeit I have to admit we bent it a little to keep you safe.”

_Archer didn’t say anything about them at the start. Had he expected them and considered them not a threat? “If you’re so afraid about her, those people wouldn’t mean anything in the big picture,”_ Daichi said.

“As much as I dislike the fact, those men risk their lives to be able to give us warning or a distraction. It may be feeble but it was deemed necessary just so that you will live.” Was that truth or lie? “Speaking of which, these reasons you have been saying. Are those yours to begin with?”

“What do you mean?” A few explosions roared in the background.

“You are open to dialogue yet you refuse to join us. What are these reasons that are so strong that you would never consider us to be an ally? A potential collaboration where both parties benefit.”

“That’s part of being neutral.” Unbiased, impartial, unprejudiced. The key role that they must uphold.

“Neutral or indecisive. What do you think you want? Not what Archer says or does but you.” _What? “You’ve always ask what we wanted. However I have noticed, you have never mentioned what you wanted. Tell me, Hideaki. Give me an answer.”_

“Reveal the world the truth.” That had been the mission. Make the government report it. Announce the entire spectacle to the world. Let the world know what is really happening. That was his responsibility.

“You know the answer to that goal. The consequence and the destruction that it will bring to the world. That is why you were against it yourself.”

“How sure are you that it would destroy the world? The world can be changed by it but it can become better.” His voice felt like lead but it need to be done. The world must know or it would be buried. Nothing would change and the world might be destroyed anyway, just because of it. Because he did nothing.
“I am sure of it. That is even what our enemy speaks of. She would never let us appear here without
that single purpose in mind.”

“She’s isn’t here to tell us that isn’t it?” Daichi lashed a hand, his voice barked against the lingering
cold. “We can turn it against her. The world would be able to unite and fight back against her. That
strength is something that she cannot hope to use.”

“You’re mistaken. Your actions will be detrimental to the world. In fact, it will be better for you to
do nothing. How can you not realise that?”

Just like that day. He can’t. Red edged into his eyes. Kazuko’s right. The people had a right to know.
Enlighten them, bring them salvation through awareness. The immense power and potential exists,
surely they can use that to defeat this Altair if she’s so strong.

“How dare you? You think that you are such a wise girl to think all of that. You’re a sage but you
can’t predict the future. Are you considering mankind so hopeless that they don’t deserve to know?
That they cannot fight for their own survival?”

Meteora shook her head. “I feel sad for you Daichi.” Sad for me? How can she say this? “You speak
a falsehood. You’re trying to push this goal that you believe is noble. The question I ask you this
now, is that even your goal in the first place?”

His voice, harsh as metal. “How can you say that? Of course it’s my goal. What have I been fighting
for if it wasn’t for that?” What kind of bull is this girl trying to spout now?

“The fact that you are standing here. You speak of one thing but doing another. .” The red tint grew
stronger. “Your eyes betray you. Anger consumes you but the true enemy you have is doubt. There’s
so much of it inside that you’re lying to yourself to make it real.”

“No, you’re wrong. Whatever you’re saying is all wrong.” That stoic nature of hers is so frustrating
to look at. Perhaps he should show her a piece of his mind through his fists.

“Yes, you’ve become angrier. I’ve been asking the same question twice yet you jump around it like
fire. You don’t want to answer it because you don’t know the answer. Regrettably, it must be a sore
spot inside you. Know this and look inside yourself. Tell me whether my words are a lie.”
To hell with her, it’s pointless to talk anymore. He should walk away and give Archer the opportunity to just rain swords upon her. There would be no lies and the world would be enlightened by the truth. Was it…his truth to begin with?

*It is fear that you’re threatening to unleash*

*That’s right. Archer said that.* Pain felt sharp like a clean stab of the spear. A fist squeezed the heart to crush it. Were his actions the answer to salvation? Is he saving the world or condemning it? Deep thinking wasn’t his best but that was all he had now. Where is the line between the truth and lies?

*Archer’s right. She’s right.* However, he just can’t let it be. Too much is at stake as doing nothing would get people killed. Can… can he make a choice? The sense of unease squeezing harder against him. How should he decide? His hands, they were shaking. Daichi squeezed them, hoping for a sign. A thought, an answer to rebuff her words. Anything.

Meteora softened as she raised a hand. “The struggle inside you is real but its answer is simple. Let go all your doubts and choose what you want to do. Not what others say but your own voice.” That smile of hers. Red sea fell and crept away. Truth is turned false and false changed into truth.

A few extra breaths eased the foundation. “Do you know any magic spells to amplify a person’s voice?” Meteora nodded. “Cast it on me.” A few stanzas of a spell and he felt it, a slight warmth in the throat.

Voice strong as a loudspeaker, he said. “Archer, stand down. This fight is over.”

Archer said from the roof. “What are you-”

“I said, stand down!” The windows creaked against the voice. Everything paused as the ringing stopped. Daichi continued. “Alright Meteora, I understand what needs to be done now. Our goals are aligned. We’ll join your side.”

“You cannot trust them.” Archer said as he leapt down onto the street. Selesia joined from the other side with a crack of boots before the metallic whirlwind drowned out the moment.
“I know they’re right. If you do not trust them, then trust in me who had the best in mind for both of us.”

“Your sense of judgement is horrible. Why should I even trust you?”

“That’s what it means to have a partner isn’t it? Putting some faith in each other to get things done.”

“People don’t stay alive from optimism.”

“Yet people can’t survive without hope. We’re all counting on heroes like you to win the bad guys. You’ve said it yourself, if people like me get involved, they will die. A slaughter of thousands, can you let that fall on your conscience, Counter Guardian?” Silence answered him. “So what do you say Archer? Can we work together and do the right thing? Minimise the casualties from this war?”

Daichi waited for the Guardian’s reply. Archer studied him. A long moment between their eyes. He recognised pause, comprehension and analysis. Deep thinking within the Magus that have fought wars dozens of times. His breath was held, unyielding as seconds ticked. A cold silence fell upon the pregnant pause. The longbow was lowered. “Very well, Kid.”

The others relaxed and lowered their weapons. Daichi turned towards their new host. “Meteora, we’ll be in your care. Don’t make me regret this decision.”

“We won’t.”

“Home sweet home.” Daichi opened the front door of his home. The ordeal was over. They had their home back. Kikuchihara would arrange accommodation for Archer within a few days. Archer had been adamant about it but he accepted it.

The house was just as they left it. Archer walked towards the sigil and inspected. “This place is secure.”

“Great. How are your injuries?” The red streaks had been bandaged up by a doctor in the nearby hospital. The secrecy about his identity had been closed shut thanks to the government’s strings.
“I’ll be fine in a few days. I can still fight, just not at my best.”

Daichi settled his rucksack onto a chair. “Let’s not get into a fight then. There’s some medicine and painkillers in the drawer. Feel free to use them until you’re all healed.”

“Very well. Good night.” Archer entered the room. “Also, get yourself a shower. You smell.” The door closed shut. Daichi took a whiff and cringed.

The cold shower was great, refreshing to the skin and mind. Being clean didn’t feel so good. A towel around his neck, he can return back to a normal night. First off would be some good sleep before he think anything further. There was enough excitement for a night.

The phone beeped about a message. He flipped it over and read it. Kazuko asked: Yo, how are you doing?

Daichi chose to call instead of replying. “The fresh shower felt good.”

“This is a surprise. What’s so urgent that you needed to call?”

Daichi decided to come clean with the truth. “The government and I had a talk earlier.”

“I see. Are you safe right now?”

“I’m alright. In fact, it’s great to be home.” The bed felt soft, warm and comfortable to the skin.

The careful vibe froze. “What did they tell you?”

“They’re working to fix the anomaly. They gave me data from their agencies and equipment. I’ve studied and it’s the truth.”

“Can you give it to me? I’d like to verify it for myself.”
“I know what you would do it so I’m sorry. I can’t.” Daichi said.

“What about the heroes?” Kazuko was getting harder to hear.

“I’ve heard from Meteora, our heroine in the flesh. The government’s taking good care of them.” Archer would join them soon as well.

“Are you sure they’re speaking the truth?”

“I know it’s not a lie.”

“It doesn’t always have to be a lie. There are half-truths as well. You’re in one of them.” Kazuko was becoming philosophical.

“It’s the real thing.” Daichi affirmed the facts. *Convince him before he starts thinking too much.*

“No, it isn’t. You have once said you can’t read them well. So Daichi, do not believe it. They are making forgeries of everything, even the data they have given you. Listen to me carefully bro and don’t trust them.” Daichi felt the silent pleas within them.

“I can be rather gullible but I’ve done my homework. I can vouch on this.”

A hiss. “Lies, lies all of them are lies. Remember, heroes are strong but they are not infallible. Anyone can become a puppet.” A frustrated sigh. “Now we lost them all.”

*Take it from another angle.* “Why do you say it’s a lie? I mean we’ve already done what we needs to be done. The Government knows about it and taking action. The heroes are being taken to a safe place, the creators are being contacted and protected. They’ll sort the problem and make it disappear as though it never happened.”

Kazuko’s answer felt cold. “That’s the problem. It’s a cover up to make everything disappear.”
They’re going after you next. You need to get out of their grasps quickly or else it’s too late.”

Standing now on the other side, he could feel it. Intent hostility against a public institution. “I don’t understand. Can’t you accept the idea that they just might be telling the truth?”

“Have they revealed it to the world? Why would they be afraid of revealing this? They’re afraid of revealing the facts because they would lose power and control. To lose them to heroes with super abilities. That’s their fear and I am sure they will not stand watch to let it be.”

“Think calmly with me. You’re starting to talk emotionally than thinking this through.”

“Oh, I am being quite calm Daichi. Very much so that I can understand now that it’s too late. You think you’re being a hero by trying to go with the government? Getting all the awards and recognition. What you’ve just earned is your death.” The words were a sledgehammer. Blunt and hard. “It’s pointless to talk anymore. Your fate is already decided.” The call ended.

Daichi stared at the phone. A friend now turned into someone he couldn’t understand. That alien feeling, twisted into something else. A sigh before tossing the phone aside. Ah, damn it.

The phone beeped again. Who would it be? A grunt before picking it back up. It was another text message. From his father.

_I’ve heard bad news from Katsumi. What happened Daichi?_

Shit.

Chapter End Notes

Good day to all, I hope you enjoyed reading Beyond Worlds. Thanks for the feedback given. Feel free to PM or include your reviews. If you have questions, you may ask so and I will reply accordingly via PM or general author notes.

1) Thanks for commenting. I’ll probably start replying to these comments instead of another chapter. I’m still not used to AO3 and its reply mechanics.

2) Project Status and Beta Reader - I am requesting for a Beta Reader for this project. If anyone is interested to support, please PM and we will sort arrangements. Also status of
this project will be available on my Profile for those who are curious on the status.

3) The word count will be controlled back to 8-10k per chapter.

Thank you for reading this and enjoy your day.

Regards
MarksmanKNG
Out of one fire and into the next. Daichi stared at the cold white ceiling. A headache accompanied him, exhaustion tied to his back. Rising to his feet, he checked the clock. Late for school, again.

Body running through the motions on autopilot, his mind wandered to the task at hand. First he needed to disarm the situation with Shizuka. That girl had escalated the situation to his parents working in China. Last night was a frustrating mess of controlling the damage done. His parents would have a talk with him when they get back to Tokyo planned in the coming week. He'll have to arrange something within the few days.

Best to get Archer into the loop.

Refreshed and dressed, he knocked on the door. Archer called to enter. Opening the door, Daichi saw Archer studying at the models he had collected by the cabinet. "What do you need to talk about Kid? You sounded frustrated." Daichi blinked. "I can hear your grunting from this part of the house."

That makes things easier. "Yes, there have been some problems. Shizuka was raising a fuss and my parents are involved now. They're planning to come back earlier than planned."

Archer raised a brow. "I warned you to sort it out with her earlier."

He bit his lip. "I know but I hadn't found a good moment."

"You can dream for a good moment. The result is the price you've paid."

"Come on, cut me some slack will you?" This is not his day.

"If you wanted some slack, you would have backed off in the first place. This is a war kid, there is no time to be soft."

Archer didn't need to be that harsh. Yet he does it anyway. To heck with that. "Thank you very much for your wisdom oh great one. I came to let you know about it but I guess it wasn't needed." Daichi turned to leave. "Since you have a new home now, it would straighten things up while I sort out this mess."

"Kid." A sigh before facing the guardian. "Thinking on your emotions will never let you off the foot. Do not let anger control you."

"Do not be angry? How can I not be? Sure we got the house back. A nice bed and all that but there's another fire ongoing now that needs to be set straight. You becoming all grand and mighty with the 'I've told you so' vibe isn't going to make things any better."

"If that was what it took you to fall, then you haven't fall hard enough. You have much to learn Kid."

Red bled into the edge. Daichi turned to leave. "I have enough listening to you."

"Are you sure when I can do this?" Daichi heard the cabinet being opened. A twist of the neck
around to see Archer reaching into the cabinet, picking out *that model*.

Daichi glared. "Put her down, properly."

Archer placed the figurine model on the table. He gestured at the small row of similar models. "You must have liked Saber. More than half of them are about her."

"Leave my stuff alone. I'm the one giving you space to sleep in here after all."

Archer grinned. "So tell me, do you like her?"

Daichi wanted to wipe that look from his face. "Why the hell are you asking such a question?"

"Just answer the question." Archer tapped a finger on top of the Saber Lily. "Do you or do you not like Arturia Pendragon, the king of Britain?"

Daichi grunted. "Yeah, I did. What about it?" Sure he could have gotten only one but each of them had a distinct flair. It was important to get them.

"Feeling attracted to her?" What the hell he's going about now? Another headache thinking things over isn't his day.

"I still don't get-"

"Sit down, think and answer." Archer interrupted, the stern instruction prompting an automatic response. The swirling mess in his head turned inside out. The calm face of the Guardian locked it down to something manageable.

The Great and noble king. The way that she compelled to his heart years ago. The state of growing to like her during her debut in Fate Stay Night. Attraction grew and it struck in conjunction with Shirou Emiya's own realisation.

Daichi felt a red flush. "It's absolutely normal. She's great, noble with her code of honour. Why do I even need to say it, I mean you're the one who loved her. Your younger self did manage to …you know what." He pointed at the models. "Tell me Archer, didn't you love them? Those girls that you have sworn to protect?"

"That is a good question but to the wrong person. I am not the Shirou that had been in love with any three."

"You did develop feelings for Rin didn't you?" That was how it was supposed to be.

"More nostalgia and hope than love. We've worked together in the Clock Tower for some time. That girl wouldn't be right for me. She'd probably keep that knucklehead in line though."

Daichi pointed out. "In Unlimited Blade Works." Archer nods. "Think of it this way, at least you are taking care of her indirectly. Ah, that doesn't sound right."

"So you say." Archer pointed at the green book by the table. "I noticed also that you write."

Daichi explained. "I used to. I've been busy studying for the exams so I shelved it aside." Another few months and the blasted problem would be gone soon. "While this is your room for now but you shouldn't be prying into my stuff."

"Nothing I can do if it's on the table." He picked up the stack. "I wonder if there's any fantasies you have in there."
"No, no, no, absolutely not." Looking through his work isn't a given right.

Archer flipped through the pages. "I don't read often but this doesn't look that bad."

Daichi shook his head. "I am not a real writer yet. Fan fiction is easier to get started. Once I'm done studying the exams, I was thinking of getting back to it."

"As you say." Archer returned him the papers. "Word of advice. Don't encourage anyone to follow my path. As noble that you think it can be, it isn't for the kind hearted." Archer returned him the book. The open page had one line written in pen.

_I want to be a hero of Justice_

Daichi closed the book. "Why? You're a living embodiment of hope. That we have to keep believing in making our actions right. You have pursued it all the way without relenting."

"I had been given the tools and skills to do it. In return, I was seen as distorted with an obsession to protect others before myself. You as a real normal human being have no reason nor ability to follow it. A hero of justice is a lonely man. If you want to do it right, join the police or something else. Protect the people in another way. You'll do more good that way."

Daichi returned the book to its place. "You may be right that we can't fight like you. That doesn't mean you're wrong."

"I am not a hero. End of discussion." The cold eye was convincing enough. "Now then Kid, feeling better now?"

"Come to think of it, yes." Daichi jabbed a finger. "You planned this all along didn't you?"

Archer smirked. "I've dealt with the worst of people. You are just a piece of cake. Your judgement was clouded with anger. Angry decisions are always bad ones."

"Thanks. I needed it."

"Good. I can't otherwise have the guy who condemned us to go screaming about and getting himself killed. Now go fix it before it's too late. Friends are the most important assets that you can have."

"I will."

Emiya glanced at his future base of operations. Cabinet Government Building Number Four. The building was normal, rows of offices and corridors to work the administration of the nation. Old, organised and structured. Something worth appreciating sometimes.

People around the building paid no mind. The regular people would not know his existence. Those that do expected him. The woman Kikuchihara had arranged the necessary papers for collection. Afterwards, it will be up to his own prerogative to decide the next step despite the ad-hoc alliance. Understanding Altair was vital. Research somewhere quiet and give the boy some space. The boy will need space to handle his personal issues with the girl. _Just don't fall the same way I had._

A presence, familiar with energy. Taking a short detour, he walked to one of the other corridors. The casual swing of the sword was enough to give out a sign. They met face to face. "Yuya Mirokuji."

The purple haired man grinned. "Yo, so they brought you in as well. You've been going solo. What's up with you?"
"Some changes to the plan." Emiya answered. "I've thought you are too rebellious for your own good."

"Rebellious doesn't mean being an idiot. There's a line being drawn now." Yuya drew a finger between them. "Two sides. Ours and the Military Uniformed Kid."

"Who are on the other side?"

"An old geezer, a cranky knight and the hopeful magical girl." Four against five. A usable numerical advantage. Yuya rubbed the ridge of his nose. "There was supposed to be another one of us in the fight yesterday but she disappeared midway of the fight."

"Who is this girl supposed to be?"

Yuya shrugged. "I don't know much about her. Just that I don't like the vibe she's giving. You can talk to the others for more details. I'm going to get myself some more of that ice cream. Catch you later." He walked away, sword resting on his shoulder.

Emiya continued following the directions given. A knock on Kikuchihara's office door before entering. The room was spacious. Enough to fit a few metal shelves, work desk and a few chairs. The window behind the desk gave the room the morning light it needed. A simple and practical for work. His host had been working at the computer, probably resolving the enormous pile of papers stacked beside it. "Welcome Mr. Archer. You are right on time."

Emiya waved it off. "No need for the honorifics. I'm used to go without them."

A nod before she reached for a file in a drawer. She handed it towards him. "Here are your papers, Archer." Emiya studied the information within. Identification papers and certificates, no aliases. An address and set of keys to living quarters somewhere in the Chiyoda Ward. Good place, centre of Tokyo, easy to get around.

He closed the file. "Thanks. I'll be going."

Kikuchihara asked. "Before you go, can I have a moment of your time?" Emiya gestured to continue. "We've started a search for your Creator since we knew your identity a few days ago."

Emiya interjected. "Something went wrong didn't it?"

Kikuchihara lowered her head. "Yes, we couldn't find him."

"I presume you want some help from me."

"I want to ask if you have any information that can help with the investigation. It remains our responsibility to resolve the case."

Emiya pointed out. "You probably know better than I do. There wasn't much time to study about my Creator" He did manage to get a gist of the company that created him.

Type-Moon, originally a Doujin comic circle before growing into an organisation with its line of visual novels. Fate Stay Night was one of the few series of games made several decades ago.

Being occupied with more urgent matters, he had paid no mind to visit his creator. Now would have been a good opportunity. Maybe threaten him a little with his own machinations. Nudge the direction for the next sequel that bastard makes. Alas, fate has something else in store. Just as always.
"I'll update you of the situation when I have more information. I am sorry that you didn't have the opportunity to meet your Creator."

Emiya shook his head. "No. There are more important things to worry about first. It'd be pointless for that woman to take him hostage." Altair wouldn't think about such acts. No reason to change her plan when you have a very capable hammer.

However given the current situation, there may be more parties involved than just the three of them. One involved with his world and present far longer. "What would be the chance for another Creation to be involved in the case? One that has no allegiance to the Princess."

Kikuchihara nodded. "That possibility certainly exists but from my understanding, there shouldn't be anyone else besides her."

"When you mean her, you meant someone new so I've heard."

"Yes, that is correct. We have identified her identity and she is not related to your story."

"If that's the case, doesn't help much to think about it." Let the police investigate the matter. Altair remains the priority.

Kikuchihara nodded. "In the meantime, we will do our best to continue searching for him."

Emiya turned for the door. "I need a word with Meteora about this girl. Where are they?"

"They're at one of the rooms in the other wing. I'll take you to them." The walk took them across to the other side of the building. Emiya paid great heed to the surroundings. If he was in Altair's shoes, this building would be his first target.

Upon arriving to the black door, Kikuchihara returned to her office. The Counter Guardian opened and entered. Meteora and Selesia were seated around a large table. Pages of newspaper were spread across the table. A stack of books at the table's edge, photographs on the other. The television in the room was showing a news program. "Busy place. I have some questions for you."

"Questions." Selesia stood up. "I have some of my own."

Emiya interrupted. "I've heard you met this new Creation. Tell me about her." The redhead girl clicked her tongue.

Meteora answered. "Yes, we've met her hours before finding you last night." She reached for a book and opened a page. "Magane Chikujoin from the Yasoukiroku. Her ability is called Infinite Deception of Words."

Emiya studied the picture. Purple haired. Typical looking teenager with black high school clothes. Experience assessed the threat to be low until the eyes. The cold yellow eyes that stared at him. She would kill without compunction and knows how to do it. "How do they work?"

"According to her story, it uses deception and lies to bend reality. I have yet to see it actually in motion. Its result however was disturbing." Now the bloody crime scene pictures on the table made sense.

"What are her motivations?" Another shake of the head. "Nothing?"

"I have yet to study her enough to know her mindset. I do know that she is not someone we would prefer as an ally."
"That is all I need to know." Emiya turned when he felt danger from behind.

"We're not done yet." He turned to meet glaring blue eyes. Selesia said. "Those eyes of yours are dangerous. You're planning to kill her."

Emiya raised a brow. "I intend to do so. Is it wrong to eliminate a potential problem?"

Selesia raised a fist. "She should be taken into custody."

"If she surrenders, maybe." Emiya returned her glare. "If she resists, there will be no hesitation."

A slight twitch of her lips. "Fine. Make sure you try before outright attempting to murder her."

"That I cannot guarantee." Emiya turned for the door.

"Don't think of leaving. It's my turn to ask the questions." She leaned forward onto the table. "I've read enough to know who you are Archer. You weren't the kind to accept our invitation easily last night. Why?"

The Counter Guardian raised a brow. "Huh. First you want us in, now you're having second thoughts. Perhaps you should have talked to your boss before making a decision in the first place."

"You were normally stubborn in your choices. Why the change?"

The sage stepped in. "Selesia, this isn't the time."

The woman's eyes continued to glare. "This is the time Meteora. If we want to resolve any doubt, it's best to do it early. Before we end up dead stabbed in the back."

Emiya answered. "First, it wasn't my decision. Second, given the circumstances, it was the better choice for everyone even if it meant dealing with an annoying woman like you."

"So says the man that decided who lives and dies."

"Ah, you know my role as Purgatory. Are you so against the fact that you're working with a man who had sacrificed hundreds to save thousands?"

Her face grew bitter. "Mirokuji was right. You were a man without pride."

"Pride gets you killed in battle." That was the undoing of the greatest king of Uruk. "You can dream all you like. Your Creator must be quite naive to believe that you can save anyone given the way you act."

Selesia frowned. Her voice hissed. "How dare you. You have no right to say that. You are no saint."

"Indeed, I never said I was one. That's the way I've been, a realist." Emiya turned and opened the door. "If you don't trust me, that's fine. I'll do my own thing as always." The conversation ended as the door closed shut.

Daichi splashed cold water against his face. The sink was turned off as he stepped out of the bathroom. The window outside was bright. It wasn't long for lunchtime. The dry piece of bread helped to soothe the stomach. Feeling in much better shape, he settled down onto the sofa.

Phone in hand, Daichi checked the time. The call wouldn't be made at the worst moment. Fix this once and for all. He dialled. The phone rang its dial tone. The automatic reply to leave a message.
Another dial and still nothing. It took him another three tries before his call was answered. "What is it?"

Annoyed right off the bat. Keep calm and civil. Daichi said. "Shizuka, we need to talk."

"Oh, you want to talk. Yes Daichi after ignoring me for the whole day and night without any proper reason. I am definitely not interested to talk today."

Guilt crept along his back. "I am sorry for that, honest. I can tell you that much at least."

"That much at least." A sigh. "Daichi, it is very frustrating to talk like this to you. I have asked you so many times yet you brushed me aside like nothing."

"I can't tell you about everything."

Her voice grew louder. "Why? Was it a guy only matter? You keep rambling about it not being safe but you never tell me what this danger is."

Daichi felt it harder to avoid raising his voice in return. "It's better that you don't know. You would be far safer not knowing about it."

"That makes absolutely no sense. Can't you hear it from your own words?"

"I have it now under control. You didn't need to raise it up to my parents."

"If you were in my shoes, what would you have done? You won't listen to me. One day you disappeared suddenly for no reason. My calls and messages aren't answered. Nobody knows where you were. Random strangers came asking about you. How can I not be worried? What were you expecting me to do? Sit there and be quiet about it? Is this what you expect from me?"

The tone in her voice was painful to hear. "No but…"

"You're now living alone with some guy whom I have never met or heard before. A man that I can't trust. This is not normal. You're hiding so much from me. It was never like this." Silence filled in between. Her voice was sad, disappointed. "Can you blame me?"

"Sorry."

A new fire bloomed. "I'm so sorry, forgive me. That's all you have been saying these few days. How can I not be worried when you are not normal? This is so tiring Daichi. I have enough of it."

Daichi took a long slow breath. Stay calm. Just stay calm and move slowly. "Can we can meet up and sort this out?"

A pause. "Where are you in school?"

"I am not in school. Can you come over to my place after school?"

"Is that Emiya going to be there?"

"No, he won't be here."

Another long pause before she answered. "Fine. I will see you later. You better have all the answers prepared." The call ended.
Selesia stepped under the police tape and entered the apartment. The curtains were drawn. The single light in the room flickered on and off. Each flicker casted shadows into the hallway. The main spectacle was in the centre of the room. A thick strand of rope hanging from the ceiling carrying a former life. She turned away as it gave her a bitter taste. Selesia said as Meteora joined her. "This is the second murder."

Meteora studied the scene, avoiding to touch anything such as the kitchen tools and stains on the floor. The forensic staff worked carefully, setting up markers for evidence and photographing them. She reached into her coat and pulled out a picture. "It is confirmed to be Tenkyu Kurakuma."
Meteora asked the staff preparing to lower the body. "When did he pass away?"

The team leader answered. "Estimated time of death is around ten o clock last night."

Meteora gestured for Selesia to follow her. Outside the apartment, she continued while reaching for her phone. "This must be Chikujoin's doing. I'll warn the others to be careful."

The bright sunshine outside were a boon to the mood. Selesia glanced back towards the open door. "This is distasteful, to kill your own Creator." The story that Magane lived in would turn to a halt. What would be life inside a story stopped in time? If Matsubara died before finishing his work…A shiver went down her spine. She didn't want to find out. Best not to think too much about it. Meteora finished her call and turned to Selesia. "There's probably some reason why she did it."

Selesia answered. "It's been a day, she could be anywhere by now." Tokyo was fortunate to have a very efficient public transportation system. However in this case, it made tracking someone difficult. Meteora tapped a few commands. "I'll ask Archer to scout the surrounding areas while we gather clues here."

Selesia sighed. "That's assuming he will even accept it. That man has his own agenda." I'm not liking it any one bit.

"It is still worth trying despite such concerns. It would be in the best interest for the city after all."

"He didn't look happy about hearing Magane. Maybe he'll make a racket finding her. Speaking about incidents, Kikuchihara did say there was an unusual report about at Kita district last night. Could it be related to him?"

Meteora said. "Possible, there hasn't been any new arrivals thus far. He was injured when we encountered him."

"You're probably right." Selesia recalled vaguely about the report mentioning a broken roof. One made of concrete blocks. "Things are just so complicated."

"We are not designed to be proficient in this role."

Meteora's answer was correct. "Yeah, I get you. I'd like things to be simpler. See an enemy and hit it as hard as you can. Not all this running around and searching for answers." The redhead sighed. "Where do we go next?"

"There has been rumours on the Net about another Creation in Shinjuku. We should investigate." A final glance to the deceased before they continued the search to stop more bodies from following.

A cup of tea had helped eased the growing pit of worry in Daichi's stomach. The morning was spent
been planning for the conversations he need to resolve. Kazuko, Shizuka and his parents. A glance to the clock. Three and a half into the evening. She should be here soon. The doorbell rang. Daichi took a deep breath. It would be the moment of truth.

He opened the door. Shizuka stood waiting. He gave a smile. "Hi." Their eyes met with silence. "Please come in, have a seat."

"Thank you Hideaki. You are very polite today." Her first reply and it stung. Shizuka entered the apartment but stood at the Genkan. "I don't want to spend a lot of time. Let's be quick."

"Sure." A chit chat by the shoe racks. She isn't making it easy.

"So, you weren't in school again." Their eyes met again. The twitch of her brow didn't feel good to him.

"I needed to get something done." Daichi lied. Keeping that eye from twitching was hard.

She frowned. "Well, here I am. You can go right ahead."

The plan, stick to the plan. Daichi took a quiet breath. "Shizuka, I get the point. You're worried about me more than anything. I'm really glad that you are." The hardest part. "Despite it all, I just can't tell you about it."

Red eyes narrowed. "You're starting to ramble again. The same thing, same excuses again and again. You could be a good music player." She placed a hand on her chest. "Am I that untrustworthy to you?"

"You don't understand the risks involved."

Her hands jerked forward. "Because you won't tell me anything." Her voice grew louder. "You're making that roundabout again. This is a waste of time."

"I don't have a choice." Daichi said.

Her stare intensified. "There is a choice. You could just have told the truth." A harsh sigh. "How many times do I need to ask you? Ugh, why won't you tell me?"

Daichi returned the stare. "I can't tell. It's for your own good."

The hard gaze shattered. She closed her eyes. "I always thought that I could believe in you. The way that you've been acting these few days. It's so strange. I can't imagine it that you'd become this way but its real." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "It hurts that you think of me so low."

Sorrow coasted along the heart. He can't give up. "It has to be done Shizuka. There's no other way. I can't afford getting you involved. If you ever got hurt, it'd stain my conscience."

Her watery eyes made the sorrow grow root. "Really Daichi, is this how you treat your friend of eight years? After everything that we've been through, this is all there is to it? If it is so dangerous, why can't you tell me? Can't you trust me?" Daichi had no answer. Everything he planned for, utterly useless.

She turned around. "I'll leave. You don't need to see me again. You don't need to hear a word from me, any longer. Goodbye."

Daichi felt a stab as she walked away. His hands wanted to reach out to her. Yet they couldn't. The
door slammed shut as his legs felt weak. Collapsing onto the floor, the body lost all strength. I've failed.

The door opened. He looked up with hopes that were dashed from the towering form of Archer. The cold gaze that scared men. He couldn't care less. "To think I'd take a look and I see a mess. Idiot."

"How did you know?" Daichi felt the throat turning dry as sand.

Archer's words were filled with scorn. "When she comes out running after a minute, it's obvious."

"Ah…” Daichi dropped onto his back. "I'm really the worst."

"What the hell are you standing there for? On your foot boy. Get going and chase her you idiot."

Archer beckoned.

"It's pointless. I've screwed it all up. There's no hope to it." Daichi bit back the growing pain. Surprise struck when he was lifted into the air.

Archer's eyes met deep into his. They were full of conviction. "This failure means nothing kid. No lives have been lost. Emotions may hurt but you are still alive. You can still fix it but you need to chase it down and do it."

Archer dropped him onto his feet. What I really want. He was out the door in seconds.

Daichi turned around the corner. Sprinting through the crowds, darting in between people. Shizuka's home is a half dozen blocks away. If he moved fast enough, he might catch her. She might run elsewhere but there was a chance.

Traffic was lighter when he passed by Tekigaiso Park. He caught a familiar face walking on the opposite end of the street. His feet stopped. Isn't that Mamika? The young girl's brown school uniform stood out. It wasn't a mistake. That was her, the Magical Slayer.

Information. It could prove vital for Archer and the others to use in this entire mess. Maybe they can convince them over to their side and help fight this Military Kid. Their goal needed their support. He should follow them.

Shizuka. He couldn't leave it be. If he stalled, he might not be able to find her. Leaving her to calm down would be too late. Archer said that it could be fixed but it was hard to believe. Confidence at all-time low. He didn't know if he could do it a second time. His heart might not take it.

An impasse. There was time to do only one. Shizuka or the mission. The dilemma hurt. Choose one or the either. Eyes closed shut as he made the decision. I'm sorry. Daichi turned to follow the Magical Slayer.

The pursuit was slow. The Magical girl was not aware of her surroundings. She strolled at a casual pace with a small paper bag, enjoying sights and sounds. It frustrated him seeing the oblivious girl going about, taking an occasional look at the trees and houses. Time was short, he wanted it to be done and dealt with. Get the answers and move on. If it was fast enough, there just might be enough time.

The young girl absently led him towards a park. Otaguro Park. It wasn't a big park. Some trees decorated the open plains, split into half by a small stream. Her purpose remains to be seen, why was she here? Mamika walked towards a bench. The bench had a plastic bag filled with something. Odd as it was unoccupied.
Mamika appeared confused. Did something happen? His balance shifted before the squeeze in the neck. Vision flickered black before he realised the tight grip around the neck. It was hard to breathe. A harsh feminine voice in his ear. "Who are you? What are your intentions?"

Panic spiked. Limbs flailed but strength rapidly faded to nothing. Mamika turned around and squeaked. "Wah, a stalker."

She let go a little for him to speak. A small gasp before he could say. "I'm... hoping to talk, with Mamika actually."

"How do you know about us?" The woman reeked of suspicion.

"I'm, a bystander, in all this." Daichi said.

Iron clad grip squeezed tighter. Reality flickered. "You are no bystander. Are you alone?"

It loosened enough for him to croak. "Yes, I am alone."

"Don't you realise how foolish you are to step into enemy territory without a weapon?" The grip tightened again around him. Uncomfortable became difficult to bear.

"I know. I am harmless so there's no danger." Daichi gasped through the choke.

"That is for us to say. I could kill you right here." The grip was tightening. Panic stricken, growing to overwhelm. He didn't want to die. Not like this.

He tried to scream, making a loud whisper. Black crawled deeper into his sight. No air left. A gamble he had to try. "Hold on. I'm here because I want to understand." Chest started to burn. "I want to know the reasons that you are fighting for."

"You creators know the reasons I fight for. That much is obvious."

"No, I don't. I haven't read your story or Mamika's in fact." Whoever she is, he didn't recognise her voice. A story that he had never watched. A pause from the woman. The burning was growing uncomfortable. "Can you tell me the story of your life?"

Waiting for the answer had never felt this long. The grip around his neck was lifted. Collapsing onto knees, he rubbed the neck to ease the gagging feeling. Fresh air never felt so good. A sick sense in the stomach churned as the throat felt sore. It took a moment to resist the urge to puke. Standing up on wobbly legs, he turned around to meet the attacker.

The woman was the knight on the flying horse the other day. Dressed in a black tunic with a skirt and green leggings, a complete contrast against the bulky armour. He remembered her name now. Alicetaria February, the main character from the Alicetaria of the Scarlet. Mamika's stare was discerning. The pink haired girl said. "Who are you?" He introduced himself with a raspy voice. "You could have just asked."

"You are a fool for trying something like this." She nodded. "However, we have time to spare and you shall suffer."

The blonde pointed at the floor. "Settle down boy. It will be a long tale." He sat crossed legged onto
the grass while the two girls had the bench. All three seated, Alicetaria began her story. "My world
was dangerous. In a land where every living being fought to survive. Barring that would be
annihilation."

"My kingdom, Holy Ulterstein had been in the war for decades. It could be against the demons,
harpies or even amongst our own humankind. Killing and bloodshed had never been sold short." Alicetaria
leaned back against the seat, eyes closed. "My upbringing as a young girl was peaceful for
most part. Being a noble, a princess, I was kept safe in the deepest part of the capital."

"I thought life would be simple for me. Reach fifteen years old, find a prince of a neighbouring
kingdom to marry and continue until I age and wither. When I think of it, that kind of life would kill
me with its boredom."

"I always wanted to go out to the city. My father had been very adamant about it, being his only
daughter and in turn, heir to the throne." Alicetaria smiled. "It was like yesterday when I sneaked out
of the castle using a group of horse wagons. I didn't know where it was going or what it was for, all I
appreciated it for was taking me out of the castle."

"At first I thought it would be going into the city. It didn't stop. The wagon continued on. Outside the
city walls and onto the open plains. I was mesmerised more of the outside than terrified at my father's
expected anger."

Mamika leaned forward. "What happened?"

"The convoy kept going until it reached the nearby village. There, I saw the unthinkable. The
knight's eyes darkened. "A village, burnt to cinders with bodies within. The wagons were meant to
carry the dead to their final resting place."

"I was terrified. Seeing those bodies, mutilated beyond recognition. Heads with cold frozen eyes that
stare into you. The fear in their lips, frozen forever. The nearby river was fresh with their blood."

Mamika looked down, despondent. "That's horrible."

Daichi felt his voice cold as ice. "That's why you became a knight."

Alicetaria's eyes lit with fire. "I wanted to stop it from happening. As a princess and noble, it was my
duty. My people had suffered for decades. I decided it was enough and started my training to become
a knight."

"What about your father?"

"My father rejected the idea but I persisted. I trained my body every day. I would join the castle
guards during their morning exercises. Despite my small stature, I would try to practice with the
lance. My father eventually relented after seeing my efforts and endorsed my training to be a fully-
fledged knight."

A gauntlet appeared out of thin air along her arm. The shape of a dragon's head. She stroked along
its metallic surface. "Gotz von Berlichingen was passed down to me upon my graduation."

Daichi asked. "Have you ever regretted fighting for as long you have lived?"

Alicetaria smiled. "Never."

Daichi had nothing to say against such genuine emotion from the knight. He decided to ask. "Thank
you very much for your story. Can I ask a question?"
"Speak your mind boy."

"I understand." He rubbed his head. "That we are not on the best terms but can we get along? There isn't a reason for us to fight each other. We can work together to make a compromise and resolve all this."

"Unfortunately, no." Alicetaria's features hardened. "That sage was saying that we cannot change the world or it would destroy this world." A twitch of the cheek. "Despite what she might say, I must try anyway. I cannot compromise anything for the safety of my kingdom. That is my one and only goal. You are now aware of that." He noticed a downcast gaze from the Magical Girl.

"I could try to do something about it. Maybe talk with your Creator-"

"Do not interfere. That is all I ask of you." A stern answer, eyes hard as steel. The knight glanced around. "It's getting late boy. You best run off now. The streets aren't safe these days."

"I can protect him." Mamika stood up and volunteered.

A hand pulled the magical girl down from the shoulder. "You will bring him more trouble by attracting the others. A bystander like him will have no chance of surviving." The younger girl's shoulders drooped in response.

Daichi glanced at the sky. Sunset was ending. There was nothing he can do now. He stood up.

"Thank you for your time. I hope we can speak on better terms the next time we meet."

Mamika called out. "If you can, drop by again sometime. Just not with that mean Archer." Daichi nodded before turning to leave. A wave of the hand before he was off. Walking out of the park, he prayed in hopes. That there was still a chance to reconcile with a dear friend.

_I really ought to exercise more._ Sweat glistened as Daichi recovered his breath after running twelve blocks. Standing before the goal, the red door felt like the gate to Hell. The neighbours in the apartment wouldn't be around. She would be alone, her parents often worked late until the night. Nobody should interfere. He must do it. A cold finger rang the doorbell.

No response. He rang the bell few more times, holding back his voice. _Don't Daichi. The door won't open if you speak a word._ The door remained still. His eyes closed. The squeeze inside his chest was hard. She might not be in. Should he wait here or try to find her? Indecision ate at him. Worry grew, blanking thought.

He slammed an arm against the concrete balustrade. Pain throbbed but it let him think. Taking a deep breath, he waited. Staring at the wooden door felt forever. Sometimes, his eyes were playing tricks at him, movement of an inch. Only to realise it wasn't. The pain faded but the decision didn't.

It opened. The first he saw was red puffy eyes. It struck a chord through the heart.

"It must have hurt so painfully."

His voice felt wobbly. "Shizuka." She reached to close the door. He lunged his right arm. Pain exploded as the door jammed against his arm.

"Let go or I will call the police." Her voice was harsh to hear.

The door squeezed against his arm. He said through clenched teeth. "Listen to me. Please. That's all I ask." A pause before the pressure subsided. The door remained firmly in place as the arm throbbed painfully. "I want to say I'm sorry that I hurt you."

"It's too late to be sorry."
"Even so, I must say it."

"It doesn't stop the pain." Her voice, a sob. "You know that."

"I messed up horribly. I know you're frustrated. That you're trying to do the right thing." The pain throbbed. "Even so, my feelings are still true. I don't want you to be hurt. It hurts me not to be able to tell you about it but I don't have a choice. People can die if they knew about it. I don't want to lose you because of such a mistake. Because of one chance, it's too scary to think about it."

"How can you say such things?" The door pulled away. The dried lines along her cheek was another stab through him. "Can't you stop trying to be a hero? Why, are you trying to be, a martyr?"

Daichi squeezed a fist. "I'm sorry. I need to do this or I won't be able to live with myself."

"You've hurt yourself once to save me. Isn't that enough?" A tear. "You're, already my hero." It started to rain. "Just let it go."

Daichi turned away, unable to stand the sight. It was hard. To take any more of it. Feet urged to run, avoid seeing those painful eyes. "I can't. Others are counting on me."

Her gaze turned away. "I can't bear the idea of losing you. I've fallen for you ever since that accident four years ago."

Daichi stepped through the door. Their faces a step away. "I know."

"Then why. Why didn't you say anything?"

Daichi reached forward, a thumb brushing the tears away. "I, I was scared of saying anything. I was afraid of breaking the status quo. That you might run away for good. You think like I'm some hero but I'm not. I can't consider myself one."

She stroked gently across his cheek. "Don't be silly. You broke your legs to save me from that car."

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She stroked gently across his cheek. "Don't be silly. You broke your legs to save me from that car." She leaned forward into his chest. "It was enough to be my hero."

"It was the right thing to do." Daichi felt the warmth in his chest. A silence as she nuzzled deeper. "I'm sorry. I really am." Staring at the red mess of hair, he reached out to stroke her hair. Silk to the touch that reached down to her neck.

"Once this is all over, can we start dating? For real." Shizuka nodded against his shirt. "Thank you. Shizuka, Thank you so much." He wished for this to last a little longer but it wouldn't be right. His hands pulled hers away with a gentle touch. "It's getting late. I'll...be going now." Lithe arms dived through and wrapped along his back.

"Stay with me tonight, please." Daichi nodded as his own arms dived around her. The floral scent of jasmine rushed through the nose. The clock ticked as they held each other in quiet embrace.

"I'm sorry for asking you to come here," Sota said as he glanced at the street. The brown benches outside the UDX Building made do as a comfortable place to sit and talk with a good eye for traffic in the area.

Meteora shook her head. "It's okay. Nakanogane said this place is perfect for doing research."

Akihabara served as the central hub for anime and manga. The best choice to gather information on the Creations. "Right now he's searching a bookstore and I'll meet him later."
She will join the hunt for information with the Creator. As the common sayings in this world go, two birds with one stone. Moving back to the conversation, she asked. "What would you like to talk about?"

Sota mumbled something too soft to be heard before silence. Sota's shy demeanour was odd. *Excessive compared to his usual self.* "What happened Sota?"

"Nothing." Sota spoke. A bit too loud. Words that are too hasty. A questionable act.

She pushed the issue. Firm but gentle. "You must have some business with me. That's why you contacted me isn't it?"

Sota paused before staring at the ground. "Yes." It puzzled her. What would he be so doubtful about? *It'll be best to wait until he is ready.* Shy as he is, there was no harm to give him time.

She observed the streets. The crowds of people walked around to enjoy the weekends. A few tourists travelled about, talking with the maid girls in the cafes. These girls were a new cultural insight to her but they didn't pose as much interest compared to the food they were offering. She remember hearing one of the restaurants in Alizen was operating on a similar concept. Perhaps its birthplace was from here.

Sota clicked his tongue a few times. The indecision was troubling to hear. Perhaps a helping hand would do. She turned towards him as he asked. "By the way, did you get any new information?"

"Information. For now, we have managed to convinced Archer and Hideaki to join us." Selesia had been resistant on the idea about the Guardian. Meteora hoped that their relationship will smooth out as time permits.

"Anything else… like finding the person you are looking for?" A peculiar question from him. The way he was behaving felt odd even to her lack of social sense. Too tense.

Meteora obliged. "At the moment, we haven't found the identity of the Military Princess. That is why Nakagone is doing research in the nearby doujin stores for ideas. I will be joining him afterwards."

Sota turned away. "I, I see."

"There isn't anything conclusive but one of these locations must have an answer or a direction that we can use. It is a basis to our Creation after all." She noticed Sota returning his gaze to the floor. It was troubling. She said. "Are you worried about something?"

"No, no, not at all." Sota was a nervous boy.

Meteora felt the situation difficult to assess. What would be the optimal solution to answer for a boy who does not know how to speak about it? She decided to offer a lesson learnt during her younger days. "Being reflective and thinking quietly on your own is a good action. However if your burden is heavy, sharing it with someone isn't a bad idea."

Sota closed his eyes. "I recently… a lot has happened. I'm not sure where to start. Meteora, do you, never mind." He stood up.

She reached out. Her fingers grasped his hand. Cold, clammy skin. He turned down to see her smile. "I'm your friend. It's okay, please continue."

Her words worked for Sota said. "For example, what if there was a person and that person had a really important friend and that friend had a lot of talent."
Sota was entering his own world. "But, the harder that person tried, the more frustrated he felt. That person felt the world is unfair. Why did he have to struggle so hard while someone else was making it look so easy?"

Meteora understood the brevity of the situation. *Not a simple matter.* Sota continued. "That person started to resent that person's friend and feelings started to change. That person grew cold towards his friend. But I never meant it."

Meteora continued to listen as Sota closed his eyes. "In the end, what should have that person done?"

A regret in the past. A broken hole that needs to be mended. There wasn't much in her social experience to guide her on this matter. Meteora gave the best answer she knew. "Does that person want to be forgiven?" He looked at her. "If he does want to be forgiven then there is only one path. That person should try to get better than his friend and then help his friend. One can go travel fast on a path alone, however a group can travel farther than their original limits."

A memory returned. Youth filled with solitude and loneliness. There were no children in the library excepting her. "Jealousy and envy, we shouldn't deny that we feel these emotions. We should use them as hints to help us work on things seriously. However if you pretend they don't exist, they turn into filth and it will build up inside you."

It was a difficult lesson and carried a price. "Once it grows too much, it will leak out somewhere and contaminate your heart and harm the other person. A negative cycle begins which will spiral deeper until it is stopped." She stopped, there was no need for the gritty details. "I hope I was able to answer your questions. What do you think Sota?"

"I…think so." Sota gave a faint smile. A small change but a good one.

Meteora stood up. "I am glad to hear that. Do you feel better talking about it?"

"A little. I'm glad, that you are willing to talk." He said.

"Think nothing of it. We are willing to help when we have the chance."

"I didn't feel so sure about that. I'm sorry for thinking otherwise."

"Because of Archer is he not? I admit that he has not been on friendly terms."

Sota turned away. "He's not a sociable person but he can be a good ally. Archer is strong that it's scary when you know the limits of his abilities."

"I understand that he has an ability to create a pseudo reality. However heroes like us are not invulnerable. We feel pain and emotions just as anyone other person. We just persevere better against the odds." She wrapped her hand around his. A tad more warmth to it. "If you need to talk more, do not hesitate to call me. I am your friend and you can trust me."

"Thank you Meteora. I really do."

Sota Mizushino let his mind wander while walking along the streets of Akihabara. The quiet moment with Meteora helped to lift his shoulders. A spark of light in the cloud of darkness. That threatened to engulf him with its bile of envy and jealousy. Her advice are well met, just some far too late.

He hadn't realised how far he had walked, reaching towards the end of the street. He was too absorbed in his thoughts. Somewhere within, there just might be an answer. That light, a small hope
"Maid Cafe, Warming Heart." A feminine voice rang in his ears. The girl dressed in a maid uniform came closer as he walked on. "You over there with the straight face, how about it?"

Spending time in a maid cafe? No, it wasn't right. He should go home since the train station was a few corners away. "No, I'm…"

He didn't finish. "You finished your date with Meteora."

Blood froze. Cold worry flushed across the skin. Widened eyes turned to see a familiar face. A face that shouldn't be here. "Chikujoin."

The girl struck a finger at his face. "Best answer. Bingo I turned into a Miracle Maid." She spun around before cupping her hands to her smiling face. "That's right, I'm Magane Chikujoin. Peace Yeah." Sota did not understand. How was she here? Standing out in the open just like that?

"Well, that's enough of that." Chikujoin darted forward, reaching for his arm. He was dragged to the dark corner around the store. "Even I was shocked and amazed. I've never heard someone gloss over so many things at once. Right Sota?"

"Huh? They never met before. What did she mean? Impossible. Just…how? "How, do you know my name?"

"It's me. Magane knows anything and everything." That grin of hers grew wider by the moment. "Meteora said your name just now." That smile of hers. The shorting laugh. They were scary. No, terrifying. "Anyone could find that out just by listening carefully for a bit."

Did she hear everything? That moment supposed to be private! Angry, that's what he needs to be yet all he felt was the fear tingling in his bones. Why can't he say anything? Why did he feel so powerless?

Chikujoin held a pamphlet in front of him. "That reminds me, you were talking to the enemy magical girl in secret in a cafe the other day too." She tore it in half. "You've let your guard down, Sota."

Even… that? There was no voice to answer her. She rambled on. "Well anyway, beautiful stories are nice aren't they? They're so soft and fluffy without even the slightest hint of responsibility." Papers ripped into quarter their size. "You on the other hand, you're not the main character of a story like that right?"

Sota was at a loss. What was she doing? How much more was known? How far had she dived into his past? Did she know about that? The shivers in his back grew closer.

Her eyes gleamed. "Do you think you can get off that easily?" Her canines were razor sharp and hungry. He was the prey. Powerless to stop against her. Quarters shredded into eighths. "In a world that's as messed up as this. Well that doesn't matter but it was fun listening even though you were mincing your words."

Strength to answer finally returned, feeble to her energy. "What are you talking about?"

She leaned close towards his face. "I'm talking about something you want to hide no matter what. If you don't hide it, your wounds would get exposed. Your open, pus filled wounds. Your wounds. For example, that friend you were talking about. I wonder where that person is now and what she's doing. What if…"
"She doesn't exist anymore?" Mind blanked. A cold restart into panic. The fear was bolted along the skin. Cold sweat along the cheeks. The collar felt suffocating. Legs felt like giving way. Throat tightened, speechless. How did she know? She didn't exist then. The mind was on fire. He never spoke about it to anyone.

Her smiled widened. Scraps of paper were tossed to the sky. Just like his mind. "How does she know? That's what the look on your face says. I love looking at dumb faces like that." The laughing echoes of a devil rang in his ears. His body felt heavy like lead, leaning against the wall for support.

The maid sneered. "Don't worry. I haven't the slightest intention of spreading negative gossip. Would you believe me? Oh, you have no choice but to believe me. Yes, that's right. As a mark of our friendship, how about going on a lovey dovey date with me?"

No…

She grabbed his phone from his pocket. "We have to exchange info so that we can stay connected anywhere, anytime." No, she shouldn't do that. He was powerless to resist. Those eyes of hers. They don't belong to a normal person.

Chikujoin tapped a few keys on her phone. "Here we go." Putting them together, the phone beeped before she returned it to him. "If you ignore my messages, I'm going to cry."

Nothing makes sense. Why him? What does she want him for? Sota squeezed his throat before he forced an answer. "What, do you want from me?"

"You've glossed so many details with the young girl. I don't even know where to start. About your new party, about this Altair and all that. You feel so peculiar to hide everything inside yet you told everything to this girl that you don't know very well."

The talk with Mamika that day. It was only supposed to be the two of them. Chikujoin pressed her fingers together. "Say Sota, I want you to tell me more about this Archer."

Archer, the first man he feared. Now this girl surpassed him. Leagues ahead. The words were croaked out. "Why?"

"You were going oh wow he is so strong and scary with his abilities and everything. All that speech sounds interesting." Her smile was sinister to the core. "I want it."

Crickets echoed the lonely mood along with the occasional drop of water behind the wall. Gai Takarada lied down on the bed. A prisoner in his own country. The smallest slivers of light came from the grill of metal bars above him. A full moon tonight. How long had he been here? It hurt to be imprisoned by his own character. If Kiyoshi was here, he'd be laughing it up.

Alicetaria February, proud knight of Ulterstein. Proud with honour, that was what he expected to ingrain. When he first seen her, he was surprised. Astounded by the regal bearing and charisma that she carried with pride. The next was hope. His character became a reality. He didn't understand how it happened but it felt good. A light grown from the seed of the creation.

Surprise was crushed when she carried him out of his office on her horse, Silford. Made unconscious, she carried him somewhere far and casted him into a cage, forced to do her bidding. That hope was broken by the walls of deception. The red bricks carried a tinge of disappointment and growing resentment.

Imprisoned, the blasted woman asked, no, demanded him to do the impossible. Revise the story.
Make it a happy ever after. She had brought his work to him, all intact fortunately. That was the most precious thing he had right now. Finding valuable ideas in the midst of deadlines was a nightmare.

Impossible, just impossible. Thinking about the idea made him reek with disgust. The challenge was too great. Every instinct in his author skills had no answer. They abhorred it. It was just not doable without it being a horrible mess. Nobody would accept it.

He swallowed his pride and broke every rule imaginable to achieve it. The revisions made apparently didn't satisfy Alicetaria. Brought before the young military girl, he had been brought to knees when the other Creations he surmised bickered about making the reality in this world change.

Back then he had thought. How could such things exist? This world had nothing special that defied Mother Nature. How could imaginary beings come to life? Yet they were there, talking without a care of his existence. The most important part of the argument was the word this 'Princess' said.

"Disturb the world enough, make it crack and crumble. Once you do that, the powers of the Creator becomes clear." The way that girl spoke, while so young was terrifying. For they were cold and without mercy.

Returned to the cage, Takarada was tasked to make more changes. More unreasonable changes to the story. A new deadline had been set and much closer. He had been staring at the page for hours. A blank piece of paper was the result.

There wasn't much time. She wanted the task done quickly or there would be consequences. Progress was abysmal and another two nights left until the deadline. He wrapped his cold hands together. They were shaking. Is this what despair feels like? He curled into a ball and prayed.

Help me

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading Beyond Worlds. I hope you enjoyed the chapter.

First and foremost apologies for the few days of delay. Work has been very busy and I didn’t like the chapter in its current state (again). However after brainstorming about it, I decided to proceed.

Second, thanks for your comments and reviews. I hope to hear more from you readers. This chapter starts the process to cut down Daichi’s screen time and expand further on our other casts such as our other Main Character – Sota Mizushino. Shizuka now has a conclusion. Originally her purpose was nonexistent but opportunities appeared and I used them to make something of value for the original cast since nothing much happened during this part of the overall timeline. This also starts the blending for our beloved Fate Universe into this story.

Third, I am struggling and will probably continue to struggle to bring better character for the Re:Creators side. That is a fact. Nevertheless with my weak skills, I’ll continue to work on it and try to make something everyone can enjoy.

Fourth, the progress of the chapter updates will be listed on my profile so you can
monitor it at your leisure and adjust expectations. Miscellaneous information will be displayed there. Beta reader request remains valid and I appreciate any help (review, PM, information) whatsoever.

I am unsure if I can maintain this pace due to the exponential increase of expected workload in the coming months. However I shall continue to maintain proceeding with the plan. In the case where I consider myself unable to finish it, this project will ideally be handed to someone else (Overall completion is at 75% excluding revisions and edits). This project will be completed, just finished by whom. That is my promise.

I thank you again for reading this chapter and see you soon.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Emiya closed his eyes as his lips sipped at the Earl Grey. A moment alone within dawn to relax and think on the biggest problem of defeating Altair.

Altair was difficult to handle, skills similar to the King of Uruk. Definitely stronger despite withholding his abilities in the battle. Fighting at the maximum limit may be the deciding factor but it could be tantamount to suicide.

The fluctuations in the world were unsteady. The restorative forces were weak. Gaia could accept only so much distortion. Unlimited Blade Works might bring the world its undoing. Without it, Altair was certain to be victorious. New tactics were needed for victory.

The world carried a hidden repository of strength. Information. Knowledge is power and he needed to understand Altair's weakness. He had to admit that his proficiency with the computer is below average but it gave needed bits and pieces. The Kid would do better but for now, he'll make do.

The plan had a flaw. How much does Altair know? She found him easily despite his attempts to find her. She knew his name, history and his Noble Phantasm. Her abilities he witnessed thus far are dangerous. The remaining question. Was it everything she had or are there any hidden cards? Exceptionally dangerous ones.

Medea or other Casters would be more suited to answer them and devise a counter. The strongest Noble Phantasm restrained by circumstance, he couldn't just make do with what he had. There isn't much time to spare. The longer he-

Someone was outside. A few moments before the front door opened, allowing its master to return home. The boy was looking better than the poor sorry state the day before. Emiya dismissed the dagger behind his back. Lowering the tea cup, he said. "Have things improved?"

"Yes." Kid summarised the story. They'd spent the night together. Her parents didn't return home, rushing some work in the office. Misfortune yet a blessing. Emiya threw in a tease but as the boy said, nothing happened.

Emiya settled the cup onto the table. "Good. She won't be squeezing the matter anymore, isn't that right?"

"For now. I guess."

The Guardian's eyes narrowed. "What have you told her?"

Kid faltered. "I, I don't know actually. I guess my feelings just came out right."

"That was difficult to believe given how you screwed it up. Especially since your approach was horrible." The kid's spectacle was worthy of a face palm.

Kid's face scrunched. "You were listening in."

"She remains a problem. You're only keeping her placated at the moment. Find another answer. I'm not going to help you on that."
"Why not?"

"I'm not your babysitter. Second, you won't be convincing if you don't believe in it."

"I'll try." Emiya chose to nod as a reply. The boy took a seat before taking his own cup of tea. The smile on the boy's face spoke of priceless taste. "Moving on, are we going to continue hiding the fact about Altair?"

The other heroes. They had their own agenda. Ignoring them was the best choice for now. The question was how this boy was involved with Altair. Structural Grasp had told enough of Altair's history. Yet the one point about the boy was a shrouded blank. Why the reference when there was almost no detail? A potential valuable asset. He needed the other boy to cooperate.

"For now. Once the situation develops properly with that Mizushino boy, we would be able to reveal everything." The direct approach would been the best but would have antagonised the others, creating more fruitless friction. There's enough problems as there is especially with a certain redhead.

"We can do better if we plan it together with them." The boy proposed. He's trying hard to bring everyone together. Let him learn at his own time.

"I know some of her abilities. That girl is powerful and formidable. I will need more information in order to prepare against her."

"I could try to talk with Mizushino, see if I can help him open up."

"I'd rather trust an antisocial robot instead."

The boy twitched. "That hurt Archer. Are we going to do nothing then?"

"I'll deal with the boy. Meantime, you can help me to gather more information on Altair. Likewise, I think those girls are eager to find out more on this Magane. You managed to pull off good investigation work. You can do the same here." Let him handle the girls and the small fry. There's no reason for him to get involved.

"An investigator eh. I guess that'll work." Kid nodded, pleased with new tasks. Emiya would in the meantime prepare the rest. He glanced at the clock. Six thirty in the morning.

"Go to school. You have a life to attend to." He stood up. There is much to do. First is to establish the limits of her-

The phone beeped, a message scrolled on the display. A quick glance turned his day outside down. Speak of the Devil.

Selesia sighed. The map of Tokyo was filled with red paper pins. The third day of the search thus far for Magane Chikujoin. They've been studying maps in search of the elusive killer. It wouldn't be long before she raises the ante and get many others hurt or killed.

Selesia and Archer had been searching for the elusive girl. Getting him to comply with her request was a pain. The white haired man begrudged her with the detailed observations of the locales, throwing in every other annoying comment now and then. He was clearly not interested in the mission.

Meteora would've been more tolerant against his crude nature. Said sage was elsewhere finding more details on Magane. She wondered if this headache is worth the results of keeping Archer in
check. *Just focus on the task at hand.* Archer said. "We shouldn't be wasting our time finding this woman. The benefits are insignificant to the effort spent."

Selesia crossed her arms. "We can't let her be. Otherwise she will keep on murdering other people."

"Even when this could have been left to the authorities?"

"She's one of us. It's our responsibility to handle it."

Archer gave her half a glance. "Making the right priority is vital. It is clear who our real enemy is. Leaving her be would risk more lives."

"We cannot leave the people on their own here. They must be protected," She said.

"We can't protect everyone. We will be doing a lot more good taking the Princess out first."

"Sacrifice a hundred to save thousands. Is that what your philosophy about?" She clicked her tongue. The notion of sacrificing human lives reeks her gut with disgust.

"That would have been Emiya Kiritsugu's. If you know my foster father then you understand why it's the truth. It would be better and faster to cut off the source by its head." He stood up and pointed on the map. "That princess would be finding new allies to bring to her side. If we dawdle too much, we might lose our numerical advantage."

"We're trying to find both of them in the same process." She wouldn't let him decide who lives or dies. A hero doesn't make that choice.

"Yet you remain obsessed in finding a girl of no key importance." Archer pointed out.

"Kikuchihara said they haven't been able to get any new leads. However, that means there are no new creations for the time being. We can count that the Military Uniformed Princess has no new allies to bolster her side." She pointed out. "Unless that Magane joins them. Her abilities would be difficult to contend against."

Archer scoffed. "That woman who has no real skills other than her words. And you cannot trust the authorities or even Japan Self Defence force to apprehend one girl. I am quite surprised at how arrogant you can thoughtlessly be."

"You are underestimating her." He hadn't seen the destruction in that bookstore. The monster she unleashed within that tore the man to shreds. That confidence would be found wanting.

Archer chuckled. "I've fought men and beasts that destroyed armies in a single strike. This girl is nothing to me."

Selesia felt the desire to slap the man. Clenching fists kept her in check, barely. "You think you are some hotshot. It doesn't stop the fact that we need to take her into custody. Secondly, we defeated you."

"Injured and outnumbered. Also, it wasn't a defeat. We had an agreed draw." Archer stood and turned for the door. "If you want her so much, then keep on finding her. I'm going for the important target. Too much time is wasted."

Selesia watched Archer leave before saying. "Ha ha ha, a draw. I was right after all. I can't work with him."
The door opened. She turned. It would be great if Archer grovelled at her feet for forgiveness. It wasn't. Nakanogane popped his head in and backed out after a glimpse of her. What a day.

Daichi stepped into the lobby, grateful from the afternoon heat. Things felt great for once. School had returned to normal barring Kazuko's absence, nothing to worry about.

The brown jacket and jeans stood out from the adults in working suits but nobody cared. Archer was supposed to be around here. A glance of the Counter Guardian would be a small relief. A few moments through reception led him to a door.

Meteora called to enter. "Afternoon Meteora." He said while entering. "You look a little tired."

Slightly red eyes as the sage turned towards him. "Yes Hideaki. We've been busy searching for Magane Chikujoin."

Daichi said as he grabbed an empty chair. "I've heard from Archer. I want to help."

"Your assistance is appreciated. Let me explain to you the situation." Her cell phone rang and she answered. "Yes Kikuchihara." Listening to the phone, her eyes gloomed. "I understand. I'll meet you there." She ended the call and turned to him. "Unfortunately, there's a third murder now and I must go. We will get back to it another time."

Daichi leapt to his feet. "Let me come and give a hand."

Meteora narrowed her eyes. "A murder is not for the light hearted."

"If I want to help investigating, I need to have details. This is part of it isn't it?"

"We have experts that can do that. Your presence there is not necessary for the investigation."

"Do you know how to get to the place?"

"I am versed in the language and can travel. That will not be a problem."

"Flying in the open?"

"I am sure I know how to use this world's transportation. Does that satisfy you?"

"Are you sure you have money for that?"

"You are just being petty with the details are you not?" Daichi shrugged. Meteora closed her eyes and turned for the door. "Fine. Let us go."

Outside, they took a taxi on a short trip towards Roppongi Hills. During the short drive, Meteora introduced him to their target.

Magane Chikujoin, high school girl villain in a detective based manga series. They found her a few days ago before they met in Higashi. The Military Princess' team were also interested in recruiting her and both sides had a fight. The girl vanished afterwards but there were trails of murder left in her wake.

A red tower next to the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Reaching the twentieth floor, they stepped out of the elevator and walked toward the end of the corridor. The last room had been barricaded with police tape and they entered.
Meteora asked. "Who is the victim?"

"Haruto Kobayashi. Owner of a printing business." Kikuchihara answered as she displayed a badge to the police officer.

Daichi glanced around as the police and forensic worked. Black marble tiles. Glass walls and a balcony with a great view towards the park a few blocks away. "Wow. This is a rich man's place." The deceased was on the floor beside the blue sofas. A man, balding white hair in a suit. A hand towards the chest. A forensic officer was busy taking photographs.

Kikuchihara stepped beside them as the officer walked out. "The police are collecting details about the victim. They'll have it ready for us in a short while."

Daichi crouched behind the officer. "Excuse me, what's the cause of death?"

The forensic man raised a brow. A glance to Meteora before he answered. "Not known for sure but the signs are pointing to suffocation or a heart attack." Daichi had a better look at the body. The man's face was flushed red. The neck looked swollen. The man's wide eyes frozen into a twisted mess of fear. A feeling gnawing inside him, a taste of death.

Daichi pulled away and looked outside. His stomach didn't want to keep the gaze at it. Kikuchihara's words were barely out of earshot. "Meteora, I disagree with Hideaki being here." Annoyance flustered before he kept it down. The next room needed a look anyway.

"A stubborn boy," Meteora said. "I will talk to him about it."

"Very well. I'll ask the forensics to pass a copy of the details." Kikuchihara said before turning around to attend the officials.

The bedroom was empty and clean. Daichi noticed some yellow plastic markers scattered within the room. Each item had been bagged and placed there. Forensics were taking photographs of the evidence. Keeping some room to avoid touching, his gaze glanced around. There wasn't anything that stuck out as important. The other room would be more useful.

As he returned, Meteora was glancing around the main room. She said. "Unlike the previous crime scene, this place is neat." A safe behind the bookshelf by the corner. The door slightly ajar. They glanced inside. Empty. Meteora stepped out to the balcony. She knelt to a marker on the floor. A closer look revealed a long strand of purple hair. She asked. "Have you made an assessment?"

Daichi kept himself from staring at the victim's face. "She's cruel." The forensics began to bag the body. "The way he died is painful to watch." He pointed to the open safe. "Her motivation here was money. She didn't need to kill him."

"Unfortunately, some people behave that way. That is why we need to put a stop to her. The previous murders were a reflection to her personality. However I do not think that money is the sole motivation."

"I don't think she'd know who this man is though. Why would she find him to kill him in his own home?"

"Her actions puzzle me thus far," Meteora said as the black bag was placed beside the body. "Despite the erratic sense of actions, there remains some cold logic and purpose inside them."

_That felt complicated. One step at a time._ Daichi pointed to the ceiling. "Maybe the camera here can tell at least what happened. Let me ask the police for the security video." He turned to leave outside.
A sigh behind him. Trouble was coming. He can feel it.

Selesia stared at the screen. White twin tails. Military Uniform. The sword. The confidence in her smile. Every detail matched. They found their target. "There's no doubt about it."

"Altair. That's her name." Meteora agreed. Nakagone had gathered everyone within the meeting room. The exception was Archer and Sota whom remained to be found. Odd since the Counter Guardian was in the vicinity earlier.

Nakagone explained as he opened an image gallery. "Given the notes I've found, she's based off another character called Shirotsumekusa from a social game called Eternal Wars Megalosphere."

Mirokuji pointed out. "That looks totally different from her. How on earth is she related?" Selesia had to agree. The young girl with the large diamond staff. Green dress against black uniform. Long pink hair against white. Complete contrast.

Nakagone nodded. "That's right. She turned into a completely different character."

Kikuchihara said. "In other words, they are completely separate people, am I correct?"

Marine hummed from the back. "That isn't totally accurate." She raised a finger while explaining. "Altair is a well-made secondary creation. Most secondary creations are parodies built to meet another theme or style. If the case where a secondary character with a plot is better than the original story, it is accepted as a separate story with its own rights."

Selesia asked. "So, if someone other than Matsubara wrote a different story about me, does that mean another version of me would be born?" What would it mean to have multiple copies of her to exist in this world?

Meteora answered. "It depends if the changes are able to blend into the original story. Stories would have to be consistent for them to work."

"That is a tough call to say." Daichi added, his seat beside Marine.

"You have some experience to say about it?" Matsubara asked.

"I, uh had some experience writing these type of parodies you see." He explained. "Usually stories in Fan fiction genre tend to break away from the original plot. Some may include references to new characters, alternate universe scenarios or crossovers with another story."

"Is that such a big change in revision?" Meteora asked.

"Not as much to an original novel. It's a lot easier to write when you have an existing foundation. There are usually a lot of problems that come with it though such as the parody is unable to stay in character."

Matsubara nodded with a thumbs up. "Writing is a tough job after all. There's so much to consider in the big picture down to the smallest detail. Character is key."

"Matsubara's characters are the hardest to understand," Marine said.

Matsubara sighed to that as Nakanogane added. "That's part of the point isn't it? Since normal people like us are hard to figure out. That's why your artwork is important to bring an image to the audience."
Marine raised a finger. "Thanks Nakanogane, it helps to be appreciated by authors sometimes unlike a certain man." The middle aged man in question fidgeted.

Meteora gave a light cough. "We are going off topic. In a nutshell, it can be considered they are two separate people. The traits that defined them, personalities and goals are very different and can be considered as individual characters on their own right." They all agreed on this. "Based on this, Altair's world is recognised as completely independent and probably separated itself from the game."

"Since we know Altair's an individual character, who is her Creator?"

Nakanogane tapped a few screens on his laptop. "This is the video that made Altair famous." The screen turned black before a set of text. The name of the video, *World's Etude* and its author, Setsuna Shimazaki.

Nakanogane continued explaining. "I tried searching around but I couldn't find any clues. I'm sure this is the author but the person hasn't been online for three months." The music video began to reveal Altair's birth from the fragments of a meteorite whilst showing the contrast between her and the original.

"I will assist with the investigation on that end." Kikuchihara offered. The resources from the government would be better suited to such a task.

"If we know who it is, we can proceed to the next action." Meteora said. "In the meantime, we should study with Matsubara on clues how to achieve the revision we desire."

"If you could make me stronger, by all means," Selesia smiled. "I'd like to smash Altair's cocky face into the ground."

"That's not your thing though." Matsubara chipped in.

"Anything for that annoying brat."

Kikuchihara received a phone call. "Yes, yes everything's okay now. Please bring them here immediately." Ending the call, she addressed to them. Everyone, we've found two authors that are involved with characters that have appeared. They're on the way here now."

"Who are they?"

"One is for Yuya Mirokuji. The other for Blitz Talker."

Yuya stood up from his seat. "Oh, my God is coming here? Now this is going to be interesting."

Meteora stood up. "Very well, let's talk to them."

The Creators were on the way and would take twenty minutes to arrive. The others went on first to the conference room. Selesia held back in wait. Her instincts were ringing alarms. A question that needed answering. A missing entity that should be here yet is not. She walked along the corridor, looking for the person who could answer it.

She found him standing around a corner. Selesia waved. "Hideaki, a word with you."

Hideaki pointed to the phone by his ear. "A moment. Sota's calling." A nod. She stood and waited as Hideaki made a quick discussion. The boy finished the call in a minute and apologised. "Sorry about that, Sota asked for a meet up with me tomorrow. What do you want to talk to me about?"
"Your good friend Archer."

"What about it?"

"Where is he?"

"Don't know. I have no control over him."

Selesia nodded. "That's right. However his intentions were very clear. Something was strange when I thought about it. Why isn't he here?"

Hideaki shrugged. "Again, I don't know."

Selesia wrapped her arms. "I confirmed Meteora did inform him about Altair. Yet he isn't here. Something doesn't add up." Now would be a good moment to set the trap. "I remember reading something about Archer. That he could identify a weapon's owner."

"Yes, that sort of ability is in his character description." Hideaki nodded.

*Time to spring it.* "If that is the case, has he already known about Altair beforehand?"

Hideaki paused in thought. "I don't know."

*Right into it.* "I've thought so. You are a bad liar." She leaned closer towards him. "Did he ask you to keep it a secret?"

Hideaki's eyes met hers. "Yes. There's a reason behind it."

She needed to dig more information. "By any chance that you know about this reason?"

"It's best not to say." Anger burst from her arm, pushing him against the column.

"For whose benefit? Meteora had been stubborn in making sure things went right with you and you're keeping things away from us? You speak as though we should work together but look at what you're doing."

Hideaki turned away from her gaze. "It'll be revealed in time. Giving it earlier wouldn't be a good thing. Can you just wait for the best moment?"

"When we are dead? I knew it was hard to trust him, to think he'd pull you into it." The point was revealed. Red hot anger turned to cold disappointment. Selesia closed her fist. The boy was just used like a tool. "I had some faith in you Hideaki. Now, not so much." She backed away towards the room. "A word of advice. This world is built on trust and breaking them leaves you with no bridges to turn back. That's all I am going to tell you." She left him outside.

Masaki Nakanogane felt good today. They've found Altair's identity and could prepare something against her. Now with Kikuchihara bringing new Creators, the team would grow bigger to fight against the bad guys.

The good guys always win, right? Especially since the day before they had a new pair to join the group. Archer and this kid apparently running on a partnership basis. Masaki couldn't believe it when Archer was around. Sure the Heroic Spirit was rather problematic but he understood the man. It was part of his character description after all. The kid though was a fan of anime and manga, seems like a good kid to him and Marine so far.
Hideaki and Selesia were the last to enter. The Chevalier didn't look happy when she took a seat beside Meteora. Hideaki sat on the opposite end of the room beside him and Marine. A glance toward Hideaki was met with a shrug. Better leave it be since it wasn't his business anyway.

Everyone seated, Kikuchihara said. "The two Creators are entering the building as we speak. Mr. Nakanogane, do we have any other information about Altair?"

Masaki stood up and reported. "No, unfortunately that's what I've found so far. I'm planning to dive later into some anime clubs to search for more information."

"A secondary creation. I wonder how she appeared in this world." Marine said.

"That is up to us to find out. She is the cause we are here in this world after all," Meteora said. The door knocked. A police officer entered whom Kikuchihara conversed. The man left before two people entered.

A man and woman entered, standing across them in the room. First impression he had about the woman was a biker. Jeans with a black jacket. Black hair in a tomboy fashion exuded the sense of toughness and solitude. However she did look rather on the sick side.

The man had a similar feel, pants and jacket. A goatee with wild stallion hair down to neck. Masaki struck him as familiar. Where did he meet him?

Kikuchihara introduced them. "This is author of Code Babylon, Shunma Suruga. Her real name is Chika Ohsawa." Masaki decided to call them by their author names. "This is author for Exclusive Underground, Ryo Yatoji. His real name is Ryosuke Goda. I anticipate that just like everyone here we will be requesting your cooperation as Creators in the future."

"Hey, I'm Yatoji." Yatoji raised a hand and small wave.

The woman was lethargic by the drawls in her voice. "My name is Suruga. I wrote Code Babylon. A pleasure."

"I didn't know you were a woman Suruga." Marine spoke.

"Yes, I often get mistaken for a man." Suruga tilted her head to meet Marine's eyes. "I'm already used to it."

"So this is the person who was drawing those pictures. Amazing." Masaki heard Marine mumble. He heard similar sentiments from behind.

Matsubara stood up and introduced himself. "I'm Matsubara. I haven't seen you since we met at Kogakusha's party." Ah, that's right. The publication launch party for his latest novel.

Yatoji was puzzled. "Have we met before? I don't remember." Matsubara's face grew puzzled.

Marine turned around towards him. "Do those two not get along?"

"I don't know the details but it doesn't look that way." Masaki answered.

Yatoji pressed both hands into his jacket before turning back towards Kikuchihara. "So what is this about? I have a deadline. I'm busy. If you have something to say, keep it short."

"Hey there." Mirokuji called out as he stood up from the back.

Yatoji paused, eyes sharp in study. "What? Why is a cosplayer from my manga here? Although I'd
say he's doing a good job."

Mirokuji set off a storm. "What do you mean 'did a good job making me'? I'm the original."

The Creator huffed. "Even in character, what a strange guy. Don't tell me all the fuss was just to see this guy."

"I thought you weren't such a bad guy but I'm disappointed. Selesia's God is a million times better than you. Get your act together. I thought you were a real man."

"The police came to my house all of a sudden and talked about some nonsense and brought me here. I got a lot to deal with too. Because I'm a real man unlike a man that goes around cosplaying."

"You're the god of our world. I have a lot of things I want to say to you. Saying it wouldn't change anything, I have no intention to ramble on like Altair. And now I hear you calling me a cosplayer like its nothing." Mirokuji was oozing with anger. "It pisses me off."

"I have a bad feeling about this." Kanoya had rested against his arm. Masaki agreed with him alongside uncomfortable glances. Although Yatoji was a Creator, he was asking for trouble.

Meteora hissed. "Mirokuji, I want you to restrain yourself here." Her words meant nothing as Hangaku appeared and grabbed Yatoji by the scuff of his neck. Oh boy, here it comes.

Yelps of surprise as Matsubara shot to his feet. "Mirokuji, don't do anything to his right hand and his head." Afterwards, all hell broke loose. Masaki would remember this for life though. The stories that nobody would ever believe because it was too crazy to be true.

Daichi stared at the ceiling. Whenever he closed his eyes, the face of the dead man would appear. Frozen in tormented pain. He could imagine the face screaming into his ears and it scared him. The other deaths were equally disturbing. One forced to hang himself. Another torn to bloody shreds by a beast.

Selesia's words came after, a hiss of poison. He is powerless against them. Beings that break reality. What could he do?

You don't need to be an idiot trying to get himself killed

Archer made pragmatic advice. Still, I can't stop. Never again. Stepping outside, he saw Archer at the dining table. Kanshou and Bakuya were on the table. The paired swords glowed a gentle green under Archer's touch. "Why are you practising?"

The glow faded. "Old habit. Can't afford to grow rusty."

Daichi leaned forward to get a better look. "Those swords are beautiful." The moonlight shined along the curves of steel. The swords vanished. "How much does the world affect your projections?"

Archer leaned against the chair. "I said once before. It's unstable. I don't like the curiosity on your face. What idea are you thinking about?"

"I need a favour." Archer raised an eyebrow as Daichi explained his request.

Archer's gaze sharpened to steel. "Kid, are you so eager to die?"

Daichi stood resolute. "It's a question I want answered." The opportunity needed to be confirmed. If it worked, it would change the game.
"At the cost of your life? I am not interested to send you to the afterlife. I have enough friends there as it is." Archer scoffed.

"You've done it before. Not just once but multiple times. Things should pull through just fine."

"That is because of damn plot armour. If I died outright at the start of a story, that would've been a painfully short and stupid one isn't it? Give it up kid. It's not worth trying this for an answer."

"To be a Magus is to walk with Death." Daichi stared into grey eyes.

Archer coughed. "At first I thought you were a smart kid. Then I've been thinking I'm seeing another idiot. Now it's confirmed, I'm looking at a lunatic."

Daichi felt another stare of death. He held his ground, squeezing the back of the chair. "Since we're in this, we do this together."

A sigh. "If you are so determined, I won't ask to change your mind. However, prepare yourself that death is almost certain. If you want to survive, your will must be strong."

"We'll succeed. I have faith in you Archer." A few moments later, his certainty was doubtful. "Isn't this overkill?"

Archer had him seated at the chair. Shirt removed, back exposed. Archer towered over him as he had Daichi lean against the table top. Hands and legs were tied with cloth. The Guardian stuffed cloth into his mouth. "Breathe deeply and relax your body." Daichi tried to relax with a few slow breaths. It was difficult. He felt a rough hand on his back. "Trace on."

Warmth. Arching along his back, it felt ease. Like a tinder fire, it raged into an inferno. Burning hot. His throat screamed, teeth digging into the towel. **It hurts. It hurts. It hurts.** An image flashed before his eyes.

A city in flames. A young boy walking through Hell. Collapsed in exhaustion. Saved from the ruins by a broken man in tears. In a flicker, it disappeared. Back to his room and the inferno raged. Sweat glistened, turning flesh hotter like a sauna. The air in his lungs, stale and burning hot.

"Breathe." Archer said. Fresh air filled his nostrils. So cool against flesh yet they helped to fuel the fire. Fanned flames grew stronger. Coursing through his body, up and down. Everywhere burned. No relief. It felt forever, just like his screams. Muffled screaming helped, a little.

The flames raged before tightening into a core. Pain compressed deeper into the spine and the thunderstorm came. Sharp tingles along the nerves, pulsing rapidly. Electric jabs jumped around, jerking muscles involuntarily. Screams cut short by the freezing bouts that took everything. Two different tortures in one.

Pain. It's just so great. Daichi felt the choice to die was better. Give up and end it. "Hold on." Archer assured. A short relief before it grew again. The heat, spiralling along the back. The limbs felt so cold in contrast. The spiral branched out into a web. The tingles grew along the nerves. They didn't hurt now. A bond formed like a coat.

The inferno vanished in a blink. Daichi felt hot sweat along clammy skin. Archer stepped in front of him. "You are fortunate to survive." The gag towel was wet from saliva.

Daichi spat the towel away. Teeth hurt from biting too hard. "I can feel it." Hot, fresh out of the forge. One Magic Circuit like a third vein. A single core that pulsed following the rhythm of his heart.
Archer explained as he rinsed the towel in the sink. "I have used your nerves as an anchor for the circuit. This way it should be less affected by Gaia's interference and last longer. There may be side effects."

Daichi felt them slowing down before silence. He chose not to try anything to agitate them. "I should be fine."

Archer applied the towel. The cold sensation felt bliss. An oasis within the desert. "That's remarkably optimistic for someone who nearly died."

"Thanks to the man that made his own Magic Circuits for years."

Archer chuckled. "That had been stupid." He plopped the towel on Daichi's head. "Keep them off for now until your body gets used to it."

"What can I do with them now?"

"Nothing with them."

"Why didn't you bother to say that in the first place?"

"You never asked. Now do you realise the level of idiocy you've just attained Kid?"

"Great…so I can pretty much just turn them on and off." Flickering like a bloody light bulb.

"Summed as much. I'm not going to teach you any Magecraft afterwards. I don't need the idiot to dig deeper into his grave. Now go sleep." Sleep is a very good idea. A pity he didn't get any throughout the night.

Meteora compiled the papers into neat stacks on the table. The meeting room cum office had stacks of documents in every corner. A messy place needing further work but it had peace compared to the fiasco earlier.

Magane Chikujoin remained to be found. Their approach thus far had not been working. It was frustrating to watch as people die from her hand.

The door knocked. She called to enter. Kikuchihara entered with a folder in hand. "Meteora, here are all the information gathered by the forensics team." She placed it on the table. "It includes their autopsy analysis on the case."

Meteora studied the papers. "Cause of death is by myocardial infraction. I am unfamiliar with this term."

"Basically, it means a heart attack." Kikuchihara explained. "The forensics were unsure to how the heart attack occurred as Kobayashi was in good health and noted it down. Can we agree that Chikujoin murdered him?"

Meteora settled the papers down. "Yes, your hypothesis is correct. She had him murdered for money. The video from the camera had proved Chikujoin as the murderer. Seven hundred thousand Yen was stolen from the safe after Kobayashi's demise."

"A murder for relatively so little. If she wanted money, there would be better options."

"We likewise agree. Hideaki and I were unable to discern the other part of the motive. The money is just a benefit." Meteora had spent a few hours trying to read the novel Magane debuted in. It was
difficult to understand the mind of the girl.

"Speaking of Hideaki, he should be excluded from further crime scenes. Murders and death aren’t things that a teenager should be seeing."

"I’ve already talked to him as we discussed. He remained persistent in volunteering. I will utilise him in a way to find Chikujoin and Altair on something appropriate as of now." A pause as Meteora sorted the document into sections. I hope there would be no more murders."

"Thank you Meteora. Enthusiastic as he can be, he shouldn't be doing things that are beyond his capability." Kikuchihara said as she leaned against the table.

"Hideaki does it because there is no other option. That is the flaw I see in him."

Kikuchihara loosened her office coat. "I believe there is a phrase of 'Goody two shoes' for that."

Meteora shook her head. "Unfortunately, that isn't the case. The better answer would be 'He condemns himself for doing nothing.'"

"I see." Kikuchihara stood up properly from the table. "In the meantime, would you like some coffee and some dinner?"

"Yes, a Long Black please." There would be another long night. "Speaking of which, how is Kanoya doing?" The Mecha pilot had been reined in by the Coordinator. Gigas Machina had been stored into a warehouse. A team of engineers were renovating the roof to make it easy to send the war machine when needed. That made him finicky.

Kikuchihara chuckled. "He's doing nothing besides searching for fun. Mirokuji is keeping him reigned in from overdoing it."

"Good. I never thought that man would be useful in such capacity."

"Speaking of him, Mirokuji left a message when I met him earlier." Kikuchihara placed the folded note on the table. She opened it and read.

*Hey Metchin, Kanoya and I are hanging out at the karaoke. We'll be back late tonight. Also, we run out of ice cream at home. Buy some on the way back will you?*

She crushed the note. "I am sorely mistaken."

Chapter End Notes

Here's the next chapter update, more or less in the timeframe. Going to keep this short as I'll be working in a short bit.

Thank you for reading and reviewing. It had been a tough week so to say on this project. I've been working on reviewing the entire plot due to some nagging feeling and the reviews helped to reinforce the notion. Building an entire excel of the remaining plot, I was regrettably mistaken on how much Daichi I had in there. Granted, he started as a main character but eventually relegated to a key character.

I've had doubts on whether the change to him would work but nothing on my research
could point a definitive answer. I consider it important to opening more options on the
Fate realm and thus kept it in.

That said, the other characters get proper attention instead while trying not to overdo it.
Doing the last minute work and I find out there are more things to fix, hence this chapter
is a bit shorter and all my chapter buffers are considered null. They'll be priority to fix to
restore.

Some scenes will be familiar in the notion of the plot and someone did raise up the fact
and concern. I am aware of it and trying to imagine the changes based on how the
characters would react.

Thanks for reading and hope to have your support in making this story better.

Regards
MarksmanKNG
Chapter Summary

Too many questions remain that needed certainty
Doubt lingers across many minds
Hope and Fear collide
Past, present and future are unclear stones

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Chapter 8: Certainty and Doubt

Trace on

Prana coursed through Magic Circuits. The six lines of Tracing echoed in his mind before projecting the final product. Kanshou appeared within his grip. Relic in history, fresh in form. Emiya’s eyes gazed along the grooves of the blade. The inspection proved it to be accurate as it always been.

He placed the blade upright beside the sofa beside several others still in pristine shape. That was worrisome. Gaia wasn’t correcting the contradiction. Barely a tug towards erasing the existence. In spite of his lacklustre experience in Magecraft, the warning gongs are ringing loud. How much time did they have left?

The Kid was grumbling from the bathroom. The young boy would suffer for a few days before adapting to the new Magic Circuit. That is the case if the circuit would last anyhow. A boy so stubborn on fighting would learn his lesson only from experience. The same way he did. Maybe that’s how Rin felt back then.

Footsteps left the bathroom and into the kitchen. Emiya decided to check on the boy. "You are alive today."

"Thank you. I am surprised I am alive too." The boy groaned as he reached into the fridge. Emiya heard the boy mumble. "Just like a bag of shit. Yup."

"If you feel that bad, then you can just spend a day off just like you always did."

"Can't afford to skip school or I'll be in more trouble." Emiya heard a glass clinking. "Is it normal to feel like this?"

"Yes. Your body is not used to it and it's something that all Magus lived with."

A bottle cap was opened. "Uh wait, did I hear that right? You guys dealt with this for the rest of your lives?"

"You get used to it."

A sigh. "Nobody mentioned about this."
Emiya said as the boy drank. "You didn't do your research. Accept the consequence for strength never comes without a price. Pain and responsibility are good friends." Kid didn't answer, focused on finishing the bottle of milk.

Someone was outside by the lifts and approaching. Another headache of the morning. The door knocked before it opened. The girlfriend arrived. "Good Morning Daichi." She stopped before staring at him. "Hi."

Emiya gave a nod before reaching for a magazine. Ignoring her was easy, restarting the experiment wasn't. The entire test was cut short, having been forced to dismiss the projections.

She focused on her boyfriend. A bit of the lip before she said. "You look horrible."

Kid waved it off. "Yeah, I had a bad day. Come on, let's go to school."

"You can't go to school looking horrible like that. You should be resting."

"I've had worse."

"You look like you went through an entire night without sleep." Not too far from the truth girl. "Sort of, insomnia or something. Things had been tough."

"It's about that isn't it?" She turned her gaze aside, her hang squeezing onto his arm. "I really want to help."

Emiya kept his eyes on the magazine about machines. So smitten. What a pity.

The boy grabbed his bag. "Thanks. I'll be fine. A good nap later is all I need."

Emiya decided to chip in. "He'll get better if you give him some treatment later in the infirmary." The girl's face went beet red before turning away silent.

The Kid turned and glared. The boy's improving, might be able to scare somebody soon enough. However he said nothing before they left.

Emiya shook his head as peace and quiet returned. He stood up before projecting the weapons again. Putting the weapons aside, he need to get back to dealing with Altair. Some tea would be good for the mind. The kid though was poor on selecting good tea.

Something was amiss upon entering the kitchen. An unnatural smell called danger. Sharp glances went about nutil it stopped at a note on the kitchen counter. A piece of paper that was far too old. English words were written in cursive black ink.

We are watching.

Emiya reached for the parchment. It crumbled to dust under his fingertips. This is swell.

Masaki checked his watch. Seven thirty sharp. He clapped his hands together. "Alright people, let's do this." He was met with silence. Dull faces with black rings under their faces. A dark contrast to the bright room in the government office.

"What are we here for again?" Marine's voice slurred. She didn't look like the cheerful person the other day.
"Marine, you need more coffee. Like seriously a lot more." Matsubara chipped in. That man looked equally guilty.

"Sorry, I'm really not a morning person after all."

I think that speaks for the entire lot. Masaki had experience dealing with night owls but for such a complete one-sided group, it was a first. Maybe he ought to introduce a health program for them. No, I'm going too far ahead. Now to address the first issue. "Where's Yatoji?"

Suruga spun her pen around a few times. "He's not coming. The other day had scared him to death." Does she ever stop drawing?

Her fellow artist shrugged. "Well, he was sort of asking for it. I mean Yuya was already mad."

The group was looking way too glum. Masaki had expected just as much. He'll have to spice things up. "Alright, we're going too far on this. Now then, let me remind you people," He went to the board and started writing. "We're here to continue working on the 'Revision Theory' envisioned by Meteora and the others."

"I see." Suruga placed a hand under her chin. "What is this revision theory about?" A brief explanation later made her raise an eyebrow. "Hmm, so you believe a character in this world can be changed in real time by revising their description. What's been tested so far?"

Matsubara leaned forward against the table. "I've tried to give Selesia a new ability awhile back by writing a few scenes." He opened his laptop and spun it around for them to see. "We then had Selesia try to activate it but to no success."

"Beats me. This is something new so there might be some relationship." Masaki chose to jot it down on the board.

Suruga tapped a pen against her sketch board. "The art looks good. Anything else?"

Matsubara shook his head. "That's it so far. I haven't had much time to think after the first try since a few things derailed us from continuing."

Suruga's hand went to drawing as she said. "Can we try to play with the word count?"

"How would the word count work on making a revision?"

"You have a point there but how do we know it doesn't?"

Masaki listed the artwork as well. "It's something worth trying and doesn't take too much time. Matsubara, can you make something longer perhaps?"

Matsubara rubbed his chin. "How big are you thinking, Masaki?"

"How about ten thousand? Enough for a short story."
The author nodded. "I'll check my schedule where I can fit it in. Ah scratch that, let's do it now or I'll never get it done."

Masaki gave a pat on the back. "In the meantime while Matsubara works on that approach, we should also brainstorm something else to try."

Suruga offered. "Maybe our heroes need to train to get the ability."

"You mean like a hero's journey?" Masaki asked.

Matsubara stroked his chin. "That sounds complicated. How are we going to do that?"

Marine suggested. "Or maybe it's something more intrinsic? Something that they have to accept before they are able to use it."

"Acceptance? Or motivation?" Masaki added Suruga's point to the board.

"Hmm, maybe either. Any idea how are we going to test that?"

Matsubara shook his head. "Getting someone to sit and meditate? The characters here aren't the kinds who'll be up to it." Masaki felt the same. Kanoya would probably get defensive and reject the idea.

"Meditation isn't just about sitting down. There are other ways to go about it." Suruga's artwork was starting to resemble her character Blitz Talker.

Matsubara chuckled. "Ah, you meant about those psychology talks. I don't know if we have anyone here qualified to do that."

Marine tilted her head. "Aren't you authors sort of psychologists to decide all their personalities?" The others were a little astounded before laughing.

Matsubara cracked a smile. "Not exactly but we're cutting it close. I'll think of something and we can try that once Selesia's here. I'm not sure where she is at the moment."

Suruga spoke up. "Speaking of motivations actually, why are they here? The others turned to stare at the girl. "What is the purpose they are chosen instead of others?"

Matsubara recalled. "Meteora did suggest those who are popular would be more likely." He counted off his fingers before nodding. "It's looking out right so far. Most of them are from the last few seasons except one case."

Masaki understood. "Archer from Fate Stay Night. He is an odd anomaly from the data." The being only from a decade ago instead of few months.

Marine raised a finger. "Fate did have a few movies going now and then. One is coming out quite soon too. So can we really say that it's old?"

Masaki remembered the upcoming movie and anime series, Fate Stay Night: Heaven's Feel and Fate Extra. "Old origins. I think the popularity factor is more important than being recent." The others agreed with that.

"I heard Altair tried to recruit Selesia but she refused," Marine said.

Masaki sketched a few categories for the topic. "Some of them were just caught into it." That would be Kanoya's case.
"What about the others? The ones that are not with us." That stands out Mamika Kirameki, Alicetaria February, Blitz Talker and Magane Chikujoin.

Matsubara nodded. "The others would've been more receptive to the idea to change their stories. That's the feeling I got from Mamika Kirameki when I saw her for real."

"They have their own desires after all. The power to change their world is very tempting." Marine looked crestfallen.

Matsubara leaned and glanced towards Suruga. "What about Blitz Talker? What would his motivations be?"

"He has many motivations. Which one he is here for, I don't know." The woman turned her gaze away towards the paper. He felt a bit of reluctance there. Then again he could sort of emphasise with that. It'd be like asking a private thing to her.

"Is that so? Maybe we'll figure it out somehow." Matsubara didn't pick up on the sentiment and decided to move on. "Now then in the meantime, let's try thinking what else is doable here."

Matsubara sighed as he reached to the roof. They made no progress on the brainstorming session. Muse hadn't been helping him much on expanding the scenes. Sure, the foundation was there but the finer details needed more work. Maybe another scene with the little girl is needed to reinforce Selesia's newfound powers. Then again, that's an external perspective, not intrinsic. Would that do the job in the first place?

The Muse had been gnawing at the problem and had no answer. A smoke for now would be good to calm it down into something intelligible. Unfortunately the building didn't have a smoking room, the roof will have to do.

Reaching the roof was a feat. A huff of breath and his worn legs reached the final steps. I need to get in shape. Grabbing the handle of the door, he heard voices behind it. Sharp ones. Matsubara pushed the door quiet and gentle. Selesia was standing by the edge of the roof, her hair being tossed back by the wind. What was Selesia doing here?

She was glaring at a particular white haired man. Archer said, his voice irritated. "I wish I didn't have to stand to this idiocy."

"Don't get ahead of yourself." Selesia glared at him.

"Why are you so persistent in bothering me with every annoying problem? You have Yuya here, right beside you to help with your needs."

Yuya Mirokuji shrugged with the universal don't know gesture. Matsubara noticed her squeezing her fist before saying. "I'll give you the benefit of the doubt and ask you this first. Did you know Altair before we did?"

"If that is how your benefit of doubt is, I think you'd make a perfect fit for a court jury."

"I've talked to Hideaki."

The man sighed. "I knew the kid was the weakest link. Didn't imagine he'd break so easily." He lifted his chin and met their gaze. "Yes, I did. What about it?"

Selesia's voice intensified. "Why didn't you tell us about it?"
"Did the boy tell you the reason?"

"He said about it not being the best time which is utter crap. I don't believe it at all."

Yuya raised his chin. "What's this thing about keeping secrets?"

"Time critical information. Touching them too early would set off problems instead. Is that satisfactory enough for you?"

"So, Archer, what is that stuff about?"

"Clues about Altair's identity and origins."

Yuya raised a brow. "Why would that be time sensitive? That doesn't add up. We know all about her now."

"Altair's identity isn't critical but the details surrounding it are. I have been looking into it."

"Without our knowledge of course." Matsubara felt the sarcasm in her words.

Yuya shook his head. "Sure it'd sound like something sneaky but is it worth the effort to begin with?"

"That remains to be seen now. I suggest you stand down and let me investigate this. You'll know about it when I'm done."

"Assuming you'll even bother to let us know about it. When would that be I wonder? When the world's about to end?" Selesia's real mad.

"Yes. I'll let you know in our last dying moments. Would that satisfy you?"

Yuya raised his hands between them. "Woah, woah, calm down you two. No need to be hard on each other."

Selesia bit her lip before toning down. "It's his fault."

"Not my problem."

Yuya shook his head. "You two are insufferable mix. Now then Archer, when do you think we can have something to work with? Metchin and the others can pitch in on that while you continue digging."

"I don't need any of you on it."

Selesia sighed. "Speaks the man who tries to handle everything himself."

Yuya clapped his hand. "Sure, I get it sounds top secret and all that. However since we're in the loop, it's the least we can do to make things go faster isn't it?"

"Too many cooks spoil the broth." Archer answered.

"I know I'm not the sneaky kind but I know how to read things behind the lines. You can leave that to me." Yuya assured.

"It doesn't matter. We cannot trust Archer. Yuya, I did tell you about his past. Would you believe such a man who tried to kill his past self?" Selesia wasn't taking any of it. Did I really make her that..."
"That kind of stuff isn't my thing. However if you hate yourself that much, it's something worth working on to change rather than stick to it."

"That's something a man on the run would say."

"What's that you said?" Yuya raised his voice with narrowed eyes. "I'm trying to work things out between you two and you decide to start insult me. That isn't cool."

Archer snorted. "Throwing insults is in my blood after all." Selesia kept a hand close to her sword.

Matsubara knew a screwed up situation when he saw one. *If they blew up now, the whole building might go under.* He pushed past the door with his hands up. "Calm down people. I mean we can be civil here."

He felt the glare from his Creation. "How long were you here?"

Matsubara scratched his cheek. "Since the start actually. I'm sure Archer here has a reason to do it. Now that we know about it, we can help." He turned towards Archer. "I know you like your thing but we can do something, even if it's a little." The gaze in response was a poker face.

"Thanks but no thanks."

"He was supposed to be a hero. One of the good guys yet keeping secrets around us for no clear purpose," Selesia said.

Yuya chipped in with an irate breath. "An Anti-Hero more like."

"The pot calling the kettle black." Archer chided. "We are heroes but that doesn't make us all grand and noble girl. Honour and hero are not mutually inclusive."

Selesia turned towards Matsubara. Some deep thoughts in her mind. "Since it came to this, I'm letting this slide for now. Give us results and keep us informed about it, daily." *No she isn't.*

Archer raised a brow before turning around. "We'll keep in touch. Just maybe." The man leapt off the building. Matsubara leaned over the edge to see the small red speckle landing into the bushes nearby.

"We shall see about that, Archer." Her glare turned towards him. "Did you plan that last bit?"

Matsubara chose to hold his ground. "I know what you were thinking and going to do. If I wasn't here, you'd probably do it."

"You already know why I would."

"I know and that's why I suggest you to understand a little more about him as well. I don't know him as well as you but I know enough."

Selesia said nothing as she went down the stairs. Yuya gave a pat on the back as he passed by. "Whatever you did... I guess, it's better for all of us." Both sides were grumpy. Who knows what could've happened. Matsubara didn't know what to do. *Yeah, that smoke now would be great.*

Curtains were drawn, leaving little light to enter the room. Books were scattered everywhere. Sota leaned back against the chair, his eyes in a long stare at the black monitor screen. The suffocating
grip around his heart. The predator smile of Magane Chikujoin remained plastered inside the mind. The way she talked about Meteora and Mamika was so sure and certain. He tried to remember the time he met the Magical Girl Slayer.

It was a few days ago. He didn't know whether it was by coincidence. Mamika Kirameki found him inside the train towards home. She recognised him from the other day and wanted to talk with him.

Ufotable cafe was the nearest place from the station for privacy. "Enjoy your meal." The waitress said as she served the cups of coffee.

Mamika reached for the jug at the side. She said as milk entered the black coffee. The brown mix felt similar to his feelings at the moment. "Do you know my story?"

Sota turned his gaze away from the drink. "Yeah."

"I see." She settled the jug down, her eyes meeting with his. She focused on stirring her drink, eyes absent.

Sota felt the silence gripping around his shoulders. The girl, felt odd. Far too quiet unlike her energetic self. He added. "I think it's suited for kids but even then it's still a good story to enjoy."

"That's good." A faint smile on her lips. "I am sorry for saying this so late but I'd like to know your name." She placed a hand by her heart. "My name is Mamika Kirameki, glad meet you."

Sota smiled. Some of her vigour came back. "The name's Sota Mizushino."

She clasped her fingers together. "When we first met at Sunshine, I think I was the same 'Magical Slayer Mamika' that everyone knows about." Her gaze dropped to the drink. "Now, I don't know if that's what I still am."

Sota was puzzled. Why would she say that?

She continued to speak. "I don't want to make a mistake for the sake of everyone in my story. No, for everyone in all worlds. Being a Magical Slayer compels me to do it although it sounds really stupid." Her eyes returned to meet his, their focus returned. "I don't want to say this but I have something really important to ask someone on the side that was supposed to be my enemy."

Sota leaned forward. "I am not your enemy. We aren't your enemies."

"That is nice to hear. I am really glad." Mamika nodded, a faint smile on her lips. "I'm sorry that things had to become that way." A slight red tinge grew on her cheeks. "In my world, believing in things is what gave me power."

She clasped her hands. "After being here for a while, I realise that this place might be different. That believing in something might be stupid but this world doesn't make it stupid either."

"For some things can only be solved by believing in something. I want to believe this. If you will continue to like my story, for my sake, for the sake of everyone. I want you to tell me the truth. Tell me the truth that I'm looking for."

Sota nodded. "What is this truth that you looking for?"

"I heard your name from the Military Princess. She knows you and my instinct tells me that you know her too."
Everything stopped. Mind and heart to a complete standstill. The will to answer turned into a black wall of pain. Why that? Amongst anything possible, it was the wrong question.

The squeeze in his chest. Should he tell her? If he did, what he was hoping to bury would come back. He closed his eyes and shook his head. 'I'm sorry. I don't know anything.' Sota felt something touch his hand.

"Sota, please." Her fingers were atop his. Warm like a real person. Fingers locked together. They felt so gentle. Was it something that he was looking for? This sense of hope against the darkness?

Turning to see Mamika was strange. Her eyes were lit, like a blazing fire, yet soft that would not burn anything it touches. Mamika stood closer towards him, her voice soft in comparison. "Please."

The wall cracked. If she could believe, maybe he just has to believe the squeezed her hand. "I got it. I won't lie to you."

"Thank you." Mamika let go and returned to her seat. Sota tried to dismiss the lost warm feeling. It wouldn't go away. She asked. "Do you know her? The Military Uniform Princess."

Sota took a breath before nodding. "I know her." He hadn't remembered her the first time they met in the short glimpse within Selesia's world. However the growing familiarity compelled him to look up on it. Finding the music video was enough to jog his memory. The rest, was better not spoken.

"The person known as 'The Seeker of a Thousand Miles' told me about her."

Sota paused for a second. "You mean Meteora."

Mamika nodded. "She said that the Military Uniform Princess isn't gathering us here to change the world. And she is planning something very bad. Is the Military Uniform Princess someone who would do something like that?"

Sota tightened the grip around the legs of his pants. "I think so. She is, Altair is my… I think she really hates this world."

"I see. That is her name" Mamika closed her eyes. "Why does she hate this place?"

His throat clammed up. "I don't know. Honest. I feel in my heart it's because of something, something very bad that happened." Finding the right words was hard. To express something like this, it felt like a crawl through the mud.

"Something very bad happened to her. She felt it was horrible and wants revenge. Is that right?" Her words were so soft and encouraging.

Was it what Altair wanted? He nodded anyway. Her gaze softened. "I understand it is hard. We will stop here. You have given me enough. It has been helpful to me." She stood up with a small bow. "Thank you so much for your time."

Sota felt a little down. "I'm sorry." What he wanted to help was so little yet appreciated like gold. He asked as she stood up. "What are you going to do?"

She turned, a faint smile on her lips. "I will do what Magical Slayer Mamika have always done." He couldn't say anything. Not even when she paid the bill and closed the door behind her. The thoughts in his head were blank like the black coffee on the table. Doubt plagued his sense of being. Was his actions the right thing to do?
Mamika was never seen since then. There was no sign of Chikujoin. How did she know about the conversation? Super hearing wasn't one of her special abilities. *I don't know what to believe anymore.*

Sota leaned back against the chair with a sigh. Maybe he should just reveal the truth. It was an effort to help them. What would be the worst scenario if the others knew?

*My judgement of you had been poorly mistaken. I am surprised that you had done such a thing.*

*I trusted you. Yet you betrayed us. Why?*

*Come on Sota, staying out of the way is one thing but to actually collude with the enemy? That's a bad taste in my mouth. Honestly, I'm disappointed.*

Sota closed his eyes. *No, it wouldn't work that way.* They'd hate him for it. For the horrifying mistake made. *I should have done something. If he had, it wouldn't have happened in the first place.* He wouldn't be here trying to find an answer within the cracks of a wall.

Chikujoin was a scary girl. What else did she know? A single word from her and he is done for. Deep breaths weren't helping to keep him in control. Not against such a monster. Maybe some tea, that'll help his nerves. He stood up to get it when the phone rang.

Sota jumped before staring at the phone. It continued to ring as dread crawled inside his throat. A hand stretched slowly towards it before grabbing it. It wouldn't stop ringing despite the hope it would give up. His stomach churned after reading the Caller ID. He answered. "Yes Chikujoin."

"Oh so slow, Sota. I'd thought you were ignoring me. It'd be very sad thing if you did." He'd love otherwise.

"What else do you want? I've already called him." Sota demanded. Playing around the girl's tricks was like walking through a minefield.

"Woah, in such a rush, what are you up to? You wouldn't happen to be doing something naughty isn't it?" He said nothing. "I know about the plan. Today something else came up and I have something extra to add."

"Extra." Sota hated that word.

"That's right Sota. I want to like to know a little bit more about something."

"Fine." His throat tightened from the answer.

"Oh yah, that sounded very wrong. You shouldn't be saying it that way to a friend." He clenched his teeth. "I'm sure you're thinking how troublesome Magane is right now."

Sota squeezed the armrest of his chair. He wished it could break, just like her neck. "I'm, I'm sorry Chikujoin. Please forgive me."

"That's much better." That voice of hers, so condescending. It felt like being a small bug waiting to be crushed under her feet.

"What do you want to know?" The question came and it struck him as odd. "Why, why do you need something like that?"

"Hmm, how about you take a guess?"
"I know it isn't for a good thing but to do something like that. That's horrible."

"You know it's horrible yet you do it anyway because you have to. Isn't that such a hypocrite?" Her laugh in the phone was painful. He bit his lip and told her what she wanted.

"That wasn't so hard wasn't it?" The snicker grated against him. "Ta ta Sota." The call ended. Sota dropped onto the bed, fighting the exhaustion on his back. Trapped in a corner by gunpoint. No escape in sight. What the hell should he do?

At first, she didn't realise her existence. A life that had no form. No thoughts. No sentience. It had been slow, methodical to grow. One emotion to another. Each, akin to a step from a drawing to image, to art. Video taken to form her mind. Her God poured emotions into every fibre of art. Each line, sketch an art that represented her desires and wishes to the world. Fragments of those memories were still remembered of a life she never experienced. Then everything was turned on like a switch.

The world she lived in was a dark place. A place of war and death. She was its Reaper and bringing justice upon those who have sinned. The Holopsicon later revealed the truth. The world she lived in was false. An imaginary world amongst hundreds of similar ones. All created by the Gods of Creation.

The world was so bright, vibrant, ever changing. The people smiled with joy and hope carried in their hearts. The world her God lived in was bright, changing and filled with hope. It felt good to see something so strange but warming. Creation wanted to see her Creator. Who could have been so extraordinary? The Gods paid no heed as she travelled across the city. The First Movement of the Cosmos told where she needed to meet her God. It didn't tell the horror behind the doors.

Her God was murdered. Death by suicide.

Rain thundered as she stood outside the morgue. A gruesome passing, crushed by a train. Watching the zipped up black bag containing her God bored a hole to drain her heart dry. A memory she never want to see again. In the aftermath, she visited her God's abode. The room was locked, her works abandoned in a growing coat of dust. An armoured hand brushed it aside. She saw the paper that led to her birth. A picture of her, the very first prototype. Accessing the information within the computer was piecemeal.

The answers were inside. A journal, years of history digested in seconds. At first, the life she had was quiet. Simple and with joys of drawing. Art as a form of expression. The work she improved into refined art, recognised even by amongst the best of the industry. Her Creator, a rising star. The reckoning began.

Day by day, God suffered the hate. Resentment bled across the paper. Prayer of hope begged for it to stop. The growing despair for salvation. Days turned to weeks. Week turned to a month without a sight of the end. Unable to voice a resistance. Unable to take it much more. She drew her final creation and named it after a Star. The star was the final hope.

Within the cloud of darkness, there was a small joy within. A young boy, Sota Mizushino. In the face of her pleas, he went silent. A coward. She should have ended his existence if it wasn't for the one message.

_I had a lot of fun at the event. I hope you don ’t mind me saying this. That was the best memory in my life. I was really happy. Thank you._

Having found an abandoned area in the outskirts of town, she sat within the abandoned chapel and
wept. The arsenal in the Holopsicon grew by the day, following the path of the other Gods succeeding hers. Applied well, they are strong beyond most Creations. Yet, all she felt was hollow. The power of the world, all of it meant nothing when it couldn't grant her wish.

She forced resurging emotions down. There is little time to wallow about it. The world needed to hear the song of vengeance. Her God's retribution against the world that casted her aside. That is her foremost responsibility.

The Holopsicon pulsed along the threads of her uniform. The door for her chambers opened. An unexpected guest tonight. "I've been thinking about this for a long time." The voice of the Magical Slayer.

The child superhero entered the room void of anything but rock. "Are you lying to me?" Her feet echoed in the empty chamber. "Or are those other guys the ones who are lying to me?"

The Magical Slayer continued. "It's true that there are gods in this world." Another disappointment. Why are these heroes all so bent on protecting people who didn't deserve them? "It's probably also true that the gods can change our worlds."

"But you've hidden something very important from me. We can't increase the strength of creation by disturbing the yoke of the world." Mamika knew the truth and there's only one choice left to be done.

"Disturbing the world only increases the distortion in the worlds that collided. Isn't that right, Altair?"

Altair closed her eyes as she stood up. It is unfortunate for the girl's investigative journey has led to the end of her story.

Bored, bored, bored. Rui Kanoya was bored as hell. Yuya was dragged away by Selesia for some errand in the day. Rui took it to himself to find his own entertainment. The bodyguards though had been a bit more of the persistent side on making sure he checked in back at the cabinet building before end of the day. Surely his hang outs into the city wasn't pulling so much attention. Yuya or the others weren't around by the time he got back. Why am I the only one who needs to check in?

Troublesome. Rui shook his head as he popped a drink from the vending machine. The people working here had already left. Cold juice during the night wasn't bad. Tossing the empty can away, he walked along the dim corridors.

Life in this new world hadn't been up to his expectations. Sure, food tasted better but walking around in the city without any chance to do anything. It felt just like prison. I wish the others were here. Even if he argued with the old gramps or the Ione attacked every now and then at the worst moment, at least something happened. Not so in this world.

Rui sighed as he entered the darker parts of the building. What was he supposed to do here anyway? A crack of light under the door caught his eye. Right, that's where Meteora was usually working.

He took a peek into the room. Meteora was inside, reading her book. He entered with a wave. "Yo Meteora. What are you up to?"

Meteora turned towards him with a nod. "Hello Kanoya, I am studying the ley lines of the world." Rui didn't understand what that was about. Seeing his expression, she continued. "The lines represent the energies of the world in the magical aspect."

"Oh." Rui plopped into his seat. His eyes stared at the book. None of it made sense. "It looks complicated."
"Yes, it is the case for the ones unfamiliar with the craft." Meteora had her eyes fixed on the book. The level of focus within those blue eyes was deep. Like those surgeons back in Energia.

Rui rested his head against the back of his hands. "So what does the book say?"

Her eyes remained unmoving from the book. "This book has not been able to give me a proper answer on the state of this reality's condition."

"What else can the book do?"

"It is capable of doing many things."

"And what are that many things?"

"Shush, I need to concentrate." Meteora flipped to the next page.

Rui gave a pout she wouldn't see before settling deeper into the chair. Older women were always trouble. They would either boss you around or ignore you. Maybe a nap in the meantime would do.

But the night is still young! He should be out there partying or playing games or something else. Not being cooped up in this room with a workaholic. Trying to sleep it off is not the way of the hero. Nope, not that way at all.

That book looked like headache. Forget it, he's bored enough that anything else would've been better. The text had a feel for the old days Latin in horrible looking fonts. Seriously, how do they know what each symbol is? "It just looks like you're reading a static image."

"Avalken text are very similar to each other in contrast to other languages such as Japanese. It was a normal occurrence to those not acquainted with the region."

"Got it." Rui kicked back and rested his feet onto the clean portion of the table. "I'll just wait here until I drop dead." Trying to go home on his own is becoming a better idea. Sure, getting back wouldn't be difficult but Selesia would nag about it. Probably she'll go on and on about how a man needs to take care of a lady and meeting her needs. Seriously, they are just trouble.

A cell phone rang. "Yes." Meteora said. He didn't like the sharp tone of hers. It usually meant a bad thing. "I'll get the rest ready." She ended the call before turning towards him. "Get ready in Gigas Machina. Kikuchihara's people have detected a large explosion in the edge of the city."

Rui shot to his feet. Yep, a bad thing. "How big?"


"It's got to be them," Rui said as they entered the corridor.

"Do you have the exact place?"

"Kikuchihara's sending over the details."

"Go on first. Send it to me when you have it. Just be careful." Getting to the clearing across the complex to summon Gigas Machina would take a while compared to the girl that can fly.

"Very well. I'll avoid conflict until you arrive."

Rui cracked a grin. "Got it. This is more of my thing now. It does make me wonder. They wouldn't be fighting us though. We'd know for sure." Selesia may be a bit hot headed but foolishness isn't a
trait of hers.

Rui heard Meteora's voice. "You are correct. That's what worries me."

She woke up. Hard cold floor. Where... am... I? That's right. swords. Magical Splash Flare. Flight. She was trying to reach Meteora. Must have passed out somewhere. Weak. Trying to move was a battle.

Standing next to her was a purple haired girl. A hand waved at her. "Hi, I'm Magane. How are you?" She had no strength. The pain hurt. A dull throb, growing back. Blood everywhere on the floor. So much of it. Afraid. She should be scared to die. Too hurt to be fear death. Her body was numb.

She cannot stop. A warning had to be given. She turned over, trying to climb to her feet. The floor was slick as a bloody hand clenched into the ground. Her white clothes all stained in red. Her hands gave way, toppling onto her back. A cry from her lips, barely above a whisper. Moving was impossible. The word had to reach her. "Please... Alice."

The black schoolgirl tilted her head. "Alice? Alice? Oh, that hot headed stupid knight from the other day. Bingo." That...made no sense. Magane rubbed blood along her gloved fingers. "Well, I'd really love to help out but I'm not her friend. I can't do anything. If I became a magical girl then maybe but that's boring."

"Please, tell Alice. Altair is..." A cough of blood. "I want to stop her. She's trying to destroy the world... Stop her, stop Altair. They were right. Meteora." It took every ounce of will to speak up.

"Oh, trying to destroy the world. Meteora must be that nerdy girl." Vision flickered black. "Anyway...she's here." It was so hard. Everything cold like ice. Sleep is tempting. It would feel very good.

Something cracked the floor. The shock forced her eyes open. No, can't go yet.

"You... Mamika."

"Does it look... to her? I...of her." The voices were so soft. Who was the other one speaking?

A flash of light. The past of time. A small garden. The day she received her powers. The little fairy, Mirimiri. Her friends fighting evil Akumarin. Life was flashing before her eyes. Wait...I can't go yet. Mamika blinked against it. Breathing hurts.

"Before... killing, whether for justice or for fun... For the sake of my friend...kill you." Why... Alice.

"Oops... trouble."

The world returned. It was hard to breathe. Every breath useless to stake the fire. Alice is here. That's the only thing that mattered. She whispered. "Alice...She's not."

Metal boots clinked against the ground. "Mamika. Be strong Mamika." Alice said. Her grip must been strong if she could feel it. Alice lifted her up. So strong. She saw a worried face.

Black edged along eyesight. There wasn't much time. "Alice...it's you. I'm glad." Everything felt so far away. Cold allures to sleep wrapped around her mind. Just a little longer.
"Magane, tell Alice, please..." Everything turned dark. She carried her voice. "Save that person. Please...that person..." Save Al-

Mamika did not finish her sentence. Alicetaria watched her friend's eye dull. The small hand slacked and dropped to the bloody ground. Life within was extinguished. The body grew lighter in her grip before vanishing into a cloud of blue light. She closed her eyes. A short prayer for the fallen and herself. The knight stood up and turned around with a voice of venom. "You."

Magane tilted her head. "What is it?" That carefree expression from the girl was infuriating to look. Exactly as her plan.

"Mamika's dying wish, what did you hear?" Alicetaria demanded. The last words must be heard. Afterwards she could stab her, if she was gracious.

Magane said with a smile. "Yeah, I heard her dying wish. She looked like she was in a lot of pain but I listened really carefully." She leaned forward, avoiding to step onto the sticky mess. "Do you want to hear it? Do you really want to hear it?"

Alicetaria frowned. The girl's indulgence to cruelty was difficult to hold back against. She raised her weapon. "If you dare lie to me. I will burn you to a crisp just for the sake of my enjoyment." She vowed there would be no compromise. Not for Mamika's sake.

"I got it. I won't lie then. I promise." Magane clasped her hands together. This would be very fun for her. "First, she said she wanted to stop her. What's she's talking about?" She placed a finger on her forehead. "Oh yeah, then she mentioned the name Meteora. That's right. I think she's the nerdy girl you were fighting by the river." She noticed the knight's tightening grip around the spear. A rise within her heart. "And then she was saying that someone is actually trying to destroy the world. That's what she said. Dangerous."

Magane continued to talk, feeling the string of orchestra in her lips. "I think she also said Altair but I don't know who that is. Is she one of your friends? She said to help her." Her prey's eyes narrowed, intention to burn literally sight. "If you explain it that way then everything makes sense. What do you think, Ms. Knight?"

"Meteora." Alicetaria glanced behind toward the pool of blood. The familiar sting of loss in the chest. How could she fail again against that sage? The stoked fire brightened into an inferno. Meteora must have done it. That annoying girl always trying to stop them at every step of the way. It must be her. There's nothing else that would contradict this. It has to be, it has to. She stopped gritting her teeth, a firm resolution. "You shall pay dearly for this." Alicetaria raised a hand and her steed answered the call. Mounted, she flew into the air in search for vengeance.

Magane watched the knight disappear into the sky. Once out of earshot, she broke out laughing. "That was too easy. The way that knight fell for it, oh it's too good." She rubbed away the dried spots of blood on her finger. "Don't hate me. Just like I promised I haven't told a single lie. I made everything clear and easy for you. I started to get so itchy when I don't lie. Dear me."

Magane continued her monologue towards her remaining guest. "There you have it. Thanks to Magane's actions, things are going to be very interesting. To celebrate this moment, Magane presents Extreme Illusion curtain." A small bow before she turned around with a cry of joy. "I'm on fire. I feel so pumped up now." Magane reached for her phone to set the next piece due very soon.

The scene deserted, all that remains was the pool of blood. Time passed as red stains vanished underground. A pair of steel boots landed beside the remaining smudges. Its owner paused as the last
remnants of blood evaporated. A clack before the feet left.

Daichi confirmed the time. Seven in the evening and punctual. Fortunately Kunitachi wasn't that far from Ogikubo. It puzzled him to why Sota wanted to meet him here. A strange idea since there were better options against the Hikari Plaza. The bullet train memorial left there was a proud history but it's nothing particular.

Sota was standing beside the old bullet train at the back of the building. He waved a hand while approaching. Sota waved back. A little tad nervous. Probably cause they're not that familiar to begin with but that's what he's going to solve right? Once the main issue's sorted out, he can nudge Sota about Altair. A little helping hand for Archer. "Hey Sota. Why are we meeting here?"

"Hi..." Sota answered. "This place just came to mind. Sorry if I wasn't thinking too much about it."

"Just curious, that's all." Daichi said. "You look a bit pale there. You're not sick are you?"

Sota shook his head. "No it's not. Just had a few things in my mind."

"That's what you wanted to meet me for isn't it? How can I help?"

"There were a few things, so to speak." Sota shuffled a few steps. "I've heard you were helping Meteora in investigating about Chikujoin."

"Yeah, I am. From what I've seen, she's a cruel person." The dead man's face flashed to mind. Daichi pushed it aside. It's not important to the topic.

"I see. I heard that from Selesia too. Why are you doing it? Meteora and the others are handling it quite well."

"Is it wrong to help when I can?" Daichi answered.

Sota waved his hands. "No, that's not what I'm trying to say." He glanced down to the floor. "Compared to them, we are limited to our reality."

"That's right. However, it doesn't mean that we are powerless to do nothing. That's what I've learnt so far."

"Where did you learn that from?" Sota glanced around, looking uncomfortable. Odd.

"A few places here and there. Some anime and books. Most important ones are from people." Daichi answered with a smile. "We have our own heroes here. They're just less flashy about it."

"That's, that's good." Sota tugged at his collar. "There's another thing, someone wanted to meet you." Daichi blinked. Someone? Who would that be?

"About time Sota. I was so bored listening to all that melodrama. It's boring you know." A shadow appeared from behind Sota. "Hi, hi. Daichi."

Daichi recognised the girl. The cold and sharp glare of yellow eyes hidden by purple hair. His voice was soft even his ears could barely hear it. "Magane Chikujoin."

Chapter End Notes
Thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

I appreciate the comments received. Some have raised up good points about our hero and as it came to I managed to cut him down this chapter. I agree that he is an outlier and I have some considerations that may be better for the story as a whole. Whether it works, I hope to know your feedback.

This chapter had been an important experiment and experience in playing with different points of view during Mamika's last moments. I believe most authors don't write this type of scene where the person in perspective actually died. The jump maybe strange but I hope to know whether you managed to feel it. I am also curious to your perspective for Mamika in this story as I had little opportunity to flesh her out during the 'initial phase' so to speak.

I aim to continue the next update as scheduled. It's been Hell and right now I'm not in the best of shapes. Do let me know whether its consistent across the chapter if possible. I plan to complete the project by August. Whether it includes the edits and uploads, I am not so sure.

I hope for your continued support.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Daichi Hideaki felt freezing chills over his skin. Magane Chikujoin, the murderer is standing right in front of him.

The girl’s smirk vindicated the worry. “How rude of you to say I’m a bad girl. Didn’t anyone taught you some manners?” Each step towards him held a slight sway. Light glinted off the black school uniform, said clothing matching the dark vibe.

A glance around told a bad story. The small hedgerows of trees around the bullet train shielded them from sight. Nobody was around the area. Complete privacy for the three of them.

Daichi turned to Sota. “What’s going on here?” The younger boy turned his face away. *Could it be?*

Chikujoin waved her hands in dismissal. “Now, now there’s no need to rush.” A smile. “I mean, we’re here for a nice good old chat. Isn’t that right, Sota?” Every fibre of being screamed. The way this girl talks, casual yet terrifying. How the hell does she do it?

Can he take her on? No, worst place to try such a thing. Perhaps an escape instead?

“Aha, I know that look of yours. You’re thinking of running away. You can’t think like that to a girl who want to confess you know.”

Muscles tensed ready. *Wait. Beyond her reality bending abilities, she wasn’t physically stronger than a regular person.*

Chikujoin leaned forward. “I know a lot about you Daichi Hideaki. You are a very important boy.”

No time to listen to her. *Force is the answer.*
Chikujoin waved a hand between them. “Now now Daichi. You can’t go glaring at every girl you see. You’ll scare them off hahu.” A glint in her eyes froze him in place. “Stay still or she will suffer.”

All stopped. She? “Who the hell you’re talking about?”

The girl spread her arms up into the sky. “Oh how painful it must be, for the great Daichi does not recognise his schoolmate as a girlfriend. Such a tragedy. If it was romcom though, I’d give it a three instead of two.”

Red exploded. Fire coursed along his senses. “What the hell have you done to Shizuka?”

Chikujoin pressed a hand to her mouth. “Oho. Nothing yet. The question is what I could do. You know the possibilities.”

The frozen face surfaced. Daichi shoved down the screaming form. How did she know? A shiver down the spine. A glance towards Sota was enough to answer. His fist wanted to smash her good. “What do you want?”

“What do I want? That’s something I like to hear.” Chikujoin laughed. “So, how does it feel? To be a sidekick for Archer and all that.”

Archer. Where was the Counter Guardian? “Nothing. What about him?”

She placed a finger on her lip. “Hmm, how would I say it? I’m a big fan of him?”

Daichi shook his head. Utter bull. That grin of hers was the devil. No way it’s the truth. “What is it that you really want from him?”

“Like I said, a chance to meet him. You two get to join me in the date of course.”

Daichi turned for ideas. Sota was frozen on his feet. Chikujoin needed to be stopped. Could he knock her out with a surprise attack? Three steps away from that smug face. One hit should do it.
“A date. Can you believe yourself that it’ll be a date?”

“Why not? After all, everything-”

_How!_ Two steps in before a lunge. A fist pulled back as he aimed for the face. Fist felt air before pain erupted along his back. “Is all according to plan.” He hadn’t even seen her move. Chikujoin tutted from above. “What a bad boy, trying to hit on a girl. Literally. Didn’t your parents teach you manners?” Daichi grunted as he tried climbing to his feet. A pair of feet pressed onto his calves. Pain exploded. “No, no, no. Bad Daichi. You don’t want to bring up old injuries right?”

Daichi grit his teeth against the bursting fire below. Why wasn’t Sota doing anything? He lifted his head to look at the perpetrator. “Sota, why?”

Their eyes met for a glimpse. Sota’s were wide and shaking before turned away. “I, I had no choice.”

“Oho, you shouldn’t say things that way. I mean it’s your choice to call our good friend here,” Chikujoin said.

The pain spiked as her heel pressed deeper. Daichi clenched his teeth to bear against it. Those feet are like cast iron weights. Unable to fight; unable to escape. There wasn’t any option. “What are you going to do to me?”

Chikujoin laughed. “No, no no no. It’s not that way. You are going to do something for cute little Magane.” She pointed a finger to him. “You see, I’m a big fan of the man in the red cape.” A finger was pressed along the spine. “I want you to call him to come here.”

“No.” Daichi answered.

“Are you really sure of that?” The finger pressed deep against his skin. A jolt tingled. “Don’t you feel like you are the little lamb, being hung out as bait for the little red riding hood?”

The weight on his calves released yet the limbs were numb like weights. “Silent treatment now. How boring.” Chikujoin pressed her hands onto Sota’s shoulders. “If you won’t call him, I guess I have to use Sota here.”
The traitor leaned back against the railing, his eyes turned away. “Now Sota, you are going to be my messenger.” She leaned in towards his ear. “You know that redhead Selesia right? I want you to tell her that Meteora is a traitor. That she is working with the enemy and they’re staging a rigged game to kill everyone.”

“As if they would believe that.” Daichi spat as he leaned onto his elbows.

Sota’s voice was a whisper. “What are you trying to do with such lies?”

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s a lie or truth. I just want you to do that for me.” Chikujoin’s smug was condemning them.

“I can’t do it.” Sota said. The boy’s hands were shaking.

“Can’t or won’t do it? Ohoho, I mean it’s a mutually beneficial thing for both of us.” Chikujoin let Sota go. “It would be very bad if anyone knew about your secret. Hey Daichi, don’t you want to hear the secret? Here, let me help you make it more convincing.” She pulled out a piece of cloth. The red portions had a metallic sweet smell. Chikujoin sniffed at the cloth before saying. “Mamika found out about the conspiracy and went to see Meteora to learn the truth. But Meteora became very angry after being found out and killed her with a single blow. I mean like Kapow.”

Sota’s eyes widened. He pressed a hand against his face. “Is that Mamika’s…Mamika is dead?”

“Yeah, she died. Never knew someone had so much blood despite being so small. That idiot knight knows about it too. If you think I’m lying then go ask her. Ask her who killed Mamika. I’m sure she’s going to be really really pissed.” She entered a falsetto. “I mean, it’s not like innocent little Magane killed her isn’t it?”

“So much lies.” Daichi couldn’t believe this. Cobwebs of them spun all around that girl. Leaning against the metal railing, every horrid thing was stuck onto her skin and she loved it.

“No, did you kill her? You were the one who killed Mamika. That’s why you have the cloth.” Sota closed his eyes and shied away from the bloody scrap.
Chikujoin smiled. “No way. Why do you think I would do something like that?”

“Because you are a cruel person that would murder without caring.” Daichi said. The bodies were proof.

“Stop lying. Who else would kill people other than you?” Sota picked up on it.

Chikujoin shook her head. “Wait a moment. Don’t just assume that someone’s a murderer. It’s not good for your health.”

“I don’t need to assume about it. The proof is already there.”

“Technically they died from their own means.” She waved a hand. “Not that it matters now, what I want is him.”

“Archer will never listen to you.”

She tilt her head, looking down at him. “I wonder. I’ll give him a choice. Sacrifice you or himself. You’re his little sidekick after all so you should be thankful that you’re valuable.”

“He’d rather sacrifice me. Archer knows what’s at stake.”

“Yes, yes so he does. The Great Guardian of the Counter Force. Protector of Humanity.” The smile of hers was feral, a predator on a hunt. “That is the ultimate test so to say. It would be the very thing he despised. Deciding who lives and who dies.”

“Once I’m done with you, I’ll just give him another choice, another and another. Oh maybe put myself in the mix too with a frilly naked apron. I’m sure he’ll love that.”

Sota hissed. “Such evil. How can you be someone like that?”

“That’s hard to say. I suppose I’m born into the role. Isn’t that right considering how I was made?”
Daichi felt a bit of strength returning. “I’m not going to listen to a liar.”

“That’s right. I am a liar. My mouth speaks only lies. Everything I say are all lies.” Her response were filled with such glee. “You know me but that’s what you think.” She raised a finger. “Ding, ding, question time. To our fellow contestants, am I lying now? What do you think? Do you need any chances?”

What was she playing at? Daichi couldn’t understand. That girl is just beyond comprehension. Silence were their answer. Chikujoin continued. “You don’t know anything don’t you? I said that I am lying but how would you know I am lying about that part? Maybe I was telling the truth? If that was the case, what does a lie of a lie make it be? Would it still be the truth? A lie squared?” Hands spread wide. “Justice, Truth. They don’t exist. Those things are made by people so that they can put the blame on something. Just like what you guys are doing.”

“That is a lie.” Daichi answered.

“Is it? Can you see justice? Can you taste it? Or do you just perceive justice to be the form of retribution you are looking for? Someone’s justice is another person’s terror. If that’s the case, you could even say that we are all liars. Unfortunately my God was someone without the guts to answer me and rather take his own life. Stupid.”

Speechless. They had no answer. How did this girl have so much wit? “So Sota, who do you think is the one who killed the Magic Girl? Do you want to guess?”

Sota did not answer, his gaze onto the floor. Chikujoin grabbed his chin and lifted it up. “The reason she died is because of a reaction from meeting someone. A step by step process that turned one thing into another. If you dig into it, you’ll uncover the inconvenient truth.” She leaned in to Sota’s ear. “A certain conversation at a certain place that connected the three of us.”

Sota’s eyes widened with a gasp. “Altair, its Altair. Mamika was killed by her. Mamika believed me that Altair was trying to do something bad.”

“Yes and Mamika paid the price. That answers everything doesn’t it?” Sota gasped with wide eyes of terror.

Daichi couldn’t understand this. What the hell are they going on about?
“That’s right. You did it. Congratulations. Your hit count went up to two.” The girl leaned close to Sota’s shaking face. “Are you shocked? About killing someone without realising it? That being a murderer isn’t such a bad thing?” Sota dropped onto his knees. “You don’t need to be depressed. It happens all the time. Be positive, because you like it don’t you? You like being a murderer.”

“Why? How can you do something like that?” Sota’s voice was barely a croak.

Chikujoin jumped and landed on the train. “Because it’s fun. Watching do what I set them up to do is really fun. Negative emotions like hate and resentment, I never have those. They are unnecessary. So there are no bad feelings when I’m having fun.”

She placed a hand on her chest. “How should I put it? I have a noble heart. Don’t worry, Sota. What was her name, Aluminium foil? Oh Altair. I’ll lay a land mine for her too and make sure it explodes. That way even the good guys have something to be happy about right?”

Daichi shook his head. Dread grew around his fingers. How are they going to stop this mad girl? Powerless. Helpless against such wit. He had to get out of here. Spread the danger of this crazy girl. Otherwise they’ll fall into the same trap.

Her voice came behind his back. “Trying to run away again Daichi? Just like how you tried to run from that day.” Cold chills numbed his legs as he turned over his shoulder.

“How the hell did you know that?”

Chikujoin waved a hand as she dropped off the train. “Magane Chikujoin, super spy detective. Nothing comes out of reach because Magane is a hero. To think that someone so bent on saving would be a –”

“Enough of that.” Daichi yelled. Never again. “You think that your words are God. That you are a divine being that can do whatever you like. You aren’t one and we will prove it.”

Her eyes narrowed with a smile. “So Daichi, you want to prove it to me.” Daichi felt a chill down the spine. “Then I will offer you a choice. Between Daichi Hideaki and Shizuka Katsumi’s life, what would be your choice?”
“I won’t make a choice. Our lives are equal.”

“Is that so? Then they both have no value.” She pulled out a phone. “It’s time for some fun.”

_She even has Shizuka’s number?_ Chikujoin’s ability had no limited reach. He reached out for the phone but was kicked back onto the ground. “No, Daichi. You can’t be playing against the rules.”

Chikujoin pressed the phone against her ear. “I wonder what demon she’d like by her doorstep.”

“No, don’t do it.” The ring tone dialled as he scrambled. “Don’t!”

“Hey, could you stop trying to be an ass?” A voice interrupted from the shadows. Yuya Mirokuji appeared with a cigarette in hand. Those eyes filled with distaste.

“Kids, People like her take advantage of everything.” Mirokuji tossed the cigarette aside. “They will use you until you’re a husk and then toss you aside. These people are the worst kinds.”

Chikujoin smiled before wrapping the phone around her chest. “That was so mean. Watch your words boy. Do I look like such a bad person? You hurt me and my virgin heart.”

Mirokuji pointed his sword at her. “You’re not a person. You’re just a laughing piece of skin hanging over a bunch of lies.”

“What a cool compliment.” Her smile in complete contrast

“Stand back.” Mirokuji said with a flying sword strike. Chikujoin jumped back and sprinted away. Mirokuji turned around towards them. “Did she hurt you kids anywhere else?”

Daichi answered. “Yeah, I’ll be fine. How did you know we’re here?”

The swordsman said. “Thanks to someone probing his nose around, I had a lead. My hunch led here. Regrettably, I was right.”
Daichi nodded. “So you’ve heard everything.”

“That’s right. We’ll talk later.” Taking a leap, he pursued the Liar.

That left him and Sota to deal with. Sota turned towards him. His eyes were downcast. “Hideaki… I’m sorry.”

Red fire blossomed from his chest. A raging hunger for vengeance. Daichi grabbed Sota by the collar. “How could you do this to us? Siding with the enemy because of your own selfish reasons.”

Sota turned away. “I’m sorry. I did it again. I’m-”

“If you want to talk, tell it to my face damn it.” Daichi slammed him against the metal railing. “You’ve put Shizuka in danger. I’m not going to let you get away with that.”

“Step back Hideaki.” Meteora said. Daichi turned around to see the librarian landing.

When did she get here? Irrelevant. Daichi turned back towards his real enemy and raised a fist. Strong hands grabbed and pulled him back off balance.

Meteora stepped in between them. “I knew there was something wrong. Yet I didn’t expect to see this.”

“How did you get here?”

“There was something that needed investigation. Mirokuji called me to come here and I obliged since this place was along the way.” Meteora turned towards Sota. Her eyes were dim. “Sota, I hoped my words would help you to find your answer in all this. It is unfortunate for this to happen.”

“You knew something was wrong but you didn’t tell us about it? After all we’ve been through, that is what you have to say?” Daichi hissed. Magic Circuit flared to life, an engine that pumped power through his nerves. He gave a glance to his hand. Their strength can take her on.
Meteora’s glare met his. “This isn’t the time for that, Hideaki.”

Daichi stepped forward. “Of course it is. Otherwise when would it ever be? When we are dead?” Sota deserved punishment for risking her. There is no excuse.

“Your anger clouds you. Decisions are not black and white. People are forced to do what they need to.” Daichi stepped closer. A blue shield formed on her palm. “Don’t push this matter. Not for now.”

Sota said from behind her. “I know it’s a bad thing. I didn’t have a choice really.” That coward didn’t have the right to say that.

Daichi slammed a fist against the shield. The knuckles burned before being pushed back.

Reason cried out towards him. Chikujoin was dangerous and he was just as guilty. White and red tugged, the red threatening to pull everything. “I don’t know what to feel. Get out of my sight.”

Meteora wrapped an arm around Sota before lifting away. The boy turned around before taking a deep breath. Not a word dared to be spoken until the boy was gone for good. The source of anger removed, the rage faded and he fell to his knees. Useless.

The pain in Sota’s heart was difficult to bear. Meteora had brought him away to the train station. Announcements in the station called for calm and order. Feet felt weak on reaching solid ground.


“You’ve done nothing wrong, Sota.”

Her assurance didn’t ease the boiling pressure around his chest. “It’s my fault. Everything that led to
this is my fault. Why didn’t I help her back then?” Iron grips tightened against his cuffs. “I felt she deserved what she got. Shimazaki hadn’t changed at all.” Everything felt warm and wet. “I wanted Shimazaki to… but it wasn’t true.”

Sota dropped onto his knees. “I was just frustrated that I didn’t measure up to it.” He didn’t want to remember it. “I made her die.”

Meteora rested a hand on his shoulder. “I thought I was being kind by not asking you about it. But I was both foolish and careless. That is my fault to bear.”

Sota denied her words. “No, I’m the one who was careless. Not only Shimazaki, not only Hideaki, even Mamika. I’ve hurt so many people.” All because he talked to her that day. She used the knowledge to fight Altair and died. The consequence was on him. Murderer, Traitor, Killer. A bad person to the core.

Meteora went onto her knees, their eyes met. Blue to brown. “Everyone will have their troubles in life. They will make the mistakes they will regret forever until the end. However that doesn’t mean that it should be forgotten. If you know you have done something wrong, you can make up for it.”

She wrapped her arms around him. Warmth filled his arms. Her voice soft to his ear. “You will feel many pains along your life. The bad memories will come back every now and again. That means that it’s important and you must never forget about it. Do not look away even as it hurts. Learn from it and continue to ask yourself what you can do. That answer will be the reason for you to continue living in this world.”

Meteora pulled back and stroked a line of tears from his cheek. “The world is undeniably cruel. Surviving it requires choice and resolution. Sota, even if you are in pain and afraid, embrace it and face it. The past is nothing to fear because it is already over.”

Embrace it? Facing the past? “Mamika wouldn’t like to see you this way either.” As much he wanted to deny it, she was right. The Magical Slayer was too optimistic for her own good.

She stood up. “Chikujoin needs to be taken down before she hurt anymore people. Please stay here where it’s safe. In the meantime, please I ask for you to think about it.” The sage shot into the air and disappeared from sight.

“Meteora…” Sota whispered. Left alone, darkness returned. A shroud around his self. Whispers of
loss and despair crept into the mind. Forget about Meteora. Forget about Shimazaki. Run away and end it all. The tracks weren’t far. A few steps was all that it needed.

Sota stood from his stupor. Yes, he must let it go. Accept the pain of the past. Move on at least for now. That meant chasing after them. A normal person against superheroes. Sota clenched a fist. *I can’t do anything. Think carefully Sota. Even If I go, I can’t do anything. I’d just get in the way. And let people die by doing nothing? The thought froze. Another loss. A repeat of failure. Can he afford to let it happen a third time? He let go his fists. They were still shaking.*

The boy who hated him. As much as he hated to see him, Hideaki was right. There were still heroes in this world. He will never be one but at least someone had to try even if it’s wrong. *Embrace the fear and face it.* Legs like jelly, he took a step forward and entered the train station.

Archer arrived faster than expected. Metal boots clinked onto the ground, the red guardian shook his head with a sigh. “I disappear for a bit and you end up in major trouble.”

Daichi tightened an icy grip around a railing. “How are you here so fast?” It wasn’t even five minutes since the call.

“I was searching for a knight in the area when you called. So what happened?” Daichi explained what happened with the devil woman. Archer frowned. “Magane Chikujoin. That’s a very good play right there.”

Of all things to care about, her wit was the concern? “You don’t seem surprised by Mamika’s death.”

“I watched her final moments an hour ago.” Clear and straight through the heart.

“Mamika really did kick the bucket.” Daichi took a deep breath. The time spent together had been short but she was honest and sweet. Now gone for good. “Couldn’t you save her?”

“I was fortunate to even see her from the other side of the city. It wouldn’t have mattered.”

Daichi bit his lip. “She was supposed to be a good girl.” Of all people, why her?
“Get over it. It is a war. People die. That’s a fact.”

Red flashed, ticking him off. A click of the tongue before the boy said. “Yeah, I get you.”

“To think that Magane girl can be so troublesome. She sowed dissent and turned the knight mad. She’s going on a rampaging hunt. It wouldn’t be long before hell breaks loose.”

The flash burned anew. “That monster was there.” Daichi closed towards the archer. “You’ve should have shot her! How could you let her live like that?”

A strong hand pushed him down onto the ground. “Do not let your emotions control you, boy.” Daichi tightened his shaking fist. “Shooting an arrow at the speed of sound across the city would’ve been dangerous to this world nor would it have brought the girl back to life.”

“At least you could’ve done something.” Daichi met the grey eyes with all he had.

The archer closed his eyes with a slight shake of the head. He turned around, saying. “As if it was so easy. Enough of the topic, there’s more to be done.”

Yeah, Archer’s right. Pointless to regret about it at the moment. Daichi forced the anger down before turning to another urgent matter. “What are we going to do about Mizushino? He betrayed us.”

Archer huffed. “I presume not by choice. That girl’s more dangerous than I thought given how she likewise manipulated the knight. You are lucky that you two managed to get away scot-free.”

“Yeah. Apparently her motive here is you.”

“I see.” Archer gazed towards the left, away from the city. “I’m going. Stay here and call for help.”

Daichi said. “I’m coming with you. It’d be easier to bring help if I know where you’ll go.” If the Knight of Ulsterstein was equally twisted by the poisonous words of a trickster, he needed to give a hand.
Archer raised a brow. “Didn’t you hate to fly?”

“Not if it means getting left behind.” Anything if it meant killing the devil.

Archer offered his hand. “Let’s go.” Daichi grabbed on before he was suddenly thrown aside. Rolling about with a grunt, he wanted to swear when light flashed from above.

Metal screeched as a pair of black and white struck the bright reflections. One reflection struck the ground. A clear gaze of his face from a sword. A 17th Century Hanger.

“Ah, Shirou Emiya. It has been a while.” A feminine voice across the street. Small and dressed in dark clothes. White twin tails contrasted against the black uniform. Daichi knew this girl as Archer spoke her name.

“Altair.” Daichi felt his muscle freeze. Standing atop a lighting pole, her beauty was admirable. Yet intimidating with the thorns of a rose. Her unnatural eyes met against his. Feeble instinct was, it knew what to do. Run.

“Come looking to recruit me again? Your magical appearances are getting boring.”

Altair smiled. Sinister travelled his arms. Holding back the shivers was hard. “Hardly. Since your cowardice, I have brought someone more amenable to assist my revolution. You can enjoy your introductions with him.” A silhouette stepped into the open street.

Dark skinned close to charcoal black. The yellow spirals woven onto the black jacket that covered only arms and shoulder. White hair that contrasted against everything else. Yellow eyes that sought to kill him. The weapon in his arm was familiar. Twin pairs of black and red. Sword and gun melded into one. A man that Daichi had never expected to see. Alter.

Archer stared sharply against the deep killing intent. “Who the hell are you?” Eyes widened. “You can’t be serious.”

“Greetings Shirou Emiya.” The man smiled as he spun the gun around his fingers. “I am the bringer of death. She called for yours and I shall deliver.” Fear screamed as a wave of darkness radiated from the dark man. Archer’s stares were frightening. These could outright kill him. Every heartbeat was pounding.
Run

Run

RUN!

RUN OR YOU WILL DIE

Cold feet scrambled upright as Archer said. “Get going kid,”

Daichi felt his voice squeak. “Let’s get out of here.” Fear pulled at the sleeves, trying to drag him away from the fight. Full agreement with it.

“Not possible for me.” Archer said as Alter vanished. Steel shrieked harsh against his ears. Blades clashed with thunder claps. Shock wave cracking the ground turning feet into jelly. “Go kid.”

Daichi turned and ran. The ground rumbled in rhythm to every clash of steel. Cold stiff feet ached at the broken speed record. Far too slow compared to those monsters. The buildings were all dark. Nobody’s around. He dived behind a wooden wall while regaining breath.

The clash and sparks of steel was an echo through the adrenaline. What was he going to do? Think, think, think. Get help. He grabbed a phone and called. The ring for Mirokuji went on. No answer. Not Meteora. Screw Sota. Another number. It picked up on the third ring. “Matsubara, Altair’s here. We need help.”

Matsubara said. “We’re in our own trouble. Alicetaria’s fighting Meteora. It looks like she brought everyone else for a Battle Royal. Can you hold on?”

“No way, he’s outnumbered.”

The voice changed. “Kikuchihara here. I’m sending help to you. Hold on until they get there.” An explosion, muffling any words.

Daichi leaned out, seeing red flying into the air. Streaks of red light flew, shot away by a barrage of gunfire. The battle was closing in. Shit.
Meteora dived through the air, feeling the harsh winds to her skin to catch Yuya Mirokuji and Magane Chikujoin. The duo had taken the fight onto the train before leaving Tachikawa station. Fortunate to avoid any casualties and damages. The trail led to a complex undergoing construction. The two were battling on the parking lot on the completed roof.

By the time she arrived, Mirokuji threw a gust of air. Magane remained still with a smile. The gust went past her unharmed. The marks on the ground spoke the answer. *The air parted into two before reaching her. Not within normal realm of physics.*

Mirokuji was perplexed at the effect. Magane burst into laughter. “Yes, that’s it. You look like a cat that’s been run over. Oh I just love that look on your face. You’re as stupid as you look.”

Mirokuji’s attack had caused itself to miss. Spectrum of reality had been denied. Meteora landed beside the sword wielder. “Be careful Mirokuji. Her power is to reverse cause and effect by making the person under her spell deny what she asks.”

Mirokuji narrowed his eyes. “I see.”

Meteora continued to explain. “The laws stick once they have been bent. Attacking Magane with Kuronagimaru won’t work anymore. Probably not until Magane dies.” He was the team’s main firepower. Being disarmed was the worst case scenario and he must avoid it.

“Damn it.” Mirokuji replied.

Magane turned towards her. “I hate hearing spoilers. Whenever I see someone giving away the secret behind a magic trick, it spoils the fun.” Her eyes intensified into death. “I hate it when people do that.”

Mirokuji stepped past the sage. “Girl, your business is with me. Hangaku.” A spirit warrior appeared, clad in red armour and armed with a long naginata. Floating in the air, it charged forward and struck with a barrage of attacks.

Magane dodged, twisting her form around. The smile on her face was certain. The villain was incomprehensible in her eyes. Hangaku’s attack struck into a metal pole, cutting deep and stuck.
The school girl studied the spirit as Hangaku struggled to free the weapon. “What do you think Nerdy girl? Since the plan I gave Sota fell through, how about making a deal with me?”

“That isn’t going to happen,” Mirokuji said.

“Shush, you’re not the important one doggie.” Magane waved a hand. “You get a chance to destroy Altair. It’s a bargain I tell you.”

The sage was silent. “Are you perhaps scared that you don’t want to lose an argument against me? Even you, Meteora the Seeker of a Thousand Miles?”

Meteora said the safest words possible. “Provoking people and taking advantage of their vulnerabilities. It’s your same old trick.”

Magane waved her hand. “Oh well. Trying to destroy each other would have been fun. I hate forcing things. People should live free or else they won’t be happy.”

Mirokuji spat as Hangaku freed its weapon. “A hypocrite. That trick bag is so full of herself.”

Meteora raised a hand. “Mirokji, do not rush. As long we hold the numerical advantage, we can keep this under control.”

Magane jumped onto a metal fence. “Oh, that’s right. Meteora. Too bad that you won’t be playing with me.” Meteora noticed a light in the sky. “It looks like other people want to play with you too. See?”

The yellow star crashed onto the ground. Meteora banished the smoke aside with a spell. Metal armour dismounted from its trusted steed. This is unprecedented.

Alicetaria February raised her spear. “Meteora.” The face of hers was stricken and taut. Meteora felt the unsettling chill. “I’ve been searching for you.”

Magane gave a thumbs up. “Nice, Ms. Knight. About time you found us. It’s hard entertaining two people at once.”
Mirokuji gave a glance to the sage before saying. “Hangaku.” The Spirit attacked. Naginata met spear before Alicetaria pushed it away. Hangaku’s attacks continued before Mirokuji dived in with a two pronged attack. The knight spun, spear holding naginata in place. The gauntlet struck forward, meeting Kuronagimaru. Meteora felt the force of the blow. *What strength even from such distance.* Mirokuji was pushed back by sheer strength.

Alicetaria followed up with a fist into the ground. Hangaku was thrown back towards its master. The knight stood up. The fire in her eyes burned. “You don’t even know the basics of how to fight.”

“You think so?” Mirokuji jest before sending a gust of air. Alicetaria blocked it with the gauntlet before Hangaku struck.

Magane said as Alicetaria stepped back, avoiding the attack. “Want me to help Ms. Knight?”

Alicetaria turned her ire towards the schoolgirl. “I do not need the help of your sullied hands.”

The school girl took a seat on the fence. “Wow, you said it right there. No matter if they are but wouldn’t you want as much help as you can get even from a cute kitten? Meow.”

“You…” Alicetaria was interrupted by Hangaku attacking. The knight dodged the naginata’s longer reach. “Gotz von Berlichingen. I summon you with this gauntlet. Donnerschlag des Jeghers.” Thunder shot out, striking Hangaku. It sent the Woman Spirit reeling into a metal enclosure that sparked with electricity. Mirokuji narrowed his eyes before darting in to strike.

Magane continued as Alicetaria fended the attacks. “Anyways you have unsettled business with the geeky girl and not the bad boy, right?” Alicetaria remained silent before a swing of her spear sent Mirokuji flying across the pavement.

Magane stepped in between knight and swordsman. “I’ll take care of him. Why don’t you and the geeky girl get together with your girly sides while trying to kill each other?”

Alicetaria did not answer but turned around to face Meteora. It was too late. They’re caught out of position. Mirokuji moved forward to intercept. Magane stepped forward before disappearing behind Alicetaria’s lunging form.
Meteora flew up, the spear missing her by margins too close. *Such speed.* Standing steady in the air, she said. “There is no need to fight Alicetaria.”

“Oh Sage, there is a very great need. Anything otherwise is disrespectful.”

The woman’s glare was filled with red. Meteora decided there was no choice. Book of Thousand Miles in hand, she summoned.

“In the name of the principle of Ars Magnas, just as the spirits create structure from Topos which presides over all creation.”

ATM missile launchers from the JSDF appeared from her call. “The spirits shall refine steel to become the form I desire.” Six of them in hand fired their volley of missiles.

“That will not work on me.” The spear swung, smashing each projectile into exploding pieces. *How can she absorb such attacks?* The weapon remained unscathed from explosive forces.


They aimed in synchrony. Spears glowed in red. A bad omen. She moved as red lights shot forward in a twist of webs. *Must build the distance.* Too close and reacting in time is impossible. What would be the best strategy against them?

All the missiles were exhausted. Meteora pulled the weapons out of the Vault. Minimi Machine Guns fired rapid burst of bullets. They did nothing against the knights firing lasers. They turned towards the host, firing a cloud of metal. Alicetaria held her ground. The gauntlet absorbed the shots before she stabbed the ground. Another barrage of light was shot.


From the ground, the knight was gigantic. Alicetaria approached with slow steps. “I shall not let you
die yet.” The intent of murder was a tidal wave. “You shall pay for the death of my friend, Mamika.” She had to get up. Everything hurt. Arms shivered against the strain. A grunt and she felt everything collapse.

Meteora bit her lip as the facts were clear. There is no chance.

“I can’t let you pass.” Standing between both women was a young boy.

Yuya Miirokuji wanted to add annoying brat to Magane Chikujoin’s list of traits. First by making an uproar within the nearby station and on the train. Meantime, Yuya had to restrain himself then from going overboard with his abilities lest he hurt a random passer-by.

Now in a quiet parking lot, he was eager to bash that girl’s skull in any way. Red spears of light darted around the area. Yuya dodged backwards, avoiding the worst of the barrage. That stupid knight was unrestrained in friendly fire. What an ass.

Yuya swung his sword as Hangaku dived from above. “You better pray to whichever dark gods you pray for mercy because I’m sending you right to him.”

“Oh, how evil of you. Bad boy antagonist you are.” Magane twisted in between his attacks, leaping back and maintaining distance. Won’t that feisty girl stop moving for god damn once?

He heard a cry from the Sage. Metchin is unsuited against such a brutish woman. Yuya must hurry.

“I cannot let you pass.”

He noticed Sota stepping between them. “That fool.” Did he expect to stop that hulking woman of metal and muscle? He moved towards the kid when the voice behind him said. “Hey bad boy, don’t look away.” That girl was irritating. “Since you’re chasing me, you have to make it more romantic.”

A glance along the edge of his sight showed Magane swaying her hips. “Hey, try catching me.”
“I’ll settle things with you later fox girl.” His reply. Barring any use of monsters, the girl was powerless to fight against him. All that dodging nonsense was annoying. Time better spent helping Metchin before she kicks the bucket. Hangaku can handle this pest.

“Oh by the way. I noticed one thing about your doll. Do you want to know what it is?” Yuya froze. Everything compelled him to turn around. “I know a lot of trivia. I was made that way after all. Hangaku, the name you said belongs to a female general. You always have a girl at your side who you can depend on for anything.”

Magane wrapped her arms around her chest. “What a fulfilling life. You make me so jealous.”

You would dare. “Me and Hangaku, we’re not like that. She’s a curse.” Yuya answered. Ever since he acquired her from that fortune teller, it was a nightmare. Nights were filled with dreams of war. Murder, destruction and hate. He grew accustomed to them. As much as he hated it, Hangaku is a part of him.

Magane smiled. “A curse. Scary, scary. That doesn’t sound peaceful. I wonder what kind of curse it can be. Forever bound to love each other together?”

“You…” The desire to rip her apart was growing stronger. He ought to deal with her incessant insults. Sota can buy the time he needs to finish her off.

“I see. Are you saying I should read the original story to find out?” She nodded in delight. “But those kind of curses, did you know that you can get rid of them?” Magane thinks she can remove it? A curse that even the fabled Oracle couldn’t remove? That is hilarious.

She’s so full of herself. Thinking she can do anything even if it’s impossible. “You are really full of lies aren’t you?” His words flew like barbs. “You think with that ability of yours you can do anything. It shows how much of trash you actually are.”

“What should I do?” The devil’s grin grew wider. “I might not look like it but actually I get along with ghosts and monsters really well. I’ve thought about it. What if, what if, I could get rid of that? Why don’t you give Hangaku to me? You don’t make good use of her anyway.”

Give Hangaku to her. Just like that? That’s her way of getting rid of this curse? Absurd. “Give her to you? What a joke!” Pause. Magane’s eyes were gleaming. Metchin did say she denies reality.
Magane said with a smile. “A lie about a lie. It turns inside out on itself and…”

That meant, shit. Hangaku lunged forward.

A snap of fingers. “Becomes the truth.” It struck.

Sota gasped for air as he saw the outskirts of battle. Kikuchihara had been informed and were on the way with help. Now he had to figure out how to stop the fight.

The parking lot was wrecked. Mirokuji was nowhere to be found. Where was Meteora? A green blur flew past to smash into a metal cabinet. Collapsing in a grunt of pain. Blood trickled down her lips. A whisper in his lips. “Meteora.” To the left, the knight was approaching. The glare in her eyes told her intent.

Sota sprinted and stepped in between them. “I can’t let you pass.” What was he thinking? Yet it felt right.

“Get away.” Meteora gasped. Heavy footsteps clinked before stopping. A moment of surprise in her eyes before hardening to the cold gaze. A killer.

The Knight resumed her approach. Sota stood his ground. “Sorry Meteora. I can’t run away. Not anymore.” He addressed the blonde before him. “Alicetaria…. you were fighting against Unterwelt. I know who you are.”


“I won’t. I don’t understand why you are trying so hard to be the bad guy. You’re a knight and the knights of Ulsterstein were the most chivalrous group of all.”

“Chivalry is nothing when people die upholding it.” She raised her arms. “After all, my world is entertainment for your people.” That smile of hers the first he ever saw. A broken one. “Was it fun? Watching my people get tortured and killed?”
“It’s not fun at all.” Sota screamed. Of all people, why did she have to say that? “Watching the people in your town die, made me sad. When the village of Magratz was attacked by armies of Unterwelt, I was hoping you’d be in time. That you’d save them all.”

A cold voice of steel. “Why would you care? You were just someone watching from the outside. It was just a story to the people of this world like you. You all had nothing at stake.”

Anger blossomed. “If you are going to say it was ‘just a story’ then do you mean that everything I’ve seen is just a story? That your life is a fictional lie?” Sota answered. “I felt your joy. The pain, the sorrow, your broken heart. It doesn’t matter when it’s real or not. The emotions I felt from your world are true.”

“Many people know about your fight. They watch and support you in painful silence. Seeing you risk your life, fighting for the things that are important to you. It brings hope to everyone living here.” Sota pressed a hand against his chest. “Alicetaria, we know what you stand for and what you’re fighting for. We watch you continue fighting because we look up to your virtue.”

He bit a lip. “Some of us aren’t that honourable or good as you. We hope someday we can become like you. Someone who can continue to face challenges beyond us.”

“You speak too highly of me. I am not the person you believe me to be.” Alicetaria said. She raised a fist and clenched it. “The important things always slip through my fingers. I’ve tried to be a knight. I risked my life and fought until now to save my world. However, my world is a lie, created on purpose for entertainment.”

She let go. “I tried to save Mamika but in the end I couldn’t prevent her death.” Alicetaria’s eyes betrayed her emotions. “Ridiculous. A knight? I am nothing more than a scarecrow in a fictional world. How am I supposed to save the world?”

She raised her spear. “However, even if I am a scarecrow, I am still a knight. So, step aside boy.”

“I will not.” Sota stood firm.

“It is not my intention to involve you in this fight. Step aside.” Alicetaria repeated.

“I am not moving. The Alicetaria I know would do the same thing. That is why I am doing this too.”
Sins need to be atoned. Mistakes to correct. Forgiveness to be achieved.

“You leave me with no choice.”

“Sota, step down.” Sota felt a hand on his shoulder. Meteora stepped past him. “Alicetaria and I must talk until we reach an understanding.”

Satisfied, Alicetaria said. “Do you repent your actions now?”

“Alicetaria, I do not understand why you have such hatred. I will speak honestly. No matter what happens, I have not hurt Mamika and never will.”

Alicetaria’s yell was filled with poison. “Even now, you still try to deceive me with your sophistry. Mamika was determined to propose reconciliation with you. Negotiations failed and she departed to the afterlife right before me.”

“No, that’s one of Magane’s lies. She is dangerous and cannot be trusted.” Meteora answered.

“Silence.” The spear was shaking. “Silence…please.” Was it despair he is seeing? “I have lost everything I believed in. My world and my ally. I do not know where the truth is anymore.”

Meteora closed her eyes. “I am sorry for your loss. That however doesn’t mean that the truth isn’t there. You just have to find it.”

Alicetaria’s gaze returned to its hard form. “I may be an empty shell. However if I may still be granted a knight’s honour, then in the name of my honour I must have revenge for my fallen friend.”

The spear was raised. “That is the only purpose I have left. You are now my purpose.”

The attack was fast, a glimmer of a swing. Sota felt a hand push him aside. Metal met flesh. Meteora was thrown across the pavement. Horror crawled up his legs. “Meteora.” Feet climbed and re-joined her. A whisper behind him.

Selesia Upitiria landed onto the ground. The concrete cracked upon her entrance. A hope that she made it in time.

“Selesia.” She heard Sota speak behind her. A glance behind to see Meteora wounded on the ground. No clear injuries but sure to be out of the fight.

She drew her sword. The one responsible in front of her. Too late to prevent injury. Just in time to dispense some justice of her own. “Look what you did.” A step forward and a swing. Sword met lance. “A little weak magician is the only one you could defeat? I thought you were a knight.”

The said woman did not answer. Selesia pressed harder. “Come on, coward.” Every skill she threw was barely defended. “You were so proud the day earlier. Now you look pathetic.”

“Shut up.” Alicetaria said.

“That’s right. The righteous one that hurt the innocent and weak. That isn’t what you really are. You disappoint me.”

“Silence.” The fire was returning. “You have never seen the levels of destruction within.” Her offence began to slow.

“Don’t you dare assume I haven’t faced the same pains you did. I lost friends and family against the Avalon Brigade. Yet I’m here doing the right thing. How far have you fallen?” Their weapons met in deadlock.

“I’ve done everything for my Kingdom. I’ve sacrificed everything so that I could save at least one life. All that was for naught. Even here I am useless. I couldn’t protect a friend.” Selesia was thrown back, her feet skidding across the ground. “At least, I must at least accomplish vengeance. Gotz von Berlichingen, hear my gauntlet’s call.”

Thunder gathered in her weapon before shot as a bullet. Selesia spun her sword and stabbed into the ground. Pushing Magic through the blade rose the debris to absorb the strike. “I will bring an end to you.”
“I will not die until her vengeance is complete.” Alicetaria raised her spear.

“So be it Alicetaria!” Selesia darted in with a stab.

“Selesia!” The knight met the stab with her lance.

Both women screamed as they put everything on the line. Selesia counted on her sword’s shorter reach to bring victory. Everything that went wrong, she will make things right. The tips of the blades touched as she saw… roses?


Swords, countless copies of them flew towards him. Emiya dived and darted across the rooftop. Leaping up and down the landscape, firing arrows to deflect the worst of them. Alter spun. Emiya parried with the bow, avoiding injury. The force slammed him down towards the ground.

Emiya landed, black arrow in place, bow drawn taut. “Hruting.” The Hound of the Red Plains flew and sought its prey. Alter deflected it aside before landing onto the ground. Kanshou and Bakuya met their twins. The black arrow dived from above. Alter twisted a gun, firing it and striking the arrow off its vector. The arrow struck into the ground before snapped in half by a boot.

That distraction served enough for Emiya to strike again from above. Twin pairs met. Sparks clashed as they brawled for strength. The struggle was even. Emiya said. “How on earth were you born?”

“How philosophical of you. I’m surprised you have much of a head.” Emiya smirked.
“One has to think more when the alternate has no brain.”

“Touche.” A barrage of swords dove from above. They separated, stirring dust from broken concrete. Emiya kept Alter in eyesight as he glanced at the source. Altair floated in the air. That gallant smile of hers was annoying. As though she earned the place of an Overlord.

Emiya leapt back onto the building. He needed to build range. Can’t afford to let Alter pin him down and Altair to gut him afterwards. The soft droning of air whisked into the wind. Halfway across the city, a pair of helicopters gunships were flying on the way. They wouldn’t help. Not against an opponent like this.

Another wave of swords. Kanshou and Bakuya answered, deflecting the incoming barrage just enough to avoid injury. Alter leapt with a crushing blow from above. Twin pairs met in sparks. Emiya kicked Alter back and tossed both blades. A new pair formed as Alter defended. A twist of the heel, Emiya parried Altair’s fresh arrivals.

Altair noticed the approaching helicopters and smiled. “I have another group of guests to accommodate. I’m sure he’ll carry on with you just fine. Enjoy your long chat.” She vanished, leaving the battle. The odds are turned. A chance for victory.

Alter leapt into the air, guns blazing. Emiya dodged aside and leapt off the roof bow in hand. They traded fire as they fell. Bodies twisting, narrow misses that would have killed thousand others.

Both landed on their feet. Emiya dived between pillar blocks. Bullets chipped away before his own arrows softened the rate of fire.

The worst possibility arrived. “Archer. Help is on the way. You just have to hold on.”

Idiot. Why the hell did he come back just to say that? The boy was fifty metres behind standing in the open. “Stupid kid. I told you to get back.”

*I am the bone of my sword*

That aria. The worst is coming. Emiya summoned twin blades and sent them flying. Catch him before it was unleashed.
So as I pray...

Alter leapt and spun mid-air. Two bullets deflected swords for a brief moment. Emiya had no time to project another pair. Landing on his feet, Alter aimed the gun.

Unlimited Lost Works

Emiya wasn’t the target. Stupid kid was unaware. Reinforcement. Shooting forward arm stretched. The gun fired. In a second, familiar pain entered the arm. A bullet he could handle -

Pain burst free. Tearing through the arm before it grew root. Metal, swords. Growing from within. Emiya clenched teeth and felt blood in his tongue. Forcing prana through the corrupted constructs, they shattered. The left arm was a bloody mess. The level of distortion from the swords. It didn’t make sense. Swords that he once knew, corrupted in dark malice. Grunts of pain was the best he can hold it back.

Stupid boy stood still as he witnessed the damnation. Emiya yelled through the pain. “Don’t just stay there you idiot. Get the hell out of here.” The boy turned and ran. The Counter Guardian could see the smirk on his alternate self.

The bleeding was bad but he would live. If he survived the battle. One good arm left, it would be difficult. He can’t protect the boy. The corruption within those swords began to subside, Magic circuits locking down the tainted portions. Would this Alter be able to use his Marble Reality? Corrupt it into his control?

The situation was familiar. Holy Grail War. A mansion, fighting with one arm against the strongest of the Greek Mythology. Heracles of Godhand with twelve lives. Against such odds, Alter was a better choice. Kanshou projected into his grip.

Bring it.

Chapter End Notes
Thank you for reading Beyond worlds.

Another day, another chapter. Here we are moving forward. I'm sure some people have wondered and mentioned so.
Canon or divergence? I don't have an actual answer because it's something I don't have full control. Sure in retrospect I would be considered the almighty in this story and I spent 2 weeks on thinking about it. It'll be odd but I digress. I won't spoil anything further on this. Just that some may like what I (or not I) will be doing, some may not.

Some people raised concern about power levels and etc. I understand but unfortunate that Archer was the one selected through. How he manages this will be up to him. Appreciate the reviews and support. Hope to hear more from you all in improving this.

Regards
MarksmanKNG
Chapter 10: Survive

Rui Kanoya watched the battle below with gritted teeth. Checking the explosion had been pointless. Nothing there but a wasteland when this fight was the one that mattered.

Kikuchihara’s restrictions were difficult to swallow. The collateral damage would’ve been too great. Invisible chains gnawed at his wrists, keeping them useless. The Refractoral microphones were able to pick up the conversation ten thousand feet below.

“Allow me to make matters more expedient for our knight.” Altair appeared in a flash of light.

She was the one who pulled him to this world. Trigger finger was itching. From this height, it’ll take a few seconds. Back in Energia Ichihara, he hadn’t been able to hit her. Annoying as it is, he waited for valuable information.

Three vehicles stopped by the parking ramp. Soldiers jumped out of green jeeps with guns raised. Rui spotted Kikuchihara, Matsubara and his Creator exiting a police car.

The crowd below stared at the swordswoman. “Selesia.” Sota whispers were loud and clear. Blood spilled onto the ground. Melee was brutal, the spear had punctured through the woman.

Even from this distance, Rui could see how bad that injury was. Kikuchihara’s instruction were to stand back. They were still evacuating the area. He hated watching from the sidelines as they finally arrived onto the scene.

The Creators left the safety of the cars towards the fight. Kikichihara called. “Matsubara, stay back.”

Matsubara turned around. His eyes glinted with a tight jaw. Determined. Rui respected that guts. The Creator nod before continuing towards Selesia with Nakanogane trailing behind.

Selesia screamed as she pulled the spear free. She leapt back, hand clutching a bloody mess. Matsubara said. “Selesia, your wounds.”

“Blood.” Nakanogane said. The shirt grew cherry red.

“I’m fine…so.” Selesia grunted before collapsing onto her back. Her breaths were ragged. *She’s in bad shape.*

Altair smiled. “I apologise for my prompt delay. I had a few obstructions to resolve elsewhere. Some people are playing too much to change fate.” She turned her gaze. “To the one watching us right now, how does this fare for entertainment? You try to craft everything into perfect fitting blocks yet you did not consider about me. How telling.”

Rui was confused. She wasn’t looking at anyone in particular. Who was she referring to? *Figure that out later, she needs to be taken down.*

Altair smiled. “Well then, the stage has been set.” She gazed at the bloodied Alicetaria. “Knight,
behead her. Her death is the herald of the revolution.” Alicetaria was impassive. Seconds went by before Altair commanded. “Blitz.”

The gunman sighed. “Dear, Dear. The dirty work is my job now?” Blitz aimed the gun. Rui raised his cannon.

LOCKING ON


“You.” Blitz’s face was hard stone.

“You pathetic old man, attacking a girl when she’s down,” Mirokuji said.

Blitz chuckled. “Enough with the insults. You look like you can barely stand.”

“You never know until you’ve tried.” That grin from Mirokuji. It wasn’t a good one.

“Then let’s do that.” Blitz raised his pistol again. Mirokuji deflected the shots before leaping away from the group. The swordsman raised a hand and gestured, Bring it. Blitz the gunman pursued.

Altair turned towards the knight. “Unfortunate. Alicetaria, you have the honours.”

“Like hell you won’t.” A Humvee skidded in across the road and shielded the downed warrior. “Open fire.” Bullets struck at the knight’s armour to no effect. The situation forced the woman to raise her gauntlet to shield her face. The next barrage towards Altair were repelled.

The Major climbed out of the jeep before firing his own rifle. “Civilian, we’ll keep them pinned here. Get her out of here.”

The deep fire inside burned. It raged and screamed. Selesia, Meteora and Mirokuji were injured. What kind of hero is he just by standing here and watching them throw their lives at the enemy?

FULL THROTTLE

ENGINE POWER 100%

Gigas Machina's engines roared within its dive. “Kanoya. This isn’t the plan.” Kikuchihara said as he heard the muffled roars.

Rui replied. “I can’t stand here watching. If I wait any longer, everyone’s going to be killed.” He nearly failed once a moment ago, there won’t be a second time.

Altair noticed him with a smile. “The time is ripe to test the pillar.” She pulled her weapon and rested it against her neck. A gun as a violin? A swipe of the sword sent a chill.
“Holopsicon, Twentieth Movement of the Cosmos, Factor Mimic.”

A blue portal appeared behind her. What is she doing? A large metallic hand emerged. What on Earth? Gigas Machina?

WARNING
TARGET LOCK

Rui twisted, dodging the Particle Beam meant for his face. That copy even has my own weapons. The city below prevented a return shot. Gigas Machina raised a fist, slamming into the chest of its alternate. Gigas Clone spun a few circles before stabilising. The surrounding skyscrapers are amidst them. Too close to the city.

“Gigas Machina, this is Bravo Two-One, JSDF. We are lending assistance.” Four friendly signals appeared on the RADAR to his left. Five thousand feet higher in the air.

IFF: JAPAN SELF DEFENCE FORCE
UNIT: APACHE AH-64

Rui closed in towards Clone. “Thanks. I got this.”

“We will support anyhow we can, Gigas Machina.”

“Fine. I will create an opening. Make good use of it.” Reaching level airspace, Rui fired the Particle Beam. The Clone dodged before throwing a punch. Rui countered with his own. Fists, twenty tons of metal jarred against each other. An equal match. Rui body slammed into Clone, sending it higher into the air. Never imagined I would fight against myself. It fights the same way I would too.

A few thousand feet higher and it would be safer to use the particle cannons. He gave the alternate the finger. “Come on you hunk of junk.” Clone accelerated, using the cannons in both elbows. Rui fired both cannons to fire. Purple beams clashed, burning a smokescreen. Now. Gigas Machina dived through the cloud and kicked it up into the sky. “Fire now.”


Gigas Clone turned around, showing its elbow. Rui yelled. “Get away.”

Purple beam fired. The flash swept clean through the two aircraft. There was nothing left. Rage climbed into his gut. Gigas Machina wasn’t meant to kill humanity. What travesty. He screamed, preparing to fire the Particle Cannon. “I won’t let you get away with this.”
Matsubara paused. Why on earth didn’t he bring a first aid kit? How thoughtless. You’d have brought something to help for a fight. Clearly common sense. Frustration ate at him.

That Altair. So small and young yet carrying such a disposition to kill. No, he had to focus on Selesia. Treat her wounds or something.

Right, first apply pressure onto it, stop the bleeding. Matsubara gazed at the wound. The hole was so big. He balled his fists and applied pressure. Selesia grunted against the idea. Darn it, had he been too forceful? How did those paramedics work on such a thing? Reading it wasn’t the same as experiencing it.

His hands were stained red. What the hell is he supposed to do? He heard Nakanogane calling for an ambulance. Such an injury, it’s a surprise Selesia is still alive. The soft moans, closed eyes and gritting teeth tug at his heart. Was it so wrong to put such painful battles in Vogelchevalier?

Hiss of metal flew around them. Pieces of the Humvee cracked as swords stabbed into them. Men dived for cover. One screamed as it stabbed through his arm. The torrent of swords stopped, letting Matsubara to raise his head from cowering.

Meteora groaned before saying. “She’s planning to start the collision of the worlds.” They turned to see Altair raising a sword into the air. A blue platform formed at her feet, pulsing into the sky. A magic incantation or something. Meteora’s right. That was a bad omen.

Meteora said. “You all have to get away now…”

Leave them? How could he leave them? Where could they go? They were the good guys. They can’t afford to lose.

Selesia croaked. “Yes, run away now before it’s too late.” Not even you. How could she say that? Selesia, his creation telling him such a thing. Madness.

Selesia tried to get up. “Even if you can save only yourselves… We’ll buy some time…” A grunt before collapsing. Her face was growing pale. She can’t fight yet she would try to save them. Ridiculous. Suicidal. Stupid, ignorant.

That was entirely unacceptable. The way she’s going about was against everything he’d written for her. How dare her to try changing everything he had put into her just because of something like this? Enough was enough. “You stupid idiot.”

“Telling us to run away. Telling us to save ourselves, anyone could have written a line like that.” He built Selesia who had the pride of a warrior to keep fighting but never stupid to throw her life away. Lose a battle but win the war. Always fighting. Never surrender until the end.

Matsubara never created her to be this way. “I didn’t make you into a character that say such useless lines.” He leaned over towards her ear. “Selesia, listen to me and listen closely. The Selesia Upitiria I created, she’s not going to die from something like this.”

He gripped her hands with an iron grip. They were growing cold. “I would never let her get killed by some sketch that a nameless person made.” That is his pride. The countless hours spent to image and plot every detail within his story. To lose to such a hack is an affront. The biggest insult one could
scoff at him

He squeezed her hands. “As long I am your creator, I’m never going to let you die a stupid death.” If she won’t give up then he won’t either. “Never.” Never to her and never to him.

A glance towards his friend and Nakanogane took over. Instinct grabbed the phone and his laptop. Muse on its haunches, ready at his beck and call. A weapon loaded within his mind. “Marine, can we talk now?”

Marine said in panic. “I got the message from Kikuchihara. What’s going on over there?”

“I’ll tell you the details later. Give me the drawing from the other day.” Matsubara instructed. He opened the short story he wrote the other day. A story constructed of three thousand seven hundred words. *Think. There must be a reason why it didn’t work.* The laptop chimed. Marine’s artwork. All the pieces were in place.

“Matsubara…” Selesia wheezed. The pool was growing. Time is essence.

Meteora struggled to rise. “It’s impossible. We’ve tried revising the story.”

His eyes were unmoving from the screen. “Nakanogane, where’s the ambulance?”

“It, it’s on the way but I don’t know if it’ll make it.”

The stakes were now. Hot fire inside Matsubara intensified. “I know but you said there was a chance. Something that we missed out.” Was there a problem with the scene or something else entirely? How did imagination become reality?

Matsubara didn’t know how to think. He wasn’t much of a smart person. Hardworking sure but in a panic situation like this, trusting himself would’ve been the last option in mind. Muse barked in his mind. It knew something.

Matsubara placed his fingers onto the keyboard and let his mind dive into the world beyond. “I’m still going to try.”

*The moment was growing tighter. The walls of the tomb drew closer to form a coffin…*

A word, a sentence, a paragraph. Fingers continued to speak on their own. The desire to save their child was growing stronger. The Writer’s Muse would lead him through the maze, even as the keyboard grew slick with blood.

*Crimson flames burst around Selesia. Carrying her rage, they burned everything within their path…*

Muse barked another direction and he followed. Weaving words through the path and paragraphs. Time felt nonexistent as the words scrolled down along the screen. Everything was coming into place. They failed for a reason. That reason wasn’t far from reach. One reason. Muse, Selesia’s mother affirmed. Burning fingers stopped. The revision was complete and all it needed was a spark. A light in the dark before it became truth.
That’s it. It had to be the difference. Matsubara prepared the artwork for departure. “I’m going to bet everything into this moment.” He written his hope within. A second before it was ready for send-off. Pray be that it’s the answer.

“I’m counting on you.” He pressed the key. In seconds, a plea had been sent across the world.

Daichi pressed a hand to the chest burning for air. How far had he run? Three, four hundred metres? Was that enough? Leaning back against a wall, he glanced at the hand. It was shaking after seeing blood burst from Archer’s arm. Useless once again.

The droning got louder. Four helicopters flying in the sky in the far distance. Two stopped to hover above while others continued on. The JSDF are here. Emiya Alter was strong, arguably stronger than Archer. Their lives would be wasted.

But they’re doing more than you. A useful weapon or at its worst, a distraction. Instead he sabotaged Archer by being a target.

The speeds that these warriors were fighting are beyond his capability. The battle was almost invisible to the naked eye barring clashes of light. I can’t even see them properly.

Thunder drilled into his ears. The other pair of helicopters fired a long barrage of bullets into the distance. Two gunshots were the reply. The flying machines spun out of control and disappeared behind a building further down the street. Shrieks of metal cracked before silence. A purple beam engulfed the other two, leaving nothing.

Destroyed. That was fate of the ones powerless to fight against super heroes. Well trained men with modern machines disappeared in a blink. What more would a boy like him? Every part of his body felt so cold. Unmoving and frozen in the pits of fear. Useless, powerless, meaningless. A Magical Circuit, that’s all he had.

A man fears not for the sake of himself but for the sake of those who stand behind his shield

The world. The people. His parents. Shizuka. All of them standing behind him. Archer and the others are the gatekeeper against the villains of the world. They can’t afford to lose. Else everyone would die. Seeing Sota and himself fall under Magane’s traps. A hypocrisy to give up. It was absolutely wrong. Never, again. The freezing warmed up a little.

Think. Think of a solution. Grabbing the phone, he called. “Kikuchihara. Where’s our help?”

“I’m sorry. More were coming but the JSDF aren’t keen to risk anymore men against such odds. Kanoya’s trying to bring down the problem now.”

“What about the other Creations?” Archer needed help. Especially with one arm. A blue light reached for the skies in the near distance.
“They’re injured. Altair and her forces are making it difficult. She started the collision of the worlds. I’m not sure. If we can win this fight.” The uncertainty was leaking through.

“Then there is no one coming.” Daichi ended the call. Alone. Archer would not survive fighting Alter at full strength. There would be no help. Except him. A useless boy that nearly got the Guardian killed.

*If you cannot defeat it, then imagine something that can*

Daichi steeled his body. A whisper. “Trace on.” Nothing. *Right.* Every person’s aria wasn’t the same. Archer’s was the firing pin of a gun. What was his? *Of all the times.*


The Magical Circuit burst to life, humming quietly in power. *More power.* The circuits roared louder, revving faster. The core pulsed faster, louder, stronger with each heartbeat. Prana coursed along the body, a swirl of fluid energy. *Visualise it. Follow the seven concepts.*

*Judge the concept of creation*

*Hypothesise the basic*

“Owh.” His fingers stung from the Circuit. Pausing, he tried again before feeling the jab. Each time he tried, his nerves would flare up and hurt. A headache was growing as he bit his lip. It would not be enough. Projection wasn’t working. Fists squeezed into a shaking ball. What are his options? A Magic Circuit useless for fighting or making weapons. What the bloody hell can he do? *Am I just that useless?*

It clicked. One way, done on another’s behalf. The conditions are hard. He might not have the power to do it. The world would reject the idea. The risks were high but so is the reward.

*If the rules of this world go against the concept, I just have to do it somewhere else!*

Feet set forth. Instinct warned. *You’ve made enough mistakes. Don’t risk yourself getting killed.* Archer was injured as consequence. If this failed, he’s going to die. *No way in hell. Everything is on the line.* Even if the price is his life, he has to try.

Minutes passed, running back to the battle. The battlefield was raked with fragments of metal. Swords, scattered and shattered to pieces on the ground. Two blurs of motion, red and black constantly about. Daichi stood behind a pillar and screamed. “Archer.”

Archer’s yell was laced with fury. “Kid, are you trying to kill me for the second time?”

Daichi sprinted between the pillars. He can’t afford to cost Archer another mistake. “Use UBW!”

“Why the hell should I?” Archer projected a wave of swords and launched them. “Wouldn’t it
destroy this world?”

“Altair’s started the world’s destruction and the others need our help. There’s no time.” Archer’s reply was a tingle along his nerves.

\[
I \text{ am the bone of my sword}
\]

Alter turned his guns towards Daichi. A wave of broadswords slammed into the ground, shielding the attack. The large bulk of steel held. Archer stood on a roof, a hard gaze at his opponent.

\[
\text{Steel is my body and fire is my blood}
\]
\[
I \text{ have created over a thousand blades}
\]

Another wave of swords counterattacked from the skies. Gunfire and blades swung to deflect the rain of metal.

\[
\text{Unknown to Death}
\]
\[
\text{Nor known to Life}
\]
\[
\text{Have withstood pain to create many weapons}
\]

The Circuit inside him stirred. It hummed to every line.

\[
\text{Yet, these hands will never hold anything}
\]
\[
\text{So as I pray}
\]

Archer landed on the ground as Alter raised his guns for the shot.

\[
\text{Unlimited Blade Works}
\]

Blue flames burst from below. Daichi raised an arm to shield his face by reflex. A second's pause before he saw. The world of swords. Red sands. Smell of sulphur. Rumble from the gears in the sky. The most important aspect, the hill of swords. Unlimited Blade Works. \text{It’s so real.}
Alter's smile felt disturbing to the core. “Ah, it’s been a while.”

Daichi stepped onto a flat plain. The soft winds dusted the sand along his feet. He picked up a random sword. “Archer. I can get help but I'll need a few moments. Can you buy me that time?”

Archer’s look understood his intention. A grin formed on his lips. “I don’t intend to let you finish.” The Guardian turned back towards Alter. “One word of advice. Speak from the heart.” Swords rained from the sky. Dust clouds gathered, shrouding the two combatants.

There wasn’t time to waste. Daichi carved into the sand. A circle before fitting the pentagram in the middle. Five swords mark each point of the anchor. Crude but it’ll do.

The conditions are set. The time is now. Focus. Daichi thrust a hand forward. The Magical Circuit activated. Warmth flowed through his veins. Power, unimaginable strength, a euphoria. Can he do it? Can he achieve the right one? The sound in the throat, an echo within the hum of energy.

Let silver and steel be the essence

Let stone and the archduke of contracts be the foundation

Let the four cardinal gates close

Let the road from the crown reaching the Kingdom turn

Gusts of wind whipped into his face as it roared alongside. Nothing. Everything counted on breaking that rule. “If you can hear me. Give me a hand so that this world is saved.” Silence. “If you won’t lend a hand, everything is going to be erased. You included.”

Even if the world won’t help, he can’t afford to give up. The nerves pulsed. More. Core revving, drawing more power from within. Feet grew cold. His back jolted with tingling, beyond control. Standing up was tough.

Young one, you would not succeed.

Whoever this is, if you can talk, you can lend a hand instead.

You are not someone of value.

That doesn’t mean I should give up and die.

Many men tried and died. You are nothing.
I know. Save this world, please. Even if my soul is the price.

A foolish one to follow his path.

He’ll hate me for sure but a man’s got to do what he has to do. I beg you.

Very well. Know this that our might shall not be underestimated.

His left hand burned. A red diamond. Yes. The pain arched along the back, travelling into the spine. Stung like jolts of lighting. Prana burst from the sigil, flooding into the circuit. Teeth grit, Daichi pursued.

I hereby propose

Thy body shall be under my command

My fate shall be determined by thy sword.

Follow the call of the Holy Grail

If thou wouldst obey this mind and this reason, then answer my call


Something shot out from the smoke. Alter aimed his guns from the sky. Another flash of red. Archer stood between the attack. “Rho Aias.” Seven petals bloomed, absorbing each strike. The barrage persisted, eating away at the petals one by one. I have to finish this!

I hereby swear this oath

I shall attain all virtues of Heaven

I shall conquer all evils of Hell

I shall deliver Justice to restore right over wrong

I shall protect the innocent, the helpless and the devoted
Senses were numb. Black spots shrouded the eyesight. Throat hoarse and dry. Breathless, feet barely standing. Fading closer to black. The fifth petal shattered. Two left to go. I can’t…give up. Cold fingers tightened around the wrist. The final stretch. The last push.

FINISH IT

*From the Seventh Heaven, attended by the three great words of power*

*Come forth from the ring of restraint, protector of the holy balance!*

He squeezed his fist, every ounce of strength left. The last voice, a scream to the heavens.

*COME*

*SABER!*

A flash of blue light. Legs gave way, dropping him onto the knees. A long-held breath let go at its apex.

White hair that stretched down the neck. Righteous green eyes. The glowing sigil on his chest. Bright sheen of steel armour. The Holy sword that created the legend of the Dragon Slayer. The man’s voice commanded with humility. “I am Servant Saber and I have answered your call for the Holy Grail. I ask of you, are you my Master?”

Daichi smiled. The right choice has been made. “Yes, Siegfried.”

“What are your orders?”

His voice was just a whisper. “Save Archer.” He fell and all went black.

Selesia could hear Matsubara begging to the machine. “Come on, I beg you. Please…” Breathing was getting difficult. A slow suffocation backed up with the sharp pain from the stab wound. A bad way to go.

He did something. Whatever it’s meant to do. But what’s the point? What could it do? Yet she can’t refute him. Her Creator didn’t give up against the odds. Unlike her dying self. *You’re doing your part of a hero.*

The glance of the screen. The artwork Marine drawn. A line of words below the picture.

*I created this new design for Selesia with Marine. If you guys like it, I’ll add it to the story.*
Selesia rested back against the rock. She can’t hold out long now. “Wow, it’s spreading.”

Nakanogane showed the page on his phone. “It’s on the news site. Sky’s the limit.” The numbers on the page was growing. Hundreds, thousands, dozens of thousands. Astounding.

A flash. She wasn’t on the floor anymore. Standing onto her feet. New clothes. The blood disappeared. Her wounds nonexistent. Pristine and fresh from the drawing board. Ecstatic. She reached for the sword. The sword expanded to its full form, a thin line of fire along its edge. “It worked.” Inside it stirred. Strength, hot and powerful like molten flame. Rising up, eager to be unleashed.

Selesia cried out as the blade slashed reality. An inferno surged forward, melting through rock and metal. The air cracked as fire fed upon it. The torrent was strong, ravaging at the knight’s armour. Wisps of steam hissed as Selesia regained her breath. The strongest swing sapped at her stamina. Most important was she could fight.

One more. Another slash of the sword burned up towards Altair. Swords formed a shield, protecting its master. Nothing got through but the pulsing light reaching the clouds vanished. Altair’s figure was… buzzing blue?

The girl in question stared at her own hand. “The physical image is tearing at its seams. A pity.” Altair addressed the group. “Just as I thought, once it reached its limits, I’d be the one repelled by the world.”

Selesia tightened her grip around the sword. That could be a good chance to attack. She stepped forward before feeling the pain inside her gut.

Altair addressed. “Blitz, Alicetaria. The stars are not aligned. This is enough for today. A splendid performance.” Selesia felt strength sap from her arms. Altair flicked her fingers. The large clone robot disappeared into blue pixels. “When the time comes, we shall meet again.” Altair vanished in similar fashion.

A small human shape flew away from the other side of the building. They held their ground, keeping a tense gaze. The knight was the last to leave. Contemplation. Reflection. Truth. Her expressions twisted to meet those emotions. Alicetaria mounted her horse and withdrew.

The soldier behind her lowered his weapon. “Men, stand down.” Sighs of relief came from others under his charge as the end was certain. She turned around towards Matsubara who gave a thumb up. Reality returned. Her grip faltered as energy vanished. The last she knew was feeling the ground with echoing yells as the world turned black.

Rui Kanoya stretched his stiff arms against the uncomfortable bench. The hospital was quiet as the people from the government cleared out the visitors from the place. Gigas Machina had been stuffed quickly into a nearby warehouse to avoid suspicion but not that it matters since the place was so empty. The hospital didn’t feel far off from his world though the equipment looked closer to being antiques.

He leaned for a closer look as Kikuchihara talked with the doctor. “Please make sure the results of the examination aren’t leaked.”
“No one except the doctor in charge is allowed to see it. You have my guarantee, Director Kikuchihara.” The doctor tapped at the report he carried. “Honestly, these Creations have a similar composition like us but their ability to recover is amazing.” A swell inside his chest.

“Even so, they still feel pain just like us. We should help them more,” Kikuchihara said. The doctor prompted a nod before leaving. Kikuchihara turned towards Nakanogane. “Did you say his powers were taken away?”

“Don’t talk so loud Kikuchihara.” Rui raised his hands in a shush. He glanced over his shoulder towards Yuya. The Arajin leader remained seated on the bench, both hands pressed onto the sword. Bandages had been wrapped around his head but it didn’t hide the sullen eyes and tight lips. “Magane Chikujoin beat him. I don’t know the details.” He wasn’t there yet by then.

“At least she isn’t working for Altair,” Nakanogane said. From what he managed to review from the videos recorded in Gigas Machina, that school girl was scary. Life in Energia was so much simpler.

The assurance failed to lift the director’s mood. “There’s no guarantee that will stop the situation from getting worse. We can’t control her so it’s harder to deal with her.”

“Over there.” Rui heard a familiar voice behind him. He turned to see Marine with Suruga in tow. She asked as her footfalls moved in a nervous pace. “Where’s Selesia and Meteora?”

“They’re both fine. They’re asleep now.” Nakanogane answered.

Marine sighed in relief, losing the excess energy. “I’m glad. I was so worried what if -”

Nakanogane smiled. “It’s all thanks to the illustration that you drew. Without it, the world might have ended.” That comment surprised the artist speechless. *I guess that’s a good show.*

Kikuchihara turned towards Suruga. “Where’s Yatoji?”

Suruga reached for her drawing board “He’s at home. Said about a deadline to meet.” Thank goodness his Creator wasn’t that bad of an ass. Yuya definitely had it tough on the other end.

“I’m going to arrange for some guards just in case. Excuse me.” Kikuchihara stepped aside to make a phone call.

Nakanogane sighed. “I wonder if Yatoji knows what’s going on.”

Suruga started to sketch on the board. “I doubt it. He breaks into cold sweat whenever a deadline is coming. Anything else is out the window.”

“Me too.” Marine chipped in.

“Except for the extinction of mankind, deadlines are the scariest things in the world.” Nakagone chuckled in agreement.

When Rui thought the Creators were being cool, now they’ve ruined their moment. “You guys have no sense of urgency. Are all Gods like this?”

Nakanogane wrapped his hands together. “Even if the world ends tomorrow, we still have to plant the apple seeds today.”

Rui mimicked his Creator. “That’s rather optimistic when the world was nearly destroyed.”

Marine giggled. “We have you to thank for that. You all are our hopes and dreams after all.”
Rui rubbed the back of his head, trying to keep the warmth from rising too much. “I guess that’s right.”

Emiya glanced out the window, staring at the hospital garden in the morning. The machine beside the patient beeped on a regular basis, keeping himself grounded to reality. The bandages didn’t carry any more bleeding barring the dull pain that throbbed in annoyance. A week would be sufficient.

He wasn’t alone in the room. Silent to his eye, invisible and patient, the Servant Saber was somewhere but he had a good idea. The Servant's actual existence has led to a horrible conclusion. Other worlds could interfere with dangerous risks.

The Kid collapsed from Od exhaustion. Saber arrived and with the numerical advantage fended off the anomaly called Emiya Alter. Altair’s forces had attacked the other group and been subsequently fended off. That hadn’t been without cost.

Emiya took a breath of the cool air. The world felt abnormal. The coherence of reality was weak that night. It’s strength flickering off balance like a dying light bulb. When the morning arrived, it had stabilised into a sharp but short rhythm. *Like a person out of breath. Funny how reality takes itself after a living being.*

If a Holy Grail war were to happen here, it would decimate the fabric of reality faster than anything happening here thus far. That lead to another possibility. More Servants appearing in this entire war and the image of Alter came to mind.

Unlimited Lost Works. His younger self had a different aria to call upon the Reality Marble. The projection of the man’s weapons didn’t reveal everything. The blurred images of horror, screams of loss did clue in on the man’s suffering. Was he similar, condemned to hell?

The bed shifted before a groan. “Where am I?”

“In the hospital.” Emiya kept his gaze outside.

A tall man in silver armour appeared out of thin air by the bed. Saber took to a knee by the bed and asked. “Master, are you still feeling ill?”

Kid lifted a hand, probably seeing the red symbol etched into skin. Emiya had confirmed them to be Command Seals of a Holy Grail war. Similar to a bird stretching its wings within a diamond cage. The Kid smiled before nodding. “Ah, Siegfried. I’m okay now.”

Emiya snorted. “You pulled it off despite the fact that it almost killed you.”

“Thanks, I guess.” Kid leaned back onto the bed with weary eyes. A growl from the stomach before a chuckle. “How did the battle go?”

Emiya explained. “Siegfried helped to ward off my alter ego. Kikuchihara had you sent to the hospital alongside the others injured during the battle against Altair’s forces.”

Siegfried added. “Your friend was stubborn to rush to the next battle despite his injuries.”

“It was necessary. The fight would not be in favour for them when Altair is there. I had first-hand
Kid nodded. “I see.” He pointed at the arm. “Does it still hurt?”

“Nothing a few days won’t get rid of. I’ve taken the liberty to explain the situation to Siegfried.”

Kid turned towards his Servant. “Okay. Siegfried, I hope you aren’t too mad about the truth.”

Siegfried nodded. “It is fine Master. There is no difference in my eyes to which reality the war is happening. The fact remains that it needs to be fought and while I am not forced to do so, it is a hero’s responsibility to attend to it.”

The boy bit his lip. “Don’t you have a wish? That is why you answered the call for the Holy Grail isn’t it?”

“As long I am alive here, it is still possible to achieve it. Do not worry Master.” Siegfried said. The Saber’s answer kept the boy puzzled.

The Kid gave a faint smile before leaning back onto the bed. “That’s great to hear that.” They noticed something large flew past their window. “Where is Gigas Machina flying to?”

Emiya couldn’t care less. “Don’t know. It doesn’t matter.” The Guardian stood up, an obligation completed. “Congratulations on your new role as Master. Now get some sleep.”

Matsubara listened to the machine speak. Clockwork beep every few seconds without fail. A steady rhythm of life as Selesia continued to breathe through the cold mask. The Creator continued watching her, eyes unmoving.

The wounds she suffered had been dire. The doctors took great measures to get her treated and that by itself was another miracle. The gaping hole in her shirt caked with dried blood attested to it. Meteora was unconscious in the room next door but she will survive. Selesia was in a critical condition and was on a slow progress towards recovery.

If things go for the worse… Hopefully the gifts he bestowed would be enough.

He turned around to face the window. Staring too long would make him face the horde of demons within the mind. The black clouds of a dull morning mimicked his sentiments. Matsubara blinked the weary from the eyes. Sleep eluded him with occasional jolts of paranoia kept him company through the night. There was nothing he can do except to wait. Just like a father for his own daughter.

Meteora had pointed it out before during an argument earlier. It felt ridiculous but now, it just clicked. Selesia was his Creation and in a way, a being given birth through him. Thinking about it made it feel so silly. Yet he could not stop the emotions that ran through him the night before. Selesia bleeding on the floor was rending through the heart.

Always be prepared to kill your characters. That was part of the road that an author had to take. ‘Kill your Darlings.’ It made complete sense. Nobody should have plot armour. Every character has to live and die by their own actions. That was the rule of life. Seeing Selesia on the bed made him balk at the thought.

It was correct but was it the right thing? Is he such a cruel murderer for killing his own children? The Muse of the mind could only reason logic. Muse understood that it was expected for him to be emotional. It didn’t stop them.
Someone stirred behind him. Matsubara returned his attention to the angel. “Are you awake?”

Selesia reached to the mask at her face. Her voice was hoarse. “Where’s Meteora?”

*Just like her as always.* “She’s fine. She’s asleep in another room.” Matsubara said. Selesia glanced around the room. “This is a hospital. You have a stab wound to your stomach remember?” His shoulders felt much lighter. “You worry about your friends before yourself even when you almost died.”

“You’re the one who made me with a personality like that.” Selesia’s frown was comical.

When did he put that bit in? Ah, he couldn’t remember. “You don’t have to point it out. Anyways, I’m glad you’re alive.”

A pause from her before saying it in a whisper. “Thanks.”

*That’s new.* “What’re you saying? That’s not like you. Humility isn’t part of your character description.”

She turned her face away to the other side. “I got a new weapon thanks to you. That’s why I was able to protect the others.”

Matsubara scratched the back of his head. “That’s natural. If you die then I wouldn’t know how to write the rest of the story. You’re an important character after all.” God forbid for Charon to be here, then that man would probably skewer him with a big stick.

“Yeah, still I want to say thanks.”

“You don’t belong to me. It is to the readers. I was able to help you only because everyone accepted that new design.” Matsubara said. If the miracle hadn’t pull through, the world might have ended.

Selesia stared at the ceiling. “It won’t become a story unless people accept it. I think I finally understand the power of this world.” Her eyes met his. Such optimism. “I never thought it’d appear. For it to happen so fast, your story must have been very popular.”

Matsubara stood up and faced the window. “My story isn’t the only one. I’m just one out of many others trying to write their own story after all. Everyone in this world likes stories. Do you dislike them?”

“I don’t dislike them. We just didn’t have many stories in my world.”

“That’s because I didn’t write them in.” Matsubara admitted. Excessive worldbuilding would hurt the story. They called it akin to a writer’s disease.

“Tell me about it.”

Matsubara took a deep breath. Something grew from within. A sense of duty. A mission to achieve, the way for his pride. “Maybe I’ll try putting in some. Although I need to be careful not to mess up the story’s tempo.” The clouds were clearing. He heard uncertainty behind him. “I said I’ll put some stories in starting with the next volume.”

“Everyone will be happy to hear that.” Gratitude. The warmth felt great along his back. It left him to wonder about another thing.
“Do, do you want to go back? To that world.” To return to that world of war and battle. Bleed and suffer to achieve the final victory.

“Yes.” Just like her.

“I see.” Matsubara turned back to sit on the chair. “Sorry. It must have been hard to live in that world.” He couldn’t get his head around Selesia’s frown.

“We get by. You’re the one who made it so.” She closed her eyes. "Sure, it'll feel weird when I go back. They'll think I'm nuts if I tried to tell them that our world was made for entertainment of other people.

“Sorry. I didn’t mean it. You’re right, there might be people who think of it as entertainment. For me though, I didn’t write it just for fun.” Not fun, money or glory. “It’s proof that I’ve lived in this world.” A regular man without any special talents. This was his way, his legacy.

Selesia smiled. “Please do write more nice stories then.”

A smile returned. “You can count on it.”

Today was cold. Rain poured. A large portion of their hideout had been destroyed. A new place need to be found but later. Blitz surmised the cause of the destruction. What a pity.

Blitz had chosen to appropriate a bench for a nap. He noticed the knight sitting at the shaded corner. “You surprise me, sulking here by the corner.”

“I am not.” The voice cracked. “Get out of my sight.”

Blitz lit a cigarette. “The young girl’s death is regrettable.” Silence. “I heard that it was from the sage.”

Alicetaria snapped. “That isn’t any of your business.”

Blitz shook his head. “She’s still an ally despite what you may say. Can’t I not feel disappointed that we have lost a valuable hand?”

The knight stood up and turned around. Her eyes glaring for fiery death. “Do you not have any thoughts for Mamika?”

“I’ve seen enough death in the world I came from. Isn’t it the same case for you?” Blitz said.

“Too much of it. That doesn’t mean their deaths cannot be mourned.”

“If you become too sentimental, it would eat you alive. You may not like it but take it to heart. It will help you.” Blitz took a whiff. The smoke was warming against the cold. Despite how strong she can persevere, taking every loss personally would eventually consume her. For him, once was enough.

Alicetaria met his eyes. “Your words are too cold for someone who lost his daughter.” She took his silence to continue. “Just as you know of my past, I had the time to investigate yours.”

Blitz stamped out his cigarette. “Miracles might really exist in this world. However, I’m too old for
the wishes that would never come true.” *For they were always twisted beyond hope.*

“Do you mean you have no intention of changing or returning to your world?”

“Of course, I do. That’s the reason I am here in the first place. I will achieve my goal here and return. Otherwise Ryusuke would probably suffer without me. That’s right, the rent is due soon.”

Alicetaria said. “Those words are empty. There is no longing for your world as I’ve seen from Mamika.” Blitz chose not to answer.

Spatters of rain filled their conversation. Blitz taken the time to think in peace. Hard to get some these days. The search had met a wall. His Creator Shunma Suruga was nowhere to be found. Seeing the use of the police and military, he assumed Suruga had been taken away under their custody.

Options were limited. A Creation he may be. Flight and a good shot made great mileage in his story but here it would be challenging. Not that his Creator hadn’t thrown enough to try killing him and Ryusuke. Wonder how’s Ryusuke taking his disappearance thus far. Maybe a little panicky at the beginning to deal with the dog but he’ll pull through.

Alicetaria’s words pierced through his thoughts. “Do you trust the Princess?”

“Speak your mind.” Blitz let her talk. It would probably help her.

“I find she is harbouring something back. Secrets of her own.”

“We all have our own closets of bones. What’s new about it?”

“All of that is meaningless.” A third voice joined the conversation. “You speculate far and wide but there is nothing much further than the truth that you already see.” They turned to see a dark-skinned man appear behind a broken wall. The white buzz cut hair struck a familiar resemblance.

Alicetaria narrowed her eyes. “Who are you?”

The man introduced. “Alter. Your Queen called for my service. I answered.”

Blitz recognised the similarity. “Are you related to this Archer?”

The white-haired man huffed. “Yes, I am him. He is I. Yet I am far superior than that pitiful existence.”

Blitz reached for another cigarette. “Good for us. You can handle your own self then.” He heard the clink of metal into the mud. “Leaving so soon Ms. Knight?”

“Your business is not of my concern.” Alicetaria answered as she walked away. He paid no heed to obstruct the woman. Cranky as she is, it wasn’t worth the effort. There’s enough as is it is, like a nice place to stay warm.

That left two men alone in the rain in the middle of concrete wasteland. At least the cigarette felt good. Blitz let the smoke wrap around the neck. “As for you, what do you want to find here?”

Alter spread his arms. “There is nothing much that a hero needs. I do all that is willed for by the Queen. Death and destruction is what I shalt sow.”

*That speaks of trouble.* “Not to my taste but that is up to you.” The fate of this world isn’t any of his business. Blitz pointed to the broken ruin. “You can have your own quiet space somewhere in
there."

Alter stared at the ruin. A moment before he walked towards it. “I must prepare for my ascension.”

Blitz watched the man disappear as he took another pull of the cigarette. The smile on the man’s face. Yes, bloody trouble.

Sota stood outside Room 5A. His feet felt giddy with a gulp in the throat. Tightening it down, he knocked. A voice called to enter. He entered and the next he heard was “I hadn’t expected you.” The host gave him a glare. “Why are you here?”

Sota closed the door before answering the question. “I want to apologise for what I’ve done. Some horrible mistakes were made.”

Hideaki stared into his eyes. Sota kept the gaze, refusing to balk under the scrutiny. “Right. So say you’re sorry, we shake hands and its done. Aren’t we?”

Sota shook his head. “That won’t be enough. I need to make up to it.” After everything, he can’t throw it under the rug.

“That’s right, it isn’t enough. Sure you had problems but you’ve done something wrong. You’ve put someone I cared for in danger. Did you think I could accept it just like that?”

“No.” Sota stepped towards the front of the bed. “I don’t expect you to. We both know I’ve done horrible things.” He placed his hands onto the overbed table. “I understand that and all I want is to make amends for it.”

“So you say.” Hideaki leaned back against the bed. Silence as their eyes met. Time passed before Hideaki sighed. “Now I understand what she meant now.”

She? Hideaki continued. “Selesia once told to me about the importance of trust. Sure, breaking it is bad but I haven’t felt it this hard.” He turned to the window. Was that regret on his face?

“We’re supposed to be the good guys yet we argue and bicker as though we aren’t.”

“Why are you telling me all this?”

“A lesson I learnt and thought maybe, just maybe that I should share it with you. That way only one idiot has to learn it.” Hideaki met his gaze. “I don’t know if I can forgive you. However, I will try to do my part.”

“That, that’s great to hear.” Sota felt the heavy shoulders lighten. “In return you want something back, do you? Like how the whole mess began and everything.”

“I’d like to know but for now, it doesn’t matter. It’s not about me now. Everything else is more important than that,” Hideaki said. “If you want to make amends, then take action. Don’t sit back by the corner and hope for someone to save you. However, that doesn’t mean you can be stupid about it. I’ve… made that mistake.”

Sota nodded. “I know. I’ll prove it to you.”
Hideaki returned the nod. “Good. I’ll be watching.”

The door knocked. Kikuchihara poked her head into the room. “Good that you are here Sota. Meteora and Selesia have woken up and would like to talk.”

Creators and Creations gathered around the centre of the meeting room. Meteora, Archer, Mirokuji were on their feet despite the bruises and the cast. Selesia was resting in a wheelchair, bloodied coat draped over her shoulders. Sota pointed out. “You should be resting.”

Selesia shook her head. “It hurts but I’ll be fine. Just need a few days to recover.”

Meteora placed a hand on her shoulder. “Our injuries will not impede the discussion.” She addressed to the group. “We’ve seen how Altair is planning to cause the collision of the worlds. Previously I’ve said that if we could discover who created Altair we could make a lot of progress. However, it has become necessary to alter this strategy.”

The others gave peculiar glances. Matsubara asked. “Why?”

It was time. “That’s because Altair’s creator is already dead.” Sota interrupted. A horde of eyes turned towards him. “I’m sorry everyone. I knew about it all along.”

“What do you mean?” Nakanogane asked.

Sota spoke. “I knew about Altair since the beginning. The reason for that is because Altair’s Creator, Setsuna Shimazaki is my dear friend.” His voice clamped up but he forced it through. “And I’m the one who killed her.”

Silence. Cold heavy clouds over his shoulders. They waited for him to continue. His hands were shaking. Feet were feeling wobbly. He clenched his fists tight and stood ramrod straight. “Back then, I don’t have a lot of friends. It’s not that I didn’t have anyone to talk to but they weren’t close. People that I can watch the same shows and laugh together with.”

“At the time, I was sharing fan art online. They weren’t spectacular, hardly ever to get a comment or review. That’s where I found her. A rising star. I loved Shimazaki’s drawings. I’d be amazed every time whenever I see a new work of hers.”

“For some reason, she liked my drawings too. We exchanged emails and started writing to each other. It took off like wildfire. We’d be sharing our experiences and good moments day and night.” Sota felt the nostalgia before bile climbed to his throat. He clamped it down and continued. “I don’t remember who asked first about where the other one lives. It could have been me.”

“She invited me to a Hakoniwa meetup, a social networking event for artists, animation and manga.” Sota glanced by Hideaki’s eyes. Quiet observation and judgement. Brushing it aside, Sota dived further into memory.

“That was the first time we’ve met.” Setsuna was clear to memory to this day. Long blue hair with twin braids to the side. Round rimmed glasses. Inside his heart burned. “Despite so, we were familiar with each other.”

Sota continued on about their adventure during their first meet. The time where they decided to head upstairs to get a better look at a talk show. The time they had a close call with Setsuna nearly falling
off the upper stage. When she lost her glasses and put his on instead. An adventure that begun and also the start of the end.

“We continued talking to each other after that and shared new drawings. Mine didn’t get any attention. However, her talent was noticed and she became famous on the site. Even her favourite video producer was interested.”

“When she was known, everyone was paying attention to her. I’ve felt as though I’ve become nobody. A supporter in the sidelines.” The distaste in his tongue. A feeling a long time ago. “I started to feel a lot of distance between me and Shimazaki. So, I stopped trying to contact her.”

The pain in the chest burned. A refusal to speak it out. An old memory to left be to die. He pressed on. “One day, I saw a post on the net. About Setsuna being a fraud.”

“Setsuna was accused of plagiarising people’s artwork and proclaiming them as her own. Someone was probably jealous of her getting so much attention and started it.” He remembered reading the three hundred comments within the post alone. “They were accusing her without proof, throwing baseless thoughts and insults. There’s no way it can be true. I was with her since the beginning. They were all saying spiteful lies.”

“I wanted to do something. She needed help. That’s what I thought. However, I was scared of making things worse. Whenever I try to think of a sentence, it comes to my mind and I felt paralysed.” His fingers were shivering, the very same as that night. “In the end, I couldn’t do anything.”

“And…and watching Shimazaki getting put down made me felt a little less lonely about being left behind.” He didn’t want to remember that sense of elation. “Somewhere in my mind, I felt such an ugly…sense of satisfaction.”

“It wasn’t long when I received a message from her. She talked about her pain. How the others were hurting her and the doubts growing inside. Shimazaki wanted my advice, whether she should continue to draw.” Warmth filled his eyes. It was harder to speak.

“There was no reply.” The right words were hard to find. The crowd continue to spectate the monologue. “After a long time, I realised that I got a message from her on the website.” The deepest part of the Pandora Box was opened.


Dear Sota

I had a lot of fun at the event we went together

I hope you don’t mind me saying this

That was the best memory from my life

I was really happy

Thank you

This is my new story. As I explained before, I named her after a star. This will probably be the last one.

I hope this girl will be loved
The last word freaked him out.

Good bye.

“I stopped contacting her after that. I didn’t know what to say to her. Her words gave such an ominous feeling. I didn’t have the courage.” He felt the warmth in his eyes grow stronger. “After all this started, I remembered that I knew her. I know Altair, Shimazaki’s last gift.”

“It wasn’t long when I found out, what happened to Shimazaki.” Fear returned. The shaking wouldn’t stop. “It terrified me. From my computer, from my phone, I deleted everything related to her. Her number, SNS address, logs, everything. My memories, the records, I wanted to make it all disappear.”

The voice he had was suffocating. “I was scared of what I did and couldn’t stand it. I ran away.” Everything tore at its seams. Tears streamed down, freed from their binds. “I was just so afraid.” Sota felt the eyes staring into him, a reflection to what they would do to him. It might be the time for judgement. There wasn’t any more to say after all.

Matsubara was the first to speak, rubbing the back of his head. “I’ll be honest. What you’ve been through is tough. If I was in your position, I might have done the same thing. However whatever that you’ve felt… I can’t just say ‘don’t feel so bad about it’. Otherwise, you’d be someone without any guilt and I wouldn’t want to talk to someone like that.”

“Matsubara.” Selesia said.

Sota agreed with the creator. “You’re right Matsubara. What I did to Shimazaki was horrible. I think Altair was probably created out of her despair. And now Altair is trying to make Shimazaki’s wish come true. So, I…”

Meteora interjected. “Sota. I understand that you regret it. Like I once said before, it doesn’t mean everything ends at that point of time. There is always something more beyond it. You have explained what is needed, now are… Are you determined to accept the responsibility?”

“Yes.” Sota felt a weight lifted off his back.

“I understand. More than anything, that is what your soul needs.” Meteora said. The others gave similar approval. Hideaki’s eyes remained unmoving.

Sota wiped his eyes dry. Chains on his arms and legs cast free. “I want to stop Altair. I need to make things right.”

“Of course, that is our role. We must stop Altair from destroying the world.” Meteora said.

“How are we going to do that? Everything we had so far didn’t work.” Kanoya asked.

The sage surmised. “Altair is someone unnatural, even beyond our levels of abilities. She has said that this world is the land of the gods. Even if we face off against her using power that surpasses logic, the power of the gods would be the deciding factor.”

Meteora nodded. “As it is, the way for saving this world is clear on one single path. Revision.”

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Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Mr. I am sorry is now here in the story. How will our new Heroic Spirit handle this new world? The summoning part felt more finicky the closer I come towards submitting this chapter. Do let me know your thoughts about it.
A long time ago, some have suggested about alternative antagonists such as Ishtar and Muramasa. Now that I’ve reached here I am able to explain more about it for those interested. I felt that there were greater potential in Alter within this story due to motivation reasons and synergy from both Fate and Re:Creators. This is one of the main reasons Alter is given the opportunity for this story.

I appreciate the feedback about having more Archer. I was curious on how the balance between the character point of view since there are so many characters that are argued to be ‘important’. I’ll be nudging the story’s camera in that direction.
Given the current progression rate, I’m getting close towards the end but unfortunately the chapters won’t be out so soon as they follow the internal review and editing process as shown on my profile.

Hope to hear your opinions and reviews.
Regards
MarksmanKNG
Sota felt the poisonous tension bleed out from his wrist. Sagging weight on his shoulders were lifted. Newfound strength within his hands and hope in his heart. Meteora stood in the centre of the room and explained. "Revision is the key for us to empower us to face off against Altair."

"That's optimistic. However, what is the methodology that you are proposing?" Eyes turned towards Archer. "Do you have in mind to strengthen our native abilities that can compete or give us specialised ones to counter whatever she can throw at us?"

"For the time being, it would not be practical to create specialised counters considering Altair's repertoire of abilities besides launching physical attacks."

"That's right. She changed my sword into a flower." Selesia chipped in.

Kanoya raised a hand. "She made a copy of me."

"That doesn't include the transmutation, teleportation and flight." Archer turned towards the pilot. "Does your machine have a black box recorder?" The young man nodded. "Can you extract the data? That'll give us some material to study." The pilot nodded again before Selesia complained.

"How many special moves does she have anyway?"

Nakanogane placed a laptop onto the table. "About that, I have an idea. Take a look at this." Several videos were played in sequence.

A short battle of Altair against a number of thugs. A strike of her violin before they turned to roses. A musical play with said girl as its lead musician. Small puppets formed alongside, each an identical character forming a cast of assistants.

"Those are the same abilities we've seen." Yuya said. "Since Altair's creator is dead, does this imply how she got them?"

Nakanogane said. "You are correct. These aren't videos that Setsuna Shimazaki made. Someone else inspired by her works made them. All of them are secondary creations of Altair."

"Fanfiction." Hideaki said off beat. "That's a horrible opponent to beat."

Sota felt a growing burn inside. Meteora nodded and said. "She updates her powers through secondary creations from other people. Someone makes a story about her and it is added to her power. It is quite formidable."

"Can we get these people to stop?" Selesia asked.

Nakanogane puckered his lip. "Asking them isn't going to be easy. These people in contrast to us create them for free. It's a hobby for them and more important detail is the numbers. Depending on the fandom, there could be thousands or even dozens of thousands of people creating these works out there. Someone tried a cease and desist once but it didn't work well."
Matsubara shook his head. "In other words, it's impossible to restrain her powers from that point of view."

Hideaki spoke up. "Something doesn't add up. If Altair gains her powers from fanfiction, why are you all limited to your current powers?"

"What do you mean when you say limited?" Meteora enquired.

"If Altair is able to get her powers from fan creations, it should be the same case for you all, there are similar fan creations about every one of you. It would've been more noticeable for older characters like Archer who existed for more than a decade."

Nakanogane offered an answer. "I think it's because there is a form of conflict. Popular characters have a defined limit from their original stories. For a character like Altair, she's more flexible since she wasn't bound to any."

Suruga added to it. "A clash between canon and a fan-based lore. The bigger the story, a higher level of acceptance may be needed for it to work."

"That makes sense."

Meteora's eyes were worrisome. "Given the case, her powers will continue to expand in an infinite manner unlike ours. This is a large danger. However, as of now Altair can't use them freely." Her eyes offered a glimpse of hope. "The restoration power of the world is probably still large enough to throw Altair out of this world if she tried to use her powers carelessly. That was the only reason she held back."

"If that's the case, then we'll be able to take advantage of it. Make us stronger so that we can smack her down real good. That is just my thing." Mirokji's smile was predatory.

Archer stepped forward. "There is a problem to this plan. The world's ability to restore the conditions is growing weaker at a significant rate. It would not be able to absorb too many conflicts, more so when our abilities are strengthened."

"Forcing Altair to use more of her abilities would be like a double-edged sword." Selesia clicked her tongue. "It feels like we would be on the clock if that's the case."

Sota understood the predicament. "Kill her before we destroy the world ourselves." That had a bad taste to his tongue.

Matsubara raised a finger. "What if we had the fight somewhere else? Like a virtual world where you all can fight to heart's content." The others liked the idea, especially Kanoya.

"However, we'll be removing Altair's restraints that way. She's already difficult as it is," Archer said.

Kanoya gave a thumb up. "We just have to be stronger than her until that didn't matter. The sky's the limit isn't it?"

Nakanogane chuckled. "Not exactly but we'll figure something out."

Hideaki nodded. "Besides, we have another ally on our side. Come out Saber." Blue sparkles rained down. Sota was amazed to see a man standing in the middle of the room beside them. The long hair that reaches down to his back. The armour that practically gleamed in the room. He recognised the man.
The man pressed a hand to his chest as teal eyes met each person in turn. "I am Siegfried of Servant Saber. It is a pleasure to meet you all." Wow, a Servant for real.

"Woah, where the heck did you appear out of the blue?" Yuya clapped.

Saber turned. "This is one of the few abilities I have as a Heroic Spirit."

Kanoya jumped towards the warrior. "That's cool! Can you teach me that?"

"Sorry but that's something that can't be taught."

"Nevertheless." Archer interjected. "If we have the numbers and the strength, the battle could be turned to our favour but I doubt it. She is not a fool and we need measures to avoid destroying the world ourselves. An alternative would serve better."

"What are you proposing?" Meteora asked.

"A war of attrition in this world. I advise in putting time to reinforce this reality while taking the offensive. With Altair out of the picture for now, we can push the numerical advantage and defeat the rest of her troops. Altair cannot achieve anything without them."

Meteora disagreed. "That will create more collisions between the worlds. The world's restoration ability is strong but it has been pushed to the breaking point once. I do not wish for it to happen again." Sota sided with that idea. The world was at stake. Making the world become worse didn't sound like a good idea.

"There won't be such luxury to prepare a battlefield. Wars aren't won by defending either." The others had pessimistic gazes. "We attack. Don't let them recover. Sacrifice a little of cohesion now to avoid greater disruptions later on by Altair. Altair cannot enact any plans if she keeps being threatened of being shunned out of the world. Her goons may be heroes but they are still human. They would be easier to handle when exhausted."

"That may be true but Altair has not been doing much directly." Selesia raised a valid point.

"Better reason to contain her forces from having such freedom. Once we have the countermeasures in place, we can go all out to defeat Altair. Second, we have an important advantage in this world, resources." Archer turned towards the Director. "Do you have any form of control of the JSDF?"

"I have some authority to request for their support but no actual control over them." Kikuchihara said.

"Better than nothing. JSDF and security agencies will be able to provide us with valued Intel and manpower. Strike teams and guerrilla tactics would be able to create opportunities for us to take them down."

The director shook her head. "You'd be risking their lives. We already lost men and cannot afford any more." The loss of the helicopters was a strong reminder. Against such odds, can the JSDF even contend against them?

"A soldier's job is always risky. This time, they're doing it to save the world. I'd say it's worth it and they'd believe the same."

"Oi, aren't you rather taking their lives a little too easy?" Yuya raised a brow. "They'll be doing some good but that doesn't mean you can consider them disposable."
Archer shook his head. "I'm not. They are valuable and that is why we will be doing our part of the fighting."

"Who else precisely are you planning to send after them? What if Altair appears during then?"

"You, Saber, Selesia and I. I'm open to alternatives. If Altair appears, we withdraw. We'd achieve our objective, exhausting them in the meantime."

Kanoya sighed. "I definitely won't be out there. Still wouldn't it be tiring us out in the process?"

"The point is not to fight them but rather to keep them on edge. We have the opportunity to rest, they don't."

Selesia pointed out. "You make it so simple as though we could just withdraw whenever we wanted. Altair wouldn't let us be that easily."

"A notable risk but worth the reward of shutting her away for good."

Meteora began to scribble on the air with a finger. Three blue words were written. Creator, Creation, World. "The survival of this world is more important above anything else. Even if we have to face a stronger Altair, I believe it is necessary and a safer option than yours Archer."

Glowing text faded. "We maximise our powers through revision and create an elite team that can defeat Altair. A new world will be created to suppress any influence from affecting the real world. We defeat Altair and get it accepted by readers to solidify the result."

"What do we need to get that idea started?" Yuya asked.

"A plot and setting are needed to create a crossover from all the stories. Without it, there will be no basis for acceptance," Suruga said.

"Before that, we need to sort out the publishing rights of each of the stories and get the publishers to work together. We can't get anything done without their support." Nakanogane added.

Matsubara agreed with his fellow Creator. "Yeah, we'll need teams of writers, editors and the support of the Public Relations Department."

"That's right. All three elements need acceptance from the viewers to form the foundation. I surmise that a big and grand event can create them in one complete sweep." Meteora said.

Matsubara frowned. "It's a battle to decide the fate of the world and we're going to make a show of it? It's not even funny."

"It started with a story then we have to end it with a story too, right?" Yuya replied. Sota noticed the reactions from the others. More enthusiastic in contrast to an all-out war. Marine shared the same concern in her eyes.

"We don't have the time for a plan of such scale." Archer reminded. "Besides there is no reason for Altair to follow us into the obvious excuse of a trap."

"That is a correct truth. Altair does not have a reason to follow us, except her pride. She believes that as an omnipotent person, nothing is above her stature. Such a challenge would not be ignored."

"That is a lot of wishful thinking." Yuya scratched his chin. "Sota, do you think that's possible?" Sota blinked. Why are they turning to him? "You probably know her best amongst all of us at the
Sota contemplated for a moment. Setsuna Shimazki's final wish. He nodded. "I think it's worth a shot."

"Meteora, how much time do we have?" Kikuchihara asked.

"To be honest, I do not know. It is uncertain if new Creations are going to appear or what Altair is going to do to destroy the pillar of the world. Depending on the factors, our time limit will inevitably change." Meteora answered.

"But still we don't have time to waste." Selesia said.

Kikuchihara estimated. "No matter how much we hurry, it's going to take at least three months. There will be many preparations required for such an event. Likewise, Matsubara and the others will need to create the story world."

Nakanogane rubbed his chin. "Three months. That's real tight considering the needed work and support for something of that scale."

Meteora nodded. "I understand. Kikuchihara, we will need you and the government's help to accelerate this plan."

Kikuchihara smiled. "The Government can organise the event but they never went well. Are you going to entrust me with it with the destruction of the world at stake?"

"Yes, saving the world is no small task. We cannot squander on the idea." Meteora said.

"A crossover for each of our stories while adding new powers in the process. Building another world to match the setting. That's going to need some thinking." Matsubara said.

"Given the restrictions at hand, let us set the plan for completion in six months. There is only one chance at this and we should not waste it"

Archer sighed. "Three months is far too long and we're going for six? I'd say this idea is difficult to bite."

"People would be hurt if we follow your plan Archer. Luck is on our side for now but it won't stay with us forever," Selesia said.

Saber spoke his mind with a nod. "I agree with Archer. War should be brief to minimise the damage. Otherwise there will be greater casualties over time."

"This world's safety is paramount. We don't have a right to destroy it."

"I disagree. This world is already involved. There's no turning back."

Sota watched as teal met blue in stern gazes. The thought of war was frightening. Bloody battles like yesterday would happen once again.

Kikuchihara said. "Everyone, enough. There's enough points on both sides of the argument. I'll propose to the Parliament both options and get their opinion. In the meantime, nobody is to go after Altair until I give the go ahead." That slammed the topic shut, for the time being.

Emiya settled back against a sofa. A free hand projected Kanshou. Metal sheen glinted as per its
history. No sense of alteration or corruption within. Luck was with him. Alter was an unknown factor. At this point, he was lacking information on his opposite and that was a dangerous risk.

The door knocked. Maybe he wasn't that lucky. No privacy even in a dedicated room. He allowed entry and Meteora entered. The sage had returned to her common robes instead of the hospital gown. "Good morning Archer. How are your wounds?"

"It'll be fine. You should be worried more for your good friend."

"Selesia is recovering well. I've implemented recovery magic to accelerate the process to fit hopefully within a week."

"That is convenient." Long history of missions without such support had grown him to survive without such assets. Those abilities though when available was a godsend.

"Unfortunately, one ward can be active at any time. Based on my presumption, you wouldn't be keen on spending a week together in the same room."

"You are correct. I rather go to Hell than stay with that woman. Enough beating around the bush, why are you here?"

"First, I've heard that you used your ultimate ability." Meteora said.

"Yes, I did. Point being?"

"Tell me everything that happened during that battle." Emiya chose to oblige. The first part was arriving and meeting Alter. The story carried on to how the kid managed to get his hand skewered and a battle to survive. Said Kid decides to be an idiot twice and inform him of the dire situation. Unlimited Blade Works was worth the risk.

"Upon using my Noble Phantasm, we managed to summon Saber and end the battle." That was enough of a story. What was she after? "Now then, why are you interested?"

"I am concerned on how much disruption your ability can create on the real world."

"Unfortunately, I cannot tell you a precise answer. However, your concern is valid. I'd prefer not to use it either if possible."

"I would like to experiment to see the level of disruption but the risk is too great." Meteora said. "Yes, I should look into that." Probably her own thoughts within.

"Is that all you want to know?" Emiya offered. Being stuck here recovering for a day was a safer option considering risks of assassination but it meant that he wasn't useful. Maybe the girl can do something useful in the meantime.

"Second topic. I am concerned on your proposed approach."

"There are many choices but the best ones aren't always well liked."

"Does the end justify the means taken to achieve them?"

"Yes and no. Sacrifice can be necessary to avoid greater loss than a safer path."

"What of the consequences if the idea does not succeed?"

"You won't be around to see it."
She closed her eyes for a moment. *Greek Philosophers tended to do that.* A strange coincidence for a sage. Her eyes opened on a lighter note. "That is a sufficient answer to think about. I would like to know more about you but I believe this isn't the right time."

"By all means, don't ask me anything about my past. They are nothing of value."

"Perhaps, I can ask this. Is Hideaki feeling better now?"

"The Kid? Not my problem."

"From my understanding, he is under your charge."

"Associate, not babysitter. Again, what is the point of the topic?"

"I understand that Hideaki may have some issues with Sota and would like to mediate on that. As such, I was thinking of using your influence to help."

"Whatever between those two aren't my business. You should talk to the kid himself."

"Very well. Good day to you then. It has been an insightful discussion." Meteora left the room. Now Emiya can spend some time thinking on fighting another Faker. The door opened. "By any change would you like some takoyaki? *Girl, your social context is completely out of the loop.*"

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Two days and it felt miserable. So much to do and yet decreed under orders by the local doctor. Ignoring it would been the preferred choice but he needed to get under the Director's good graces. JSDF assets are vital to the plan. Although it wasn't breaking the rules if nobody noticed he was missing for a while.

Emiya let his mind wander under the warmth of the afternoon sun. Reminiscence of the old days and its important lesson. Fighting in a war against injustice in the old days wasn't as straightforward as the youthful self once thought. A few years to understand how information is power and how to harness every available asset. Servant Saber was making preparations on his behalf for a brief tour of the future battlefield. A valiant warrior but not acquainted with the modern times. Mundane but necessary to utilise the hero at optimal condition.

The bright sun was great to the arm which had been placed in an orthopaedic cast and finally removed. Every bit of time is precious so that preparations can be made. Gut feeling told him it wouldn't be straightforward, if this nemesis is similar in mind.

A familiar presence was approaching behind him. Emiya sighed. "Must I be interrupted every now and then? Especially by a woman like you?"

Selesia Upitiria sighed. "Give me a break. Climbing up here was a chore." Tenacious recovery speed for a few days considering the severity of such wounds.

Emiya couldn't be bothered to turn around. "Of course. So, what's today's menu going to be? That I am a bad guy and I should be sent to the deepest depths of Hell? Maybe you can try the 'I am so evil I will kill anything to get what I want.'"

"Cut the crap. Honestly, you're too snarky for your own good. Everything that you've been hiding about, it's about Sota. Isn't it?"

"No. That boy wasn't worth any thought. If you'd like to, you can put it as evil man seeks to abuse a young boy. That'll bring the headlines."
"You're lying. You two knew about Altair before when Sota was the only one who should have known. You two were trying to protect him."

"Bravo, bravo. Would you like me to tell you that it is 'Elementary my dear Watson'? Again, there is no benefit to do so."

"You may be an arse but not a cruel man. Not when you have a choice. Going about this 'time sensitive information' and all that was an excuse to work things out."

"Selesia Upitiria, I will never understand you. First you rattle me off like I'm a the most horrible demon in the world. Now you turn things around as though I'm some sort of a hero. Which one are you following or is that a womanly kind of thing?"

Selesia chuckled. "There you go again with your rambles. A hero? That's farfetched to reach there yet. You're nothing close to the others that I know. However, I… I will accept it this once. A clean slate from now on."

"Believe what you like. That means nothing to me."

"It might not be to you. But, it does for me, Archer." Emiya heard her steps back down the stairs with the occasional curse.

Emiya took a deep breath. Women, he'll never understand them. Maybe he should've got himself some advice from Lord El-Melloi II in the old days. Rin was just as troublesome but this girl is on another side of the spectrum. Good grief.

A scent of copper wafted across his nose. Right on cue. Saber appeared from spirit form. "Sorry for the delay. I am now ready." The man managed to get himself some basic clothes from the nearby store. A simple black shirt and pants allowed to be inconspicuous when they are in public. The Guardian gave a nod towards the hero and they were off.

Alicetaria February stared as the winds breezed gently in a red sunset. Hair plastered to forehead by sweat and grim. Hunger growled within her abdomen with muscles of the flesh complaining equally from rigorous training.

It's been three days since the battle. She was not alone in this war but what was normally a happy girl is now gaping emptiness. The fox had vanished afterwards. The truth hurts when she had time to think. The fox lied and the librarian wasn't the killer. The girl was deceptive yet she could hardly find fault to that girl. A trickster in nature, Alicetaria had only fell into the whims of a girl obsessed with fun.

No, I'd probably chosen to fall into it. Who else could she blame? Accepting the fault wasn't a truth but it was just easier to do so. A knight princess that commanded armies of thousands yet she can't even succeed one thing. What's another one to the growing list of failure?

Alicetaria wanted answers from the Princess but that girl was nowhere to be found. The others have no idea of her current objective and naturally so. An uncommon occurrence. Thus, Mamika's death was in vain for now. The right time will come.

The sun completed its turn to sleep. Lights within the streets turned on to greet the world. The world once again reminded of its alien features. She's been here for weeks but it still felt unsettling on occasion.

Her purpose here was supposed to be simple. Change her world, restore it to its proper peaceful
glory. That had been her hope for bringing back life and smiles to her people. They've suffered too much.

After taking a day to read a few books, she managed to understand. Mankind was both hopeful and cruel. They inflict or suffer death and still hope to remain triumphant to the end. An era of victory, glory, peace and happiness behind a page of death, deceit and sorrow.

She was alone to make a choice. However, she finds it difficult to decide anything else. The Librarian may not entirely hostile but remained out of reach. Pride demanded the line for there is only solace otherwise. Consorting with the lying fox is dangerous ground.

Mamika's death replayed before her eyes. Another moment of regret yet the stoic nature ingrained since birth suppressed it. Action before dreams. Altair wasn't the choice and that left nobody else.

Except a young boy. Young and weak, he stood defiant against her. His voice spoke much of dreams and hope on Alicetaria. The Creators were watching her with hopes and prayers that she'd save her people. She cannot believe that she alone could save her kingdom. Doing so would be foolhardy yet the warmth in her chest was grateful.

Maybe the Gods in this world aren't so bad. Her journey through life was considered a living hell. Many depended on her for survival and only so. For receiving hopes of others to bringing peace, that was novel.

Alicetaria February, princess of Ulstertein stood up with a tightened fist. Honest answers are needed and she will get them from him.

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Emiya unlocked the door and entered home. The wooden furniture remained untouched. A thin layer of dust coated the brown lacquers. Air smelled stale as he tapped at a rune on the wall beside the shoe rack.

The rune, barely visible against the red wall glowed for a second before becoming quiet. Satisfied, the Guardian stored his shoes, tossed the bag pack onto the black sofa while checking the rooms.

Structural Grasp revealed no electronic bugs. He pulled back the blinds to the balcony, seeing a view of the Imperial Palace. The twentieth floor provided great overhead view and obscurity from being seen on taking flight. Mirokuji and Kanoya weren't at home next door given the lack of music. The girls were staying further down the block.

Saber had taken the tour rather well. The Holy Grail provided the basics knowledge of the world but it lacked a little on the intricacies such as terrain, local culture and politics. Saber must be able to carry himself in the new life in the city.

The smartphone rang. Kikuchihara said. "Archer, I want to inform you that we've finally found Kinoko Nasu."

The Creator for Fate. "I see. What happened to him?"

"The publisher, Type-Moon was contacted by him. Kinoko Nasu is overseas. Said that he travelled on an inspiration for some research."

Good news. "At least he's not hurt. I assume he will be coming back soon." He'll need to prepare several contingencies to avoid blackmail like the two boys.

"Unfortunately, he won't. Mr. Nasu has refused our offer for protection." Kikuchihara explained.
"Despite how much we insisted for his safety, he was outright unwilling to return and meet us in person."

"Why aren't you taking him into custody?" He managed to learn about how the other group got rooted into the government's hands. It had a similar comedic distaste especially when he managed to hear how the calculative sage balked upon the idea of reparations to the government.

"We would but there's protocol that need to be met to prepare for international custody."

"How long would that be?" He asked.

"I was informed it's subjective. It may be several weeks or months." Kikuchihara answered. She didn't sound pleased by the idea.

A rise into his chest. "Would he at the minimum be interested to talk?"

"Mr. Nasu has allowed that concession. I'll inform them to ask for a teleconference."

"Yes. I'll get the computer on. Send me the details." The process took twenty minutes and it left him staring at the computer while it worked the necessary connections. Under Kikuchihara's instructions, the machine will connect to a chat room where the said Creator would be waiting.

A deep breath blew across his lips. Moment of truth, time to meet the man who created him and everyone else within his universe. Emiya leaned back as the connection completed. Was this man someone worth in gold or is the man another sad rendition of darkness?

The image appeared. A second was needed to know that it wasn't human. A green mushroom in shape with legs and arms. White eyes with yellow stars within. A small stick in its yellow hand. The mushroom waved as Emiya shook his head. Another disappointment, again. "What kind of man are you if you won't even bother showing your face?" A line of text appeared at the bottom of the screen.

*I'm a very shy person. Don't mind me, lol.*

Emiya felt his temper flare from the last word. "Damn, you remind me of that crackpot."

Uhuhu, Zelretch. Always liked his penchant for fun. That's the way we are designed to live after all. We search for happiness instead of getting shit done. If only I could be serious like you sometimes.

"You speak that way yet your results work speaks otherwise." Emiya had studied rudimentary details about the man, reading about the surprising amount of depth given for every work requested of him. A perfectionist to the core.

*Ah, I see you've done your homework. Quite thorough yourself and I do agree that it's a strong habit of mine. Regardless, I prefer to enjoy the moment in my quiet life. By the way, did you have the chance to play your games?*

"No. I do have a summary."

*That's unfortunate. It would have been a pilgrimage on your part to travel back to the roots. You should try them, and then a few other games. Bayonetta would be a nice example.*

Emiya sighed. "Enough talking around the bush. Your hobbies are not of my concern. Now then, I've heard you refused to have protection."
Honestly, I am surprised that. I mean it would be great to be able to talk to my own characters but to think could actually happen. That's exciting and crazy in its own way. Still I am sure I am quite fine staying right here.

"Where are you anyway?"

Can't tell. No, they're probably listening here and doing all those techno tricks and all. Thank goodness I have someone who knows their stuff unlike me.

"Aren't you scared?"

Why should I be scared? I cannot fear when I understand everything about you.

"Creations are out there. Siegfried and an alternate version of myself are here. There may be more from your universe, others keener on killing you if they found out. I might even do it myself after what you put me through."

That's nice to know. If it happens, it will no matter what I do. That is what Fate is about isn't it? Besides, do you regret it now?

"No."

Live on. You are a sword, a weapon to kill. That doesn't mean you still cannot protect the people you love. Like how Arturia did. Your wishes do not invalidate your achievements.

Emiya felt the sting of the past. A memory long buried. "Sometimes I wonder if you're being serious or a liar."

Lolololol, I did remind you of Zelretch. For all things could have been, maybe I am him.

"Go to hell." Emiya huffed. Looking at the mushroom walking across the screen gave an annoying sting. "Did they talk to you about rewriting my character?"

Of course they did. They wanted you to be stronger to fight against this Alhair. Reminds me of Gilgi.

Emiya chuckled. The King of Heroes would've be screaming if he heard that. "Quite right you are. So, are you going to do it?"

I leave that for your imagination.

"Yep, I expected as much for your shenanigans."

That was uncalled for. Now I'm not keen on telling you the answer.

"Not that it matters. I don't need your support."

Not that you need it in the first place. Shirou Emiya or would you prefer Counter Guardian Emiya?

"An extra hand would be convenient. What you call me doesn't matter. Now then, are you going to disappear off or can we talk another time?"

More questions and answers for the future. Foresee that within the Counter Guardian, I do. Well if I'm not busy gaming or getting shit done, why not?

"We'll keep in touch."
The team was back in action at the nearing ends of the week. Meteora and Mirokuji were healed from their wounds. Archer's progress was on the finishing touches. Selesia was discharged from hospital but needed a few days more to optimum condition. Kikuchihara's appointment with the Parliament had garnered the final decision.

Both options were to be pursued. The military supported the agenda, calling for retribution on the lives lost since that day. Emiya's plan, named as Operation Vengeful Hound was to be the main strategy.

Meteora's Bird Cage plan was the backup alternative. She didn't like the final decision but adhered to it. Kikuchihara would be the lead of the Bird Cage while Major Magaki of the JSDF would command the combat front.

Now with support behind their backs, they have a war to fight. Creator and Creations had gathered within the meeting room of the Cabinet Building. Meteora took point of the discussion. Their objective, Altair and her forces. "Let us have a short recap before we strategize further. What do we know about Altair?"

Nakanogane opened an image of Altair and projected it onto the wall. "She has a submachine gun as a violin for some reason. And she has swords, a lot of swords."

Archer said. "Hanger, sword based from 17th century Europe. No special abilities except remote psychic commands and being indestructible. Those swords cannot be disarmed from her."

Selesia pointed out. "Not that it matters when she can make more copies." Archer raised a brow in response.

"In addition to that, I am placing an assumption that she can only copy and control anything that is not a living being." Meteora said as Marine helped to take notes. "Furthermore to that, she can turn objects into a handful of roses."

"How are we supposed to fight something that can erase all our weapons?" Kanoya scratched his head. The pilot would be at greatest risk.

Meteora opened the Book of a Thousand Miles and flipped through the middle pages. If she was not mistaken, yes there it was. "I have a magic spell that can create resistances against specific mediums or forms. I can modify this to resist the breakdown of a concept. It might not outright stop it but it should limit the damage and maintain Gigas Machina's existence."

"Nice." Kanoya gave a thumb up. Marine scribbled quick notes in response.

"Another alternative is to stay away from her when she does it." Nakanogane said as he opened a video to demonstrate his point. "I've done some studying and found that it expands in a spherical shape." Each special attack of hers had a similar shape and form.

"That is a very good observation. Likewise, there is an apparent cue of striking a sword against the violin. We can assume it to be the case and respond if we see such indicators." Meteora nodded as pen scribbled in a furious fervour.

"At least I won't have my sword disappear on me again." Selesia said. "Do you remember anything particular about Altair?"

Sota shook his head. "No, I don't. Shimazaki gave me a few images and the video but that was it. Nothing I think that will be helpful. Sorry."
"That's fine. I wasn't expecting for a list of weapons or something like that." Selesia replied. "Speaking of weapons, we can't even get close to Altair with those swords defending her in the first place."

"We could have someone dedicated to handle them." Mirokuji joined the conversation. "I haven't seen that girl swing a sword once, not here or in any reference. She might not be skilled in a close-up fight. That means we can take advantage of that."

"That may be the best option." Meteora asked the Red Guardian. "Archer, by any chance do you have any particular weapon that would be able to handle those weapons? Especially amongst your strongest abilities."

Archer paused. "Good question but I have no answer. I've tried overwhelming her with equivalent exchange once but it wasn't effective. Altair was vigilant of her surroundings."

"Not to side track it too much but does she operate using magic?" Hideaki asked.

Meteora considered the idea. Most forms of stories or games like hers applied the concept of limited energy such as natural mana or fuel sources. "There is no information about that. Certainly, if she does uses magic, it may be possible to exhaust all her reserves."

"That would be possible unless she has a similar form to True Magic." Archer said.

"By any chance, are you referring to Aoko Aozaki?" Hideaki asked.

"Yes, the Blue. Her Magecraft is so cost efficient that it's insane. We won't bleed her dry if she has a similar ability."

Meteora did not recognise the name. "For the point of clarity, who is this person?"

"Aoko Aozaki's a character in my universe. A Magus that carried the abilities of Fifth Magic."

Kanoya raised a hand. "Sounds something fancy. Isn't magic just magic?"

"Magecraft and Magic are not the same." Archer explained. A sword appeared in his hand. "Magecraft are achievements that can be achieved through scientific or mundane methods. Magic on the other hands are considered miracles or concepts thought impossible to be executed in this reality. For example, Aozaki's Fifth Magic relates to time travel and manipulation."

Mirokuji said. "You're saying the girl's strong and with a very efficient engine. That's totally my kind of girl." A chuckle before he narrowed his eyes. "The concept of energy might not even exist for Altair. She's dangerous as hell and I doubt that girl would have a simple weakness as running out of steam."

Archer added. "She does have a limitation. A time limit of sorts for her abilities to recharge and recycle."

"I've noticed that as well. Games refer to that limitation as cool down. Once she uses those abilities, we can take advantage of that."

"Why would she have such limitations? I doubt it's part of the artwork." Selesia said.

"Inferences from her comments suggest that the world is trying to reject her existence. Excessive use of her abilities would cause the rebound to be strong enough to throw her out of the world." Meteora surmised.
"That just sets a time before she disappears. It doesn't help us in actually fighting her." Selesia pouted.

Matsubara sighed. "That's the problem with fighting Mary Sues."

Nakanogane added. "A Mary Sue is the writing trope for overpowered heroes."

Mirokuji clicked his tongue. "How are these Mary's handled?"

Matsubara explained. "We tend to avoid the idea of having Gary or Mary Sue characters unless it is the main premise of a story since it'd eventually becomes boring to the readers. What we usually do is try to level the balance of the powers towards even for the story. Otherwise we put in flaws in their powers or character like making magic only work in certain conditions. That way, the character would be able to have a challenge and create a form of growth."

Nakanogane added. "The problem with such ideas that since she is a secondary character and with such base stats, the sense of overwhelming power would be difficult to dilute or address. If we'd try anything with that, they'll be rejected outright."

Matsubara sighed. "What a pain. Mary Sues were always the most troublesome to resolve, not without major power creep and the consequences afterwards." He tapped at the board with a finger. "Power creep is always bad. It breaks the sense of disbelief for people the more ridiculous it becomes."

"Is it possible to create one story where she's weakened due to some condition or factor and get them to accept it?" Hideaki asked.

"Definitely possible. It's risky though because it's just a small element and not the majority." The Creators were in full agreement.

"We can't buff the heroes either if we can't find a useful loophole to exploit." Nakanogane glanced at Marine's notes.

"That's considering that we have to limit it within our own stories as well." Matsubara leaned back against the chair and draped his arms over the headrest. "I'm stunned to think of a useful option that would suit Selesia well."

"Thanks to hear that. Can it be something really powerful and cool in the process?" Selesia said.

"No guarantees." Selesia's response was a pout.

"At least you have someone considering, my Creator's not even around to listen, always babbling about his deadlines." Mirokuji said.

Meteora pressed a hand on the table. "We're going off topic. The revisions can be thought out in detail later on. Meanwhile, it is imperative that we decide the strategy to handle Altair and her followers in this world."

Archer nodded. "The JSDF is doing the ground work on finding their new base. Meteora, I need your help on getting that spell sorted and finding ways to reinforce reality. Altair is out of our reach until the revisions are in place."

Mirokuji relaxed in his chair. "What about that old man, knight and this new guy?"

Nakanogane opened the photo of Blitz Talker as Archer spoke. "Blitz is limited by physique. He
may be a good shot but he is fragile in comparison and doesn't have superhuman abilities. If we can corner him into an enclosed area, his ability to fly would not be effective."

Meteora gestured to Blitz's Creator. "Do you have anything to add on to that Suruga?"

Suruga was drawing as per habit. Pausing her pen, she answered. "Archer is pretty spot on but I will warn you. He knows this as well and will prevent you from trying to take advantage of it. Likewise, indoors doesn't hinder him. I already had someone try that and didn't work."

"You're correct. He was well prepared against me when we battled a few weeks ago."

"That old man sounds much simpler. Now then what do we know about our warrior knight?"

The picture of the princess of Ulstertein appeared. Meteora spoke of her experiences. "Alicetaria's armour is able to withstand a lot of damage. She is skilled in the use of a lance spear and also in close hand to hand combat. The dangerous part is the gauntlet in her left arm. Magical abilities, commonly lightning related elements including summoning warriors to aid her."

"Fast, hits like a truck but she is not invulnerable. Maybe if you can throw some magic at her while in a brawl, that'd be great." Mirokuji smiled.

Matsubara raised a hand. "I've read her stories and if I'm not mistaken, that gauntlet needs chanting to work. Can we make some sort of voice silencing field and lure her inside?"

"Archer here knows something about fields. Maybe Meteora and Archer can figure something out?"

"I do not appreciate you speaking on my behalf, Kid. Meteora, I'll have a word with you later about it." She nodded in response.

"If you need a Magic Swordswoman, I'm the right choice. I'm confident I can take her down." Selesia stood up and tapped her stomach. "Besides I have some payback to return."

Archer nodded. "Very well. I accept the proposition. We will see who else can support you and investigate on the magic field after we've decided the plan on all targets."

Mirokuji spun a finger in circles. "We're on a roll. That leaves the new guy next."

"As for this man called Alter, I think-" The door knocked. Kikuchihara entered the room with a folder in hand.

"Afternoon, we've just received word from the Meteorological Department, another Creation has arrived somewhere in Hongomagome. We are deploying police and JSDF but I appreciate having a helping hand if things turn south."

"Of course, we are willing to help." Meteora addressed to the rest of the team. "We will adjourn for now and search for this Creation. If we are fast, we may be able to bring them to our side."

The conference room had been plastered with paper. Reports, maps and news of value were plastered across the table and on the walls. Emiya noticed several satellite images of the area surrounding the Rikugien Gardens.

The search for the Creation had yielded poor results. No creation was found, only the aftermath. Broken floors and walls significant enough to cause major problems to the small shed building. No evidence of the perpetrator could be found. The garden will need repairs for a few weeks and was
Meteora decided to have Saber and Kanoya continue the search. Meanwhile Mirokuji and Meteora coordinated with the police and JSDF from the Cabinet building. Emiya was placed on sentry duty to observe for targets of interests. The skyscrapers are starting to become his second home now.

The search had eaten the rest of the day and called off at night. Morning returned and Emiya wanted to close the remaining hole. Shirou Emiya's Alter Ego. Joined by him in the investigation was the Sage and Kid. The other Creators had been harried back to work with their tightening deadlines.

"What can you tell me about Alter?"

Kid blinked a few times before Emiya called on him again. Kid arranged his research on the table. "There aren't a lot of details about him. Motivation is vague." There were a few artworks. The computer tablet at the edge of the table displayed a video about Alter, mostly from the mobile game of Fate Grand Order.

Emiya instructed. "Tell me what's there."

"Emiya Alter is a man who had cast aside his name in the journey of being a heartless executor. He had lost his past and memories. Alter has forsaken morality and scorned any bonds of affection. It is said that he was born from trying to subjugate the Malice within a woman."

"That isn't far from my version of history. What is this Malice referring to?"

Kid retrieved a page from the table. "It refers to a Kiara Sessyoin, founder of a cult called Shingon Tachikawa school." Kid read another page. "This woman's complicated from the biography. However, there is a key point. Every follower under the woman commits suicide in the end."

"Suicide. That is distasteful." Meteora said.

Kid pointed to a paragraph on the web page. "There's a reference to Alter here." Emiya read the text. In that timeline, Alter had massacred cult members before finally killing Kiara. No numbers were specified but it was apparently enough to drive him towards another level of Purgatory.

"Why was he created? If he is a copy of Archer, why is he using guns as weapons?" Meteora observed.

"It's intended by the creators. Alternate versions are popular especially within the Type Moon universe. As for the guns, that may just be a part of his character description." The teenager explained.

"We don't need a history lesson Kid. Tell me about his abilities. How similar are they to mine?"

Kid flipped down the page, struggling a few times. "Nothing much about it but stats appear similar to yours in the original story. His Noble Phantasm is called Unlimited Lost Works." Emiya remembered the ability used on him, causing swords to appear from within flesh. His arm remembered the pain for a glimpse before pushing it aside. "It inserts Alters origin of sword into a bullet and fires it at a target for swords to shred from inside." Meteora bit her lip at the note.

Kid pointed at a table in the page. "There's a reference to something called Derisive Heart of Steel but it doesn't specify anything other than a form of self-indoctrination. Beyond this, I haven't found anything useful in particular."

Meteora studied the note. "The description is very brief and troublesome. Why did Altair choose him?"
"You use a thief to catch a thief?" Kid suggested.

"A plausible truth." Emiya agreed. Unlimited Blade Works carried many weapons that it would be difficult at times to know which could be used. Alter would be able to know each weapon and likewise counter him accordingly.

Meteora raised the concern. "He knows all your abilities and limits. That would be a difficult limitation for battle."

"Yes. That doesn't mean I don't know his. Unlimited Blade Works is fortunately not within his control thus far. If this list is true, he might not have it at all." That was a fortunate downside to know. As Alter could account for his abilities, Emiya could do so in reverse.

"That is an assumption which is difficult to verify."

"If it comes down to it, I can pull it off."

"Such confidence, what is your plan to handle him?"

"Subjective. I've fought against him once. We definitely have similar fighting styles, he is keeping some cards hidden and nothing new appeared from that list."

"Would it be possible for him to take control of your Reality Marble?"

"I have not encountered that kind of attack before. A reasonable possibility."

"I could try to find something about that." Kid offered.

Emiya refused. "I'll do the searching. Second hand information wouldn't be as useful for my assessment of the man. Now you focus on handling Saber. Have you checked his stats?"

"Stats?"

"You are aware Masters can see the status of their servants, correct?"

The kid nodded his head. "I remember now. Although, how exactly do you do that?"

"Why am I not surprised? Here's a crash course for you." The process wasn't difficult but one needed to be trained in the arts of handling familiars to be able to grasp the concept. All it needed was a few minutes of work and a guiding hand.

"Wow." Kid blinked a few times as he looked around the room. "It works." Emiya noticed the boy's hands were shaking. Kid turned for the door. "I'll be right back."

Meteora returned to the topic. "Barring the discussion, we should also evaluate who else is capable of fighting Alter. We all are equipped with different skills and maximising their utility should be our focus."

"All that is assuring to hear." Emiya said. "It would still be best if I dealt with him alone. I know how we fight and I prefer to have no liabilities."

"While Mirokuiji has lost Hangaku and I do not possess many offensive spells, the rest of us can support you in our own ways."

"Maybe. Again, to repeat, I prefer to fight on my own."
"That will be considered." The sage can be annoying on her insistence. Not that it matters since the plan never survives first contact with the enemy.

Daichi leaned against the wall. Hot. Flesh under his skin was burning. Cold showers several times during the day hadn't help to stave it off. He hadn't had a good appetite since…when? Memory was starting to feel a bit difficult being tired all day. A night's sleep wasn't refreshing at all, just a deeper lull towards exhaustion.

Maybe a rinse to the face would help to pass this moment. Daichi walked towards the restroom but felt his legs give way. Why did he feel so weak? The door opened. Meteora noticed him. "Are you alright? You don't look so well."

Daichi answered. "I think I have a fever." Had he taken medicine? He couldn't remember. That headache was becoming a growing nuisance.

"Hideaki." Meteora placed a hand on his shoulder. Her hands were so cold. "You're burning up." She turned down the corner. "I'll ask Kikuchihara's people to help send you to a doctor." He gave thanks as he waited. Nerves felt jumpy on fire. The headache was throbbing harder. Ringing in the head.

Siegfried appeared beside him. "Master, are you alright?" The weight in his chest pressed harder. Limbs were feeling like lead.

The pain was growing. "Honestly, I don't know." Perhaps he should -. Everything went black.

Daichi crawled back to wakefulness. A white bed. Why was he here? A glance around told him the answer. A hospital room. Meteora was sitting by the door. She approached as he lifted an arm. "What happened?"

"You collapsed. The doctor said you have a fever, malnourished and a few other complications. I have not been able to identify the root cause of it. I do know that is related to magic and called for Archer to help."

Siegfried was standing beside him. "Are you feeling better Master?" Daichi didn't feel worse, or far better.

Archer burst through the door. "What's this going on about the kid?" Archer touched his wrist before his brows narrowed. "You idiot." Archer turned towards Siegfried. "Saber, spirit form now." Daichi felt immensely better when Siegfried vanished. "You've overloaded yourself."

"I see." That was all he could say.

"You are a Master now. You should have been aware of the Prana consumption." Archer lifted him up. The white shirt was peeled off. "This is going to need some work." Placing a hand on his chest, Daichi felt a pulse. The burning heat stopped. A true blessing. The exhaustion began to unwind.

"Didn't you all manage to contract a Servant while fighting with your own Magecraft?" Daichi said.

"They have been born a Magus and been training years for it. They have more Magic Circuits and each with greater quality and capacities than you. You barely had one for days and think you can handle a Heroic Spirit as a Servant?"

"Point taken. I'm sorry." Daichi said.
"Get some rest. I'll check up on you later." Archer gestured for Meteora to follow him before leaving. Siegfried stood watch as the door closed shut. The cool sensation was tremendous relief as Daichi closed his eyes and slept well.

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Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading Beyond Worlds. It's been a while and I've been left to think hard on this for a few things. Been shuffling things around which led to the delay in my part. My apologies for that.

There's a lot of valid points on both sides of the topic that led me thinking and changing things up. Enough to consider it as the second rewrite of the story. I think it's for the better but I cannot foresee the impacts on the other things such as the thematic and other notions of the story. The previous chapters are not invalidated but I feel that some potential have been lost in following new directions. Then again, this story is already long as it is in contrast to normal books in the market. It has no need to go dawdle on about everything.

Kinoko Nasu's here and I hoped I managed to get a close enough gist of him. It took a few weeks of reading through the interviews to understand him. I don't know how accurate I am since I don't trust Google translations on the little nuances and details. Earlier within the project, I had grand dreams of trying to meet Kinoko Nasu if I travelled to Japan for this part of the project. That will stay as a dream of course. Trying to find a slot to place this scene in was difficult.

Please note that, I'm now on a medical hiatus so I won't be able to adhere to the regular schedule anymore. I apologize for that and likewise I don't know how long treatment will be. I hope to recover soon and complete this project.

Until better times.

Regards
MarksmanKNG
Siegfried dreamed. Unnecessary for a Heroic Spirit but it helped his Master's well being. They were uncommon, this time leading to his past. Youthful days when he begun his adventure. Bright enthusiasm and energy to protect the people. Receiving the people's joy and receiving more calls in turn.

*Monsters attacked our farms.*

*Bandits took everything I owned.*

*Help my son …*

Their words would echo in his ears. He would answer with Balmung. Lapse of years in an eybinkle, moving through a constant loop. Energetic turned to stoic resilience. He did not remember how. Every battle coated his being with blood, each kill adding further to the red coat. Until it stopped at the end of his life.

Another dream. Japan in the modern time. A young boy was watching a show on the television in the living room. It was about a group of people trying to escape a large mansion. A familiar hero within the group led them towards the exit. Blocking the exit was a monstrous man.

Crazy and wielding a dangerous stone axe, it brought fear unto its audience. The white haired man in the red cape stayed behind, holding the monster back. His final words as the large twin doors closed shut.

*If you cannot defeat it, then imagine something that can.*

The world faded further into the future. Boy, now teenager continued to pursue the dream and hope. One evening, there was a fire in a house near his home. A girl was trapped inside, calling for help. Hot flames crackled as it consumed. Thick black smoke billowed in shroud. Siegfried felt the boy's emotion. A dedication towards the path. What needed to be done was simple, enter the house and rescue the girl.

The boy stepped in before his feet froze. Terror chilled his bones into fragile sticks. All blood drained from his skin. He couldn't understand. How could someone feel something like this? Panicking in standstill, the boy could not fight the weights that anchor his legs. In the short span of moments, the boy became a stone. Eyes unmoving, staring deep into the rage as every cry grew weaker until nothing.

In the end, the girl suffocated to death. There hadn't been enough time. By then, half of the house had been destroyed. There was a chance if someone arrived earlier. The fire hadn't been too strong, giving a reasonable window for escape. The teenager struggled with his insights ever since for he hoped for a hero. All he had was an empty hole of what was supposed to be, a saviour.

He woke to dawn. The experience was intriguing yet disappointing. Siegfried studied the peaceful gaze of his Master, deep asleep. Standing up from the chair, he stepped towards the window and pulled the blinds shut. It wasn't long when the red Archer made a visit to inspect on his patient.
Archer knew where he was, given the silent nod towards him before waking up his Master with a nudge.

Familiar presences approached from the corridor outside. They were friendly. The door knocked and two women entered. One, a redhead in a uniform, the other white haired girl in green robes. According to Master, they were friends who could be generally trusted. He hadn't known them well yet but there will be a correct time for that.

The woman named Selesia said, "What's with the alarm?"

Archer explained. "This idiot here managed to nearly kill himself. I'm checking to make sure he doesn't do it again."

Master protested. "Like I said, I feel much better already."

The woman in the robe, quipped. "You should listen to Archer. He means well for your sake."

Master gestured towards the girls with a red face. "Do we have to do it here?"

Archer huffed. "You're a guy, nobody would care. Besides, it'll be quick." Master sighed and turned around. Archer pulled down the gown to reveal Master's open back.

Selesia whistled. Master replied, tinge of agitation in his voice. "Don't you girls have some manners?"

"As though you boys ever give them when looking at us."

Archer said. "Give it up already." The man placed a hand on Master's back. Master grunted a little as Siegfried felt traces of magic. The connection between him and Master had stilled before returning in full form. A moment before the ritual ended. "Your magic circuits are working fine. Don't push them too much. You have only one circuit and its burdened trying to keep Siegfried alive."

The robed woman questioned. "Archer, will this Magic Circuit's output be sufficient to sustain this Siegfried's existence?" Siegfried recalled her name, Meteora.

"Just enough. However, any battle will lead into a deficit."

"I see. I will see if I can assist to improve the output when I have time later on."

"Suit yourself."

Selesia glanced around the room. "Speaking of Siegfried, is he here?"

Master nodded as he pulled the gown back up. "Yes, he's here. Come on out." Siegfried obeyed, appearing into physical form.

Selesia squinted her eyes in response to his appearance. "Whenever I see that happen, I get a bad feeling. He wouldn't dare to slip into the changing room would he?"

Her words stung. A hero of legends considered within to be a petty criminal? Siegfried pressed a hand to his plated chest. "I would not. You have my word on that."

"That's neat. Better than this arrogant annoying man that just knows how to insult people."

"So says the woman who can't take on an injured Bowman despite having a sword and a giant robot." That started off a bout of bickering between the two. He did not understand why but Master
was amused of the situation. This world is so strange.

Emiya took a glass of tea and observed the computer display which displayed the map of Tokyo. A room had been renovated into an operations room. The door was reinforced and the fingerprint scanners should be enough to keep the mundane people from entering.

He settled the glass beside the dossiers on the table. Nine in total, each of them carried details about the Creations. The Internet provided him with plenty of information alongside Kikuchihara's and the Kid's own efforts.

Selesia Upitiria, Yuya Mirokuji, Meteora Osterreich. Each dossier carried about their physical descriptions, abilities and what was known in their respective canons. A day was enough to carry an effective preliminary analysis and stratagem.

Keep your friends close and your enemies closer. Micheal Corleone was fruitful in the picks of the intelligence work. Given their personalities, it was unlikely that they would turn. Everyone had a price. Believing was wishful thinking and countermeasures are required. Nobody can be trusted as an absolute especially after what happened.

Discussions thus far about Altair and her forces had been useful. The computer screen listed every asset on both sides in the map. While he didn't have information to where Altair's forces were, it had been agreed with a Major Magaki to place spotter units and designate regions for patrol. Given data wouldn't be in real time given there weren't any connections to the military but it would work for now.

Knowledge is power and he needed to ascertain their location. These resources would expand his options but it won't change everything. Meteora agreed to enchant several modern tools such as radios and radar to track magical signatures instead of physical elements.

Next agenda was also to prepare the effective kill team. The JSDF had accepted the proposal of effective combat teams. They traded the list of available men the previous few days. Four of his men had been wounded in the battle earlier but they'll be back in action within a few weeks faster with Meteora's recovery magic.

The black cellphone on the table rang. He picked it on the custom line to hear a gruff voice. "Has the sake been delivered to your doorsteps?"

"I believe I requested for sushi, not sake."

"Oh my, I have to get the orders checked out."

"Certainly, Major."

All cue words checked out, Major Magaki went went to business. "Archer, I've been assigned a unit from Defence Intelligence. They'll be assisting on the scouting operations and Opsec."

"Good to hear. What do we have on public security?"

"Police will continue handling public that duty. It will be much easier for them to go around without eyes watching."

"More than what is presumed?"

"Yes according to the reports I've been hearing. The public would be uneasy if they see soldiers
moving about so often. Especially after the incident of losing the birds."

Emiya understood the man's concerns. World War Two played a big role in Japan's pacifism. "The story's going to make a mess of the politics but it'll die down eventually."

"Sure, a crash incident makes us look incompetent but we make do. Also, the incident caught the eyes of the US."

Emiya hated the unprecedented. "Does that mean support or trouble?"

"Uncertain for now. Yokata and Yokosuka raised a few brows but kept their mouth quiet. Someone's working behind the scenes. Meanwhile Camp Nerima is setting up the killhouse and should be ready in the week. Who is coming over to babysit my men?"

"I'll drop by for the first round. We'll agree on a roster afterwards."

"Roger. We're acclimatising to new equipment and be ready by then. The next update is coming in now. Talk tomorrow with plus two?"

"Yes with plus two. Keep me posted, out." Emiya hung up as another data package arrived. No new changes on the map but the additional men would prove handy. Absent hand reached for the glass only to find it empty. More tea it is.

Matsubara scratched his forehead while staring at the laptop screen. Four thousand words was a sad sight. In the big picture, that was just about a third of the chapter for the story. Muse had been refusing to come out even as the deadline approaches towards its last legs. That was part of the reason why the Creators were gathered into an office to consolidate efforts on the project.

Masaki studied the white board filled with notes. "For Kanoya to abandon the problems in his own world and go to another world, I think the motivation is too weak."

He threw a suggestion. "Maybe you can try giving alternate reality a try. That's a growing trend in the market."

Masaki hummed. "I don't think that'll work. The trope would be too common with the other crossovers. It needs a bit more oomph to it. Give me a while, I think I have something."

"Nothing like a kick in the butt eh." Matsubara leaned against his seat. Suruga and Yatoji were silent, focused at their work at the other side of the office. He should get to his own problem. Just as Masaki was facing, he had motivation problems to resolve.

How could he motivate Selesia to enter the Bird Cage? Sure, Meteora was set as the conduit to the other world but there are a lot of questions and loopholes to resolve. Left unattended, readers would be wondering and tear into the finer aspects.

First point, she was a key character to the story. I'll need to create a suitable situation that separated them. Somewhere in the timeline that'll fit the bill. Selesia though would need another nudge somewhere. A world in peril isn't going to help when her own is already in trouble. There're enough problems as it is.

Before fixing the motivation, perhaps it'll be easier to develop the situation first. Once he gets the frame of the story built, there'll be enough ideas to flesh out the details. Matsubara needed to be creative to explore new boundaries. Make something new from a blank portion of the paper would be easier. That idea might work. Muse poked its head and began to give better ideas. Several paths
branched from the main road. Fingers went to work, crafting the foundation and planning needed to achieve it. Yes, this is doable.

Muse continued to give tips and pointers as the word count skyrocketed. Yes, there was a clear direction, he know what to do now for this part. Now he needed to verify the sync with Masaki's part before discovering writing the rest of the outline.

Matsubara stood up and read the board. His limbs protested in their stiffness. The two of them double checked to ensure the convergence was right within their stories. The door opened and Sota entered with a bag. "I brought what you asked me to." How long as it been? He glanced at the clock. Wow, he hadn't realised how late it was.

"Thanks, come in, come in." Marine waved him in.

Masaki cracked his neck. "I was feeling a bit cramped. Let's rest for a bit." The others were likewise flustered. Black coffee and sweets were helpful to recharging their stamina. With another day to go, they'll need to sprint through the night to get it done right.

Marine asked as Sota arranged the bag aside. "Where's Meteora and the others?"

Sota answered. "They said there were possibly two new Creations arriving and went out searching."

"The one that will be released tomorrow?"

Matsubara explained. "Tomorrow is only one short story. We're making several and going to release a book of them of them right before the event." They have six months to make it work. Thinking about the amount of work to be done was already threatening to be a headache.

Marine pointed at the artwork of Selesia and Meteora, still within its early framework sketches. "This is for the third one. I take a lot of time to finish the drawings so I have to start early."

Sota studied the artwork. It was still basic and in his perspective, within its raw stages. "Wow, this is really cool. It has a lot of aura."

Marine giggled. "Hearing you say that makes me feel relieved. Oh, did you bring what I asked you to?" Sota retrieved it from his bag and placed it on the table. "Salmon." Marine hugged the orange plush rabbit and rubbed her overjoyed face into it. "Thanks so much. I need this whenever I take naps."

"Sota, it might have been a better choice not to bring it around. Otherwise Marine might just fall asleep right and then." The girl in question frowned at him before he chuckled. Matsubara agreed with her about a nap. Creating is a marathon after all. It's been a long time since he started. Almost two decades now eh. For now, there's coffee to entertain him.

Suruga was debating between sweets when she turned towards them. "Hey, that…" Suruga reached towards the row of pens resting on the cloth tray. "I see you're also using this pen."

"Is it that rare for someone to use it?"

Suruga nodded before reaching for a clean piece of paper. "In a way, yes. It's a pen that's easy to use but not many like it for some reason. The way it draws, it can become very sharp, clear and precise." Her grip was strong and the lines smooth and striking into the eye. Matsubara had to admit Suruga's
artwork was great in its own way contrasting to the thorough and well articulated lines he saw in Marine's.

"It's too simple." Yatoji was standing by the board reading the notes. Oh, finally he took notice after it was there for the entire day.

Masaki choked on the red bean bun before gulping it down with a glass of tea. "I couldn't think of anything else for the introduction. Besides we shouldn't be start too complicated right off, it'll alienate some of our readers."

The Underground author turned around, a dark visage beneath those sharp eyes. "I feel bad saying this but this isn't acceptable. Your readers are for kids so this kind of stuff could work with them. My readers wouldn't accept that kind of crossover with the world view like that from your story."

While he wasn't Masaki, Matsubara felt the insult twisted within. Muse advised. It's not your story, take it easy. A deep breath before he glowered. "Whatever you say, I have no idea about the world view in your story either." Each author to his own was what he would like to add but didn't.

"What? Are you trying to say my concerns are stupid?" Yatoji said.

Marine got up and left the room in a hurry. Oh dear. Another one of her moments. He'll handle that later.

The air felt chillier as Suruga continued drawing, oblivious to the world around her. "Yatoji, just calm down." Masaki tried to ease the situation.

Yatoji tapped his pen against the whiteboard. "The problem is that right now the only way we have to counter Altair is to depend on Meteora and summon Selesia and the others to this world. How can we defeat her with something as simple as that? That is going to follow the shounen standard which most of our stories don't fit well with the tropes of the genre."

"I had Meteora increase the strength of our cast and summon their weapons. That is what we must achieve in this crossover. There's not much wiggle room considering we have so many characters to add and also the ambiguous nature we need to leave out for Kinoko Nasu."

Kinoko Nasu and Type-Moon accepted the request and would start on the project. Conditions was that he'll handle Archer and Siegfried's part on his own. Kikuchihara and later Masaki would manage the integrating both parts together.

Masaki added on. "Besides we need to set a premise that will be flexible for everyone. It's a problem if left open just like that. I'm open to alternatives. What do you have in mind?"

Yatoji paused before sighing. "I'm just giving you my thoughts about it."

Matsubara raised a brow. "That means you don't have a better idea at the moment do you?"

Suruga interjected. "It doesn't matter. That's why we're brainstorming to figure things out."

Masaki pointed at the board. "This is what we have. I suggest we go with it for the time being. We might be able to discover something better as we go along."

"No, the hook and premise is vital. Otherwise the readers won't even try to read the story. Everything else is worthless when they won't even read it," Yatoji said.

_He has a point._ That was when Yatoji added. "Good enough. That's what salarymen writers like you
say." Fire burned as Masaki shot to his feet. "Hey I don't get a salary. I put myself on the line whenever I write. Our work is fundamentally different."

"No, that's wrong." Masaki spread his hands with glaring eyes. "Working under someone else doesn't mean our works are bad. We aren't coddled and have to work just as hard to beat the competition. It's not just about doing whatever you want for that's causing problems for other people." Matsubara recognised Masaki's particular finger jabbing. "The only reason your stories sell because you have an editor who handles those problems for you. We don't have such luxuries like that and that's why we learnt to deal with it."

"No wonder the market trend's going downhill when you have writers like these."

"Come to think to that, I'm doing just fine. I wonder which side of the trend you are on." Their eyes met, unbent wills in between.

"Calm down you two. Going about it isn't solving the problem." Suruga said as she continued to draw. How she could draw while attending to a quarrel as though its nothing.

Yatoji frowned before turning around. "I'm having a smoke." He left the room. Masaki fumed. "I know it's not the best story right now but the fate of the world depends on it. I think we need to play on the safe side. Am I wrong?" The man started to dig into the bunch of cakes.

Matsubara sighed, sinking back into the chair. He felt the door close shut another time. "You're right. You're bloody right. Anything comes to mind?"

"Each of us have different styles and it's what make us unique. As they say, too many cooks spoil the broth."

Matsubara stared at the board. The story was simple, straightforward. A generic story that anyone could create and accept. He frowned at the texts, it was missing something. Yes, the authenticity. An author's own touch to the story.

Without them, it wouldn't be a story written by Matsubara, Masaki, Yatoji or the others. It was just a mix mash of stuff to justify a gladiatorial battle. Glancing at the notes, in nutshell it didn't sound very exciting. A glimmer of understanding Yatoji's concern. A sigh from his lips. It's been a while since he felt so worn out.

Masaki huffed and sat down. "Matsubara, I understand the problem. I'm just as worried about it. However if the production of the Bird Cage isn't done on time, then everything is over."

"It would be a waste if we can't even get past the front gate." Matsubara finished the cup of coffee. "I want to avoid that from happening. so I'd like to keep trying until the end. I'm sure he felt the same way."

Masaki turned to look at him before loosening up. "Sorry for blowing up like that."

Matsubara cracked a grin before his knuckles. "Masaki, I get you. Take a few minutes break and let me have at it. Maybe we'll have better ideas on how to fix the puzzle."

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Sota watched the conflict unfold between the authors. It gave a sick feeling to see them acting that way. He left to get a breath of fresh air and leave the heated debate for the moment.

His footsteps echoed in the long corridors. Nissan Stadium had been selected as the venue for the Bird Cage. One of the unused administration blocks had been taken over to find an obscure and quiet
place to establish all the necessities in one place. That meant the authors too.

Yatoji was acting kind of mean. Nakanogane was a nice helpful guy from the weeks spent together.
Yatoji on the other hand felt a bit more grim, quiet and unfriendly. The man was similar to Yuya in
some forms.

Marine was standing at the main corridor overlooking the lobby below. Sota called out to her. "Oh
Marine." He noticed a drop of tear and the wet cheeks. "Uh…"

Marine turned towards him. "Oh, sorry. Sorry for stepping out while you all were working hard."

Sota joined her by the railing. "No, I'm not doing anything." Should he talk to her about what
happened? Best to be honest about it. He mustn't make the same mistake. "Are you going to be
okay?"

Marine turned down towards the lobby below. "Suruga and Yatoji also know we don't have a lot of
time. I've never seen their series go on hiatus suddenly." The crowd, a small portion of the staff were
leaving the building as the day ended. "I think they just don't have any ideas right now."

Sota spoke his mind. "It's amazing. You're all amazing. I haven't seen anything like this before. I
never thought on how the pros would argue like that. It surprised me by a lot."

Marine giggled. "That's right. Even if other people thinks it's a silly thing, the person in question
might believe that it's something very important to the story. We might, no I think we do have a
tendency towards thinking like that. But I think it's not related to whether someone is a pro or not. It's
just that everyone have similar thoughts like this, especially in this field of Creation."

Why would she say that? Sota asked further. "Everyone?"

"Something that you can't give up on or something that you don't want to lose in. That feeling inside
you that makes you hate yourself for not being good enough. That sense of victory in a bloody battle royale after defeating your competition." She closed her hands together. "I've went too far with that."
Another laugh from her. "I have the same feeling about that between me and Suruga."

"Isn't art supposed to be a form of expression?"

"Like I've said, it's in our nature. We are Creators after all. Creating new things are our dreams and aspirations. We can't accept anything besides the best, even if its not made by us."

"I, sort of understand that feeling." Sota smiled. The sense of defeat watching his own work months ago still lingered somewhere.

"Suruga showed me her Manga once. I thought during then that she was really, really amazing. The way she could draw such cool drawings so fast. The first time I seen it, I wondered how she could do such amazing, no magnificent feats." Marine's joy turned down. "And then I started to think 'Hmm' I shouldn't be thinking that. My mind started to compare her work with my own, just like earlier."

"That's not true. Marine, your drawings are really popular. You have a lot of fans that hope to see more from you every time," Sota said.

Marine smiled. "Thank you. But I, I myself know that I'm not good at it so I can't pretend that I am. In order for me to accept myself, there's no other way than drawing what I can."

Sota was confused to that idea. "But there's no end to that. Wouldn't that be an endless circle to it?"
"But it's something that's fun." Marine faced him. "Yes, it hurts. There are times where I felt so hopeless trying to draw something. There was no idea, no inspiration where I had to just force my way through to get something. Even then it would be just a scarecrow. I've felt so tired sometimes, sitting alone in my bed and just crying it out." The Creator smiled. "Even so, it's still something that's fun and cannot forget about."

"Fun, that's right." Sota realised. Despite all the struggle he went through, that was the reason it started in the first place. "I…after all, I…that's how I liked about drawing too."

Marine's eyes gleamed. "Isn't that right? When you work your hands to the bone and you get to see the magic that appears. The results are worth it."

"Yeah, I guess." Sota chuckled. It was a while since he enjoyed a good moment like this. A simple day to day talk. "Are you feeling better now?"

"Much better now, thank you so much for that." Marine sighed in relief. "Now I feel all hyped up to get back to it."

Sota chuckled. "Let's prepare something for the others. I think they need some of that hype." A bright nod from the young woman before they headed downstairs.

By the time they returned, the room was still silent. Suruga maintained her silent efforts. Matsubara and Nakanogane were reading the board quietly. Yatoji was nowhere to be seen. Sota declared. "We bought some drinks."

Marine raised the bag of plastic. "Let's have these together."

Masaki reached towards the drinks. "Thank you." He paused, looking behind them. They turned to see the Dark Underground Creator.

Yatoji returned into the room and took his own seat. Matsubara stood up and said. "Hey,"

Yatoji turned towards him. "What is it?" As though the argument never happened.

Matsubara stood up and approached his colleague. "We managed another idea in the meantime you were gone. What do you think?" Matsubara handed a piece of paper. "It's a bit better but not much by far."

Yatoji studied it before returning it. "The good part isn't quite right, just short of hooking the audience." A pause before he grabbed a pen. A few scribbles before it was returned to him. He said. "This hook has more promise. I think we'll be able to gain acceptance with this." Matsubara flipped the page over to Nakanogane.

"This…" Nakanogane nodded with a smile. "We can use this. This can work."

Matsubara let a sigh. "This isn't that far much better but at least it's not giving me chills on something about to explode when it gets published."

"No, it isn't bad. It's a little weak with just that part." Yatoji turned away. "I had my doubts about the alternatives either. The market is too big for us to get it aligned to our preferences."

Matsubara chuckled. "So you do compliment people sometimes."

"I'm not complimenting anyone." Sota thought he noticed a slight blush with the closed arms.
"Yatoji." Nakanogane said with a wide grin. "This is good. Thank you for that. It does looks like you got out of the tunnel of being a loner."

Yatoji turned away. "No, it's her idea." Eyes turned over towards the woman Creator by the desk.

"You're such a classic hot and cold personality." Suruga teased. Yatoji protested as the others laughed within the moment. **Creators are just regular people like us. Just like Sota, they all have emotions and things that drive them. These in turn get transferred to their very creations.**

Something struck his mind. **What if?** Sota approached Matsubara. "I have something I want to talk to you."

"For a crude man without pride, this place is rather homely," Selesia said.

"I know. It has that really warm feeling." Marine agreed.

The tenant of the house wrapped his arms around his chest. "Why is everyone, here in my house?" Archer demanded. Creations and Creators were gathered in the living room in a cramped situation.

"Because we needed to talk on Altair?" Kanoya pointed out.

"We've done all the strategy planning earlier. Why again?"

Mirokuji kicked back against the sofa. "Metchin wanted to talk on the progress of her work. It's easier to just do it here than go all the way to the office. Lady Boss was already updated of the situation."

Meteora gave the man a nod of gratitude. "About countering Altair's nullification magic, I managed to create a spell that would boost the factor of Conceptual Cohesion. I cannot say how effective it is but it should function to a degree." She returned to the group. "Second, I also created a spell for monitoring the level of acceptance and the impact to the world. That means we can track our progress."

"Not a bad idea. I'd hate to see the world blow up before the main show starts." Mirokuji said.

"How is the acceptance doing so far?" Matsubara placed a hand over his chair.

Meteora reached for her magic book. It glowed before revealing the world like a projector. "Generally, the world is stable at the moment. However, the damage caused by the previous encounters are not completely restored for uncertain reasons."

"By any chance do you think they are permanent?"

"Unlikely but our existence is probably hampering the world's ability to correct itself." Meteora concluded. A large growl rang across the room. Eyes went about before returning to the owner at the centre of attention. "I apologise for that."

Hideaki glanced at the clock. "Yeah, it's about time we get some dinner."

Matsubara reached for his phone. "Let me order some takeout."

Hideaki stopped him. "Not sure if everyone knows but Archer is an expert cook. I think that's a nice opportunity for us to try his palate."

Archer narrowed his eyes. "I don't take kindly for people offering services on my behalf."
"Well, the other options is cheap takeaways. I do know you wouldn't like them and we're not pressed for time at the moment."

"You're saying that this man can cook?" Selesia spat. A man bent on victory at any cost regardless of moral consequences, is an expert in cooking. That does not compute.

Archer glanced towards her. She imagined seeing red in them before he turned to the kitchen. "It's on now."

Shrugs went about as Meteora frowned at the boy. "That's not a good thing to be doing, Hideaki."

"It's alright. He doesn't look like it but he does enjoy it." A few curses came from the kitchen. "I'm hoping he has enough stock to cover all of us."

"We're going to need some beers. Let's see."

"I have a scent for it." The former boss said. He showed the bottle to the others. "You kids want some?" The others shook their heads. "Suit yourself." Heaven breezed into their noses. Mirokuji sniffed several times. "That smells good."

Selesia pointed out. "Are you okay Hideaki? You seem really eager."

The boy clasped his hands together with a wide grin. "Let's say I know that something good is coming."

Dinner arrived after several minutes. Selesia was bewildered at the Tonkatsu. Can such fried meat glow so bright? Cabbage and strips of carrots contrasted the glow with a peace that she couldn't comprehend. Yellow Miso soup and hot fresh white rice to complete the set. Archer plopped the pot of hot tea before glaring at Selesia. "Dinner is served. Enjoy." The boy gave a nervous laugh in return.

Marine's eyes were bright. She clasped her hands together, her face studying the crispness of the meat's skin. "Wow, it looks really good. It smells beautiful too."

"It does." Meteora took a bite, hearing the soft crunch within. Hideaki smirked. The librarian gobbled it down before reaching for another piece. "I think I need to check it for poison."

"You just want more of it don't you?" The librarian ignored his jab. Hideaki took a similar bite before freezing. It took a moment before his eyes was mesmerised. "I knew it was going to be good but to be at this level. Can it be considered a Noble Phantasm?"

Seeing such optimism, Selesia reached out and grabbed a piece. The sizzling smell enticed her appetite. She took a bite.

Bam. Behind the soft crunch of the skin, a fiery power with shocking power jolted her taste buds. A sweet taste that turns the inferno into a calm tide. Heaven in her lips. The fried texture down to the sauce that blends together at the right heat. She'd been enjoying great food for the past month. To think of something far exceeding them. There were no words for it. "This is crazy. How, how can it be this good?!.

"Woah, I have to agree. This is damn good." Mirokuji dived into the rice. "Damn, that combination tastes a lot better too." She followed suit and wondered how her eyes must have beamed from the
soothing calm from the rice.

The others gave similar approval. Hideaki placed a hand onto the table. "I hereby proclaim this a Holy Food War. The victor shall be entitled to Archer's cooking for life."

"Shut the hell up you people. There's enough for everyone." Archer hissed while eating his own meal.

"Sorry." Hideaki withdrew before noticing Saber watching from the corner. "Aren't you going to eat Siegfried?"

"I am fine Master. A servant doesn't need food to sustain themselves."

Hideaki patted at an empty chair. "Well, come here and have some food. That's a command." The boy had made enemies that night from the dangerous glares around him. "You are a warrior but that doesn't mean you can't enjoy the little things although I think it's going to be a very big thing."

"Very well Master." Siegfried seated beside his master and sampled the food. "This is good. Far excellent than my time."

"I'm amazed by how good it is." Selesia agreed. How did such a snark antagonizing and annoying man had such skills to create refined cuisine? It just doesn't make sense.

"For a wandering freelancer, where did he learn all that cooking?" Mirokuji stabbed a fork at a piece that Selesia was reaching for. When did the meat disappear so fast? Their utensils battled for dominance as Kanoya grabbed the contested piece. That stopped the two into an armistice.

"It may be the voice actor. Whoever he voiced had very good cooking." Hideaki suggested.

"Oh, you mean like that curry guy from the cooking anime few seasons ago?" Nakanogane said.

"Yes, that guy looked quite similar to Archer too." Marine pointed out.

Matsubara chuckled as he took a sip of tea. "Isn't that the Creator's decision in the first place?"

Meteora raised a bowl towards the chef. "Seconds please." A few other joined hers.

Archer glared at the sage. "Not even five minutes, you ravenous lot. All of you deserve to starve." He grabbed the bowls before heading into the kitchen.

"Archer, I offer three million Yen if you can continue to cook for me until the end of this entire debacle. I'll pay even more if you would follow me home."

"Where would you have that kind of money anyway Meteora?" Selesia said. Chopsticks between Kanoya, Hideaki and Nakanogane competed in a battle for the precious pork.

"I'll borrow it from somewhere."

Kanoya raised a hand. "I noted 'me' in there. What about us?" A few others raised their voices and an argument sprung up into an all out food brawl.

The cook shook his head. "Money doesn't have any significant value for me girl. Forget about it."

Meteora stood onto her feet. "The level of skill within your cooking is beyond anything that had been experienced for my entire life. I offer anything for it, my skills, magic book, anything you ask for." Marine turned away with a pink face.
"Even your soul?" Kanoya asked.

"That is also negotiable." Meteora was committed.

Archer clicked his tongue. "Starve, all of you."

"Have you seen anything conspicuous?"

"Beats me Metchin." Yuya said as he glanced around. The two of them were walking around the streets of Shiori. From what the old lady said, her counterparts detected two Creations but the specific whereabouts were not known. The others had been sent to search the Arakawa side of the city. That Archer dude would have been useful if it wasn't him doing some research of his own.

*You don't need me. I'm sure four of you are capable enough to find just one person.*

Quite a Jackass indeed. Metchin glared at him. The baggy green cap she wore made her expression not working as intended. "Enough with the nickname Mirokuji. It is annoying to hear that." Yuya decided to ignore her. He'll call her whatever he likes. Beside it wasn't so bad, Metchin is kind of catchy and cute.

Yuya decided to turn her mind to other things. The day felt great to walk but there's better things to do like the arcade and drinking beer. "So, did the magic book catch anything?"

"No results." Meteora dismissed the book to disappear wherever its supposed to go. "How are your injuries?"

"That? It's all good now. Minus the missing hole thus far." Yuya spat aside. "Feel like I'm going commando and having a stick in my ass." Going about the area without Hangaku didn't count to being defenceless.

"Please refrain from using indecent language especially in the presence of minors."

"Right right Metchin." If she'd be less of a stickler, he probably be able to enjoy a better time with this nerd.

The sage girl turned to answer her phone. Yuya managed to hear Selesia's question as a whisper from the phone. "Meteora, did you track down the magnetic field fluctuation?"

"It's too bad, we lost it." Metchin answered. "Kikuchihara is communicating with the department to get another reading for us. We might still be able to trace a direction from lingering effects."

"These occurrences are becoming too frequent. Is this Altair's doing?" Yuya could hear Selesia's frustration.

"It's probably because of Altair's interference to the world's rationality. I think the amount of variable imaginative force has increased that led to more occurrences happening simultaneously."

*Is it the time to be talking all that kind of things especially when there's a kid pointing at us? Those three girls are cute though.*

"Although it isn't a clue, there's something that caught my attention. One of the eyewitnesses reported seeing a robot. There is a high probability that the Creation is from a robot or science fiction series."

"It's not the same case as the one that left the broken mess right?"
"That is correct for now. It is likely a few more will occur within a short time frame."

_More of us coming over eh. It'll be quite a party although it'll be a headache for the Gods. That sounds fun._ "Whenever they appear, they go quiet real fast. Wonder who's doing is that?"

"There is no answer for that. I do hypothesise that-

Selesia interrupted. "Meteora, I think we've found her."

Emiya took a sip of tea as the Mozart played in the background. A slow soothing melody to the fable in his hands. Fate Extra had been another rendition of him with another master. A nameless Servant within the digital world. He closed the comic book as he heard a phone call. He checked the ID before answering.

"Kikuchihara, to what do I owe this call for?"

"Selesia and Kanoya found the Creation. I assume you would be interested and since your home is within the area I've thought to come pick you up," She said.

"Who is this new Creation?"

"I don't know. They're bringing her in to the Stadium as we speak. My team will compile the details along on the way. I'll be outside the apartment in two minutes."

"Very well." Emiya grabbed the black jacket by the door. Ensuring the door and sigils are secured, he reinforced his eyes to scan the roads below. _There_. He recognised the Director's car approaching from the main street. Nobody in the streets either. A hand over the railing, he leapt over into the air. A soft landing as the car crawl to a stop. Emiya opened the door and entered the car. "Let's go."

Kikuchihara adjusted her glasses. "That's a very, surprising entrance."

"Less time wasted." The trip would drive up south towards Nissan Stadium. That was the planned venue for the Elimination Chamber Festival. The Creators had setup shop over there to make the creation process faster. Emiya continued to observe the city as they drove over the Metropolitan Expressway.

The journey taken forty minutes although Emiya surmised he could get there in fifteen. The others were already within the room by the time they entered. He gave a nod to the others before standing at a corner to listen. Kikuchihara carried a few items in hand before taking a seat to join the Creators.

The Creation subjected to interrogation was a timid schoolgirl. Pink twin tailed hair made a sharp contrast to the green uniform that stood out. It reminded him of another sharp nasty girl probably somewhere in the city. Kikuchihara announced her name. "Hikayu Hoshikawa." Nakanogane handed her a CD box. "Anyway, welcome to this world."

Matsubara was the next to speak. "I can't believe it….You're that character from that dating sim game."

_A dating sim game?_ Emiya read the label on the box. Had men have fallen so far to need a game to have a proper date with girls? The major would provide him the dossier later today.

His fellow Creator corrected. "That used to be an X-rated game." _How the world has crumbled._

Marine slapped against the man's thigh. "Nakanogane." The schoolgirl burst into tears. "You
shouldn't say something like that to a girl."

Nakanogane blinked. "Is it my fault?" As much as he knew about the man, this was being rather dense.

The girl rubbed against her sleeve. "Why does everyone know about me?" She glanced around with frightful eyes. "Um, uh, do you know about me and..." Her red face turned down to the floor. "Masayuki?"

Glances were thrown around. Mizushino explained. "Masayuki's the main character from the Milky Way of a Starry Sky. The prince charming so to speak. This is going to be a waste of time. Turning away, he texted the Major on the results of the training.

Meteora added on to the topic. "From her point of view, she must feel like her secret diary was exposed to the entire world. It's like an accident. I extend my sympathies."

Kanoya tilted his head. "Why is she here of all people?"

Matsubara scratched his head. "Logically, it does make sense. The characters who get transported here are the ones who are accepted by the readers. In other words, the popular ones."

Selesia was at a loss. "Until now, all the characters that appeared here were Creations with special abilities for battle so I thought there was some kind of rule like that."

"Of all the possibilities that could have come, we get a young girl." Emiya shook his head. Fate always have a funny way to throw a wrench into things. So many heroes and legends exist and the world decided to choose a young schoolgirl.

His remarks made the girl cry more. Emiya didn't care as Matsubara protested. "They are popular in their own way. They have their charm and beauty so you can't put it on a similar scale."

"Men are disgusting to think such things exist." Selesia bit her lip. That shut the Creator up.

"Mankind is disgusting, that's the norm." Emiya took a seat across the group. "She is just unfortunate to be pulled here into this world."

"Please don't call people like that. It's not good to say such bad things." The timid girl yelled.

Emiya ignored her and turned to the phone. The Major reported the men were sore from all the bashing by the wooden swords and rubber bullets. Overall the results were optimistic and they hoped to spin into action in another two rounds.

Yatoji stood up. "I'm going back to work. I have a deadline for my spin off." The man left with a distraught face. Emiya filed the observation.

Matsubara returned to his seat. "So, for the rest who are unfamiliar, what do we know about Hoshikawa? Strengths, traits and that kind of stuff."

Nakanogane started a list. "Well, her special ability is showing her panties and seducing men."

Hoshikawa screamed with a finger stabbing for his heart. "Panties? Who would do something like that? Why do you think I would do something like that? You're so mean." The girl pressed her hands into her face and continued to wail. Will that girl ever stop?

"You..." Selesia hissed as she pressed a fist into Nakanogane's head.
Nakanogane was at a loss. "But that's just how she is in the game..." I stand corrected, men have fallen.

Selesia posed the important question of the day. "But what is she going to do?"

"It's fine even if she can't help us fight. We'll figure it out anyhow," Yuya said.

"Yeah, you're right." Selesia released her fist from the Creator's head.

The man rubbed his head as Meteora answered. "In any case, we must contact her Creator. No, since it's a video game, I meant the company that created her."

Kikuchihara offered to resolve the problem. "I will arrange for it. However, I'm still curious about the whereabouts of the other Creations. We haven't been able to find them."

"Three Creations have appeared and two of them still remain to be found." Meteora said.

Yuya clasped his fists together. "I bet at least one is on Altair's side."

Meteora nodded. "That is a reasonable assumption. They may however be neutral similar to Archer's original intention. We will continue our search until proven otherwise." She turned towards Archer. "Can you assist with the search to help identify them? If we can discover the identity of that character early on, then we can include that character in our storyline. That would be advantageous for us."

"I'll think about it. Altair didn't take my snooping around lightly."

Matsubara said. "About that storyline, this girl is a Creation too. Considering the impact, don't we have to include her in the Elimination Chamber?"

Emiya felt the presence as the door opened. A soldier in uniform entered the room before addressing to Kikuchihara. "Director Kikuchihara, the Oji office notified us that they have taken one person into custody under the Special Disaster 105 Measure."

"Who? A Creation?" Kikuchihara asked.

"The person calls himself Naoya Takarada. He has no notable external injuries. The Metropolitan Police Department is confirming his identity now." The others were caught by surprise. This is an interesting development.

Matsubara shot to his feet "The Creator of Alicetaria of the Scarlet, he's still alive after what that mad woman is doing?"

Kikuchihara answered as the soldier was dismissed. "I arranged for him to be sent here. Why don't we ask him?"

Matsubara waited by the door for the police car due to arrive. He remained to stay under the shade from the orange glow. The others were How long has it been since he seen him? That's right, a year ago when Alicetaria of the Scarlet was announced for airing.

"What kind of man is Takarada?" Marine asked.

Matsubara scratched his chin. "He's a good man. A bit hard to talk with, pessimistic but aware about the light of hope behind the darkest parts."

The police car came to a stop. Matsubara was surprised when the familiar man stepped down from
the car. Gai Takarada had a drawn and haggard face with poor shaven hair. Look like some weight lost too. What have they done to him? Matsubara went down the steps to greet his fellow author.

"Matsubara." Gai Takarada's voice gave ease before he was covered in a hug. Warm flesh and blood. Still he was glad the man was safe and sound.

Matsubara rubbed the man's back. "Takarada. Are you hurt?" They parted as Kikuchihara talked with the police officer.

"No, I'm fine. Thank you for the concern. I just find it, a bit hard to believe that I'm here. That I'm alive."

"We're glad to see you're okay." A tap on the shoulder. "We can talk more inside." A nod and they walked carefully up the steps.

Settled within the meeting room, Marine placed some snacks onto the table which Takarada began to take in earnest. After several bites of the onigiri did they start questioning him. Kikuchihara asked the first question. "Mr. Takarada. I'm sorry to ask these questions so quickly but we need to know the details to your appearance here. What had happened? How did you escape?"

"Escape?" Takarada laughed. A laugh that didn't feel quite real. "Did you expect me to escape from a woman that can defeat dragons? I was released."

"Alicetaria let you go from captivity? What made her change her mind?" Meteora's turn to ask the question.

"She referred to a particular boy that had returned a small spark and hope to her. I had a very exciting talk with her after that." Was Alicetaria refer to that kid? Matsubara wasn't around probably for that part of the conversation.

"What was the contents of the discussion?"

Takarada shook his head. "I cannot tell you that. It's our secret. I gave my word on that." He grabbed a bottle of water and drank the entire contents. "Apologies for my rudeness. Food was hard for them to find. What I can tell you is that the means to her ideals have changed."

Kikuchihara continued. "Does that mean she has changed her mind on forcing you to change her world?"

"One of the truths, yes. From what I managed to overhear time to time is about causing havoc to this world." Takarada nodded.

"That is a long story to explain." Matsubara grabbed an onigiri and placed in Takarada's hand. "I'll tell you about it once you got some good sleep."

Selesia asked. "What does that mean in the big picture? Is she still an enemy or someone we can take in as an ally?"

"That is yet to be decided. We may need to decide further on that." Meteora answered.

"If you want a straight answer, you can go ask it directly from her mouth." Mirokuji offered the idea.

"That would be the optimal solution. Unfortunately I would probably the worst choice for the matter." Meteora said.
Mirokuji scratched his chin. "She and I didn't really have a good history either."

"As though anyone has a good history with her." Selesia chipped in.

"We can think of a solution later. Meanwhile the Bird Cage must continue as planned," Meteora said. "With Mr. Takarada's assistance, we can shoehorn Alicetaria into the story the way we see fit."

Nakanogane rubbed his chin. "The question is who will she help?"

"In my opinion, she will do what's right and those actions will eventually lead to something that helps us. That's the way she is," Takarada said.

"How certain are you?"

A wide smile from the dry lips. "One hundred percent."

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Master dropped onto the bed as Siegfried walked through the blinds of the balcony window to observe the city in its nightly form. He checked on the prana flow, a slow and steady beat that pulsed alongside his Master's. He continued to remain in spirit form whenever possible. More so because this house, a simple abode would have visitors in the morning on occasion and it was prudent to remain unseen.

Master's voice entered his head. *How do you find the city so far?*

Siegfried sent his reply. *Very different. It gives an impression of being cramped in crates. I do understand as this city have millions of people, something unheard of in my time. Times have changed.* Master rose to his feet. *Siegfried, I have a request of you.* Understanding its importance, Siegfried astralised into his Master's gaze. "I would like you to train me how to fight."

Train him how to fight? Siegfried paused for a second before speaking. "Master, what are your intentions?"

Master pressed a hand on his chest. "I need to know how to fight. This Magic Circuit is a special weapon that nobody has. I should make good use of it for the cause."

"No. I cannot accept your presence on the battlefield. A war isn't something that a young boy like you should take lightly."

"Even if I have the opportunity to save others?"

"A man bent on saving others do not enter a fire on the first choice Master. That mindset is not wise." Master lowered his head in response. "What is the truth that you have in mind?"

"Seeing Mizushino manipulated that way. I can't make myself easy as prey. Your life is in my hands." Master squeezed his fist carrying the Command Seals. "I don't want give you regrets like the another Heroic spirit called Diarmuid."

A story behind the reason. Siegfried said. "I see. However you should have faith in me that it is unnecessary for you to fight."

"I know. Every time I've tried, someone paid the price. Someone suffers even if I did nothing."

Master turned away. "Siegfried, I kind of get it but..." A sigh in his lips. "I can't just sit by there and let everyone else fight, not when I can do something about it."
"Master, each person has their role." He placed his gloved hands onto the young boy's shoulder. "There is a time for heroes and also for the common folk. A hero will not live if the people do not support them with the farming of food and smithing of tools and armour. We are both dependent on each other."

Siegfried dropped his hand. "I will provide you the training, if only to improve your self confidence and physical condition. Archer have mentioned on the risk of others getting caught in the crossfire and the extra strength would help you to survive. You will not fight alongside me but there are other fights that need you to win."

Master gave a faint smile. "Thanks Siegfried. I owe you for that."

Siegfried returned it with his own. "Your welcome. Come and take a seat. Tell me about this Diarmuid and his tragedy. I would like to give my respects."

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Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day, belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for reading Beyond Worlds. As you may see, I am back from medical hiatus. Whilst trying to recover, I've also decided to change my update strategy to complete this project in one full shot considering the impact.

Looking at this, it's been over a year since I've started this story. 190k+ words for this project, nearly triple the expected that I've planned. It is now coming to an end since I've posted all the chapters in a single go. The future author notes will focus further on the development and processes to its conclusion.

Moving onto this chapter. Well, I believed Emiya's cooking was a natural given due to the fact that Daichi's awareness about the man's impeccable cooking. Some parts are similar as they still remain true. Authors can have such disparity in their styles that I'm sure many readers have already seen so I won't go further.

I'm glad to those who've enjoyed the story thus far and continued to support it. I'll probably retire for good. It's just been such a weary journey and I've burnt myself out more than once trying to complete this.

Once more, thanks for reading Beyond Worlds.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
"Did you manage to find anything?" Siegfried asked as Meteora activated an incantation on her Magic Grimoire. A pulse of blue light before it faded.

She shook her head while closing the book shut. "I am unable to likewise identify any sources of magic from this location."

"I do not have anything else here either." Emiya said as he sifted through fine dust and handful chunks of rubble. Structural Grasp likewise did not grasp anything of interest. The hastily constructed Bounded field revealed nothing. They were just as is, broken stuff. He stood up from the centre of the purposed scene.

The missing Creations were nowhere to be seen. It was agreed upon as a minimum to investigate the sites where they appeared. This site was certain. Half of the building shattered into pieces of concrete and metal beyond immediate manmade capabilities. Given the amount of damage, it was intriguing to find the other half remained standing from the numerous cracks and stresses within.

Siegfried observed the little pieces of the pole previously buried into the ground. "Given the amount of damage from the piece of metal, I am surprised that we haven't found any signs of magic. These metal sticks aren't suited for such a feat."

"I would agree with you but it may be something further than we think. There are much greater possibilities than the ones at hand," Emiya said. The animation industry in this world is vast with the amount of complex stories and characters. The Nasuverse alone has many intricacies within its various versions of the storyline and alternative options.

Siegfried nodded as he stepped out of the green sidewall of the tent covering the area. "I see. It is a pressing matter but I am optimistic we are able to pull through. I apologise for being unable to assist beyond being present on this matter."

"So you say, Saber. You do your part and I'll do mine." Emiya had already planned him into the roster lineup.

"This site is a bust." The area had been cordoned off from the public with a full tent placed overhead to avoid prying eyes. They had been given a day before the area had to be cleared to start repair works.

Meteora followed through the tent into the white sun. "The police haven't been successful on gathering additional details from witnesses. It would not be hopeful to expect anything new on that front."

Emiya dusted off his jacket. "The Major told me they have no available data from GPS as the satellite was on the other side of the world at that point of time."

"I understand this machine is able to take great details from huge distances away?" Siegfried said.

"In nutshell, it is floating somewhere beyond the clouds, spinning around this Earth." Emiya riffled
inside his jacket for the keys. "Best we return back and restore our strength. I need a word with the JSDF as well along the way."

"Excellent. I look forward to your cooking later."

Meteora raised a hand. "I am eager and grateful to enjoy all of it."

Emiya shook his head. "Do not remind me." Ever since that kid mentioned about his skills, the demand for food among the Creations skyrocketed. Creators themselves were tempted to travel all the way for his cooking. Pride befell upon him once, and now another time again.

Siegfried put on his blue jacket before walking towards the car. "Do you not like to cook? I see a different set of eyes whenever you start to cook."

"I do not take privy to being stared at."

"You said nothing so I assumed you didn't mind about it. I apologise if it's otherwise."

"Forget about it." Siegfried was the least of troubles for food. The bigger trouble was the short one trailing behind. Why on Earth did he always have to feed gluttons?

Daichi Hideaki stared at the blank white screen. A finger tapped against the laptop's keyboard, trying to nudge an idea from the silence. Nothing was coming to mind.

Archer was getting an inclusion into the Bird Cage from one of the writers from Type Moon. A miniature arc spin off created within the Fate Grand Order universe. Siegfried would likewise be included within the process. The idea of acceptance would be handled by the pros.

Important question was how could they improve their powers? His situation was in a bit of a limbo. The Magic Circuit didn't have much of an output but it had a potential. What can he do with it to help them?

A loud clack jolted Daichi out of his seat. Snapping his neck towards the door revealed Mizushino in his uniform. "You scared me."

"Sorry," Mizushino said. "I thought the others were here today."

"Marine and Matsubara's working on an interview while the others are having their own programs elsewhere today. They should be in tomorrow."

"I see." He returned back to the chair. Long silence took place alongside. Mizushino pointed at the word processor. "What are you writing about?"

"Nothing. I'm still trying to come up with an idea to help out." He'd been here for an hour now since the end of school. Something had to come out by the end of today to make it in time. Daichi noticed the sullen face. "What's with the long face? Chikujoin threatening you again by chance?"

Mizushino shook his head. "No. It's not happening again. I'm not letting her get away with anything."

Daichi stretched his fingers. "Then what's with the look?"

"You're busy and I don't want to bother you."

"I need a break anyway. Seriously I hate these chairs. They are so hard and uncomfortable. Are these
people made of metal?" No reply. "So what's wrong?"

Mizushino shook his head. "It's not a big deal."

"If it wasn't a big deal, you wouldn't be looking like that. I'm not going to leave another potential bomb waiting inside there again even if I don't like it."

Mizushino paused, mind contemplating an answer. He took a seat across Daichi. "I had an idea to incorporate within one of the stories. I managed to convince everyone else that it can help." The boy's face turned away. "However now, I'm struggling to make it work."

"What would you say the problem is about?"

Mizushino turned away, his voice barely heard. "I can't get it to work right."

"How is it not working right?"

"Well…"

"By any chance, are you're saying that your skills are bad that you can't get it to work?"

Shy boy bit his lip. "That's quite direct there."

Daichi clicked his tongue. "Yeah, that was a bit too much. Anyhow, that doesn't mean the problem's fixed just by knowing about it."

"I'm not giving up so to say but I'm a bit worried that it won't be done correctly in time." Mizushino squirmed. "The way Archer talked about short of time is making me uneasy."

"I feel the same vibe. The faster it is, the better. As for an idea, I can only suggest to get someone to help on that," Daichi said.

"How can I get someone to help me with creating something?"

That piqued his interest. "Oh, it's related to creating stuff? That's somewhere easier to start then."

Daichi pointed towards the empty desks. "You already have the best people around you to look for help. Matsubara and the others should be able to give you advice."

Mizushino's reluctance was plastered on his face. "I don't want to bother them. They're busy enough as it is."

"That's true but rather than to keep struggling against a problem and possibly not fix the problem, it's a better alternative. In return you can help them on something else."

"That would be hard. I mean, it'd be too imposing on them. It was difficult already to get their opinion on it."

"Nobody would fight for you unless it benefits them. Kindness and charity aren't free either. If you really want it, you'll have to earn it."

Mizushino's eyes widened at the thought. "That sounds deep."

"I guess being around with Archer so much rubbed off me a little." Daichi glanced at the clock and realised. "Speaking of which, I need to go to practice."

Mizushino paused before answering. "Sure."
Daichi scrambled his things into his pack and walked for the door. "Believe in yourself. If you can't, believe in someone who believes in you. I don't but I'm sure someone does." He gave Mizushino a wave behind his back before disappearing. The right thing doesn't care even if they aren't eye to eye.

Emiya contemplated between poisons to use on the ungrateful lot. Ever since dinner that day, the humble abode had been packed with the entire group. Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. Every single time. Kikuchihara seemed to be supporting the idea, delivery of food and stocks just in time every day. Sure, cooking was enjoyable but they deserve some retribution especially the Kid. Maybe he should add some laxatives as the first step.

Today's lunch topic was about the Internet. Meteora had been exploring the idea of utilising it for trying to expand her current database of knowledge given how any revision for her would be limited given her Creator's death. From Emiya's observation thus far, it seemed more probable that the girl was looking for more food to try instead.

"The Internet is a vast place for easily accessible storage and information. Having such a commodity is truly valuable."

Emiya pointed out. "Though the Internet has its own underworld within." The Dark Web existed in his universe. He used it on occasion to acquire difficult goods and materials for his missions. Darn, he hadn't the time to thank Luvia Edefelt for the few jewels given to him at times.

"There's that and also Rule Thirty Four." Kid pointed out. Emiya didn't recognise that rule from any of his experiences in the underground communities. *Probably not important.*

Selesia was perplexed. "What's rule Thirty Four?"

Mizushino cracked an awkward laugh. "That isn't a really good thing to know."

Kid raised a finger. "If something exists on the net, there's a porn of it."

Cold silence blanketed the room. Selesia chuckled before settling her eyes on the Kid. "You're not joking, right?"

Kid shook his head, cringing her face into rising tide of hell. Her hands hit the table before screaming. "I feel so violated darn it!"

*There the kid goes at it.* "Did you have to tell them that?" Mizushino said.

The sage was quiet, Hoshikawa bright fumbling tomato with the other Creators giving uncomfortable looks. Emiya surmised it to be a natural conclusion. He had learnt to cast aside modesty when need be for war in the old days were random. Battlefield injuries were priority than shame.

"It's a truth they deserve to know." Kid protested.

Yuya reached for a piece of teriyaki chicken. "Well, sucks to be girls." That promptly got him a glare from Selesia and Marine.

"Nope, you guys ain't scot-free." Kid explained. Chopsticks froze. "There's a particular genre called Yaoi."

Emiya felt the need to cringe. "I have a bad feeling about this." Doesn't the Kid have any sense of tact to drop the topic?
Kanoya gripped at his stomach. "I feel sick."

Yuya raised his brow. "Oi, what's this Yaoi about?"

"Guy with guy relationship. Gritty details included." Kid explained.

"You can't be serious." Yuya's eyes were wide, in need of denial.

Kid shook his head. "It's the truth. There are probably at least a half dozen stories involving you with someone."

"I feel like I just got cancer." Yuya stood up and walked to the door. "I need a smoke."

"I really don't like the sound of that." Kanoya looked just about to throw up.

Selesia's face slammed onto the table. "I think my respect for the Gods of this world has dropped. Hard off a cliff."

Matsubara winced in the background as Kid continued his demise. "Well, there's also lot of other categories. Example would be gender bender where your genders get swapped."

Emiya huffed. "So in one case, I ended up as a girl." The girls were stuck lamenting at their predicament. Only Nakanogane had any sense of an appetite.

"There was one case besides Chloe."

"Who exactly is this Chloe?"

"Well...she is a girl that was born from a Class card based on Archer. She'd be his little sister."

"Little sister huh?" Emiya didn't remember reading that part.

Kid reached for his phone, tapped a few keys before showing it to him. "Well, she became a magical girl."

Ilyasviel von Einzbern, a homunculus and Master to a Greek God. Bloodthirsty and relentless. Turned into a magical girl with all the skimpy frilly clothes. The two different extremes considering the bloodthirstiness she brought upon her foes. A sigh and a hand to the face. "Another one?"

"The worst is when the girl meets the original."

Selesia stabbed a fork onto the plate. "Let's just end the topic." White china cracked behind the smile he actually found was rather sinister for once. "Or else." Kid nodded and a form of calm returned to the meal. Somewhat.

Sota fiddled his fingers as he waited for the meeting to start. Hikayu's Creator was coming and Meteora wanted a discussion with the others. The room was cramped with everyone inside. Creators by the front amongst the seats, Creations kept back towards the walls. Exception was Hikayu herself, having the main seat.

Archer was absent. Selesia raised a fuss before giving up. Apparently the man had been exhausting to deal with. He didn't want to come close to him, even when he is a hero.

When Hikayu's Creator was brought in by Nakanogane, he wasn't as expected. Short with the large nose and mole on the right cheek stood out and adding the unkempt black hair gave the closest
impression Sota had of a NEET.

Kikuchihara begun the talk. "Welcome Mr. Ohnishi. I thank you for your time." Hoshikawa followed by introducing herself. Her voice soft in contrast to the other day.

Ohnishi grew excited given his energy and loud voice. Hearing her voice grew his eyes wide open. A smile of joy that showed large teeth. "Hikayu, it's me." He reached forward with open arms. "Marry me please!"

Sota blinked. What, just, happened? Screams shrilled ears as Hikayu was trying to fend herself from Ohnishi's attempt at either hugging or groping the girl.

A large hand grabbed Ohnishi by the collar before lifting him off his feet. Siegfried in full armour turned the man around to meet eye to eye. "Please restrain yourself."

That calmed the man. "Right." Siegfried nodded before lowering him back onto the chair.

"Woah, you really act like a knight." Selesia said. Siegfried returned her words with a nod before returning to his place beside Hideaki.

Kikuchihara adjusted her glasses. "Ohnishi, this isn't a hand shaking event with an idol group or a cosplay event. This is a meeting to discuss on how to give Hoshikawa powers. Please remain focused on the task at hand." She nodded to Meteora whom began explaining the situation to Ohnishi.

Ohnishi's initial excitement went up several notches but Selesia's aura of danger probably kept him on a tight leash. Several minutes was enough to bring the man up to date.

"Wow…I'll be honest. I wasn't expecting this. To think that Nirvana has graced me today." Sota felt a chill down his spine.

Meteora continued. "In Hoshikawa's original description, she is supposed to be a normal high school girl. However given the circumstance, we want to find ways to give her abilities to help us to fight Altair."

"Hmm, hmm." Ohnishi rested his fingers under the chin. A snap of fingers. "For Hikayu's case, it's a piece of cake."

"How do you plan to do, specifically?"

"A fan disk would do. What kind of abilities do you have in mind?"

"Based on the current composition of our team, I am looking to enhance it with a fighter that can handle immense attacks."

Ohnishi nodded, his eyes wide with glee. "I see. I have just the right thing in mind."

Siegfried stepped forward. "I would like to raise a point. While I understand that Altair is strong, I feel that we should not force our lady here to fight."

"Saber's right." Mirokuji tossed a casual salute to the servant. "We shouldn't force someone to fight just because they're a Creation. We should think this through."

"I understand on the concept. However, having an additional fighter will make a significant difference in our team's combat ability especially when her potential is endless," Meteora said.
He glared. "Metchin, we Creations may be tougher, stronger than you people but that doesn't mean we are immortal. We've felt the pain of our injuries. We've been fighting all our lives and accepted that we have to fight to win. This girl here is normal, a life worth envying. In any case, can you accept the responsibility for her death?"

"That is not a certain-"

"Are you so sure that you can guarantee her survival against Altair? The girl that has powers beyond all our capability so far? We almost died fighting her. I made my decision to fight and the consequences. It isn't right to force it onto her." Mirokuji walked towards the door. "I'm done."

Silence filled the room until the door closed shut. Kanoya broke the heavy weight in the air. "Wow…what a let down."

Selesia shuffled. "Maybe we can let Hoshikawa have something safer, like those supportive abilities?"

"An ability behind the front lines would still put her as a target. The risk remains," Siegfried said.

Nakanogane scratched his head. "Thinking of a useful ability like that would be tricky. It'll probably mess with Ohnishi's plan as it is."

Meteora turned to the girl in question. "Hoshikawa, what do you want to do?"

Hoshikawa pushed down the hem of her skirt. "I don't know."

"If that is the case, very well. We should adjourn for the time being. I need to think further on this matter to find an optimal solution." Meteora's face revealed nothing as she left. Selesia sighed before following up to chase the sage. Kikuchihara adjusted her glasses and nodded to the others to disperse.

The room grew in space as the Creators file out in their own thoughts of the matter. Sota bit his lip as he continued watching the frightened girl that held still.

Emiya tapped a boot against the panel of wood below him. Solid piece that made good footing. Meteora arranged some meeting to give the school girl some powers. Ridiculous idea for creating an unreliable weapon. This place, is where he needed to be.

His hands clapped into an echo before leaning over the platform to bark down towards those under his charge for today. "Let's get started. We ain't got all day."

Sixty men donned in green armour stood in formation. The best of the JSDF. Today was the third session of turning these lethal men into something more.

A storage warehouse had been turned into a makeshift training facility. This Killhouse would be his ground. Most of it had been constructed with wood to form a multi storey building. Easier to reconstruct later to cater new scenarios.

"We'll be running close quarters. Mixing it up to prepare you against all cases simultaneously. Jorgumand squad, you're up." First group fell out to grab their gear. Meantime, Emiya dropped down into the Killhouse and settled by the chair in the centre of the building.

Today's setup was to mimic an office building, many small rooms with a large meeting hall. Plentiful of windows as well. That was where he waited in the centre of the Killhouse. Emiya leaned and
kicked his feet onto a chair. Furniture as props added to the authenticity of the situation. Perfect position to read the newspaper. A nice balcony to watch the boring view of a metal wall.

Leaning over a shoulder, he tapped the large alarm clock, starting the timer. Team Jorgumand had four minutes to flush and remove the threat, that being him. Contrast to standard tactics, fighting heroes was going to need a revamp. Twelve men on their own would be sitting ducks. This would be their third reminder.

Soft thumps from below. Without reinforced hearing, gauging their specific location was tad more difficult. He played the fool, checking the world news section to be disappointed. *This world is just as messed up huh.*

He didn’t wait long to notice something small fly in from below the balcony. Flash grenade clattered onto the floor. Lifting the papers around his eyes, the loud bang proved an annoyance.

Door to his right smashed open. *On cue.* A body sized shield charged through. Heavy bulky piece of composite clanked with each step. Faster than human, slight. *Nice of them to keep those shoes a secret.* Without a glance, he projected and sent swords flying.

Blunt metal smashed against the shield. Not a dent. Pistol shots from the side in reply. Leaning aside popped the paper with holes. *Too sloppy in such haste.* Meteora’s magic had improved durability of equipment and armour but these men were still human in flesh.

A wave of his hand projected swords behind the shielder. Sending them flying before deflected aside by rifle rounds. *Good, they’ve learnt against that already.*

Emiya flipped forward as more men followed the breach. A casual salute before leaning out and falling off the balcony. Grabbing hold of the footholds, breaking through the wooden wall and into a Jorgumand. Reinforcement complete, his fists struck like sledgehammers. Rapid streak of blows sent the soldier into a wall, unconscious.

The rear guard turned around from the commotion, opening fire point blank. Emiya ducked under before elbowing the man in the gut. Grab the wrist and tossed the man over onto his shoulder and a kick to the face will shut him down. *That's two.*

Tingle on the back of his neck. Rolling about before rubber bullets broke through the ceiling. Heavy footsteps scattered above with profound agility. Minimising losses. Emiya picked up a rifle from the floor and shot back through. Recoil thud against his shoulder, probably hitting everything but the targets. Tossing the empty gun aside, he sprinted towards the other end of the room towards the two stairs of the building.

By their footfalls, Jorgumand was setting up to watch both stairs and balcony. Pushing reinforcement further, he vaulted out the open window beside the stairs and climbed up. Most of his weapons would kill outright. Thus, he'll give them a bit more shame by projecting a pair of the cursed shinai of Fuyuki. They’re fast, but not enough.

Reaching the roof, Structural Grasp gave him the needed details. A stomp of the feet brought him down, right onto a pair of shoulders. Guns blazed in return. Emiya weaved through them, each of his blows a blur.

*Three.*

*Six.*

*Nine.*
Eleven.

Bodies hit the floor as Emiya scanned for the last one. Last man with the shield charging from behind. Sidestep, disarm and push. The impact threw the man out of the building to a painful landing. The loud grunt outside probably meant he survived it rather well.

Twelve and all accounted for. Rubbing his hands together, Emiya popped a head outside and said. "Exercise is over. Team Niner, prep up." This time he'll get to enjoy the tea by the pantry. He made a smirk towards the downed men crawling to their feet. "Are you guys done hugging the floor yet?"

Their squad leader spoke between breaths. "Permission, to speak, freely?" Emiya gave a nod.

"Was that the worst you had to give us? No way in Satan's blazing balls are we going to give up from a walk in the park like that."

Emiya sensed growing will within them. Relentless faces of demons that will persist even when they are on death's door. A smile grew on his lips. "Still some hope left in your sorry lots. Let's make a demon out of you."

Sota opened the door and stepped out of the stadium. The meeting earlier had been sullen after Archer and Mirokuji left. They've decided to wrap it up as Meteora and Kikuchihara have a private discussion. Perhaps some fresh air outside could give a breather.

The afternoon day was cloudy and made the open corridor a comfortable walk. Sota noticed a tour bus turning into the parking area. He noticed someone further down the corridor.

Her green school uniform stood out against the white wall she was leaning against. The sombre looks on her face worried him. A decision made, he stepped closer towards her. Hikayu Hoshikawa noticed him as he waved. "Hi."

The girl's voice was soft, uncertain. "Hello."

Sota pointed at the bench she was sitting. "Can I have a seat here?"

"Oh, sure. I don't want to impose anything on you." Hoshikawa waved her hands with a smile. Yet it felt too fake.

Sota decided to sit anyway. "How are you feeling?"

"I'm…alright I guess." Hoshikawa turned to look towards the field where a team of players were practising in the field next door. "I still find it hard to accept that I'm in a new world."

"I think I would be same if I am in your shoes." Hoshikawa looked at him. "I mean I'm also a normal high schooler."

Hoshikawa's eyes widened. "Eh, don't you people have power to create?"

Sota shook his head. "Not really for me. We don't have any powers. We just have hobbies or we turn it into a part of our life."

"Still, it's better than me. I don't have many talents." She pressed her hands into her face. "It's so embarrassing to think how that man's word was true."

Sota was at a loss. Nakanogane's words had continued to bite into the frail girl. As much as she was a Creation, Hoshikawa was just a young girl.
He decided to say. "I don't have talents either. Some of us don't or haven't found them. Maybe you haven't found them yet and what's needed is just to seek it out." Hoshikawa pulled her hands away. "Maybe we can just ask Ohnishi to give you some instead."

Hoshikawa blinked before laughing. "Sorry, that sounded so crazy." She calmed down, a little smile on her lips. "Yet it felt good to hear that."

Sota realised how crazy it would have been to casually give stats or traits to someone. Despite it all, it reminded that their words aren't the same. "I get it too. It'd be just like a game."

Hoshikawa's face returned towards a cold stare. "Are you afraid?"

"Yes." Hoshikawa bit her lip. "I'm scared."

Sota understood her worries. He asked to be sure. "That they'll force you to fight?"

A nod. "I don't know if I can. I'm not someone useful especially when it comes to something like fighting." She squeezed the hem of her skirt. "I don't know if I can do this."

Sota sympathised with her. Sending her off to fight against Altair, the woman that could win against heroes far greater than her. For a normal girl, it was something to contend with.

"Altair is a scary woman from what I hear." Sota said, the memory of the devil fox came to mind. "I was powerless against a girl that could twist a person's words."

"However, I've learnt from someone that giving up wouldn't have changed anything so we still have to fight to survive." He scratched the back of his neck. "I know my talents are limited. Matsubara, Marine, Suruga, Yatoji, Nakanogane, the other Creators. They are all far better than me. That didn't mean that I should stop. I want to help them. Do my part for the team. Isn't that how we get over our challenges?"

She turned to study him. The gaze in her eyes softened as she said. "I guess I was hoping for someone to talk about it." She pressed her hands together before smiling.

"I'll do my part then. That helped. Thank you." She stood up with a small bow. "I'll inform Kikuchihara of my decision. See you."

Sota turned to watch her leave. I suppose it turned out alright. "Looks like you're being a good player there." A voice spoke from around the corner.

The man waved his diminished cigarette. "Since the beginning, you two decided to come over here in the first place." Red flushed his cheeks. "What do you have to be embarrassed for?"

"Weren't you against her receiving any power ups?"

"If she's willing to fight, I am all okay with it." Mirokuji took a puff and put out the smoke. "Never let others decide what you want to do. That is the most important thing, at least for me."

"I, I think the same too."

Mirokuji nodded in approval. "Good, keep that in mind. You have a long way to go in life."

"Why are you saying that? As though you are going to die," Sota said.
"Die?" Mirokuji barked a laugh. "I don't plan on dying. However once I go back home, my life will depend on my God. Knowing that arsehole, I'll probably by killed off eventually in the moment I least expect it."

He stood up, towering over the boy. "Until then I'm going to enjoy life the way I want." Mirokuji waved as he walked away. "See you kid."

Altair knew everything, even with her eyes closed. The First Holosipcon collected information from the entire universe, ready at her beck and call. It was her strongest weapon for knowledge is power.

Information flowed like tidal currents. Waves of data travelling across the world on constant basis, only changed by their magnitude. Most of it was irrelevant but new information of interest came to mind when warranted. The girl had not managed to achieve her goals. An unfortunate result for someone with great potential.

Her new quarters was equally devoid as the former. It's only fortune was to have a long bench to sit on and a door. The place was the same like the one before. Distance was irrelevant for the Holopsicon.

The door rumbled from the old door knocker still attached. She said nothing as it opened without her permission. Altair did not need to see a face to know. "What is your need to see me Alter?"

Alter dropped onto a knee. "I have questions, my queen."

She turned to face the esteemed warrior. "Speak your mind, Alter."

"I can feel the desire for vengeance within your veins. Yet I witness such restraint in thy hand." His gaze remained to the ground. "What stops you from destroying everything within the horizons?"

"You are correct. Vengeance remains deep and strong inside my beating heart. However just as they made my God suffer, I shall let them endure the painful realisation of how their world will end."

"To understand that moments before their existence becomes nothing. Such a painless end for these Gods. You harbour them pity do you not my Queen?"

Altair turned towards the broken man. "Why do I need to?"

"Why should you not? The Gods of this world have betrayed your God and in proxy, you. You are eager for their demise but few steps are taken. It is surprising when there are faster, more effective means within reach."

Those words were hollow to her. "Are you suggesting to hurt them more beyond their existence?"

"Revenge is something that should be applied like a burn. Painful, slow and relentless before expiring." Looking into Alter's past gave an insight to this thought of mind. A man whom suffered daily in his quest for vengeance and salvation.

"You are different from your other."

"He is a man that blames others on the deaths he has inflicted. I have accepted the blood that flows due to my own actions. In turn I shall find redemption by spilling even more."

"Spilling blood is unnecessary for this world."

"The fruits for our efforts would be bountiful into the long cause. What is there for us to lose?"
"Vengeance would be sweeter after all the effort." Every step of the way taken to see it come to
culmination. A growing satisfaction as the reality ends in its abrupt destruction. That was what she
hoped to see.

"Effort matters nothing to the results. That is why we find the fastest solutions for the ends justify the
means." She said nothing. "Even if you may be limited by this realm's power, we as your servants
are not bound by this limit. Send us forth as it should have been and the world's demise will be
complete sooner."

"I will consider. Leave me, Alter."

"As you command." The man turned and left. As the door closed, Altair didn't like the bitter taste in
her mouth. For now, her fight remains with him.

Siegfried waited. Master is late. It was peculiar. His understanding of the local culture is brief but it
was understood. Their pride demanded timeliness. His Master had informed in advance with
exuberant apologies. Siegfried had not taken it to mind and used the spare time to think.

His legend was a web of assumptions. The life he had were made by the interpretations of centuries
past. Is this what Siegfried was? What had been the real history? Or would it be what he preferred to
be? Siegfried took a deep breath. He never had the time to think deeply into these topics, each time a
 crisis would reach his ears. His travels across Xanten would consume years, each return to home
bathing him in blood of the enemy. Each and every time.

How long has it been? The Throne of Heroes gave no sense of time. Millennia passed since his
legend yet felt just like a drop in the lake.

Master hurried to open the door. Stepping into the dojo, he found his Servant sitting cross legged in
the corner of the room. "Was there a problem Master?" Siegfried asked as he stood up.

Master clasped his hands together with a bow. "Really sorry for being late. Had some troubles along
the way." He put away his bag by the corner. "Shall we start Siegfried?" Siegfried nodded, reaching
for a Boken. That wooden sword is the simplest of tools but would give the greatest lesson.

"System start." Siegfried could feel the circuit activate by the rise of prana flowing towards him.
"Alright Siegfried, let's do this." Siegfried raised the boken. Master flew before slamming into the
wall. "Gah." The impact would hurt the boy but nothing detrimental.

Siegfried lowered the sword. "Sorry Master. Did that hurt too much?" He did hold back towards
something more towards the ordinary man.

Master was taking the blows in stride with a shake of the head. Siegfried explained. "Avoid
excessive movements when you are dodging. It makes you difficult to follow up especially if one
keeps their strikes short." A nod before they continued.

Half hour and twenty six times of hitting the wall was enough to make Master call for a break. The
boy was exhausted, flat on the floor while he prepared the warm tea from a thermos. Siegfried
explained his findings as he poured a glass. "You are improving. However, you will still be unable to
survive against a Servant."

Master groaned before lifting himself up. "Better than nothing. All I need to do is not end up stabbed
while you are fighting the others." He took the glass with gratitude before drinking it down in a
single gulp. "Are you getting more prana now?"
"Yes. Provided you minimise usage of reinforcement, there is enough supply for my daily existence."

"Great. I'd hate to imagine using that spell and end up hindering you. What are my odds right now?"

"At present moment, your condition is still poor to survive an attack. It remains best for you to hide and avoid being found."

"I thought I lasted for half a minute. Wait... how big of a handicap did you give me?"

Siegfried gave a slight bow. "I'm sorry Master. It is a big handicap. Most Servants would kill you in seconds in spite of this training."

Master sighed. "We're not always fighting Servants. There may be just a chance where I can make a difference. Let's have another go." Master tried to stand up before dropping onto his back.

"Master, you should rest. There is so much that I can train you at once. Your body has its limits."

Siegfried offered his hand. Master grabbed it and was lifted to his feet. "It does not detract your ability which is better than a normal person but you must be realistic."

"Yes, yes. Realistic it is. I'll have to get stronger over time." Master grabbed his bag. "Meantime, I should have a word with Meteora and Archer for ideas. Let's grab dinner from the Master Chef of Creations."

The orange sun begin to set as Emiya stared at the city. Nothing to see once again from the Koishikawa tower. He must have been here too frequent. Maybe he ought to bring a book to sit here and read. Learn something further about his Creator so that he can prepare for their next discussion.

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Emiya turned towards the west. Magic within a park few kilometres away. An invitation. The number of people with such a mind is few. An ambush was possible but this, this is bold. *Might as well find the answer from the horse's mouth.* He tapped a command on his phone, leapt down and entered the park.

Trees shrouded the sunset, casting slits of lights into the grass. The long path of clean concrete lead to a small field of grass and path of rocks. Dressed in a blue tunic and red skirt, the blonde knight met his gaze with steeled eyes.

The knight declared. "I am Alicetaria February, princess of Ulsterstein." She rested a hand on her hips. "I will be brief and direct. I want you to come and help me."

"Thought you'd get the memo. I'm not interested."

"It isn't for the Princess."

"Then to what purpose does this end meet?" Emiya kept his eyes open. No signs of anyone else. What is her motive?

"You were resistant against joining Meteora and her band."

"Fact, yes. Part of the past. Your point?"

"An open proposition if you remain interested."

"No thanks. I see no benefit in joining. What would've been the end goal for your team?"
Closure. An elimination of this entire facade. We don't belong here and there is no need to stay."

"Speak to your boss about it."

"We have similar paths but different ends. Convincing her would be nought."

"Two of us wouldn't change anything."

"Not if you include the Devil Fox."

"Her? Wow...Colour me surprised." Emiya shook his head. "That Chikujoin girl, has she blackmailed you again like the other pawns in this entire story?"

"No. Nonetheless she serves her own purpose, as long we both benefit from our goals." Her eyes were sincere. Another scan in the surroundings. Nothing.

"Not going to happen. That girl is just trouble and not worth talking to." A flash of light and Alicetaria was donned in full armour. A hand raised the lance. "I suppose it was inevitable." Emiya projected his blades and prepared.

"Indeed, misfortune befalls onto our negotiations."

"I've presumed as much." They clashed. Gravel scattered as metal sparked. Strikes were close and brutal. The small confines of space granted them no quarter. The lance while unwieldy remained agile in the knight's grip. Emiya's own pair sought to close the distance which within held back by the gauntlet in her other arm.

A single blow from her fist pushed the Guardian skidding. The loose ground pushed the heroes around as Emiya counterattacked from above. The lance intercepted. Emiya slashed Kanshou against it, twisting through for Bakuya. The gauntlet met the sharp edge before landing to a standstill.

"For a knight, you are proficient fighting bare handed." Emiya probed for opportunity. The woman wasn't seen to be stoic.

"Did that swordswoman teach you to flatter people?" Her reply was amused. She slapped Bakuya aside before lunging into for a fist to the face. Emiya slammed his knee up against it, turning to slash from below. A twist of the body let the sword past, clipping a piece of hair.

Emiya backflipped, throwing his pair of swords. Alicetaria deflected them aside as new copies appeared. "Since you haven't put a scratch, I decided to oblige." Reinforcing his legs, he accelerated into a flicker.

"How quaint of you to think a battle for victory would be considered tea time amongst heroes." Alicetaria replied, lance swinging. Weapons clashed before separation. Emiya flew backwards as six swords spun towards the target. Alicetaria spun the lance. Metal smashed into the ground, spraying rocks and dirt.

Alicetaria reached out, catching the arrow aimed at her face. She tossed it back, stabbing the entire shaft into a tree. A raised hand before smashing into the floor. Gravel sprayed, scattering the incoming barrage. A smile on her lips as the Red Archer landed onto the ground. "You are the first man I've seen that wields both sword and bow. Your skills are impressive."

Emiya kept the bow ready to fire. It was odd, nobody was coming. "Since you're here alone, your boss must have abandoned you."
"This is my own decision. I do not need her." Alicetaria made no move. What is her plan?

He waited. Swords ready for projection. More information from her would help. "That's harsh from a knight. Then who do you serve?"

"My own goals."

"What are these goals?"

"The survival of my kingdom."

Emiya spared an ounce of attention. Nobody approaching. Returning to the conversation, he said. "Yet you spare your Creator. Isn't he the key to your vision?"

"My God is the key but I've learnt enough." She nodded. "You have the boy to thank for that." The smile of pride.

Emiya pulled the bow taut. "It must have been simple for a boy to change everything you stood by."

The knight laughed. "We are a big mess of people. Did not your father change yours too?"

"I have enough fans. Are we here to fight or jest?" The lack of sneak attacks was starting to be worrisome. Did she think she could handle him on her own?

She shook her head. "This world is making me a rambler. There's so many strange things and I cannot find enough things to complain about."

"All I find are always idiots and crazy people." Emiya noticed the lax guard. A quick sword through the knee would put things in favour. *Time to make an opening.*

"You remind me of a King."

"Entertain me. Who do I remind you?"

Emiya prepared a blueprint in his mind. "A king in a far distant land and time. Similar to yours. She devoted herself to her kingdom." An old memory of partnership. The Fifth Holy Grail war and succeeding his wish to be a Hero of Justice.

Alicetaria's eyes gleamed. "As she should."

The hammer of the gun fired. "If she was here, I'd wonder if she would fight for her subjects or for the sake of the world."

"I'd like to meet her if there was a chance."

The sword of the Nibelungen, gifted to the famed hero. "Normally I would say she's long dead. In this world where the impossible happens, its different. Bringing her here though would be a sin."

Alicetaria nodded. "A shame."

The sword finished projection behind his back. "It is also a shame to see someone following a similar path."

"For a man who had thrown away everything to his ideals, you have reaped too much misfortune."

Emiya chuckled. "Misfortune follows me, so does Fate." He twisted aside as Balmung shot forward.
for the poleyn.

An armoured hand reached up and smashed head on against the Dragon Slayer. Sparks flew before Balmung was directed into the ground before her lance met the wave of arrows.

She raised her gauntlet. Instinct warned and Emiya followed. "Gotz von Berlichingen." Thunder struck at the spot he was standing.

"It was certain." Emiya closed the distance as Kanshou and Bakuya answered. "What I wanted was never meant to be achieved."

She met his approach with her own. "I am no aspirant to great ideals. My kingdom, is all I need."

Two forces of man collided. Emiya felt the tremors from the metal clashing at speeds of trains. "That kingdom, will be your downfall."

Her eyes sharpened. "Even if my end is certain, I am satisfied as long as my home stands."

"What is the point of a home when all it became is just ashes?"

"If nobody fights for their home, there would be nothing anyhow."

"An endless pursuit with eternal suffering." Emiya deflected the lance aside before being kicked back. Skidding onto the ground, he finally sensed it.

"That is the duty of royalty. To endure for the sake of its people."

Warning bells rang. Emiya leapt back before the ground erupted. The narrowed eyes of hers told him enough.

Black miasma along the dark plates. The red visor glowed with rage. A muffled scream before the… The weapon was…a traffic pole?

Emiya stepped back to avoid the swing to his face. Fast. Energy oozing out of the crazed warrior was undeniable. A Servant. Twin blades blocked the next strike, sending him careening across the grass. The forces that shook his bones were enormous. Far stronger than a Saber. Defending head on would wear him out.

"This is my fight." Emiya heard the voice behind the miasma. Black screamed louder as Emiya focused on staying out of reach and diverting the deadliest blows. A lance stabbed in between the two warriors. "Do not interfere."

Black screamed before spinning around with a long swing. Both warriors scattered before the whirlwind of the attack. Emiya tried to study the weapon. The weapon wasn't special beyond the black miasma that was incomprehensible. "Friend of yours?"

"Hardly." A few alarms rang a soft echo. Black screamed before vanishing in sparkles of gold light. Suspicions were confirmed. The female knight clicked her tongue. "Unfortunate to be interrupted. I believed I almost convinced you." She raised a hand and her horse appeared. Climbing atop, she gazed into his eyes. "We will meet again." He said nothing as the horse trotted into the air.

So we shall. Emiya felt Meteora's direct approach from the left.

"Are you alright Archer?" Meteora joined his side as they stared at the shrinking figure.

Emiya dismissed his projections. "It's nothing."
Meteora lowered her head in thought. "What was her purpose in attacking you?"

"Trying the change the cards of the game."

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

The Fabled Rule 34. I'm certain some stories for Re:Creators have already covered this. However I felt fanfics, partly separate background from the original stories hadn't been given enough attention considering Altair was born from Fanfiction itself.

Second note is how easy I found Hikayu to be so willing to fight in the original story. Whilst creation, she is still a normal girl. Likewise for others to be so accepting of her to fight. The conclusion arrived rather early but I'd rather it be there than anywhere else.

Lastly, I found it interesting contradiction between villains. Trying to follow the train of thoughts and alignments for Alter and Altair led me on an interesting journey of mind. Who's this new warrior that joined Altair? Hmm.

Alicetaria's bid for a third faction. That came out as an interesting anecdote from discovery writing the scene.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Blitz contemplated on whether the incoming bullets are an annoyance or a pain in the arse. Gunfire roared within the tight confines of the warehouse. Bright flashes of yellow provided light as bullets struck against the wall he leaned against. A nearby box splattered splinters of wood against his arm.

It was an off spur decision to explore a little more of the land of the Gods during the later parts of the night. More so importantly for booze and much needed cigarettes. That was when he noticed a floating drone and later a military jeep approaching afterwards. Maybe I shouldn't be flying around too much next time.

He set his pistol against the large metal rack and fired back. Both sides traded gunfire down the corridors as crates were damaged. Blitz didn't have any trouble with these soldiers, they were just doing their duty. What a disappointment. Creations should be fighting each other, not the Gods of this world.

These men were excellent opponents, accurate and well trained. Their coordination was the best that he had ever seem. Impeccable response and unnatural fast movements made it troublesome for him to handle. Blitz managed to hit a few but unable to verify any of them as kills. The shield men were the most troublesome in preventing that. Well armed, armoured and eager to survive. Having them on the team in his world would have made everything faced a walk in the park. How his God had condemned him to do the dirty work.

Blitz shouldn't spend any time longer here or they'll swing around to catch him exposed. Chronos Horologium activated with a chime. Rising into the air, he flew over the racks and towards the back of the building. A few yells before gunfire was sent his way. Too pesky for their own good. Arrows pierced through the roof, a close call if he hadn't moved a second earlier. Why wasn't he here upfront and personal?

Flying away was the easiest choice but they always followed. Four of those drones had already been shot to pieces and they managed to keep up. The constant barrage of arrows made it a touch annoying that led him into this place. Really such a pain when all he wanted was a new pack of smokes. He needed a new escape route. Something with a little less brutal to it.

The Princess was nowhere to be seen. No signs of the others as well. Maybe they're having their own trouble. Not that it matters to him. His goal was what mattered. These men were just an obstacle towards that goal. Getting past them would an easier choice.

He found an exit to the outside. Switching for a gravity bullet, he fired. The roof collapsed, its metal trusses buckling under the newfound weight. Yells echoed as chaos ensued. Kicking the door open, he felt the open air as he sought what he wanted.

In the few minutes he needed, Blitz entered the sewers through a public manhole. Just for insurance. He fired another gravity round behind him. Another roar into his ears before the concrete ceiling shattered from the herculean grip and collapsed. The path behind him was closed off, now he can make his escape and perhaps get some beer on the way.
Rui bowed, feet scraping along the floor as he presented his partner towering behind. "Here it is, the masterpiece."

"Woah. This is cool." Daichi sprinted up to Gigas Machina's legs before practically trying to inspect every nook and cranny.

"I know." Rui Kanoya beamed with pride. Gigas Machina was the finest machine in the world. Despite piloting it for years, the inspiring gaze at the thirty metre tall machine above you never ceased to dull.

"Aren't you guys busy?"

"Well, Old man Archer don't want me flying around. Said about collateral damage." Getting grilled like Meteora about government cost the other time isn't worth sticking out for. Not that he mind. It gave more time for him to enjoy the city and scout for young cute girls while at it. Those that wasn't spent on reading boring maps and numbers during 'designated work hours'. What kind of hero needs work hours anyway?

"So has anyone else ridden this thing besides you?" Rui pointed a thumb at Sota.

"Yeah, it was way too scary." Sota gave a sheepish answer.

The three of them stood outside the industrial warehouse within Urayasu. Kikuchihara managed to find a place to store Gigas Machina for the time being. Tokyo Disney was nearby so it was more inconspicuous if it did get found out. Besides, it beats the other choice of having to clean the war machine for a few hours every few days.

Rui did get the gist of the feud between the two after what happened. Both of them were trying to keep it sort of professional although he noticed the occasional slip ups. Seriously, *Honne* and *Tatemae* were irritating to get around in this world. Home was much easier to contend when you can yell at the person without caring about your own form of expression.

Daichi asked as they approached. His eyes were gleaming way too creepy. "Can I try riding it?"

Rui waved his hand away. "No way. It's been configured for me. Besides it's not safe for you to pilot it."

Daichi propped an arm around his neck. "There's a nice cafe in Akihabara where you can have maids attending to you."

Rui tilted his head. Nope. That isn't going to turn him over…

"You can have many young cute girls serving you however you like them to."

Something flicked in his head. Rui hit the remote and opened the cockpit. "Get on. You're buying later." Daichi was already clambering up the ladder. Far too excited as he noticed only two pairs of shuffling feet.

"You coming Sota?"

Sota shook his head. "I'll meet you guys later." That would not do.

Rui puffed his chest and waved up towards the cockpit. "As Chief Captain of Energia, I hereby kidnap you for this flight. Come on." Sota gave an awkward chuckle before following.
It took a few minutes to settle everyone inside the cockpite. Comfortable and safe, he started the power sequence. Meanwhile, Daichi was walking around and studying everything. That sense of enthusiasm was nostalgic.

"You're quite excited," Rui said.

Daichi said. "It's natural. I mean, who gets a one in a lifetime chance to pilot a huge robot? I'm taking it no matter what it takes."

"By the way Daichi...aren't you afraid of flying?" Rui finished off the diagnostics. He heard about that from Yuya on how he met Meteora and the Old man.

"Not if I have my hands on the controls. Come on, let's get going already."

"Hold your horses. I'm starting it up." Rui took a few minutes to set the right settings. Everything checked out before locking the drive controls. Daichi will struggle a little but it'll be alright. What's the worst that could happen?

Half hour later, Rui blinked at the results. The information on the screen was there but it was hard to believe it. "Seriously, you suck as a pilot." Such enthusiasm and yet a horrid lack of aptitude.

Daichi was trying to find the restart button on the screen. "I never had a chance to fly before. A few more practice rounds and I'll be on my way to be an ace."

Sota chipped in. "It's not that bad." A huge understatement.

Rui shook his head. "No. You're worse than the poorest trainee back in my class and that was really bad. I think it's an achievement that you can fail this hard."

Daichi pressed a hand to his chest. "Oh, that hurt like a knife through my heart."

Rui took over the controls before resetting everything to his settings. "It was a good thing I kept the flight safety on. Getting in trouble with those old women would be a pain."

"They'd kill you if they heard that."

"That's why older women are always so troublesome. Young girls are the best."

"You're not a lolicon by any chance are you?" Daichi asked.

"No way. I don't swing that way. I prefer younger girls because they are much easier to handle. They don't snob over you and think they are the boss of everything."

Daichi wrapped an arm around Rui. "I think I have an idea what you mean. Shizuka was only a few months older and she was leading our relationship."

Rui asked. "So Sota, what about you? What kind of girls do you like?"

"Ah, well. I think I like mature girls, the ones who liked to listen."

Rui pouted. Man of culture fallen under such whims. "No fun. To each his own then."

"I think Meteora fits the bill for you Sota. How's that?" Daichi said.

Sota went up like a red flashlight. "No way. I can't think of her that way. Besides she'll be going back to her world after all this."
Daichi slumped as Rui double checked the settings. "That's true. Kanoya, if you had a choice though do you want to go back?"

A finger paused. "Honestly, I think I would want to stay here. I'm tired of fighting." Rui cracked a smile. "However I can't let my world fall into peril. There's too many people counting on me. I'm the main character after all."

Daichi pumped his fist into the air. "We'll support you all the way. Maybe I can help if you let me practice a few more rounds."

The idea of Gigas Machina crashing through building after building horrified him. "No. Absolutely not! You'll kill us all. I know it."

Impossible. Impossible, impossible, impossible. Daichi Hideaki shook his head. It was just not possible for him to not have it. The talent to pilot a Mecha must be hiding somewhere, waiting to be awakened. All it needs is a bit of a push. Something to trigger it and turn him into the outstanding pilot he is destined to be.

Wasn't it?

Kanoya went to work on cleaning his machine. It'll be a few hours before the pilot would be done. Sota went to prepare for his first lesson with Marine. That was a good thing.

Daichi sighed as he entered the foyer of the Cabinet Building. Kikuchihara had called for his presence regarding something. Knocking on her office door, he entered to see a busy room. Charts and diagrams were stuck onto the wall. One of them reminded him of the meteorology case. He bowed before asking. "Good afternoon Director, you have requested for my presence?"

Sharp eyes rose to meet his before softening. "Afternoon Hideaki. That's right. Please close and lock the door, this is a private matter." Daichi felt his gut churn. There was an edge on the older woman. He obeyed instructions as she reached within one of the drawers. They took their seats across one another.

"What is this about?" Daichi asked.

She placed a folder on the table and turned it around to face him. "The police had arrested a person and unfortunately based on the information available... I suspect that you know him."

Daichi opened the file. The first page of the file was a report. Dread shot into the heart as he saw the picture at the start of the report. "Kazuko Minamori, from the Ogikubo High School. Do you know him?"

Kazuko… Daichi bit his lip. "Yes, we're friends. What did he do?" He glanced through the report, seeing bits and pieces of some basic data. Nothing particular that caught interest.

"Minamori was caught trying to hack into our computer systems and steal information. In this case, very particular information."

Daichi was surprised. How did Kazuko manage to pull off something like that? "Did that information happen to be about us?"

"Yes, the Major is not pleased to hear about this breach. I decided to pursue this matter to alleviate his burden on handling the Creations. It's rather worrying to know that other people are interest on this, in particular the media."
Daichi bit his lip. "Aren't we making quite a mess out there though?" Creations and JSDF in a secret war amidst the public.

"We're handling that part rather well. Misleading information and directives to make all the parts unlinked and inconclusive. However it wouldn't elude someone who already knows what's happening."

Daichi recalled the day back in the cafe. "Yes. He's in fact the one who got me involved within this fight in the first place."

Kikuchihara's eyes sharpened. "I see. Do you think he informed anyone else about this?"

"No. We were on our own. I've argued with him about it after meeting you all. We haven't talked since then. I should have known he wouldn't leave it be."

She began scribbling onto a stick it note. "Optimistic as it may be, I'll let the Major know to keep searching on that. He may have opened more doors without your knowledge." That might be right given the intrusion he just did.

Daichi turned back to the report. Why did you have to do this? The crime was going to be severe given how critical it raised his gaze towards the Director. "What's going to happen to him?"

Kikuchihara met his gaze. "That depends. Juvenile law would be the norm. However given the secrecy of this Council, that option may not be applicable."

It wouldn't be right. Kazuko was paranoid and anti government but it didn't mean that he deserved a life behind bars. Daichi pleaded the case. "He's just trying to do his own sense of justice. Please don't punish him too harshly on this."

Kikuchihara nodded. "I cannot guarantee that but I will request for some leeway. However he has been uncooperative and would make it difficult for me to support his case."

"Then let me have a word with him."

Kazuko Minamori was sitting on a chair. A hand, cuffed to the leg of the only table within the centre of the room. Silent and cold eyes boring into the white walls in front. Daichi watched his friend through the interrogation glass panel from the room next door. Kikuchihara asked. "Are you ready to talk to him?"

Daichi nodded before turning for the door. Stepping into the room, cold air whooshed against his skin. The moving door echoed before closing with a loud bang.

Kazuko raised a brow before a sneer grew on his lips. "Daichi Hideaki. As expected of you to become their dog now."

Ignoring the jab, Daichi took a seat on the other chair. "I've heard of what you've done." He placed the file about Kazuko on the table. "That you've tried to hack the government."

Kazuko said nothing. Daichi tried to ease the tension. "Since when did you get so good with computers?"

"Beats me."

"I've managed to negotiate for leniency on your case. What you need to do is just to help answer a few questions."
"My, they certainly let you come in unprepared. Did you expect to just waltz in and make me answer questions? Whatever your scheme is, I want no any part of it." Kazuko interrupted.

"Why?" No answer. Daichi pursed his lips. "We've talked about this before. What you've done was wrong."

"Ah, preaching the ways of the government. Praise the good of governance. Blah, blah, blah. Are they giving you a cookie for that?"

Daichi knew this was going to be tough but boy was it hard to hold it down from giving a piece of his mind. "All of this posturing is meaningless. It'd be a lot simpler if -"

"No meaning you say." Kazuko slammed the table. "Everything has a meaning. Every breath, every step, everything has a damn meaning about it whether you like it or not. If you wanted something meaningless, then that would be to trust the government and adults with the entire governance of the nation."

"If we don't believe in the government, then who else can we trust to lead our country?"

Kazuko yelled. "No true form of governance is fair. The right to rule should be wielded by the strongest, not the ones chosen by the communities of sheep."

Daichi yelled back. "Dictatorship would lead us straight down to hell. There's plenty of examples out there in the world."

Kazuko stood up. "Those men fell to their own corruption and power. Absolute power corrupts and knowing that is half the battle against such fallacy."

Daichi rose to meet him. "Why do you hate it so much anyway? Even until now, I don't understand that fanatical devotion of yours."

Kazuko's face twisted into a snarl. "There is no need to understand. Your mind is all fixated, devoted, set on just being their lapdog. There is no salvation for anyone who helps the incompetent in flailing in their tasks."

Daichi buckled down. Motivation was the answer to everything. "That's where you're wrong." Kazuko narrowed his eyes. "That's a contradiction of its own since if no government is ever fair. As much as you blame me on it but you've let such ideals fool you like a veil of illusions trying to deny the truth."

Kazuko grinned before sitting down. "Well met, trying to pull off something like that. That still doesn't matter because the future is never certain and history has shown us the correct ways it is meant to be."

"Yeah, that means they're going to send you to prison too. Or worse."

Kazuko remained unperturbed. "I'm prepared for the consequences. If I enter jail, the information I have now will be sent to the right places. It will go public. Your efforts will be fruitless and fears realised."

Daichi leaned forward. "What did you take? What did you take damn you?!"

"Everything that I could. I might not have been able to study it but a wise one can put the parts together." Daichi held himself back from beating his friend to death. Kazuko added with a smile. "You throw me in, you lose."
This boy couldn't be treated like a regular kid. A nightmare. Touching him any further could make things worse. Yet he can't back away, not on grounds like this. Daichi met the smile with the most serious face he could fathom. "Kazuko, you believe that you are meant for greatness. That any means justify the ends you desire. A chance to change the world. Revolution, innovation, shift towards a 'better' future. I see those steps are dangerous ones, that could taken regardless of the cost. That's a step I'm not willing to take."

"You believe that doing this would grant you some liberty or glory. However what you did would doom us all. As is, I am afraid of the fine line already drawn in order to win this fight. One wrong move by our part and its over."

There was no change from those cold calculating eyes. Daichi turned for the door. "It's not too late to turn back. Think about it." The door slam shut.

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Emiya stared at the computer as it worked. When it was ready, he said. "I have a question for you." It took a minute before he received a reply.

*Speak. Answer your question, I wonder.*

"Don't go Yoda on me. Now I've heard that you're sticking around somewhere in the United Kingdom."

*A Sticking like glue? No such thing. It's for research so to say.*

"Another legend or another version of Arturia?"

*That's a secret. I do think though that Takeuchi has been drawing her too much. What is your purpose today?*

"There's a war ongoing. I thought it was worth speaking a few words with my Creator to get some insights or advantages."

*Not far from what I've expected. Well Altair is rather formidable from the details given to me. Really powerful, ridiculous off the note.*

"Yet what are you not saying?"

*Anyone can be defeated using the right step or tools. While you do know that but I love to remind my characters about them. Makes them so much easier to stay in character.*

"You're one weird man to think that way."

*Nor was I expecting you to be more relaxed and open. Maybe I've been mistaken or rather pleased with such development. You always needed to be a bit more outgoing but of course the way you were made that difficult.*

"Things have changed. Maybe I did a little too."

*Humans always adapt to follow the world they live in. At least most of the time. I'm honestly just still stuck on enjoying the moment. At least it's still fun though.*

"Yet you push yourself to crazy limits in achieving something like a fool."

*I admit that. Deadlines are deadly but my pride is the most dangerous enemy of mine.*
"I'd originally thought you would be a man without pride, hiding your face no matter where you are. Yet I get understand the point. You hope for a quiet life behind the success."

You know the rules of life. The more famous you are, the more problems will come. I hate problems.

"That is why you work so hard and yet want so little."

Closer but shy from the mark. I suppose that 's still worth a reward. Do you remember the day I said I wouldn't change your description?

"What about it? Getting cold feet?"

The image laughed. Actually laughed for once. LoL. Here's the secret. It's not that I didn't want to. I don't need to.

"Why not?"

You already know why. Or would you rather let me spell it to you in the Kotomine fashion?

A fist tightened on impulse. "Hell no. That bastard should go to hell."

Most people liked him to be dead. Despite what others might say, there is still value within him. Antagonists are protagonists of their own story after all.

Very well Emiya. In a nutshell, you are already powerful enough as it is. Whatever changes I can do will be accepted, the most important criteria according to that old hag. The important point is whether you accept it.

"What are you going about? I'm not that powerful to begin with. Accept what exactly?"

The world loved your journey. The man that faced hell, the world and everything else and still fight for what 's right. That's why there are many versions of you, past, alternative and future. You've brought both hope and understanding to the light and dark of the reality we live in.

"You're going around the bush."

You are powerful. Unlimited Blade Works carry legendary weapons that equalled Gilgamesh, the King the proud owner of every Noble Phantasm in your world. There are only few heroes that can be declared as a mobile armoury. You may fear heroic spirits that far outclass you but even then you always made your own chances of winning.

Now, the limiting factor is you. You 're aware of the alternate versions of yourself aren't you?

"Of course. I had time to read about the my copies in these alternate worlds." Four of them to count thus far.

Yes, each variation of you are still real. Not to mention the other copies your readers create. Although sometimes I wonder why they work so hard on making copies when they could make someone of their own to be proud of. Anyway to the point, their strength comes from different worlds but they are still you as you are they. In fact if I would remind you, you learnt your skills from your past during your early years as a freelancer.

"They are I and I am them. What are you going about? That I have some hidden vault with super powers that I can use to take out Altair?" He felt no such thing inside the Reality Marble. New weapons just wouldn't appear like a bag of cheats.
If you put it that way, that is correct. Altair is stronger than anything you've faced but I have confidence you can manage. Overpowered characters are not infallible after all.

"As though you would make it so simple. Otherwise I wouldn't be struggling in my battles to find every possible nook and cranny for weaknesses to victory."

Slight detour. Do you know what the term 'Gar' means?

"No. I presume it's a form of insult?"

How far from the truth. It's the surest form of respect for the man so cool and bad ass that even grown men grown in awe and fall in love with you.

"That does not sound endearing at all."

Your readers, your fans all feel otherwise. You have everything single trick in the book and out of the box to handle every possible kind of situation. You will struggle, you will bleed but you will succeed. That belief is the strongest amongst the readers. The belief that you can overcome anything no matter the cost. No matter whichever sacrifices made to achieve it. You already have everything you need. You just need to reach out.

Emiya blinked. For the first time in the few times of conversation, this mushroom had spoken far different. Words beyond his years. "Now I feel bad for having that said to me."

That's natural, you weren't a man with pride. I give you that right today. Go out there and win the fight, Shirou Emiya. Prove to the world the impossible.

Blitz took a smoke for it was a small comfort within the rubble of rock and sand. The Princess hasn't given thought of changing places despite the beat down looks and lack of amenities since the Magical girl's passing. It wasn't difficult to surmise the perpetrator of the mess. This inconvenience wouldn't stop him, it would be a sad showing of a hero otherwise. Although a penthouse suite with warm beds and beer would be great.

Footsteps threaded across the shards of stones with care. Blitz reached a hand into his coat, gripping the handle of his gun. A young man entered, dressed in a red jacket and black trousers. The long red staff and blue bandana gave a sense that he wasn't one of the homeless people. Not to miss the eagerness and strength radiating from his eyes. The presence of a hero.

They traded a nod, enough of a greeting between men. The lad raised a hand. "Yo, the name's Sho Hakua. What's yours?"

"Blitz Talker. So you're the new guy?"

"I guess I am." Sho took a glance around the remains of a room. Before it was blown up, it had been a small library. Nothing of its books remained, just a piece of wood from the shelf which he used as an impromptu bench. "How long have you been here?"

"A while now, enough to make me start worrying if my partner is managing to get the bills paid."

Sho chuckled. "If that's what you're thinking, that's just the worst of priorities."

"A man must always handle the bills. That's what women always think of us to be. Breadwinner and manual labour when it comes to it."
The blonde cracked a laugh. "That's one hell of a life you have there old man." Blitz felt a small rumble across the other side of the ruins. The new guy turned towards it before gesturing with a finger. "What's with the noise over there?"

Blitz returned to his smoke. "The Princess decided to get a few extra hands."

Sho raised an eye. "A few hands? What in the world are they doing there?" Another rumble, stronger and faster.

Blitz finished the cigarette and tossed it aside. "Beats me. The other guy had been quite mum about it." The man turned towards him. "A loner kind. He's an odd guy, staying near the broken chapel tower."

"Are you heroes so depressing as it is?"

Blitz chuckled at the thought. A bunch of heroes made close to miserable homeless people who can't even afford to rent a house. If his Creator was around, he'd probably turn it into comedy. "Well kid. We're a pretty grim lot. I did hear she's getting another one. Hopefully someone more sociable."

"I see." Sho glanced around the building as the rumbles died down. "So that counts for we have? What a small bunch we are."

"There was supposed to be one more. Where she is currently is none of my business." Blitz lit another cigarette. A celebration for the situation they're in, maybe.

"All I care is finding my target." Sho spun the staff around his hand. "I'll do what needs to be done, just make sure I get my revenge."

Another hothead or maybe he's getting the wisdom old men must receive. "Just hold your horses. You'll find him soon enough. Stick to the Princess's plan. She knows everything that's going on. The right moment will come."

"Sure, sure. In the meantime, I'll see what this world is all about. Find my God too, I will have him answer for this." Sho disappeared into the rain as Blitz took another puff. At least it won't be as quiet now. Another rumble before a wall shattered into large chunks. Right.

Emiya settled the cup of tea as Beethoven played in the background. A rare time to have peace and quiet these days. Today he was going to cover another agenda within today's plan. Nestled into his seat by the computer, he opened the Internet browser and searched for stories. About Emiya Shirou.

Kid mentioned they were called Fan fiction. Emiya didn't have much opportunity to enjoy reading as a hobby. Most of his reading had been for school since he had a part time job and other responsibilities as part of the Emiya household. The web page scrolled, hundreds of hits. The number of stories that exist are astounding. All of them, fictions of their own. Made by the fans of his story to cover their own interest and thoughts.

There were several websites that offered answers. There were two major contenders. One website coloured in red and sophistry. The other in blue was much simpler and easier to handle. Emiya decided to work with both to look around for options. Getting around the websites weren't too complicated but needed a bit of nudging around to find what he was looking for.

Surely there wouldn't be much about him. The search filter finished processing and a flood streamed in. Hundreds of titles involving his existence, thousands more if it wasn't focused on him. That didn't include these crossovers with other worlds.
It would be a joke if this world was a crossover as well.

The story referred to both his past and current self. Facing adversity that nobody could. Fighting and survive for all different motivations. Justice, duty, love and family. He remembered the Einzbern girl, his stepsister.

Each of these stories had different directions. Countless branches within the trees of Fate and beyond. A life beyond the world of swords.

An alternate universe created from the butterfly effect.

Another revisit of the Holy Grail War

The Sixth Holy Grail War

Travelling back in time to Camelot

A crossover into a world of Gods and God Slayers.

A crossover into the Digital world.

A crossover into a world of Angels and Devils

A crossover into world of Wizards

Each story had a trip to somewhere new. If that crackhead meant it right, what he wanted was here. Emiya didn't like the assessment. Far too time consuming. Taking a moment to recollect, Emiya sought for an easier approach.

The filter proved to be his best tool in this task, isolating the best to his prescribed criteria. Cutting down the number of options. Reading through the stories were a breeze with Reinforcement. What would have taken hours had been cut to a third of the time. There was an occasion where he slowed down to enjoy the words.

The worlds that had a form of peace, a moment of solitude were the best. A craving long wanting. A life he will never have, yet could only live within the minds of others.

The phone rang. "Yes, Madam Director?"

"Archer, we have found some details about Altair that can be useful."

"Got it. I'll meet you later as planned then."

There was another story that have been caught by the filter. He checked at the summary. It was surprisingly short and the premise appeared interesting, involving interactions between him and Cu Chulainn. Why is there a title for smut? A mouse click after, he regretted the decision. God forbid his eyes to burn in acid.

I'm going to kill that Kid.

Emiya walked into the conference room at behest the call of Meteora. Everyone was gathered there. A projector was running with a blank screen. Meteora proceeded with the news. "I have bad news."

"Chikujoin has murdered another person again." The projector displayed the body of a man hanging from a ceiling in a bright room. "We are trying to figure out where the murder has taken place."

"Another one. She's really excited to keep blood running." Mirokuji spat.

"What's so important that you need all of us here?" Emiya asked. One girl's killing spree didn't warrant bringing the entire team here.

Meteora nodded to Nakanogane whom opened another picture. "The murder was addressed to us. There's a demand written on the body." The picture switched to another view, focusing on the wall behind the body. Blood had been used to scribble the message on the white wall.

**I want to meet Archer**

Kanoya frowned. "Really strange request there. Why kill someone to get the point across?"

"A warning. She doesn't want us to ignore it. Otherwise she'll continue killing until we accede to her demands," Selesia said.

Mirokuji spat. "Bitch. That is just sick."

"Very well. If she wants to meet me and die, then we will do as she says," Emiya said. End the annoying insect biting at their heels.

Kanoya asked. "How are we going to give her the message?"

The Kid answered. "Sota Mizushino. She had a way to contact you right?" Mizushino nodded.

"Call her." Selesia said.

Mizushino dialled the number and placed it on loudspeaker. They gathered around the phone as it rang. After a few tries, it answered. "Magane Chikujoin here. Leave a message after the beep. Beep."

Meteora said. "Don't fool around. We know you're there."

"My message? What message? Ohh, you mean that. That's just a prop."


"I've met my fair share of villains but I never had one as a fan." Emiya crossed his arms together.

"Eh, you must be Archer isn't it? That hurt. I'm like a really big fan of yours."

Emiya took point for the discussion. "You have my attention. Why do you want to meet me?"

"I can't tell that here. It's too private you see. I mean, how can a girl speak her heart out to a group of people on the phone. Kyaa."

"Enough games Magane. This has to stop." Meteora said.

"How can I stop? It's like a life. I can't stop thinking or living wouldn't it not?" A pause from her. "Meet me at the building under construction at Nihonbashi tonight. Just him alone."

"You'll know where to find me." Emiya said.
"Sure. Catch you at our date, honey." The sound of a smooch before the call ended.

Selesia was equally disgusted from the result. "What is her motive with Archer?"

"She said once to me, that Archer has something she wants," Sota said.

Kid suggested. "Would that be a weapon? Archer has countless weapons after all."

"She stole Hangaku from me. I doubt she'd need more weapons than she can handle. Sure she's not screwed right in her head but a massacre killing spree isn't her main motivations."

Kanoya put up another idea. "Manipulation? Something only Archer can do?"

Meteora rested a finger under her chin. "She can change the rules of reality, I doubt that's the right answer."

"Who knows what goes on in her mind?"

"No, it's one of Archer's abilities. She said something about that when we talked for the first time."

Emiya tapped a finger along his arm. "I have a faint idea. I'll confirm it when we meet."

Meteora outlined a plan. "Archer will enter the building and wait for Magane. The rest of us should stay together for the time being. Meanwhile, Mirokuji and Selesia will be nearby to provide backup."

Mirokuji nodded. "I'm all eager for payback."

Emiya shook his head. "No, I'll handle it alone."

Mirokuji frowned. "Why the hell not? Sure you can beat her with all your magic but don't be fooled by her feint."

Kid protested. "Yeah, at least take Siegfried. He shouldn't be detectable in spirit form."

"I have no intention of underestimating her," Emiya said. "She won't appear with you people even if you're hidden. Her senses are good like a fox. Siegfried may be invisible but you on the other hand kid fail at sneaking around."

"Second, I work better alone. If it comes to it, you can put something to monitor us. I don't think she'll mind that, in fact she'll relish it."

"Very well. Mirokuji and Selesia will wait with us. I'll get Kikuchihara to arrange what we need."

Rui Kanoya yawned as he reached opened the door to the roof. Selesia and the others would be going out to the battle. Gigas Machina was horribly unsuited for the upcoming task. It gave him a little time to enjoy the moment. The moon was visible tonight, standing amongst its own. Much easier to see it compared to his world where the tall towers covered it most of the time. A small breeze brushed his neck. It's been a long time since I've enjoyed wind.

He noticed another person sitting by the edge. Rui walked closer to see Yuya having a can of beer. "What are you doing?" Yuya gave a wave with a finger before returning to his drink. "There's no need to look down."

"Nah, just been thinking." Yuya said as Rui took a seat beside him. "She taken a curse from me. Not sure if that is bad luck or a blessing."

"Why do you call it a curse?" Rui had read a little of Yuya's story in the brief free time available.
Hangaku was strong and obedient. It could suffer damage and be removed from a fight but it couldn't be killed.

Yuya crushed the empty can and tossed it to join the other four. "I'm supposed to be stuck with Hangaku for life. No way to get rid of her from me."

"Hangaku follows your orders isn't it?"

"Hangaku's a spirit. She shouldn't be sticking around with me forever. The dead should be resting in peace, not taken to fights one after another."

"Hmm, that is quite complicated. I do understand your point." The pilot laid back onto the ground. The stars were bright tonight. "If you have a choice, do you want Hangaku?"

"I'd prefer not to but given the situation with Altair, I think I will need her help." Yuya reached for another beer. "The hothead was right, I don't know much about sword fighting and that's probably why I depend too much on Hangaku to work things out for me." The man offered one to the pilot whom promptly refused. "Despite my beef about it, Hangaku's my responsibility so I gotta handle it right and proper once I get her back. Enough about me. Why are you here?"

"Same old not allowed to do anything. What a pain." Kikuchihara had been rough on that since the fight. Third time's the charm and the machine had been hidden into another warehouse. "Back in my world, things were a lot easier to deal with. People were used to having aliens appearing out of the blue."

"Your God had planned it after all. It'd get bad ratings if it showed the reality of such fights."

"Of course. Still I'd prefer that." Rui lied back onto the floor. The floor was still warm. "The guy may have put me through some hardship, a lot of it actually but at least he cares unlike your Creator."

"I don't want to be thinking of him. He's one hell of an asshole, focused so much on those bloody papers."

"Isn't it like trying to give you life by working hard at it? Moving our stories forward so that we can actually enjoy our lives?"

"Maybe. Is that what these peeps call 'Tsundere'?"

"Beats me."

Emiya had to agree that Magane's choice was well suited against him. A construction yard in midst of building a multi storey apartment. It had been sealed off but given the amount of machinery, debris shielded away behind the construction tarps it would difficult to take advantage of his longer range abilities.

Her weapons mean little to the Counter Guardian. He saw her sitting down at the highest level of the construction, waving her legs along the winds. She noticed his landing on the same girder and hopped to her feet. "Finally, I'm been bored waiting you see."

Emiya stepped along the long narrow path. Each step of boots clinked with the metal below. "Here I am. You've made many people crazy just to see me."

She beamed in response. "Oh, they're nothing to bother about. They've been so boring these days."
"I am not intending to be your entertainment. You want to talk then talk."

"I've been reading up on you, Shirou Emiya. Your history is really interesting. A young boy who wanted to be a hero of justice. Most girls would fall heads over heels for such a thing."

Emiya primed a blueprint. "A fan girl. You’d be the most annoying one I’ve heard."

"Ah, that was such a let down. You see. I heard of many type of abilities, even more now thanks to manga. They are such a blessing. So many Gods and their Creations that it doesn't make sense."

"Yours didn't make the most sense." He tried to goad her out of it and waited.

She paused before her lips twisted into a thin lipped smile. "Not interested to talk? I thought you were a man of pride. The big hero of justice."

"If you know my story, you would have known I am a man without pride. What kind of fan are you?" Emiya jabbed back.

"Hmm, is that so? I think not because your swords are made quite to perfection you see. Recreation of a weapon down to its exact history is something nobody can do. Shouldn't you be proud of that?"

Emiya projected Kanshou behind his back. "They are not my pride. They are weapons of legend handed down to me."

"Handed down to you? Why not just give them to me?" He answered by throwing the sword. It sliced through a piece of scaffold before stabbing into the wall. Magane raised a brow to that. "Nice try."

The brow widened into a bright smile. Magane shuffled her hips before ducking under flying Bakuya. "Ah, now you've made me fall for you. Oh great hero, wouldn't you save the damsel in distress?"

This woman is quite a jester. He heard there was a similar clown in his own universe. "When the damsel is the killer, I think that is yet to be decided."

"Wow, nice save there. You've must have prepared very well. Did that Meteor girl teach you how to control yourself? Like the monks with those glowing laser swords?"

Emiya spun, fresh copies blocking the beheading. Twin blades screeched against the long naginata of Hangaku. The spirit's gaze hidden underneath the blinds met his, trepidation coursing through.

He shot backward, spinning around to cleave Magane in half. She was gone, dropping under to the next level. He grabbed the handle bars and vaulted down in pursuit. Emiya pressed a hand to the structure. Trace on. "I have prepared. You're wasting my time."

"So boring. How would a boring man like you entertain a girl that way?" Her voice echoed across the concrete pillars and flat Blueprints of the building filled the mind with clarity. She was hiding on the other end of the building.

Emiya threw the pair of swords towards the girl as reinforcement took hold. "You've gone far enough." Shooting across the floor, four copies swung to reach the girl.

Magane bent and twisted her body, dodging the swords. Unprofound agility pushed her aside, dodging the final swing. Hangaku appeared again in a slashing strike. Emiya jumped over both the attack and Hangaku. Kanshou and Bakuya spun in the momentum in a simultaneous counter.
He felt resistance in his blades as they tore at the spiritual skin. There was no hesitation in counter his next attack for the back. Blue blood soaked the cloth along its arm.

Magane's voice was a soft echo. "Stop. Somewhere inside this place is a room. That dark musty place has a family. There's also a monster inside. If you try anything against me, I wonder what could happen."

Emiya narrowed his eyes as he slammed the naginata backwards. With breather space, Structural Grasp spread its tendrils along a metal pillar. "Your words would not work against me."

Hangaku held back as Magane continued to speak. "If not yours, what about your friends? Would you be so cruel to sacrifice human lives when they are so innocent? That would be quite a bad hero isn't it?"

Emiya found the room in the lower levels of the building. Two adults and an infant were inside. "Collateral. That's the price of a hero." He said.

"Are you sure about your comrades waiting somewhere? How would they think if they see this great man of theirs kill innocent beings? Calling them collateral is so insulting. Just like trash, isn't it no?"

"They won't be able to hear you and their concern is not mine to care."

"Your voice sounds so... certain. You've already had plans to betray them, didn't you?"

Emiya studied the spirit. Its empty gaze through the blinds gave it no sense of sentience. How would Rule Breaker work against Hangaku? "Nice idea. Maybe I should follow that. That would stir things up in this entire mess."

"Ohoho, the Red Betrayer, that is a cool nickname you can get. I mean you've done it not once but several times already. What's another one to you, hmm?"

"I'm curious so to speak. Why are you so eager for Unlimited Blade Works?" Emiya turned towards the footsteps at the other end.

Magane pressed a finger to her cheek, eyes turned away in thought. "Hmm, that's a hard question to answer." She tilt her head. "Super powers are common in the dusk, making an entire world though, that's something new."

"Why do you need a world of graves?"

She waved a hand. "Beats me. I want it first, then who knows what I'll do with it. Life of a fancy girl after all."

No cues for a trap. The girl kept running from his attacks. Hangaku was not going to defeat him but it interfered too much. By the time he finished it, the girl would escape. Unless they're in a place that cannot give her a chance. Two birds in one stone.

"If you are really that interested, I'll just show you." Reality will survive his anomaly, more so if he kept it brief. "I am the bone of my sword." Magane's smile widened as he invoked the arias. Like a little girl given her very plaything. "Ara, ara. It's time for the big thing! Is there any popcorn with it?"

"So as I pray, Unlimited Blade Works." The world transformed into his realm.

Magane squinted at the far horizon of the endless dune of red soil. "Woo. It's so realistic. I mean even my feet get all dusty from the sand. You really need to clean this place up."
Emiya towered her from the little hill. This world is his domain and the the woman shall be punished. "This entire world is made of swords. It isn't a power that is harnessed. It's not just a special thing that can be taken because of one fact."

"It is born from the soul." Emiya raised his arm. Swords rose from their graves. "This Marble Reality will be your cage. And your end." The arm went down and it rained of swords.

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Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

The original six month timeline made me wonder about Altair's proactiveness originally. They had no incentive to wait that long. It was up to Meteora's team to roll the ball to buy that time in my opinion. Magane was another outlier as well, not the one to just wait things happen.

While Magane has tendencies and desires that rise and go random, I felt on a similar note how the government weren't trying that hard to find her considering the potential risk she carries and also the fact that she already murdered at least two people.

Kazuko, Yeah. I once thought of a potential branch in order to open up further for Yuya, Kanoya and Selesia but it was just worth a small arc which in overall hindsight doesn't add much. Considering the additional fact it would probably drive the story further away from Emiya.

Trying to envision Kinoko Nasu was a tough process given such little information beyond his blogs and interviews. Adding to the lost nuances due to translation, some guesswork had to carry the rest. A man of great dedication but humbling in his own way. Pride for his work yet hallows it all the same. At times, I wonder how similar we are when I try to do some personality assessment. Over assuming much perhaps. Perhaps.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
The clock struck twelve midnight. Sota's eyes glued to the displays of the construction site. There wasn't anything worth seeing from outside the building. The microphone from the drone wasn't picking up anything. A long quiet silence with the occasional drumming of the fingers along the table.

On the edges of his sight, he noticed the others waiting with similar situation. Yuya and Kanoya playing with cards, although slow and at times distracted. Meteora were in deep discussion with Kikuchihara regarding several matters. Selesia was chatting with Siegfried about small talk.

Hideaki was also staring at the screen. Said senior noticed his glance before returning it. Nothing was spoken before he turned back towards the screen for an answer. No change.

Sota broke the silence. "It's been a long wait. Do you think he's alright?"

"Don't worry too much. That man knows how to take his time." Selesia quipped.

Whip cracked against the air. Mirokuji turned around and was surprised to see a familiar face. "Hangaku's back." Relief grew amongst the others.

"The rules of reality she reversed are restored to form." Meteora explained. Sharp shearing sounds of metal from the microphone before a figure appeared from the building. Said Counter Guardian waved a hand, a phone in the other. The phone on the table rang.

Kikuchihara set it to speaker mode before Archer reported. "It is done. She is no more. I will require a cleaning detail."

"Understood. Please return back. We need to debrief the situation." Archer acknowledged before ending the call. Kikuchihara nodded before moving to distribute orders.

"Glad that's over." Kanoya sighed.

Sota didn't know what he should feel. Glad? Relieved? Free? Sota noticed he wasn't the only one having the problem. Meteora asked. "Hideaki, is something wrong?"

"In a way, yes." Hideaki said. "While she is vicious and manipulative, her philosophy had merit, at least part of it."

Meteora assured. "Do not fall to her trap. The way she lives is built based on contradiction and fallacies. All of them serve for her selfish reasons."

Hideaki paused before answering. "You're right. We've won but it felt so hollow."

"It was never meant to be a victory. This is just a closure for a person that has fallen far from the acceptable constructs of humanity."

Mirokuji leaned against the wall and reached for a cigarette. "Don't think too much about it kiddo. It is just like putting down a rabid dog. You might not like it but it needs to be done."
"Right."

Meteora nodded. "Mirokuji is correct. Now moving on the situation, the Bird Cage Plan must continue. Having Mirokuji's powers restored will benefit us but its up to the Creators to do the final touches."

Despite their assurances, Sota didn't feel any better.

Alicetaria February observed the craftsmen below staring at the broken mess of this place called a construction site. Out of sight, she watched them carefully try to understand the broken pieces before being informed by the local arbiters to drop the issue.

Magane Chikujoin is no more. Alicetaria knew of the girl's demise when the she seen a broken battlefield. The people within were summed it up into intentional sabotage or vandalism. Those with the truth knew better. None of Altair's. Chikujoin's remains weren't to be seen with the exception of the stains of blood and its lingering smell.

Alicetaria surmised the girl had fallen during streak of fun doing whatever of interest. However this has presented another challenge. Without the trickster to play her role, the war had been streamlined. That woman's power was incomprehensible. Everything that she needs is in her grasp.

Strength and weapons would not win a war against one armed for breaking the fabric called reality. The knight knew that other means are necessary. *It's a pity these heroes had thrown them away.* Undeterred, she will need to make new preparations. There isn't much time left. The others will hear her words through her God.

Daichi opened the door into the interrogation room. The place was clean as it had been. Cold hugged onto his skin as footsteps erased the silence. Its sole occupant silent at the table. Daichi approached and placed a bag of snacks on table. A quick glance at the glass window told him nothing about the officer's face behind it.

Kazuko's face was unreadable as shrunken eyes continued to stare at the table. Daichi opened the bag and pulled out a pair of yakisoba buns. He placed one across him. "Have they been treating you well?"

A few moments before the fellow student answered. "Why are you here?"

Daichi propped the green tea next. "I've come to visit. Not like you'd want it or anything but its the only courtesy I can give."

"It's decent." Kazuko reached out to the yakisoba, still warm from the convenience store down the street. He opened the plastic before taking a sniff.

Daichi raised a brow. "It's not poisoned or included with any magic if that's what you're thinking." Kazuko gave a faint smile before taking a bite. "Still, that's good to hear. Story in school's going that you're very ill with something contagious. They're hoping that you'll be back soon."

"I see." Kazuko reached for the tea. "Why do you visit me when there's nothing for you to gain from me?"

"True, I might not be able to convince you from your hellbent ways. However it doesn't mean we aren't friends."
"While that may be a fact but we're also enemies."

"Only if you want it to be that way. I don't."

"You've always been the one too far optimistic."

"I'm the one trying to be a hero, aren't I?" Daichi chuckled.

Kazuko took a swig of tea and a moment to ponder. Daichi waited, taking his own cup of tea in silence. Their eyes stared as they finished the food and drinks without a word said. Putting away the plastic wrappers, Daichi asked. "What's the story behind it all? The reason you hate the government."

"One does not simply pry secrets from a man."

"Is it a secret to begin with? Was it something that shameful to talk about?"

Kazuko eased into the chair. "You're right. In contrast to everything that could happen in the world, it may not be significant. However, it is all that matters to me." He leaned forward onto the table. "I'll indulge you a little. The reason I hate them the most, the reason I have a vendetta against the government, against the adults for they betrayed me when I needed them the most."

"How?"

"Six years ago, my parents and I were supposed to take a trip to Nagano. A few hours drive through the mountains, nothing special." Kazuko closed his eyes before continuing. "We had an accident and got trapped inside the car. I was unhurt besides a few bruises."

"The car had plummeted into a forest and become stuck. We waited for rescue on hopes someone would notice the accident and call for help. My parents were always assuring that they are on the way. The government would know about it and save them. The adults would handle everything." Kazuko leaned back against the chair. "There was no rescue. We waited for a day but nothing arrived. I didn't know then my parents were injured. If I knew, something could have been done."

"Two days after the accident, they found us. Only I survived."

Daichi felt pity to the friend sitting in front of him. Survivor's guilt, a path with similar challenges just like him. "Because of that, you hated the government because they didn't help in time."

Kazuko sighed. "It may have been a fussy reason but it didn't matter to me. All I wanted was a reason. Just one reason."

"I don't know the right answers to that." Daichi gave a sigh of relief. "However, I feel that this isn't something to be kept bottled up inside or it will consume you."

"Humans aren't that accommodating to one another."

Daichi shrugged. "Maybe yes, maybe no. However that's what makes each of us so different and why we want to achieve our own individual dreams. Feeling better?"

"Maybe yes, maybe no. Still a long way to go if you want to get me to tell the answers, hero."

Daichi cracked a smile. "I do what I can. After all, convincing you is harder than convincing a rock."

Kazuko met it with his own. "You bet it is. Otherwise I'd be too gullible for my capabilities."
Daichi stood up. "It's time to go. I do hope that you'd change your mind." He gave a mock salute before leaving the room.

"We'll see." The door closed shut behind him.

Daichi turned and entered the investigation room next door. Kikuchihara was waiting by the desk. "Hideaki, interesting way you've went about it this turn."

"It's a lot easier when I don't need to convince him." He decided to ask. "Ms. Kikuchihara, what will happen to him?"

"We plan to keep things quiet. I've offered him freedom once the crisis is over provided he informed us where to find the files. With this detail, we might be able to find an avenue to convince him."

That'll be quite a while. "I want to thank you for being lenient for him."

She smiled. "The law may be firm but sometimes we need to let our hearts guide us."

"Thank you for your time. I'll take my leave." Everything was going to turn out well. It came to mind. Turning around, he asked. "On second thought, I need another favour. I'd like to speak with Kinoko Nasu."

"Matsubara, I'm thinking of adding this scene here to make Kanoya and Mirokuji closer in the story like what we have in this world."

"A good idea. That would help the acceptance and not make the sudden bond too jarring."

"How do we get them to know each other since there shouldn't be that much time between the portal?"

"We done one scene for the overall introduction. I think we can stretch that part of using this part of the sidestory to make it work."

Sota watched the group of Creators working at the white board. Matsubara circled at the flowchart with a black marker pen. "This next part is going to be a problem. What can we change to fix this?"

Nakanogane pointed at the centre of the chart. "Maybe we could try to add another scene about Selesia and Meteora meeting up. That way it'd make sense for them to team up."

Matsubara hummed. "That would be redundant. We already have the first story with both their arcs in place holding that idea in place." He squeezed some scribble at the tiny portion of open space on the board. "How about this?"

Yatoji studied the idea. "Better but we could add a bit more suspense to it. They shouldn't be allowed to bond up so easily. A bit of conflict should intensify the emotions. Earn the reader's interest."

"Aha, the rubber banding idea. How about some foreshadowing here to build that part for it?" Nakanogane underlined one of the points in the chart.

"How would that fit with the other team?"

"Not too sure Matsubara. Knowing how they work though, they'll probably try to make it more dangerous for Archer and Siegfried and separate them from Chaldea on a temporary basis."

Yatoji took his own pen and began squeezing some text. "If that's the case, this might be able to
work. If we also tweak this part here…"

Suruga spoke from behind, catching Sota's attention. "They're getting much better this time."

_That's right. They've been butting heads before but now they're working like a team._ The idea elated Sota as he answered Suruga. "Yes they are. If we can keep up this momentum, we might be able to do something better."

Suruga smiled. "If that's the case then I can't lose as well." She returned to her drawing, the strokes of her pen becoming stronger and faster.

The trio were oblivious to the spectacle they were creating. It felt exciting to stand amongst them. Striking their ideas off each other, creating something unique.

The excitement turned back towards himself. He had a chance now. Something to grow further in his direction. All it needed was to accept it and step forward. Doubt was asking him to step away. _They're too busy. Disturbing them would affect the entire project._ Asking them for something selfish would be bad.

Doing nothing though would be just as bad. There isn't time to think about it. Otherwise he'll find some excuse to get away, spinning a full circle. It's either he does it or don't. Sota realised someone was missing.

Marine wasn't at her work desk. The art she had been working on had been left there since half hour ago. Where did that woman go? He decided to find her. That would be something better than waiting for an answer. _Hopefully she isn't crying again._ Sota left the room and walked along the corridors. Evening was approaching as people left for the work.

The other Creations were busy with closing up the case about Magane and also researching about Altair and the other heroes. Sota realised that he hadn't worked much on schoolwork. He'll need to clear those out tonight to avoid any trouble the next day.

Sota blinked when he was standing inside the stage. Thoughts had occupied him too much and he absent minded walked to this place. The stadium was empty and the lights turned off for there wasn't any event expected tonight.

Sota leaned against the railing. Gentle little brushes of wind felt good. Watching the darkening field below had a slight calm to it. He noticed a particular woman sitting by the seats near the top. A few steps away, he called out. "Marine, is everything alright?"

The brown haired girl turned around. Fortunately he didn't see any tears. "Ah Sota, sorry. I was busy clearing my mind." Marine said.

"If that's the case, then it's alright." Sota took a seat beside her. "I was just worried since you weren't in the room for awhile."

"Sorry for that. I didn't notice it was that long. The sunset here was beautiful to not enjoy it." The surrounding lights began to turn on.

Sota took a seat beside her and agreed. A quiet moment as they watched pairs of light flicker on, banishing away the shadows with each click. A particular thought came to mind. _Better now than never._ "Marine, I have a request."

Marine turned towards him. "What would that request be about?"
"Well, uh…” Sota couldn't find the right words.

Marine stood up before bowing. "I'm sorry. I cannot accept your confession."

"Huh?" Sota blinked. *What is this about a confession?*

"Isn't that what you're trying to say?" Sota shook his head. Red grew on her face. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I assumed it to be that way." Tiny hands shied her face away from view. "I've really gone into the deep end."

Sota chuckled. "I guess that's okay. I want to ask you for something." The tension between them was gone. The words flowed easily. "Can you teach me? Teach me your skills on how to draw."

"Ah, that's something unexpected. Why do you want to learn under me? Suruga would be a better teacher."

"I guess it's because your art has a different feel to it. The bright warmth within it. Suruga's art is also excellent but I don't think it would suit me very well."

"Thank you for the compliment. I really am glad to hear that." Marine pulled at a sleeve. "I will teach you. However you have to be ready for it."

Sota smiled as he stood up to join his teacher. "How soon should we start tomorrow?"

"We can begin tomorrow. Prepare yourself for a thousand strokes a day."

"Of course."

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Emiya closed the book of the latest review. It was a foolish idea to be sitting on the roof when there wasn't a real need for it. JSDF had deployed a good surveillance network with the drones, said coverage including the Government Cabinet. A man like him standing guard was a contradiction against automation despite his enhanced sight.

"Archer-san." He heard a soft timid voice behind him. He turned around to see the young girl, Hikayu Hoshikawa. *Like a lost sheep walking towards a wolf.*

"What is it?" Emiya raised a brow. The girl stuttered before starting to mumble. "What's with you? Spit it out."

Hoshikawa finished it. "I'd, I'd like to ask for your help."

Warning bells were ringing in his head. "What kind of help?"

Her Creator appeared from behind. He said with a finger, the other hand on the hip. "Ah, you see. We're helping to improve Hikayu's fighting capability. However I think we should have some practice session to put things into gear."

"Find someone else." Emiya didn't like the thought of dangerous collateral watching his back.

Ohnishi interjected. "We tried Siegfried but he was apologising more than actually sparring. Selesia uses a sword and Meteora is a magic user. Your fighting style is probably the best given the weapon she has. I have a present in return for that."

The young girl was a nervous wreck. Damn his Creator for making him so fallible to those eyes.. Emiya sighed. "Very well. Where will we spar?"
Ohnishi rented a dojo in advance for this preparation. Made ad hoc recently to be a training centre for Hoshikawa and the others heroes. It wasn't a big place but the dojo reminded him of the old days in Fuyuki. An era long past for him.

The red archer raised a brow. "Is that your idea of clothes?" Hikayu Hoshikawa was dressed in a red Cheong Sam dress. Skirt too short with exposed shoulders. Half a stocking missing. What kind of a joke is this?

Emiya's stare was disconcerting her given how she was trying to hide her form. Hoshikawa jabbed her finger towards her Creator. "It's not my idea for this getup. It's so embarrassing." He glanced at Ohnishi whom shrugged. It was too late to change it any further.

"I'd put it to good use." Emiya projected the fearful weapon of Homurahara Academy, the Tora Shinai. Prana flushed through the weapon, projecting its sentient bloodlust. "For starters, I'll let you have the first strike."

Hoshikawa gulped back the fear clear in her eyes. She drew upon a nunchaku, the worst possible weapon for a beginner. Setting into a posture, the girl said. "Extreme Final Legend Martial Artist, coming."

Emiya yelled. "Idiot. You don't tell your opponents you're attacking." Hikayu stopped midway and Emiya struck her head. She squeaked in pain as he explained. "Do you even know how to fight in the first place?"

"Sorry." Hoshikawa rubbed her head. "Ohnishi said I would know how to fight once I put this on."

Emiya stared at the Creator whom promptly nodded. "It's perfectly built in as instinct."

Instinct. That alone wouldn't be enough. Emiya lowered the shinai."Hoshikawa, what is your plan to defeat me?" Hoshikawa tilted her head. "Even if you are given the skills to fight, you need to understand your fighting style." Silence was her answer.

Emiya sighed. "Do you know what to do in a fight?" She shook her head. "Do you know my abilities?" Another shake. He struck her leg once. She yelped before rubbing the sore spot.

"Know your enemy and know yourself and you will win a hundred battles, Sun Tzu." Ohnishi said. Emiya glanced at him whom smirked with a raised chin. "That's my job, to know enough so that I can write it out."

He was right after all. Looking at the girl's sorry state, this will be a mess. A lot of work to be done and he'll have to enforce the learning in the quickest way possible, pain. Time passed like a slug as he embedded the lessons onto the young disciple.

"You left yourself exposed." A blow to the stomach.

"Watch your footing." A twist, throwing her off her feet.

"Don't leave any open spots." Tap to the head.

Emiya turned to the clock. Past half hour of practice had been disappointing. The sparring had been closer towards complete bullying. Hikayu massaged her bruises as Emiya added another number to her supposed death count. Sixty seven. Yes, he had that much leeway to actually count. Emiya sighed. "This isn't working." She wouldn't survive three minutes. That instinct of hers wasn't coming out.
Hoshikawa said. "I know I'm new to this but isn't this a bit harsh?"

That had set the Guardian off. She'll never grow this way. Final step. "Fine. I'll escalate this." Emiya dismissed the shinai and called for Kanshou. An injection of killing intent into his gaze and the girl froze. "If you do not fight seriously, you will die." In the corner of his gaze, Ohnishi turned pale. The girl squeaked. "Fight for your life." The girl turned and ran screaming for the door.

Emiya primed his circuits and moved. Split second, he was on the other side, cutting off her escape. "Run all you like but you won't survive by running." Another dose of killing intent. "Come at me little girl." No way out, the panicked girl fumbled for her weapon. "That's more like it. Show me what you can do."

She screamed as a cornered rat. A careless swing, a step back enough to dodge. A few strikes came forth, each just as unwieldy as its owner. Emiya stepped back, taking time to find the perfect entry. There. Stepping under her swing, he reached in and stabbed. The edge of the sword grazed along the side of her head before his feet stomped her away. She collapsed onto the ground as a few strands of her hair fell to the ground. Just as intended.

Hoshikawa climbed to her feet as Emiya lunged in front of her, weapons discarded behind him. Her arms parried the flying kick, pushing her to skid across the wood. A flurry of blows struck along her side before his fist was stopped in its tracks. She grunted in pain as the martial artist closed in with an elbow blow.

Emiya stepped back, feeling the whisk of air passing by his lips. Leaping back, he called forth his twin swords to parry the nunchaku. Each weapon met its pair. A twirl of chains against the spinning swords in a rhythm of death. Every blow intensified the dance, rising closer towards the crescendo. Both pairs met each other, blasting a gust of air surrounding the warriors.

A pair of hands clapped, prompting them to turn and see Ohnishi nodding in approval. "Wow, I'm impressed." Emiya lowered his weapons, prompting the girl to do the same.

"Ow…” Hoshikawa rubbed a hand along her side. It was assuring to know she could withstand reinforced blows even if his fists are subpar.

"That's much better." Emiya noted the bag of drinks. He grabbed two and tossed her a bottle. "Get yourself a drink."

Hoshikawa drank the bottle to the last drop. "I didn't know how it happened. It just clicked." She tilted her head. "Why are you standing like that? Aren't we done?"

She felt dangerous intent. "Who said we are stopping?" The budding warrior shrieked. There remains much to do. Only to allow this girl to survive on a hanging thread.

"Are we there yet?"

"No." Selesia wanted Kanoya to shut that incessant rambling. Meteora ought to be in here instead of the other car. "For the last time, we'll be there when we're there."

"Right." Kanoya sighed. "I wish we could just fly over in Gigas Machina." The pilot was definitely not used for such long journeys in the van.

"We talked about this. Flying across the country with a big giant mecha is asking for the world to see it."
"Yes, yes, then you're going next to say about where we going to store it in a nice quiet place bla bla.

"Then you realise the point of talking this out." If only Yuya wasn't busy napping.

"Doesn't mean I can't voice it out again. I'm bored as hell. We would have been there in just a half hour instead of three. More time to enjoy the day you know. I mean, look at it. The sun looks great. It would be a letdown if we get there by the time it sets."

Selesia glanced at the car's clock. Nine in the morning was plenty of time for the day. "We're almost there. Just bear with it a bit longer." The pilot said nothing more as the journey continued.

A short time passed before they saw the far edges of brown sand. Marine said while leaning against the window. "Wow, the beach looks good." Selesia pulled the car over by the parking spot available. Yuya woke up and stretched as Kanoya sprinted down the beach.

"Finally we're here." Kanoya tossed his shirt aside and rolling about in the sand. Selesia shook her head at the antics. The swordswoman was glad the drive was done. Being cooped up too long in the driver's seat wasn't uncomfortable but the pilot has been a pain to drive around with. This is the right time to totally unwind and relax.

It was hard holding back herself, it's been ages since she visited the beach! Clear blue waves crashed into the long banks of sand that couldn't reach deep enough to the higher ground. She took off her slippers and rubbed the warm sands between her toes. She yelled before reaching into the car for her things. "Hey, don't get too far ahead of yourself."

"Oi, where's Matsubara and the others?" Napping guy finally asked the question.

Marine said. "The others will be here in the afternoon. They were screaming about meeting the deadline." The artist had been working harder in order to get the chance to get the chance to join the morning group.

Archer's car lined up beside them. Siegfried appeared on top of the car as Hideaki and Meteora disembarked from the back. Selesia waved as the girls went towards the changing rooms. "We'll catch you guys later."

By the time they were back, the guys had setup two parasols alongside each other. A few blankets laid ready and two large ice coolers for drinks of the day. Yuya tossed his shirt before popping open a can of beer. A sigh from his lips. "Ah, this is good stuff. Hey, you look overdressed for today."

Yuya's words was an understatement. Archer had been dressed in a sleeveless red shirt with a matching cap to boot. Long blue jeans made it clear he's definitely not going into the waters. He hefted a rod in hand and haversack in the other. "I'll join you guys later."

Selesia hummed. "Loner." He said nothing.

"Well, everyone has their own thing." Yuya stretched his muscles. Wow, he looks sexy.

Sota smiled as he said. "You girls look great." Yes, the effort had been worth it. The black bikini with red frills and a pink skirt to make the perfect match. It'd taken her hours to find it. Meteora, dressed in a purple swimsuit with plentiful of frills said thanks. Marine had a silver one piece which made her red with embarrassment.

Yuya whistled. "Yes indeed. Our luck that this place is quiet, otherwise things would be annoying." There were a few other parasols but further down towards the end.
Selesia noticed someone was missing. "Where is Kanoya?"

Sota pointed towards the sky. "I… think he's over there." She squinted at the tiny object, growing larger at a rapid pace.

Isn't…that Gigas Machina? Selesia felt her voice quake. "I told him perfectly clear that we are not bringing that thing over here. How did it even get here?" The swordsman let her shoulders loose. "I give up."

Archer raised a brow before walking towards the rocks along the side of the beach. "I'll prepare a bounded field to minimise the impact." Finally a man with some sense. Meteora went to join him.

"Please do that before I kill Kanoya." Every sense of energy drained away, leaving her into a dark quiet husk.

"I will talk with him." Yuya offered. She gave thanks before resting onto the sand. The warmth rejuvenated the exhaustion in an instant. She let out a sigh before closing her eyes to get away from this mess. It's going to be a long day.

Marine stretched before sitting up on the blue blanket. The parasol's shade kept the sand warm in the right spot. The waves of sea echoed calm into her mind.

She took a sip of ice cold tea as Archer and Meteora finished their work. The results were instantaneous, the small group of people left. They just packed up and moved away, further down the beach. It was a wonder how magic could work in such seamless manner.

Meteora gave her thanks before the red man disappeared further down the beach. Selesia brightened up as the situation was resolved and called over with a bottle of lotion in hand. "Sota, I could use some help here."

The boy raised a brow. "Where on earth did you learn this habit?"

She dropped onto the blanket with a grin. "When in Romela, do as the Romelias do." The boy chuckled with a shake of the head before walking over to help.

Meanwhile, Hideaki was sorting out the things in the ice cooler. Closing the cover with a satisfied look, he turned towards Saber. "What's wrong?"

Siegfried turned from his long stare to answer. "Sorry Master. I am just not accustomed to this."

Hideaki shrugged. "It's normal I guess. After all, the idea of having fun this way didn't exist in your time."

Marine licked her lips at the sight. Dressed in simple black shorts, the man projected strength far beyond anything she felt. Contours of his muscles mesmerised her eyes for its allure. Scar in the man's chest disfigured yet masculine. She slapped her face with both hands. It wouldn't work out.

Hideaki shrugged. "It's normal I guess. After all, the idea of having fun this way didn't exist in your time."

Siegfried nodded. "I will try, Master."

Hideaki waved him off. "Don't call me that here. There's no need to be formal."

His Servant nodded. "Yes, Hideaki."

"Nope, just Daichi will do."
"Daichi." Saber said the name several times before nodding.

"Sure, sure. Have fun, however you want Siegfried."

"Oho, what a lucky guy." Yuya hummed before tossing a beachball in his hand. "Come on, let's work out a sweat. I've been sitting around too much these days."

"I'll be the referee." Hideaki offered before climbing up the stand.

"I'm not familiar with the rules." Siegfried said.

Hideaki pointed at the square zone opposite Yuya. "Don't worry. Just don't let the ball fall in that zone using your hands. No catching or holding the ball. We'll take it slow to get you used to it."

Marine expected slow to be relaxing. Cringe crawled down her spine as she saw the match turn into all out war. Movement flickered faster than eye could see. Ball trading sides with such impact.

Siegfried leapt before striking the ball with a force that blew whirlwinds. Which promptly exploded the ball. Hideaki hummed before sighing. "I, expected as much."

Yuya barked into laughter. "That's a good one. Good thing I brought spares."

Siegfried's eyes glinted. "Let's have another go." An affirming yell before they started Beach ball war.

"Yo, we're finally here." Nakanogane waved as the beach war concluded in a desolate battlefield of sand. The others in the distance gave a wave, carrying their own parasols for relaxing.

"Finally I have my day off." Matsubara's voice was a whisper. His skin and eyes were devoid of life. Hikayu giggled at the Creator that plopped onto the sand.

Marine raised a finger. "You look worse for wear. Good thing that you're finally here." She noticed missing people. "Where's Yatoji and Ohnishi?"

Suruga plopped onto the sand before reaching for her artboard. "Yatoji said he can't make it. Said deadline was too close for his comfort." She paused. "Ohnishi needed to continue on the development for the fan disk. He wouldn't make it here."

"It feels so bloody hot." Nakanogane wiped sweat off his forehead.

"It is the beach after all." Hikayu pointed out.

"I want to go home now." Nakanogane waved a hand at his face several times.

"You just got here. Come on, have a cold one." Matsubara tossed a drink from the cooler. Nakanogane flicked the tab open and drank it in one go. He slacked onto the sand with a smile. They look so tired. *Totally worth rushing it through.*

"Look what I got." Marine turned to see Selesia carrying a small box. She opened it and grabbed one of the dozen weapons of mass entertainment. "Water guns for a fun way to cool off."

Meteora picked up one of the little plastic toys. "I think that is a good idea." The new arrivals went to get changed as the two girls filled up their new weapons. Meteora studied the weapon in her hand. "Carrying one of these gives me great temptations." She aimed at Selesia before firing a squirt.

Selesia squealed before firing back. Meteora raised a hand in response. "Reflect shield." Water struck
the handheld shield before returning towards Selesia.

Water splattered against Selesia's face. She pouted at the blatant act. "That's cheating."

"It is all fair in a game of wits." Meteora fired her own gun. Selesia twisted, dodging the blast of water. "Do not escape your impending doom."

"That's what heroes and heroines do." Selesia darted across the water before jumping above Meteora with a shot to the face. Marine giggled as both girls duked it out in a battle for water queen supremacy.

Gigas Machina soared across the waters, its huge engines blasting waves of water across them. Selesia sputtered water before raising a fist at the disappearing robot. "KANOYA! YOU ARE SO DEAD!"

Marine gave an awkward laugh. Maybe the beach wasn't such a good idea.

Emiya watched in silence as the wind breezed against his skin. A hand reached into the jacket, the other against his weapon. Taking it easy, he prepared the bait to the hook as the waves echoed gently against the pier reaching out to the sea.

A familiar presence approached behind him. Kid said. "I didn't think you were much of a fisherman."

Emiya tossed a line from the fishing rod. "I had a quiet taste for it. Lets me think once in a while." Such opportunity was few but it was cherished peace. "I'd take you were dumped today."

Kid shook his head. "Not really. They're sunbathing right now so I thought I'd take a walk."

"Alas another idiot has fallen into the new realm of the dull minded."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Kid stood beside him. "Ah whatever, I didn't know you were much of a philosopher."

Emiya kept his eye on the line. "Between having some peace and quiet against facing the horrors waiting in the Clock Tower, the former is preferred." Distorted as he was, there was a limit to what insanity he could endure inside the blasted place.

"The horrors? What would be able to scare you there? It wouldn't be the Zelretch isn't it?"

"That crackpot was a prankster, scary from the possibilities of mischief he could pull at you. Rin on a bad morning however, never mind." The lure dipped a little into the water.

Kid cracked into laughter. "Archer, you're really a man that can't handle women well."

"A kettle calling the pot black." Emiya pulled, throwing the fish into the air. It would serve well for dinner. Another six more to feed the monstrous eater of a sage, for the first round.

"It's awfully quiet here despite the three of you are hanging around." Matsubara and Suruga were sitting by the piers doing their thing.

"You know, you're always trying to talk a lot. Is that a thing of yours?" Emiya said as he tossed fresh bait.

"Is that so?" Kid turned towards the other sitting on the other side of the pier. "Isn't it bad to try
"If you're not a man to talk, sometimes silence is golden." Emiya chipped in.

"Pfft, you got me there." Kid shrugged before sitting down at the edge. The seawater coasted along the boy's feet. Another tug on the line. "Suruga, you're always drawing."

"Drawing is my life. I can't get around anywhere. The ideas I have is always flowing but I need to put in the effort and practice to grow towards achieving it," Suruga said.

"Drawing is a craftsmanship. Writing and drawing are brothers and sister in that respect." Matsubara raised a can of beer to his lips.

"You looked addicted to writing." Kid pointed to the notebook. Matsubara's eyes gave an expectant answer. "If you're not addicted to it, you can't survive working in the industry."

"Such dedication. You're all amazing."

"People only think we are because of what we achieved." Suruga kept her eye on the paper. "We're nobodies in the big picture. Its only through blood and effort that we are what we are today."

"An endless journey. Forever working, forever improving in a cycle." Matsubara took another sip. One must wait continuously, one must pursue endlessly. Emiya remembered words meant for him and yet not. Another path in another time. His thoughts were pulled by the tug of the rod. A quick pull tossed another catch into the open air. Another big one as he reeled it in. Still need five more as a minimum. There was no satiating the black hole of a sage.

Sota sat on the sand as the gentle waters brushed against his legs. Mushy sand in his grip, loosening its heat alongside the others settling down from the initial fervour. Selesia and Meteora were having some iced shavings by the nearby shop. Matsubara and the others were enjoying themselves by the piers. Kanoya, Hikayu and Marine were snorkeling at some far edges of the sea.

Calm winds cooled along his back as another wave of water soaked his feet. Peace of watching nature at its work. Sota felt slight regrets. If only Mamika and Altair were there to see it.

Sota noticed Yuya and Siegfried returning from their stroll along the beach. Sota waved before being met with a nod from the Servant. "Yo, what's with you sitting all alone here?"

"Nothing particular. Feels nice and quiet watching the sea."

"You have something good going inside your head. Keep at it." Yuya rubbed his neck. "Meantime those girls were such a pain."

Sota tilted his head. Siegfried answered. "They were pestering him for an unclear reason." Sota had a very probable idea. Those men were all muscle. Yuya bared his chest for all to witness the glory. Siegfried had worn a blue shirt but it probably had the opposite effect.

Yuya bumped a fist into Siegfried's shoulder. "Thanks for getting rid of the trouble Siegfried."

Sota turned towards Yuya. "What did Saber do?"

Yuya grinned before giving a slap to the Hero's back. "Joined in the conversation and watch all those
ladies swoon over to him. This man's a Casanova I tell you."

Sota blinked. "All of them?" Siegfried nodded.

"I do not understand what they find so interesting about me."

Sota shirked back to answer. Answer's pretty obvious. "Well…There's probably a lot of reasons."

"I mean no insult but there's no immediate benefit in talking with me."

Yuya sighed as he propped a hand on Siegfried's shoulder. "Saber, other men would kill to be in your position."

Siegfried's eyes sharpened. "I have noticed some demeanour from some of the men and kept on guard in case they had hostile intentions." Sota shook his head at the thought. A normal person would certainly be unable to hurt Siegfried. Maybe a comedic moment where the man would be skipping across the sea from the hero's strength.

Yuya cracked a laugh. "That's to be expected. You are strong just like me."

"I am not a strong man. I do only what is asked. A strong man is one who is able to achieve his wishes."

Sota understood the context from the Fate Apocrypha. "You achieved your wish once. You'll do it again."

"I apologise for the pessimism. From my understanding, this Altair is far stronger than anything we've faced before. I would prefer to be certain than to underestimate her."

Yuya grinned. "Well, not the time to think about her. Now I'm up for something icy cold. Let's go bother Metchin for a bit along with it."

"I do not think she would take it lightly at that."

"Let's see her try. You up for some too, Sota?"

"Sure."

Excitement of the dying sunset grew from the sizzling meat settled on an open barbecue. Daichi felt temptation crawled into his nostrils, egging him on to break the ultimate taboo. He leaned over the pit and stretched his chopsticks before a metal skewer stabbed into the sand.

"Do, not, touch." Daichi felt the chef's full blast of the murderous glare. He let go everything and backed away. Nope, nope, nope. Messing with Archer's cooking is really going to get him killed right there and then. Seductive little chicken wings would have to wait until they're fully cooked.

The long table stood out from the open sands, accompanied with white chairs. Yuya took on the job of preparing drinks. Hoshikawa had the unfortunate role of serving the food. The hungry stares was spooked her out. What a pity.

"I don't understand why it's just so good." Selesia squealed after biting into the juicy meat on the yakitori stick. Dinner was on the beach itself. Large varieties of seafood, fruits and vegetables with a rapidly declining stock without thanks to particular person.

"Archer's cooking is the best there is." Nakanogane said, hands busy competing with Meteora,
Mirokuji and Kanoya in an impromptu chopstick war. Matsubara and Siegfried were having themselves some major drinking with an icy bucket at their side.

"Where did he learn how to cook like this?"

"I want to take him back home."

Meteora raised another skewer devoid of food. "Your proposition is rejected. Archer must stay with us. Maybe join me in the library later on for culinary research."

"Oi, I'm not some commodity." Archer protested in the background. He had made the area surrounding the barbecue pit off limits. The signboard and barbed wire might be a bit overkill but proved little against the hungry wolves.

Yuya raised a bottle of beer. "You have no right to say that. Your cooking is beyond human and needs to be enjoyed to the fullest. We are truly the luckiest bunch, aren't we?"

Watching the debacle amongst heroes, Daichi couldn't help but feel amused. Laughter drew the attention of the others. Yuya asked with a brow. "What's so funny?"

"Just thinking that a few months ago, we were going about trying to kill each other. Now we're all like old friends."

A cold silence within the group. The sounds remaining were the sizzling and chomping of food from a sage. Selesia shook her head before smiling. "What a way to spoil the mood."

The others eased up. Yuya said while reaching for a piece of fruit. "He's right though. Things have improved for the better. Can't say no to that."

"Altair has united us to be a team to protect this world." Meteora finished eating the last piece of lamb. "To protect the world, we will need to be ready and well fed."

"That's just an excuse so you can have more of them." Archer tossed half dozen pieces of steaks onto the pit. One of the plates was labelled off limits but Daichi noticed a pair of approaching hands. A skewer struck where the hands were, prompting Kanoya into a yell.

Matsubara raised a glass of beer. "A toast, to a brighter futures for all of us. Our own worlds." The others met his with their own glass. Archer continued to hold the fort, raising his from adistance.

"Cheers." Glasses tinkled between the sizzling meat.

Night took over as the embers of coal were put away. Belly full, Daichi plopped onto the warm sand and looked at the glowing stars. Tomorrow it's back to Tokyo and back to the war.

Siegfried sat in the sand beside him. "What is on your mind?"

"Today felt so short."

Matsubara joined, a cold glass in hand. "Time flies whenever we have fun. Well, we've enjoyed what we can. There's always next time."

Selesia propped out some stick fireworks. "I got us something to spark the night with."

Kanoya waved it off. "Puh-lease, that's totally not good enough." He glanced at his watch. "It should be coming on about now..."
A light streaked from the cliffs nearby. An explosion into bright lights. "Wow, fireworks. It's beautiful." A few other surprised sounds as several more joined in cue. A rocket barrage shot into the air, turning night into day with loud spectacles of colours.

"Master, I believe we are under attack."

"Chill, Siegfried. It's just a celebration."

"I apologise."

Selesia tugged at her jacket. "Kanoya, how did you get the stuff?"

Kanoya cracked a grin. "I had Kikuchihara help with that."

The redhead raised a brow. "I don't think she would be so kind to help with that. This isn't part of saving the world." She waved her miniature fireworks. "Besides I don't remember it being in the budget."

The pilot shrugged. "She…doesn't know about it yet."

Selesia frowned while wagging a finger at him. "You're so dead."

Kanoya leaned back into the sand. "Who cares? It's already done. Let's just enjoy tonight." It was later found out that he didn't survive against the Director's wrath.

Daichi turned back towards the Each fireworks represented a hope. A fire that kept going in spite of harsh adversity. A representation of tomorrow. He clenched his fist into the sand. It would be this world's hope.

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Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Magane dead, Alicetaria's plan twisted around again. Closing off the open ends of the extra OCs.

Sota and Marine. Emiya and Hikayu. Hilarity ensues.

The trip to the beach was something that came to mind from the ED scenes. Back when I watched it for the first time, I was curious why these scenes weren't used since they provided good avenues to explore. Something less grim while we're at it.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Selesia Upitiria stared at the enormous number of people. "Wow, there's so many people here." Rows of people blotted out the path towards the large building further down the road.

"I thought your world had a good bunch of people." Nakanogane said while waving a small fan to cool down. The day was a bit hot but it was nothing in contrast to her young days in the Karabian Deserts. Kanoya and Mirokuji didn't seem to mind the heat. Meteora though looked a bit on the lethargic side.

"Earth-Melia didn't have that many people around like that. Sure we have cities and all that but nothing compared to this." Many people were in small groups in the open areas outside the main building barricaded by lines of tape. "What are we doing here anyway?"

Matsubara said. "Check out the sights and sounds. Besides, it's a social experiment Marine wanted to try. She wanted to see if anyone would notice that you're actually real and not a cosplayer."

"Cosplay?" She piqued.

Sota explained. "People pretending to be fictional characters or in other words you guys."

Her excitement deflated. "That doesn't look so fun."

Hideaki added with a raised finger. "Who knows you might find a good looking copy of Charon here."

Selesia turned around, gazing within the crowds. "Charon? Where would I see those?"

"That was quick." Kanoya sighed. He had come dressed in simple jeans and T-shirt. "Hopefully I don't meet one of mine. That'd be way too troublesome to deal with."

Meteora puckered her lips. "There's so many copies of me." The number of white haired girls with the sage garbs. *Must have been hot wearing those on a day like this.*

Mirokuji raised a brow at his own group of lookalikes. "Why the hell am I here?" He narrowed his brows. "They don't look like me at all."

Nakanogane tried to ease the situation. "Now, now. Perfection isn't everything. It's all about trying your best to be the character."

"Dresing up as Sho ain't going to make you just like as him." Mirokuji tapped him. Was the red bandana and vest the telltale clothes for this 'Sho'? "I can tell you, you're not even close to it." The Creator balked at the sight of the angry antagonist.

"I find that difficult to comprehend as the best would imply perfect accuracy yet it would not be achievable." Meteora defused the growing anger in the man.

Nakanogane nodded in frantic frenzy. "I'll explain to you another time. Let's just enjoy it for a bit."
Matsubara pulled the sleeves of his shirt. "I suppose it's time to dive right in there."

Hideaki looked over his shoulder. "I'm going to look around and see for any interesting stories."
Both of them vanished into the crowd.

The day was spent in this event called Comiket. Nakanogane explained later to them that this was a fair organised twice a year that dedicated to selling fan made artworks. That meant materials possibly including Altair which may prove useful in the war later on. Though she felt it was a bit otherwise. Each of them had assigned themselves a zone to search within the fair. Selesia chose to steer clear from the adult sections of the place. There were enough nightmares with this 'Rule 34.'

By afternoon, Selesia felt exhausted upon leaving the building. The amount of people staring at her was not comforting. Everyone asking for photos of her. Kanoya left her in a pickle to fend off for herself. That kid, I need to get back at him.

Occasional glances at Mirokuji told that he didn't have such issues with his dark demeanor.
Meteora, was nowhere to be found.

The clink of the drink reminded her of the ice tea she needed. Popping open the lid, the tea was a godsend for the day. A whisper behind her ears. "Selesia. It's me." A voice far too familiar.

She whipped around to see red eyes. They were familiar, hidden under a brown hoodie. She stuttered his name. "Charon. How, how are you here?"

His eyes sharpened as they glanced around the crowd. "Selesia, I've been brought into this world just like you did." She blinked as a hand grabbed hers. "I came here to talk to you." Surprised, she followed him towards one of the quieter side of the stalls selling merchandise.

Satisfied with the situation, the tight grip relaxed and the man turned around. "I'm glad I finally found you."

She held back from bursting out. "I am glad to see you too! How long have you been here?"

"Not long but I need your help."

"Help?"

Charon nodded. "We have an opportunity in this world. Come help me change our world."

Selesia felt uneasy. "Change the world?"

"That's right. The land of the Gods here have a special power. Using that power, we can change everything that happened in our world. We can defeat the Avalon Brigade, the war would be over."

Charon didn't know about it yet. "Charon, it's not as simple as that."

"It doesn't matter if we can get our God to change it. The answer we want can be found. The important thing is to start the change."

Selesia bit her lip. Charon had a point. If there's a will, there's a way. Was it an excuse that she didn't try hard enough to find a compromise? A win-win solution for everyone. Her partner dived back before a large wooden sword struck into the ground, cracking the concrete floor.

"Get away from her." Yuya Mirokuji stood up from his surprise attack. The surrounding people raised glances with a few cameras taking pictures.
"You shouldn't be interfering with our affairs."

"Your affairs is your business. She however sticks with us."

Charon turned and ran. The swordsman moved to pursue but stopped at her yell. "Stop." She walked up towards him. "Mirokuji. Why are you interfering?"

Mirokuji watched the shape vanish within the crowd. "He's the enemy. That's simple as it is."

"He is not."

"Cut the bullshit. I didn't hear everything but I got enough to piece things together. He's one of Altairs minions now."

"How could you say such a thing? He's my partner. I had the right to at least listen to his opinion."

"The way you two are going about, are you sure you're working partners and not bloody lovers?"

Her hand was faster. Selesia hissed as her hand burned from slapping so hard. "How dare you to say such a thing." Turning around, she walked away as the ignorant said.

"What tough luck. That's going to leave a mark."

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Weekends were the best time to get things done. Sota knocked on the door before entering. "Good morning." Sota called out to the Creators. Placing the morning snacks by the table, he noticed an empty seat that should already be filled. "Where's Matsubara?"

Marine tapped a pen against her latest work in progress. "I don't know. Maybe he's down with the flu. Didn't he go to Comiket with you?"

"Yes, he looked okay yesterday."

"Hmm, maybe he's just exhausted and overslept. He had done that before on a few occasions." Marine suggested.

Nakanogane sighed before reaching for a snack. "You may be right Marine. I think we're all getting tired from the deadline. It is harsher than the norm."

Sota agreed. These Creators were working on a continuous basis. Seven days a week of work would exhaust anyone. "I suppose its better to let him rest a little." He picked up the piece of paper prepared by Nakanogane beforehand. "Anyway I'll give the morning update to Kikuchihara." The screenwriter waved in thanks before returning to the task at hand.

The errand didn't take long as Kikuchihara's new office was setup within a few rooms away. Dropping the report, he asked the same question.

"I'm not aware of this. At least he could have given the courtesy to inform us in advance." Kikuchihara sighed. "Thank you for the report. Let me check on him and inform the rest later." Sota nodded before leaving the Coordinator to her duties. In the meantime, he'll help out Marine with some of simpler tasks in preparing the next pages in the next manga release.

Sitting in his station, Sota arranged the tools prepared in hand and got to work. Marine focused on preparing the core outline. Sota would do the inking before returning it to Marine for the finishing touches. The stacks of paper weren't many but each piece needed meticulous effort to be done right. Otherwise the entire page would've been ruined. Sota had failed enough times as it is.
The door jolted him out of focus as Kikuchihara entered. The serious face worried Sota. "Everyone, Matsubara's missing."

Marine jumped to her feet. "Missing? How can that be?"

"Matsubara wasn't answering our calls and he was supposed to meet me an hour earlier." The Coordinator explained as Selesia, Meteora and Mirokuji filtered into the room.

Nakanogane raised his hands. "Matsubara's not the most punctual guy. Could it be a bad day and a broken phone?"

"I'd assume the same. I had someone check out Matsubara's house just in case. The place was raided. His work tools were taken, nothing else."

Suruga nodded, hand still on the board. "There can only be one assumption from it. The kidnapper is a Creation."

Mirokuji turned towards the swordswoman. "So, are you going to tell them?"

Meteora turned towards him. "What are you talking about?"

Mirokuji kept his attention on the redhead girl. "She knows what I'm talking about. Don't pretend that you're stupid. If you're not, I'm going to spill the beans."

Selesia paused in thought before saying. "Fine." She explained to them about the incident that happened at Comiket. The appearance of her partner from the world of Earth-Melia. The short conversation between them before Mirokuji's interruption.

Marine was the first to speak. "How is Charon here and behaving in such way?" Selesia had no answer.

"So it is confirmed that he's working for Altair." Meteora summarised the information. Sota could see her eyes in deep thought. It presented the same question to him. What are they going to do about Charon? The idea of Selesia and Charon fighting each other was bitter. "This is an unprecedented situation. Selesia, how do you feel about this?"

Selesia took a seat on the chair. "Honestly, I don't know what to think about it. I've been thinking over it since last night."

"Any idea where he would be?" Selesia shook her head. She hadn't seen him since then nor was there any way to know where he went.

"They won't kill him that's for sure," Gai Takarada said. "They can't afford to kill him or the point is moot." That brought a bit of relief to the group.

Meteora opened a map onto the table. "We must begin to search for Charon immediately. Otherwise the Bird Cage plan will be severely disrupted."

"Where are we going to find them? We sort of casted them into the winds with Archer's plans of hide and seek."

"There must be certain limitations to where they are hiding. More so for a machine like Vogelchevalier."

Selesia pointed out. "Vogelchevalier is a lot easier to hide compared to something like Gigas
Machina. There are a lot of places that it can fit into."

"I believe it is easier to search for Charon than the others. More so, our objective remains to rescue Matsubara, not have a major battle with them."

Mirokuji nodded. "Sure. Selesia, do you have any will to fight him?" Selesia turned her gaze away from the question.

Meteora turned back to the map. "Before we decide anything, let us pinpoint his location. Once we have him, you can talk with him as long as it needs. Given their relationship, there may be a chance we can turn him over to our side." The redhead gave a nod before returning into her own thoughts.

Selesia stared at the blue sky. Charon's words had put her into a limbo. Her partner of years and now on the other side. How should she decide?

The sun baked into her skin yet she didn't mind. The view of the moving crowd and videos was enough to keep her mind in check. Had her God made it such way or was it something more human?

"You look troubled." The voice was beside her ear.

Selesia jumped out of her thoughts, a hand reaching to her sword before she stopped. "Woah, don't scare someone like that Siegfried."

"Sorry. I have been careless." Siegfried bowed in apology.

Selesia lowered her guard, albeit spooked. "Were you there all this time?"

"No, however I have noticed your presence here and decided to investigate. I am sorry for intruding." The man had dressed in regular clothing instead of armour. The purple shirt and black slacks made an interesting contrast to the man's white hair. The ladies here would've loved him.

"That's fine." Selesia forgave the man. Unlike a particular hero, this one had heart of gold. She turned back towards the sky. "You are right. I am having a problem to think about now."

"I understand. Is it related to this Charon by any chance?"

*It was that obvious huh.* She closed her eyes. "Yeah, it is."

"I understand that you two are lovers."

Selesia coughed a few times. "We're not that way."

He bowed in return. "I am sorry. I presumed too much."

Her tongue struck for words. To think this man is rather blunt. "We're not lovers. Close partners would be the better term." *I wouldn't have minded.*

"I see. I am sorry but I am not well versed to help on matters that relate to the heart."

She smiled with a shake of the head. This man is too apologetic to be a hero. "I guess even we heroes have flaws of our own." She sat down onto the warm floor. "I do have to admit that I don't know how to answer the problem."

"If I may suggest, it might be better to just wait for an answer." Siegfried sat down beside her. "I have heard of this quote from Master so to say it would be 'sleep on it'." She had nothing to say. "I
apologise for giving an inappropriate answer."

"You apologise way too much."

"I apologise for that too."

She giggled at the man's intended antics. This twisting around the bush, it felt sort of refreshing for once. Every time she had a mission, there was always a direct answer of what needed to be done. Charon's case wasn't so clear cut. This kind of thing might be what she needed for now. "Fine. I can't be angry against something like that."

"Well bargained." Siegfried pressed a hand to his chest. "I am glad that you feel better."

Selesia turned away, hoping to hide her red face. "Now you're overdoing it."

He smirked in return. "I apologise for that."

A giggle slipped from her mouth. "Pfft. Now you owe me a story."

"It is a long tale." She continued to stare into his eyes. Siegfried took a breath before recalling a long past, back in the times of legends.

Beginning of his journey of answering the quests of the people. Receiving Balmung from the Nibelung tribe through a bloodied feud. The cursed holy blade that brought him to victory against the dragon Fafnir. Bathing in the dragon's blood that shielded him from lethal blows. All was well as the people were protected.

People would cry for help and he would deliver. Siegfried never refused, taking on perils that at times would bathe him literally in the blood of his enemies. Given how he went about his adventures, Selesia started to understand his actions. Siegfried wasn't a man who wanted gold or glory. A simpleton hero that simply wanted to help, no matter how challenging or dangerous it could be.

The downfall started when he married a princess named Kriemhild. Bringing victories to the Burgundy Kingdom, the request that befell him arrived from his brother in law. A hand of marriage of a Queen in his stead. By hindsight, the measures taken weren't the right choice. Honour of both sides were wounded and Siegfried decided, that death was the best choice to avoid slaughter of many.

Selesia's face was crestfallen by the time he finished. "That's a sad ending."

What kind of story did Matsubara had in mind for her? Was it something of sacrifice or a happy ever after? She never asked for asking it would've been too much. Someone shouldn't live knowing they had a clock left to live.

"I am sorry for telling a story that doesn't have a good ending," Siegfried said. "I managed to learn that another version of myself in one of these stories managed to achieve what he wanted."

Furrowed brows in response. "Another version?" He told her about the Heroic Spirits and Throne of Heroes. Where the world may retrieve copies of the spirit for use as a familiar or in this case as a Servant. "I see. Are you looking to do the same here?"

Siegfried nod as the gentle winds touched his hair. "Yes. Nothing more, nothing less." The firm expression in his cheek, the sharp glint in his eyes. That has been what he wanted. That is what he will achieve.
"That is sweet to hear." Selesia sighed. A heavy weight had been lifted from her shoulders. She felt a smile blossom from her lips. "Thank you Siegfried."

"You're welcome, Selesia."

Matsubara rubbed his chin, wondering who would kill him first. The small shed in the middle of somewhere being his cage. He had no clue where he was. Fully enclosed in a metal box kept him edgy being in such confined space. The sounds he could hear through the small ventilation grate above implied somewhere on the outskirts of the city. That's if he was still in Tokyo, given how unlikely it was to be inside a box hardly big enough to fit a desk, a small bed and the locked metal door.

The door opened and his captor entered. Matsubara refused to see the man. Heavy porcelain clinked onto the thin bed sheets. He didn't feel hungry. "God, is it done yet?"

Matsubara turned towards the laptop screen. Blank as it needed to. "I won't do it Charon."

From his place, he could see his own shadows. Soft shapes of shadows grew larger, towering over his smaller shape. It overshadowed his own. A gloved fist struck onto the desk. The table rattled, tilting the glass of water nearly off balance. "Why? You know the pain that we suffer through every day."

Matsubara stood up, facing eye to eye with his Creation. "I know that, I'm the one who created you Charon."

"Then are you some sadist? Making us endure the loss of our friends and family? What kind of cruel man are you?"

"Sure, I get your point. Don't you think that I cannot feel your pain too? That I am the author. I decide who lives and who dies. You all are my children. Do you think I kill characters off because I like to? That's absurd."

"Then it's simple to just change the world. Make it a peaceful place, turn it to what it should become."

"Impossible. Nobody, not even demons in hell would accept it."

"I don't care about them." He felt powerless before pain exploded onto his back from being slammed into a wall. "You just have to change it."

"It will never work. The readers will never accept it because it would never make sense. You think that this power is so invincible that I can do anything I like. That's not the way it works."

"Again. I, don't, care."

"Are you going to threaten me? Kill me? Torture me? What can you do?" Matsubara grit his teeth against the throbbing pain in his back.

"If you won't do as I say, then I have no choice but to be the villain." Charon pushed him onto the bed. "You know Vogelschevalier's power." Those words froze every retort he had in mind. "The power beyond capabilities within this world. Think of the possibilities that I can unleash."

"You wouldn't think of it...That's not like you Charon." He didn't create this man to do such things.
Charon raised his chin. "You're pushing me to the edge. If I have to become evil to save my world, I will do it. I'm done with fighting. I'm tired of being the hero. Why won't you let me go?"

"That's because you're the main character. Readers want to grow, appreciate and sympathise with your journey. You are their inspiration to lead towards a new tomorrow."

"They are just cruel spectators to revel in our sweat and blood." Charon walked towards the door. "I'm done with this. You have until tomorrow to make something or I will make you regret it."

The door slammed shut before being locked secure. Matsubara shook his head before lying down on the bed. Pain throbbed as Muse kept silent despite the need for solutions.

*What am I going to do?*

Sota opened the door and shielded his eyes against the bright light. He stepped out into the open wind and approached the woman standing by the edge of the roof. Noticing his approach, Selesia turned around and asked. "Anything yet?"

Sota shook his head. "Not yet. The others are still working at it." Meteora had returned to command the war room in the mission of finding Matsubara. Mirokuji and the others searched the city for clues. Kikuchihara however confined the Creators to the work room to avoid a repeat of the situation. Maybe by his good fortune he wasn't seen as valuable.

Selesia scraped a feet along the edge. "Ah, why does he have to be so annoying? Even now he has to be a pain in the butt."

Sota raised his hands. "Calm down. Everything will be alright."

Selesia paused before turning around. "You're right Sota." The signs of worry were hard to discern. "It's just frustrating to just sit here and do nothing."

"If he saw any signs of you searching, it would've been a sign for him to move. You and Charon have been together for a long time after all."

Selesia sat down on the edge of the building, kicking her free legs into the air. "That's right. We've been facing everything together since the beginning." She took a deep breath. "Four years, it's been that long already."

Sota nodded as he joined beside her. "Yea, we've been through a lot." It had been nearly a dozen light novels. Matsubara hinted on the ending approaching but it wouldn't be within the next few books. "You and Charon must be very close."

"As close as we can be barring a relationship. I'd wish the war with the Avalon Brigade would be over soon. I don't understand why he wanted to use Altair's way. He knows it's wrong."

"You may not know this but I think he's tired." Selesia looked at him. "Charon's tired of being a hero. He went through a lot of pain just like you. The war had been going on for very long after all."

"That's right. I could've been one just like him. However I'm the younger one that had a little more fire than the current him." She raised a hand. "It's up to me to bring him back to the right and change his mind. Even if I have to punch his face a few times."

Another voice cut into their reverie. "If you have enough time to sit here moping, perhaps you can do something of use." They turned towards the corner to see Archer landing on the roof.

"Did you hear about it?"

"Would you believe me if I said no?"

She narrowed her eyes. "Don't you dare think about blackmail. Why are you up here?"

Archer snorted. "As though I would be petty with such matters. I carried my observations for the sage. Best way to lose any eyes focused on me."

"That's good to hear but if I heard a word about it, there'd be hell to pay."

"Suit yourself." Archer opened the door and disappeared downstairs.

Selesia waited for the door to close shut before giving a sigh. "Good riddance." The relief on her face was clear. "I don't know how that man lives the way he does."

"Archer is a man that suffered for upholding a duty that is deemed impossible. However that didn't detract him from giving up until the end." Sota pitied the man's past. Forced to do his master's bidding for countless time, it was painful slavery to watch your own hands destroy the things you wish to protect.

"Hmm, you know the right things to say to put things together." The redhead smiled. "Thanks."

Blitz missed having a good beer. Sitting in the shelter of another broken house, he stared at the open moon. At least it wasn't raining.

Sho twirled his staff around before swinging at an invisible enemy. Youth these days, always excited to do something. Or maybe its just him getting old. Or the men keep chasing after him. How many had he shot so far?

Ah, should he be having a mid life crisis now? What a pain. Heavy footsteps clacked by the door. The pilot strode into the room with a face that would tear people for looking at it.

Blitz decides to holler. "Ah, good to see that you're in good shape."

"I'm a hero. Dying now would be an insult."

"Maybe but we're not the heroes of this world are we? Anyway, there's tea at the back." For all the weird quirks and penchants this heroic spirit had, the skill to make tasty tea had been an unexpected find.

"Thanks." Charon waved before pausing. The pilot pointed to the large hole outside. "Is he still here?"

"He is, probably somewhere breaking some walls." Another soft rumble in the distance. Breaking all the little parts of shelter was annoying. Living space is already a premium and he'd go about ruining it. Glad were the times the Princess reins him in on a leash.

Charon sighed. "I don't understand how he got here and why the Princess wants him."

"Neither do I but it serves a purpose which we will probably need in the Princess's foresight. She has excellent sense on the matter."
"It matters not for all that needs to be done is to kill." They turned to see a grey haired man entering the room.

Sho clicked his tongue. "That is rather inspirational Romeo."

Alter spread his arms wide. "Life is only a step before death. Time before its end."

Sho turned towards the detective. "Now that's out of my head. You understand any of that old man?"

"Time is of a fleeting moment." Blitz stamped away the embers of the cigarette. He added as Charon trudged on towards the other rooms. "Do bring some more beer when you come around again."

All conversation halted as a soft pair of boots entered. "Gentlemen." The Princess announced her entrance. "I trust you all are well."

Alter knelt onto the dirt. "All is well as it should be, my Queen." Sho and Charon took to nods as Blitz said.

"Not as good as I'd like. No beer or cigarettes to keep this old man cool."

Altair chuckled. "Are the gnawing insects too much for you to handle?"

Blitz shrugged. "Can't fight while carrying crates on a shoulder. They always break in a shootout."

Alter turned to meet his eye. "The better reason to steer away from vice and profess towards the greater faith for comfort."

"Not my kind of thing."

Princess said. "I'm confident that you all are able to handle their interventions thus far. However, the cowards will be starting the second part of their plan soon. You all will need to prepare."

"I'm always ready for a fight." A rumble. "Though that guy beats my enthusiasm."

"The will of the Queen shall be adhered."

"I am grateful." Princess turned around. "Blitz, a private word with you." He followed her into the main chamber, what's left of it.

"Do you see this room?" He knew it was once a hall for activities. Terrible age across the time the former church was abandoned. Peeled white paint with moss and plants crawling its tendrils along the crevices in the rotting pieces of wood. Like the many slums in his neighbourhood.

"What do you need from a humble old man like me?"

"Do not downplay your ability. You deserve that much."

"Thank you for such courtesy Princess."

She rested a hand on the lone aged piece of a podium. "Now then. I understand about your reasons to be here in this world."

"Oh? What would that be?"

"Erina." She raised a hand. A blue light appeared, forming into a form of display terminal around her. He recognised some of the text. "There is not much time for your quest as the deciding battle
approaches." Princess stared at the stream of data. "The Sage believes that her spells can hide their plans. However they remain ignorant." Several images appeared, displaying several icons with a name to each. He manage to decipher what they represented.

Every existing creation in the land of Gods. Dozens of them. How were there so many? She kept her eyes across the number of panels and information. "I wanted to give you an early notice so that you may complete your goals in this world."

"How kind of you." Blitz studied the image before a new list appeared to the right. "This is a fancy skill you have."

"They believe they have the upper hand." Blitz saw a map of the world, yellow markers blinking across different parts of the blue globe. "We will prove them wrong."

"My repertoire of skills grow daily. Bolstered by the other Gods in this world, in time I should receive some that will be able to ease our tasks on a greater level."

Unfortunately not enough to get what you want.

The panels faded. Princess turned to face him. "I hope you will find peace."

"Just the same for you."

Sitting by the rooftop, Alicetaria February wondered how much she has changed across the years. From a hopeful bright young girl to a stoic knight before falling into the dark pits of despair as a broken mess. The things she had done in this world would've been rejected by her former self. An irony for the past to reject the present.

She closed the book to the latest instalment of her story. In contrast to her current memories, these were far different. And much more painful.

It was written how she endured. Yet, even though it is her, she didn't feel the same.

Would it have been better if her present self didn't exist? What did her God have in store for her beyond this world's periphery? The chills in her bones anticipated the possible pain to happen. Death of her people, treasured friends and family. She would survive until the end whilst the world killed her softly.

Turning a side glance, she noticed the advertisement about Mamika's cereal. Mamika is dead. Nothing she can do to change the fact barring asking Altair to bring a new version of her into this world. That option disgusted her because it wouldn't be the same girl after all.

If the girl had a chance to go home, the experience in this world would have changed her entire world. Alicetaria squeezed her fist.

There was a little point to fret over things that didn't happen. The face of the magical slayer refused to leave her mind.

Nor do faces of her subordinates. Those under her charge. People she had been fighting so hard to protect. Each of them had their turn, voicing their silent pleas. Their cries for hope and salvation.

The false Mamika smiled before whispering.

*Thank you*
She stood up to face the setting sun. Thank you Mamika. Her God have many challenges remaining to endure. The moment of respite in this new world maybe the Godsend she needed. How much she had changed. If Adalbert was here, he'd be proud. Reaching for a cereal pack, she opened it and bit a sugary piece.

These are good.

Days passed since the Creator's disappearance. Meteora and Kikuchihara had been working around the clock to search. Police authorities and Creations went around in search for the man. The others Creators had been placed under guard to prevent another repeat of the incident.

Mirokuji and Selesia took the streets for clues. Archer and Siegfried had the high ground, observing across large distances with their abilities. They proved to be the most effective with their long range. Those ideas had been pinned across the city for the former pair to find. Kanoya's machine unfortunately wasn't proficient at finding things.

The far borders of the city were scoured in two days. No signs or traces of her partner and God. Hope inside her heart was starting to wilt. A book on kidnapping mentioned that the most important hours to catch a kidnapper was within the first day. The probability otherwise falls almost to zero.

Selesia was worried by the amount of coffee the Sage was drinking. A stack of cups were on the table whilst the woman was studying the maps. The sage persisted despite her red eyes yearning for sleep. Selesia tried to advise her but it was ignored due to the urgency of the situation. Reality's downfall was approaching closer according to her. Without Matsubara, what could they do?

Until now.

Meteora chugged down the sixth coffee for the day. "The JSDF have found something on the western outskirts of Tokyo." An unmanned drone flew over the target area, its camera feed displayed on the video. The GPS readings on the video displayed the name of Sagamihara.

"That's Charon's Vogelchevalier for sure." She pointed it out.

Selesia raised a brow. "How did we miss this? We've already went through there once." Archer scouted the area twice to be sure.

Meteora rubbed her eyes. "It wasn't by chance. I believe Altair's been helping Charon in an indirect manner to move everything related on regular intervals."

Mirokuji chugged an energy drink before tossing it aside. "That's strange for the girl to be helping her minion."

"Wasn't it the best form of returning the loyalty of your subordinate?" Archer said.

Meteora placed a finger on the map. "The topic is irrelevant. We will go in tonight."

Mirokuji leaned forward towards the point. "Why not now? Otherwise he might get away while we wait."

"People are in the surrounding areas. Charon would avoid drawing attention by moving his machine. Likewise we also need time to prepare. Kikuchihara, can I trust you to help evacuate the nearby citizens?" The Director nodded in response.

"Would he be alone?"
"No way to be certain. I propose we go in with full firepower."

Siegfried emerged from spirit form. "Master, if I may suggest. I should go first to observe the area. In the meantime, preparations can be made." Hideaki nodded and the man disappeared.

Selesia stepped forward. "No, let me go first. I will convince Charon to give up his idea."

Meteora's bloodshot eyes met hers. "There would be little point to do that. For Charon to take Matsubara is already a key decision point." Selesia's gaze remained hard as steel. Bloodshot eyes closed shut. "Very well."

Meteora drew a circle on the map, several blocks away from the area. "Archer will establish a long range position. Mirokuji and I will be a short distance away, ready to join the fight."

"You look like you need a lot more sleep Metchin."

Kanoya loosened his shoulders. "I could do with some exercise."

"Kanoya, you will wait here. You are the last reserve."

The pilot balked before pouting. "That's boring."

"Yuya Mirokuji, if you say that one more time, I will and I will find a way to make things miserable for you. Do not cross me." The man shrugged in response. She sure was in a bad mood. "In fact, I believe you should stay with Kanoya."

Hideaki raised a hand. "Where do you need us?"

"Siegfried should join us in the front. You must stay with the others."

"Got it." He turned his face away for a moment. "Siegfried is fine with the plan."

"Good. Let us prepare for we must rescue Matsubara tonight. No matter the cost."

Blitz felt the warmth within his chest as the insects in the nearby forest made music. Across the room was a fellow audience, listening with eyes closed. The lad had a talent for finding places to stay. Although he doesn't say much beyond the initial introductions.

Blitz let smoke free from his lips. Sho rubbed the ridge of his nose before saying. "Do you just smoke all day and night on those things?"

"Is there anything better to do?"

The light in his lips died, the end of its short life. Blitz reached into his pocket for another cigarette. Sho rested his head against the wall. "Sheesh, you really love them."

"It's a pastime. There aren't much things that can entertain an old man the way this one does."

"It can't be that bad. There's a lot of new things in this world to try."

"Last time I tried, this world's army tried to kill me. Besides the food, my world was far advanced in comparison so nothing comes to fancy." Replenishing the booze is going to be another hassle. Rationing them would keep stock a little longer but that will not do.

"That's a show stopper right there," Sho said. "Sad thing since you maybe old but you're still good
looking. I think the chicks would've like such a man."

"Thank you for the compliment. However, I had a kid and no intention to remarry."

Sho turned his face away towards the moon light. "Sorry."

"Think nothing of it. I'm used to it." Nothing to do, might as well entertain himself with more angst. "So young man, what's your life like in your story?"

"I'd say it started off as boring. There were so many things to try but I had no chance. Staying at home and taking care of the family was more important. That was until my sister and friend were killed."

"My condolences. Is that the reason that brought you here?"

Sho nodded, squeezing the staff on his lap. "Yuya Mirokuji. Unforgivable."

Ah, the purple haired man. He never liked the man's cocky nature. "Revenge is a strong motivator."

Sho's eyes lit up. "Are you saying its wrong?"

"I wouldn't say it is. We humans are fickle in the bigger picture of things. We may desire one thing in one moment and another seconds after. I'm not one to care for it."

"You've been through a lot."

Blitz huffed at the dying cigarette. "Yes." A silence pause between the two. "Our lives will be different. We enjoy different things and endure unique pains in our lives. In the big picture, it means nothing and we should just try to get it anyway."

Sho cracked a laugh. "Now that's something I can live with. Why don't I give that a try?" Blitz tossed him the pack and lighter. Lighting up a cigarette, Sho took a deep breath before falling into a coughing fit. "This tastes horrible."

"It's a refined taste."

Selesia landed at the open field of grass. Several trees in the area with sheds in a neat row at the end. Archer confirmed nobody was seen around the area at the time. She called out to a long lost partner. "Charon, I know you're here somewhere. Come out please, let us talk it out."

"Here I am Selesia." Charon appeared from behind a tree. "If you're here, that means the others know about this place too." She said nothing. A frown grew on his face. "Have you made your mind? Will you join me Selesia?"

The hardest part of the problem. "I, I honestly don't have an answer."

"Earth-Melia needs our help. You know this. Our people are suffering everyday." Charon clasped his hand tight. "Just as entertainment for these Gods. How can we leave them to do such travesty?"

"It's not right Charon. We can't put this world at risk for the sake of ours."

Charon stepped closer towards her. "How are we putting this world at risk to fix ours? Tell me Selesia."

"Our world doesn't exist in the real world."
"That doesn't mean that our lives didn't matter, that our emotions aren't real. That everything we've suffered and endured didn't exist. Isn't that right, Selesia?" She could not answer him. "I've thought so."

"You can't do this Charon. Despite the misgivings of our world, we can't sacrifice one world for ours, especially when it is the world that created ours. Think of how many countless other worlds would be affected by that."

"Nobody is going to stop me from trying to save our world. Even, if it is you, Selesia."

"Don't, Charon. Please." It hurt her to say those words.

"Selesia." Her friend took a deep breath. "I'm sorry." He looked up towards the building behind her. "The rest of you are out there, you can come out now."

Siegfried appeared out of spirit form. He raised the sword to proper form. "My name is Saber. I will be your opponent."

Sharp whistles before cloud of arrows dived from above. Charon sprinted and dived behind the tree. Arrows spliced through before being parried by a sword. The man glared. "A surprise attack. You are a truly dishonourable enemy."

Siegfried said over his shoulder. "Very well. Archer, cease your attack. I will face him the proper way." The response were another barrage of arrows.

Charon zigged zagged as the arrows tore the tree to splinters. He leapt into a shed before arrows penetrated it through the roof. Vogelchevalier burst through the front, shredding the wooden cage apart. Charon's Vogelchevalier stood at full height, its black skin made it difficult to see in the night barring the red streaks of light along its joints.

It raised the arm mounted gun and blasted the next wave apart with large calibre bullets. Seventeen metre tall war machine unfolded two swords and pointed one at Siegfried. "You are a swordsman but you dare to fight against a Vogelchevalier."

Siegfried raised his sword. "A warrior fears no metal contraption. It is the warrior's soul that carries meaning in battle." Flash of light before blades met. Wow, I barely noticed.

Tremors along her limbs as the blow turned explosive. Their blades held in place. A man far too small against the machine. Charon's voice was muffled behind the speakers. "You are strong. I'm sorry for underestimating you." Charon stepped back before throwing a large swing.

Selesia leapt back by reflex to avoid the swinging blow. It was held in place by Siegfried before a war cry pushed the sword back. A flash of blue before diving under Charon's feet. A twist of the blade protected his ankles from the Heroic Spirit. A step back from the titan before a fist into the ground.

Siegfried was already in the air, their blows meeting in big sparks of light. Blue light dived for the ground before turning around. Charon spun on a feet, sweeping the other in bid to kick Siegfried.

Red cloud struck onto Charon's back, exploding and pushing the machine down off dropped into a roll before swinging at the Saber diving from above. The soft soil buckled under the impact. Momentum depleted, Charon pushed back, sending Siegfried across the grass.

Archer's voice called out onto the radio nestled in her ear. "Do not waste time Siegfried."
"Do not interfere Archer. This is our battle."

"Your honour is not of my concern."

"Pathethic." Selesia hissed. There was supposed to be a sense of chivalry in a duel. A proper fight between men. Even she understood that.

"Victory is what matters. Honour means nothing when reality is destroyed from it."

Charon raised his sword and lashed it across the ground. "Make up your mind who will be doing the fighting. Forget it, I'll take you both on."

Siegfried said. "You are outnumbered. Surrender and we won't kill you."

Vogelchevalier took a few steps to the side. "Come on, did you think a hero would give up so easily against the enemies he face?"

The knight made a small bow. "Right, I was mistaken."

"To hear such a thing from a man wielding such strength, what kind of person are you?"

Siegfried raised his sword. "One that serves the people."

Selesia spotted another wave of arrows. She lunged into the air, a draw from her blade sliced them into half. A scowl grew from Archer's voice. "I'd expected more of you."

"That is my question to you." Selesia sheathed her sword upon landing. Turning back to her old friend, she said. "Charon, you won't win this fight. Please, leave."

Vogelchevalier paused. The glowing blue eyes stared at her own. "Fine. Consider it your win. I will leave our God here." The machine raised a hand, pointing to the shed on the far right. "He's inside there." Powerful engines ignited, lifting Charon into the air.

Selesia turned towards the small silhouette of the building where the Guardian was watching from. "Archer, do not think of shooting him down. I know you want to." A warning.

The machine laughed. "You are surrounded by optimists." Vogelchevalier raised a hand. "Selesia, I hope for your answer." Turning around, it vanished behind the mountain.

Siegfried rushed towards the shed. A fist through the door before the Heroic Spirit was through. Too far for her eyes but his voice remained clear. "Matsubara's alright."

Archer hissed. "You removed us of victory."

"This is no victory. Only a rescue." Selesia saw the white shirt her Creator was fond of wearing.

"We'll talk this out later." She pulled the earpiece out of her ear. For now, Matsubara in safe hands is good enough. The fields parted as she sprinted towards her God. Matsubara wasn't in bad shape but his eyes were weary. He gave a faint smile as Selesia felt audio on her earpiece, putting it back on.

Major Magaki's voice came on the radio. "Team, we have a problem and need you back immediately."

Archer answered the soldier. "What kind of problem?"

"The others are under attack."
Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Charon, charon, charon. Another point that I've found missing. The original owners wanted to put it as a surprise twist in the end. Alas I find it contradicting. A man tired from war and want it to end. Similar reason like Alicetaria yet far too passive given how early in the six months he appeared.

In my opinion, I felt that Selesia's conflict had been put a little too lightly. Their bond taken for granted a little too weak. I understood the constraints due to the episode count they had.

Sho Hakua likewise had been put too basic as it is as well. Placed in sort to just make a filler fighter for the final battle. Granted, they had placed too many characters to get a good focus and arcs.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Yuya Mirokuji's feet clacked along the dark silent road. Ever since Selesia's boyfriend managed to kidnap their God, someone needed to keep the Gods safe. The old woman had arranged for bodyguards but it was agreed that one of the heroes need to be around in case anything happened. Yuya and Rui had the worst stroke of luck to be stuck on the job. I should be the one out there kicking ass.

Sitting inside the apartment room was boring. Gods were having naps, exhausted from their work. Bodyguards didn't want to play cards with him. What's a man like him who lived on excitement got to do? Maybe a smoke would do some good. A finger reached into the pack to find it nearly crumpled. One stick left, that won't do. He ought to get a new pack. Perhaps some beer in the process, two birds in one stone.

The nearest store would be across the block. Hangaku was back in hand. There wasn't anything he can't handle. He was Yuya Mirokuji, the Last Boss. The title given by God are never downplayed. Reading about your life in paper was refreshing though. It's like keeping your own diary and you don't even need to put effort into it. He didn't bother to read up on the other stuff that didn't involve him, invasion of privacy after all. He may be an antagonist but that kind of stuff isn't his deal especially when a lot of it related to Sho. Yuya missed him.

Yuya popped a stick into his mouth as the vending machine responded to his cues. A silver can dropped into the bin for collection. Finally, some Asahi and it'll be good. Maybe he ought to catch up on the next chapter to where he was supposed to appear. It might be fun to see what others have thought about it.

Yuya didn't get the chance to light the cig. "Yo. I heard you've been doing very well." A familiar voice in his ear. That shouldn't be here. He whipped over his shoulder to see the very suspicions vindicated

Yuya spread his arms wide. "Sho? To think you got here and didn't find me all this time. How long have you been here?" His friend, was finally here.

Sho reached for the trio of red metal sticks at his waist. "I finally caught up to you." Flicking them locked the parts into an extended staff. "Time for you to die."

Battle instincts pulled him away from the swipe for his skull. Yuya grabbed his sword and parried the next blow. "Oi, oi. What the hell?"

Sho continued to attack without answer. Yuya stepped back as the strike crumpled the sides of the vending machine. "Can you spare a moment to listen to me?" Sword met staff, holding each other in place. "Seriously, can you just listen to me?"

"If you're willing to offer your life, then sure, I'll listen to you in your dying breath."

Yuya ground his jaw. "That's a rough way to go about it." Warning signs rang in his head. Reflective plastic panels on the machine glinted red. He backed away as his opponent said.
"Bayard." Red spikes shot out from the sheen. Most of it caught out of range, several others in a grouped cluster for him.

"Hangaku." His partner appeared, blocking off the remainder. The spikes disappeared as Hangaku stood guard. He turned back towards Sho. "What if I told you that what you've learnt so far is a lie?"

"No way in hell." Spikes shot from the side, drawing Hangaku's attention. Yuya kept steady as Sho charged forward. Their weapons met into deadlock. "You're just going to lie, just like that other day."

"That wasn't my fault. How long have you been here anyway?" No answer. "If you're not going to listen from me, then who will be answering the questions you have? About why everything happened and et cetera."

"I don't need answers. All I need is your dead body."

"That's totally not happening." Yuya shook his head, shoving back to build distance between them. Bayard revealed itself on a charge right for him. The red armoured centaur carrying the lance. Hangaku interjected in between, meeting the charge head on.

Yuya stepped aside to avoid the flying masses of astrals shooting past. "That hotheadedness of yours, now it's annoying." Yuya glanced around, tapping the speed dial on the phone in his pocket. "If you'd just listen to me and hold still, I can bring our God over here to clear things out. Right here, right now."

Sho shook his head before spinning the staff in a twirl. "Sorry Yuya. I can't let you do that. You'd bring all your friends here after all. It'd be that obvious." Sword met staff before Sho split the weapon into three pieces. Yuya stepped back as he weaved parries against the rain of the nunchaku from all directions.

"You're really letting your anger drive you all the way up the wall."

"Revenge is the only thing I have left, after everything you've done."

Yuya narrowed his eyes. "What, did, I, do?" The answer was renewed fury. Hard pressed, the final boss stepped back for wiggle room as the red astral vanished from Hangaku's shared perception.

"Bayard." From above.

"Hangaku." Both Astrals met, shattering the lamp post above into sparks as the street turned a shade darker.

Sho glanced overhead before clicking his tongue. "Your friends come to rescue you." Bayard vanished as Sho pointed the staff towards Yuya. "Prepare yourself Yuya. The Reaper will come and reap what it sowed." A leap before disappearing behind the corner.

Yuya didn't bother to pursue as fabric flapped behind him. She landed in front of him in a red flashy dress. "Hoshikawa? What the hell are you wearing?"

Hoshikawa turned around, trying to flatten down the hems of her dress. "It's totally not my thing!" Those clothes are totally something worth looking at. Her face were just as matching to her garb. *Quite a cutie if it wasn't for bad timing.*

Shaking misleading thoughts aside, Yuya went back to the problem. "Are the Gods safe?"
Kanoya answered from behind. "Safe for the time being. Meteora's checking to be sure no one else is nearby. You guys made quite a racket." Kanoya in his pilot jumpsuit dropped down onto the pavement. "So, who's that?"

Yuya clicked his tongue. "Someone who was supposed to be my friend. To think he'd actually be here and raising more questions than I can answer."

Yuya bashed the door aside. Eyes turned towards him but it didn't matter. His god, Yatoji was standing by the table in the living room, getting a cup of coffee. Yuya stepped next to him before jabbing a finger into the man's gut. "You, tell me what's going on."

God's eyes widened with an open mouth as the jab nearly sent him sprawling. Matsubara stepped up beside him. "Woah, calm down. What's going on?"

Yuya kept his glance on Yatoji. "I knew the redheads were after me. But, why, is, Sho, after, me?"

The other Gods blinked. Nakanogane said as they begun to realise the topic. "Didn't you read your story?"

"Me? No way. That'd make things boring if you know exactly what'd happened."

"Then how did you know you were the last boss?" Matsubara asked.

"Didn't have a choice on that part when signboards are marketing the very fact."

Yatoji raised a brow. "That's your problem then. All the reasons are already there."

Hangaku appeared and lifted the man. Yuya stared eye to eye with the man. "I want to hear everything from the horse's mouth. So are you going to tell me the answer or do I need to break a few bones in the process?"

Gai Takarada answered from the table to his right. "Sho Hakua, the main character of your story is finding you for revenge."

Yuya snapped his neck towards Alicetaria's God. "Revenge? What about that? I didn't do nothing."

"Yeah. The story goes that you were a murderer of his precious friends."

Yatoji nodded before pointing towards him. "You are technically the antagonist. In fact that's the entire premise of the story. Hence, the Last boss."

Yuya shook his head. "Oi, oi. This is not funny. What kind of joke are you pulling off?" His best friend is now on a quest to kill him? Their eyes did not betray them. "That sounds like me being framed." Yuya felt his voice turn like gravel. "I'm not taking that kind of stuff lightly."

"Despite how much you may think about it, it is what it is. Trying to deny it will not help the situation," Suruga said.

Yuya clicked his tongue before stepping away. "To think that he was after me for some fun. What a waste."

Matsubara turned towards his colleague. "Yatoji, what kind of relationship are they supposed to have eventually?"

"That's for me to know." Yatoji's eyes remained unmoving. The man shifted his shoulders before
answering. "It's part of the later arc of the plot where the real villain was revealed."

Yuya perked up. "Real villain? Now that's something I'd like to hear."

Meteora strode out into the room and asked. "Can we put this information to good use like putting it into the story?"

Yatoji rubbed his chin. "No. Its not meant to be out for at least another eight volumes yet. That would be far too early."

"How long is this eight volumes?"

"Give or take about six months."

Tough luck for Sho to be hunting him for a long time. Even if the guy's up to kill him, no way in Hell Yuya is going to kick the bucket without a fight.

Matsubara rubbed his chin. "You're right. Changing the information now doesn't mean that he would know about it. I believe the current Selesia was based on the animation adaptation. It'll be the same case for Kanoya, they won't know what happened up to the latest arc of the novels."

"The answer's simple." Yuya gave a pat on Yatoji's shoulder. "Whenever he comes around, I'll get this guy to spill the beans."

"I have a feeling things wouldn't be that easy." Matsubara shook his head.

"Nevertheless, it's the best solution. Going around the bush would only lead to more misunderstandings. I have enough of those spinning about now," Yuya said.

"Mirokuji has a point. There is no point in trying to subvert the problem using indirect means. However we must ensure that they aren't interrupted during that point of time," Suruga suggested.

Yatoji murmured silent words before nodding. "That could work."

Matsubara gave a thumbs up. "We'll do our part to get him on our side." The others were on similar note.

"Thanks. Drinks will be on me when we show him the truth." I can finally have my friend together in this world. It's been far, far too long.

"I have to get the orders checked out."

Emiya watched the computer establishing the data transfer while saying. "Right. Any good news Major?"

"Good news, we're getting better at finding Altair's men. Bad, is that we're getting our asses pounded just as fast."

Emiya grabbed a cup of tea. "How bad?"

"Four teams down. Thankfully, not killed but out of the fight."

His lips still felt dry. "Fortunate to survive. Who have you been fighting against?"

Display screens flickered from the updates. Just as the Major said, things were bad. Half of the
available strike teams were incapacitated. Three quarters of the drones were wiped out. While more powerful assets remained available, they weren't to be used bluntly.

"Mostly Blitz, somehow he's caught always at the weirdest moments. The knight princess was an occasion but she usually slips away faster than we can call you guys in. We stayed away from the rest as advised."

And nothing to show for. Emiya didn't like the process. Twenty seconds to get the call in. Five minutes afterwards to reach the battlefield before the prey escaped. Overtly optimistic estimation. Siegfried and he were the fastest of the group but they always had warning somehow. This in spite of using Meteora's experimental spells to cloak the drones.

While Emiya could support the fight from long range, there wasn't an effective way to keep Blitz from just making a blitz for it. That included showing the entire city of Tokyo a red cloud light show. Bad for government health.

"Any signs of the Mecha pilot Charon?" Alter and Altair were too dangerous to be dealt with by the JSDF at present time.

"Whatever his machine is packing, it has good ECM tech. My operators can't differentiate between him and a flock of birds before he goes back to ground." Major's word probably have some truth to it. He'd gave a rough glance of the equipment before. Not anywhere close to a specialist but he learnt to get a general feel about them as part of assessing their threat towards his abilities.

Emiya filled a new cup of tea. "Likewise, my observation points hasn't picked up anything yet. Send me your data and I'll see to setup somewhere closer."

Scribbles through the phone call. "Got it. I'd let you know that Command isn't taking the results well so far." Wouldn't be far from the truth having suffered such losses.

"It is to be expected. Fighting insurgents are always troublesome." They weren't easy to get rid of even when cards were stacked in his favour. He'd count on benefitting from the secondary effects first than outright killing off Blitz or Alicetaria.

"Yeah, the Middle East are having a field day on that." This man understood. Asymmetrical warfare needed different approaches to handle them. "Likewise, police struggling to keep the public in order. Parliament demanding this problem to be solved two months ago, what's not to love?"

"End of the world."

A crack of laugh. "Not far from the truth." Major's voice lowered to a rumble. "Intelligence are also picking up interesting reports. We may not be the only nations involved."

Emiya didn't like the news. "Which countries are we talking about?"

"Biggest contenders. USA, Europe, China, Russia. Maybe more."

"That's a problem. How much of an impact are they having on the world?" How much of reality's destruction are related to Altair? How much otherwise? Possible recruitment options or more enemies to handle. What are their options to deal with them?

"Unsure. Intelligence is trying to get the actual meteorology reports from the respective nations but fast and discreet don't mix. All I'm hearing is hearsay from the various combat ops groups."

"We have our hands full as it is." He and Mirokuji would rotate out with Siegfried and Selesia
tomorrow. It limited his time here in this impromptu command chamber. "Although, keep me updated on that."

"I'd love to discuss it when I have the data. Same time tomorrow?"

"Let's shift tomorrow's check in to dawn." Best time to get the preliminary information out before patrolling in the field. Several more confirmations and the call was ended.

Emiya leaned back against the chair and watched the blinking displays. More questions had turned up mind, many of them bad.

Are these new Creations happening naturally or by Altair?

How many of these Creations are appearing by the day?

Who can be trusted and whom cannot?

How much time did they have left?

For all those other possible creations…

Who's commanding them?

---

Daichi stepped through the door, anime music entering his ears. A young maid greeted him as he glanced around and found his target. Waving her off, he walked over towards the table and took a seat. "Not making anymore trouble aren't you?"

Kazuko Minamori, laid back on the chair threw back a smile. "No bro, we're fine and squared away."

Daichi raised a brow. "Since when have you been working for us? This sounds too suspicious to begin with."

"I'm bored being stuck inside a cell so I made a deal." Kazuko lifted his wrist, revealing a tracker. "In retrospect, it may not be much but it beats being stuck in a cell."

"I see. So why are we here?"

Kazuko placed a flash drive onto the table across him. "For now, here's some news for you. I have managed to find some interesting facts that can be useful. The Director and Major already have a copy, this is for you."

Daichi pocketed the drive. "Thanks, I'll take a look at it later. What's it about?"

"Altair, nothing worth killing people for. I heard you're together with Shizuka now."

"Yeah. We're in a relationship." He scratched his cheek. Things have been rather interesting. She had put off with digging into the situation. In return though, some concessions had to be made.

Kazuko chuckled. "Speaking of which, you do look in much better shape."

Daichi lifted his arm. "I had a good teacher." Dodging attacks from a Heroic Spirit and enduring those that hit had rugged him out. Sink or swim situation forced onto him to survive.

Kazuko glanced around before saying. "I've heard what happened so far and it pains me to hear it. If
"only things would be much easier alas heroes always work something out despite any challenge."

"Yeah, slippery as eels. At the way things are going, it looks like it'll be Plan B after all."

"That means you'll need to be always vigilant. Is he here?"

"Saber's somewhere within reach." The hero was busy looking at some books across the street. "I hope that we can finish things before it comes to it. Once the festival begins, it'll be an all in effort."

"Hope is the leading road towards disappointment." Kazuko's eyes wandered deep into his thoughts. "A battle royale between heroes of different worlds for the world we live in. Sounds rather cliched but facts do not lie." He smiled. "We do so much but in the spite of it all, we depend on fictional characters to save us."

"That's right." Daichi shook his head. "If we told any of our friends, they'd make us a laughing stock."

Kazuko snorted. "This entire thing is complete nonsense, breaking rules of science by the dozens, cheesy with all its ideas. It shouldn't exist but its happening." He reached into his pocket before displaying the ticket. "Kikuchihara had sent me a ticket for the show. Are you going to watch the final fight?"

Daichi raised a brow. "How did you get this before I did?"

"Right place at the right time."

Daichi studied the ticket. Clearly a sample. Still, not bad. A simple diamond logo with the name, Elimination Chamber Festival printed on a blue band. "I don't know if I can watch it from a chair. Fate of the world after all."

Kazuko nodded. "The world will be watching, unaware of the stakes. That'll make all the players in the game excited for it. Unfortunately there's nothing we can do but watch the heroes decide the fate of our world."

"We'll see about that."

Daichi closed his eyes. System Start. Magic Circuit hummed as od flowed along the nerves and across the body. Guiding it along different parts of the body took days of dedicated practice before the next step. Reaching into the nooks and crannies, he guided it to take hold and form. Skin hardened, muscle stretched, bones condensed. Reinforcement complete. He was getting proficient at it. The positives he seen thus far had only been fewer bruises formed and flying into walls far less painful.

"Are you ready?" Siegfried's voice pulled his attention away from within. The Circuit quieted in response. They were at the Dojo. Afternoon was starting to set.

Daichi answered as he made a short hop, far exceeding expectations. "Tell me Siegfried, do I have a chance? Of actually helping more than just this?"

Siegfried approached him. A hard pat on the shoulder. "Everyone has a chance. As I once said, you have your role to play. Excel in it and it will be more than enough."

Daichi minded himself to keep the spell on. "My skills are still horrible in the big picture. These Circuits can barely give you enough. Time's clocking down before we have to fight in the
Elimination Chamber." The worry was choking into him. "Can we continue further practice later until tonight?"

Siegfried retrieved a boken to the rack. "Your worries are not unfounded. However, they are just that. Uncontrolled worries and fear that lead to ruin. Meantime, there is a time to prepare and to rest. Constantly pushing yourself will pay a price at the worst moment possible." Siegfried paused before adding. "Sorry Master. I have overstepped my bounds."

Daichi tried to dismiss the sting with a hand. "It's alright. It was a sensible thing to ask. You are far wiser than I am."

"I'm given the years to understand them. However, you have the benefits of knowledge in this world far greater than anyone in my time. Knowledge is a virtue and so are hierarchies that need to be respected."

"Hierarchies huh. Well, I do understand that our relationship by the Holy Grail is set as such." Daichi squeezed a fist close to his chest. "Even so, it wouldn't be such a fair thing. I'd prefer to think that we are partners."

Siegfried paused in thought. "Partners. I'd like that."

Daichi stretched his arms. "Meantime, I can't afford to let you or the others down. I am your weakest link Siegfried and I won't condemn you by getting myself killed by stupid mistakes."

"I understand that the risks for such things was high in the past. However now with the plans Archer and Meteora is implementing, it should be safe for you."

"Not yet. Not until the winning moment. Let's make sure of that." Daichi stood up. "Come let's begin. If we're fast enough, we might be able to join the others for dinner." Magic Circuits primed to his call, a slow cool rev of prana.

"Very well." Siegfried tossed a boken towards him. "Prepare yourself, partner."

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*What a sorry lot.* Blitz Talker stared at the group. The young boy was dozing off at the wall. The knight doing her own thing outside, a frequent occurrence. The other two, he didn't want a headache from them.

Robot guy was sitting on the new benches they've scavenged. Bits of comfort now and then. Cold red eyes staring off somewhere inside dreamland. "Hey." Blitz tossed a bottle of beer to the pilot. "Sitting alone isn't going to make things better."

Charon caught the bottle before opening it. "Thanks."

"You're at least someone who talks. The first guy's just staring at his own world or something. As for the other, I don't even dare getting close."

"Like a bear chained to a pole." Sho said from the other end of the room.

Charon turned towards the young man. "What's your reason to be in this world?"

"I'm looking for Yuya Mirokuji, the one who killed my sister and best friend. I will get him no matter what."

Blitz gave his. "Find my God. Have a nice talk. I've heard you wanted to change your world."
"That's right. I have to change it to save everyone before more people get hurt."

"A hero trying to save everyone? That's a bit far fetched isn't it?"

"Yeah. That's why I'm here old man. The Avalon Brigade had been pushing us hard into a full stalemate. People are dying while the war isn't ending." Charon raised a hand before his eyes and tightened it. "If there's a chance that Revision can change my world, I'm going to take it."

Blitz took a sip. "Why do you want to change your world? Even if the world is changed now, it might not matter in the future when you return."

"If that God turns things again for the worse, I'll just come back here and give him a piece of my mind."

"Assuming we can come back. Still, an optimistic mind goes a long way."

Sho hummed. "That's a shortcut way of fixing everything though."

Charon scowled in response. "It might sound dishonourable but do you think fighting is fun? When you see the destruction caused so far, it's not a game." A sigh. "I'm done with fighting."

Blitz tossed the empty bottle to the growing pile. "I can empathise with that. Your reasons are your to begin with. This world of Gods is the key for us to achieve it."

Charon paused before letting off a frustrated sigh. "You're right. Let's just work together with the Princess to make sure we get it."

A rumble in the background. Charon raised the question everyone hated. "Who's turn is it to deal with him?"

Sho leaned against the wall with a sigh. "Not me. I've already done it the last time. Man, that was a pain. That guy would've killed me if he wasn't chained up like that."

Charon stood up. "I need to perform some repairs before I can chip in."

Blitz shook his head and rose to his aching feet. "It's up to the old man again. How the youth have fallen."

Sho pointed at the other side of the building. "Why not ask the knight or the other guy? I mean he's doing nothing else but staring at the stars and mumbling prayers."

"I would love that. Include a jacuzzi with beer and I'm sold. However you don't mix two madmen together." Blitz waved as he walked out. "You two owe me a beer."

Emiya felt the branches crack under his boots. Deep inside the forests of Aikawa, there would be no distractions. Reaching an open plain guarded by groups of trees. He closed his eyes and felt the world surrounding him.

Trees waving their leaves in the winds. Insects crawling across the roots. Small nests for the swallows and the predators that seek them. There was no danger for there was a Guardian.

Emiya opened his eyes and summoned. Kanshou and Bakuya answered the call as he spun. Techniques born from years of battle came to life. Body moved like clockwork, refined across countless decades.
Invisible enemies died to each stroke. Slash and stabs that struck the air and scratch the ground. Each blow avoiding the boundary of trees that circled him.

_Spirit and technique, flawless and firm._

Kanshou and Bakuya OverEdged into their long reach, deflecting an imaginary arrow behind. Turning around, arms and leg spun, following the chords of the battle.

_I am the bone of my sword._

The archer dived into Unlimited Blade Works. Body continued to work as his mind searched through history. Standing atop the hill of swords, a vast abyss beneath the gears of the world.

Countless Noble Phantasms awaited him. Each carried the weight of their heroes and legends. Their manufacturing, excellence, history and techniques bound within to be used.

Emiya jumped, the twin blades fading away. Black Keys struck the shadows of the trees. _Steel is my body and fire is my blood._ The red spear of Cu Chulainn spun along his hands. A long sweep of Gae Bolg before more swords appeared in the air around him.

_I have created over a thousand blades._ Each weapon was projected in turn, brought form to life. More lined up to enter the firing chamber. Memories of their use came mind, those earned by others.

_Unknown to Death. Nor known to life._

They fired, digging deep into the soil. A barrage of swords as Emiya tossed the spear through the heart of the tree. The unfortunate tree snapped into half as new blades called for attention. Blades he could not recall seeing yet they are here.

Selecting the next contender, a white blade with red streaks. It unfolded along its side, unveiling true power beneath it. A slash of the sword, burning black streaks to create small fires. Emiya tossed the blade up, letting Clarent deliver its spark of rage into the sky.

_Have withstood pain to create many weapons._ Clarent faded as the Rapier of the White Knight filled his hands. A spin of the metal before stabbing it into the ground. Lily flowers burst from the ground before blooming in full. Experience from the Chevalier of France entered his Circuits, making the small slashes of a weapon unsuited onto a tree a work of art.

_Yet those hands will not hold anything._ A flip of the sword, vanishing in midair. Sleek elegance replaced by brute strength. Nine Lives, the hulking sword of a demigod filled his hand. A swing of the sword blasted winds within its wake. The lilies eased to a stop as the wind calmed down. Countless swords still waited within the hill of Blades. Each weapon stood ready to be used. Truly it was just as its namesake, a world of unlimited blades.

_So as I pray._ Emiya stopped. A gaze to the left, lowering the behemoth of stone. "Was it necessary for you to be here? Siegfried."

Servant Saber appeared from the astral realm. "I am here on my Masters orders. I will do nothing but ensure you have help if it comes to it."

Emiya dismissed his projections. "I don't need it."

Siegfried observed the scars along the ground. "Yes you do not. Just 'insurance' against the danger of this Altair. I understand that she is clairvoyant. That she can know exactly where we are and our actions."
"It doesn't matter that she knows this. We will beat her just the same."

"That I agree, Archer. Would you like to continue?"

Emiya turned towards the exit of the forest. "It's enough. I have what I need."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Now I managed to close off Kazuko. Originally, I wanted to include him and Shizuka as supporting characters but given reviews and likewise more retrospection, there wasn't much space to work with unless I want to add a lot more chapters to the story.

Emiya on his way towards the route of Gar. What lies ahead for him? A whole lot more.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Master, why are we here?

Just a hunch I'd like to check along the way. Daichi replied as he walked towards home. Everything ached after practice but it gave a good feeling. He felt muscles growing from the conditions of simulated combat. Nowhere near to have a chance competing against a Servant or Creation but a chance to flee and survive? Possible.

Something compelled him to deviate from the usual road home. A growing incomprehensible itch in the back of his mind. Things don't happen without a reason and pondering it over the train ride, this place was the first that came to mind.

Green evening smells of trees as Daichi returned. The Magical Girl Slayer Mamika and Princess Knight Alicetaria February. The girl's passing was a pity that he could not.

"Alicetaria." Said knight was sitting on the same bench, in the same dress he saw before. "How are you doing?"

Daichi felt the pressure from her gaze. "You speak to me as though we aren't enemies."

Pushing prana through the magic circuit helped steady against it. "I hope we aren't. Not in the moment. Others could get hurt."

"Master." Siegfried took physical form in armour behind him.

Gotz von Berlichingen formed around her arm. "I've heard of this Heroic Spirit concept and this is the first time I get to see it. You've grown."

Daichi raised a hand to stow Siegfried from making any unwarranted gestures. "I'm nothing compared to real heroes like you but I do what I can." Siegfried relented, dispersing his armour. Daichi could feel his focus watching the area around them.

The gauntlet vanished. "Now then. If you do not wish to fight, what do you want from me?"

"Talk. Parley with me Great Warrior Princess. Did that come out right though?"

Alicetaria chuckled. "Why do you wish to talk with me? I will not surrender if that is what you are hoping."

"I won't expect that from you." Daichi reached into his backpack and pulled out a box of chocolates. "Want some snacks?"

Alicetaria raised a brow before breaking into laughter. "Boy, you have an amusing train of thought. She patted on the side of the bench. Very well. Spirit, how shall I address you?"

Siegfried turned to Daichi who nodded. "Very well. My name is Saber. Worry not of my presence. I shall bring no harm unless provoked otherwise."
She nodded in approval. "Well met Saber, fellow warrior of the past. I, Princess Alicetaria February will hold you to it."

Daichi took a seat, opening the box of chocolates. "Honestly I wasn't expecting you to be here. Why?"

She received a piece offered by him. "A princess needs her quiet place."

"By any chance are you suggesting those guys make horrible room mates?"

A faint smile. "Think as you see fit." She took a bite of black chocolate. "I trust the sage is in good health."

"Yes, she's back to becoming a glutton. More competition for Archer's cooking. Are you by any chance still…"

"No. I know the truth."

Daichi offered a thermos of tea whom accepted. "I heard you released your Creator and that you'd-"

She raised a finger to her lips. "There shall not be a word spoken about it." He mulled at the response. Why not? This was the one opportunity they had to verify the plan. She said. "Again, think as you see fit." A glance to Siegfried drew nothing.

Move on. Wanting to talk but having no topic in mind. He rattled off the first thing that came to mind. "Bit too late for it but my condolences for Mamika." He never had much time to think about the Magical girl, pressed into training daily and trying to find ways to support Siegfried. Their relationship was barely much of anything beyond this connection

She turned towards a building in the distance. Vague shapes of Mamika's advertisement was plastered on a sign board. "Thank you but I do not deserve them."

Mamika's death reminded him of that day. A time where he had been put into such weakness. A squeezing grip to his guilt. Pains of failure. Daichi slumped onto the chair and tried to sighed it away. "I'm starting to understand what you mean. About feeling betrayed and everything."

"Unfortunate for a young one like you to feel such emotions."

"Inevitable, just a matter of when." Daichi leaned back against the seat. Orange glow intermeshed between the shroud of leaves above.

"Careful. Stray not too far or you would drop into the same pitfalls that others have dug into." He glanced at her as she added. "I may be a warrior princess but that does not delude me from the subtleties of court."

"A warrior princess that kicks monster butts that leads. You'd be a great leader eventually."

Alicetaria's expressions faded. "Not yet. That respect is to be earned. I shall return home and continue my journey. For such is my duty to my people and perhaps, Mamika's sake."

"Even though that's Hell you're walking back into."

She turned towards Siegfried. "Saber, what do you see in this world?"

Siegfried paused before answering. "A place that is worth protecting. Reality may prove to be a harsh teacher but it serves to make us stronger through adversity." He gained a nod of approval.
"Learn well from Saber. There are many lessons he can teach you."

"You grant me too much favour."

"I'd favour drinking with you but alas circumstances separates us. Not to mention the boy is too young." Siegfried gave a faint smile in response.

"Sorry to be a little too young for your adult conversations." Daichi felt a shiver down the spine. A glance to the clock told him the answer. "Ah, sorry but I have to wrap this up or my girlfriend would kill me."

Alicetaria stood up with a sly grin. "Go boy. Else Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." A quick bow and he left. He never saw her at the park ever again in the coming times. Not that there was much time left.

Emiya clicked his tongue. Everything wasn't going to plan. Reports displayed on the screen have been dismal. Altair's teams had disappeared off the grid. No signs or traces of their movements for the past few days. Only given good grace was that the JSDF weren't losing drones and narrowed the area. However, that meant their response times were only growing larger.

Barring to mention the notice from the Major about the reports overseas. The data collected thus far led towards a growing pit of trouble. Multiple spikes in meteorology charts had been identified within different locations across the world at different times. At least six other unaccounted Creations had appeared with timeline suggesting new arrivals every other week. A risk far too dangerous to be left alone.

Occurring events were odd and crawled under his skin. An odd case for there were no hints in the news. Not on public media or the Internet. Reports available were limited and there was a possibility. An undesirable probability that there is more to what they knew.

The stack of questions continued to grow with no answer in sight. How many other places were affected? How many had already arrived thus far? Beyond the rule of being popular, what were other criteria that can influence the potential pool of Creations? The most dangerous question hung on the corner of his thoughts.

*Whose side are they on?*

GAIA had nothing useful. The other ones beyond this world hadn't communicated. He'd pry nothing from Altair's cold dead hands albeit it would been a humorous idea.

Emiya couldn't let these results be. They demanded a significant plan of action. One he'd like to take but would find opposition behind every corner.

Chime by the door. A press on the keyboard activated the automatic shutdown before locking the door. Emiya opened the door to see the sage in a casual dress. "What brings you here?"

She raised. "There are some matters I would like to discuss."

Emiya gestured to enter. He flicked on a rune beside the door, activating a silencing boundary field. "Let's be quick."

"I've been looking into the information that you've given about the possible other creations in the world. Regretfully I am unable to ascertain any new details."
Emiya turned on a kettle. "I see. Likewise, no new updates from JSDF."

Meteora took a seat at the dining table. "I find it dismaying for this development to occur. The Book of a Thousand Miles should be able to detect up these changes in the reality."

A soft hiss as he turned to ask. "Is it a limitation problem or something else?" Meteora had no answer. "Nevertheless, I haven't detected the same fluctuations. There may be other causes than the ones we know."

"One possibility would be from the increased frequency of collisions between worlds as the threads that weave reality is weakening. A gentle slip instead of a forced summoning, making the readings subtle. An alternative theory would be due to Altair's machinations as a strategy to create chaos beyond our ability to control them."

Two cups were fished from the tray as the kettle clicked. Emiya took a deep breath. "I assumed the later just as much."

"Neither do I. Given that these creations are in countries abroad, our hand in controlling the situation is growing weaker. Do you have a suggestion on how we can contain them?"

Emiya grabbed a tin of tea from a cabinet. "We don't have the luxury. Since Altair is the source of the collisions, taking her out remains priority. Everything else should fall in line afterwards. Trying to expand the conflict would only open up new fronts and for that strain us of far more resources than we have right now." Emiya didn't know if that was the right choice but it made the most sense for the moment.

The red archer began his trade, silencing conversation. These moments were precious for they are only when he could turn his mind away from constant danger and worry. A time to cool down and relax. Nothing paid mind besides making the perfect tea. Making tea was simple but to perfect the blend needed mastery.

A brief minute led to hot Earl Grey tea on the table. Meteora blew at the tea before taking a sip. "It would be good to have some snacks."

"Don't count on it." A beep and vibration in in his pocket. Emiya pulled out the pager and read the number. Meteora asked. "What is it?"

Emiya narrowed his eyes. "A major problem." Three steps took him to the control room and pick up the phone that started to ring. "What's the situation?"

Major Magaki's voice was tense. "Gigas Machina has made an emergency launch."

Emiya swapped to speaker mode, a hand reaching for the cupboard. "Keep going."

"Cause is unknown. Logs report the launch four minutes ago. Rui Kanoya was supposed to be in Koenji."

Emiya slipped the red cloak over the armour. "Who else is enroute?"

"Selesia and Saber is on the way in fifteen. Tokyo Control Centre is working to clear airspace as we speak."

He clicked the boots into place. "I have Meteora with me. We'll be there in ten." Call ended, he flicked the systems back and strode for the door. Meteora had already swapped to her robes. With a nod, they were out the door and leaping into the sky.
"You really need to work your game. That's really a whiny bunch at the beginning." Yuya said towards his fellow Creation.

"Hehe." Rui clasped fingers behind his head. "Man, feels weird to be watching my own movie." It was a curious thought that came to mind. Living in the world where they were sort of celebrities while not so had its interesting motions. Walking along the sidewalks right now didn't call to attention from the public but the ads about them were strewn everywhere.

If he wore different than his regular getup, Yuya surmised he'd get away and stay under the radar. Likewise for the little munchkin walking alongside.

"Never thought I'd change so much in that span of time." Rui said. "When is yours coming out?"

"Not interested in having my own movie." Yuya reached for a cigarette before noticing the glowing no smoking sign by the brightly lit bus stop. He sighed and flicked it back to its pocket. Rules in this world were far different from their own worlds. It took some dedicated effort to get used to them.

"Why not? I can imagine it'd be a great movie. You get to show your cool moves after all."

"Just got a bad feeling about it." Motivated by a good friend out to kill him, Yuya had taken initiative to read his own source material. What transpired is enough seeing once.

"Not like it's anything private after all." Rui dropped the topic and they continued to walk for the train station. The biggest portion of the rush hour should be cleared by then.

Yuya pointed towards one of the dresses propped for display at a clothing store. "Think the girls would like one of these?"

Rui leaned towards the window. "Nah, you're thinking too far ahead Bro. What's with that kind of idea?"

Yuya scratched his chin. "Well, just thought would be something nice for Metchin." A bribe so that he could tease her even more. How he'd like to break the girl's stoic facade.

Rui squinted, standing on his tip toes to scrutinise. "Sounds very wrong there, very very wrong…are you the real Yuya?"

Yuya backed away, waving a hand. "Oi, oi. Don't play those kind of jokes on…" That tingling sensation down the spine. Cold grew from the pits of his stomach. A slight ring in the ear. Everything was screaming to him. Why? He shoved his junior down to the ground. "Get down!"

Glass behind them shattered before the gunshot caught up. Fragments scattered as several more shots followed up. Yuya grabbed Kanoya and rolled him behind a car.

"Who was that?" Rui asked as he got to his feet. Screams of panic as crowds erupted into a stampede. Sharp invisible whips cracked against the ear.

"No idea. How the hell did they find us?" Yuya leaned over the fender before ducking back. Shrapnel scratched a line on his cheek, there's hell to pay for that.

Rui tapped a few commands on his wrist computer. "Gigas Machina is coming. Just need some time."

Yuya summoned his sword. "Get away from here until then. I'll hold out against them." Gunfire
stopped followed by a clack of shoes landing onto the street.

Yuya didn't have to guess. Sho stood before him, staff ready at hand. "It's time for round two, Yuya."

Hangaku appeared at his back. Yuya clicked his tongue, standing away from the car. "So you're on Altair's side. I was really hoping you were on your own."

The street was cleared of people now. At least, nobody else would be hurt. He squeezed his sword tight. One more try. "Sho. Let's talk this through."

A man's silhouette emerged from the roof. Yuya recognised the man as Alter. Rui pointed. "You're the other copy."

"Try your petty tricks as many times as you like Yuya. I'm not going to forget. Never ever." Yuya couldn't say further when Sho dived in with a spinning staff.

Weapons met as he held them in place. Perhaps if he can hold Sho here. A bullet whizzed by, striking far too close for comfort. Didn't that man ever had a concept of friendly fire?

Sho didn't have the same compunctions. His eyes were filled with the one essence he hated to see the most. Fatalistic determination.

Rui jumped to his feet, waving at Alter. "Hey you, come get me!" Yuya clicked his tongue as Alter leapt in a chase. Not good. That stupid kid should had just stayed still.

The lapse of attention caught him a blow to the face. Numbness spread across his chin. Yuya blocked the staff from hitting any further before stepping closer. A fist slammed retribution into Sho's gut and tossed him back onto the ground. "Stay down already."

Sho stood up before wiping his cheek of spittle. A flick of the staff before charging in. Yuya met it head on, keen on buying time. As long there weren't anybody else, he can hold Sho in place all day. Someone ought to be coming from this mess after all. Question was how he's going to catch up to the munchkin.

A tingle down the spine before he summoned. Hangaku emerged, parrying the spears coming for his back. Sho took the moment to push past his guard and swung.

Yuya stepped back, the staff clipping his jacket but nothing else. Sho pushed his advantage. "Stay still." Yuya stepped back, jumping around to avoid the longer reach of the staff.

Not looking good. Ground beneath rumbled. Big mecha man arrived. Good. Now just have to focus on the guy in front. "Sho, it's time you listen. Seriously."

Enough defence. Yuya shot forward, pushing everything into his attacks. Beating the shit out of him wasn't nice but it'll force Sho to listen to him when he's down like a sack of potatoes.

Sho was surprised from the initial flurry. He said, a step out of reach. "That's really more like it." Not a chance, smashing the staff aside. Yuya's fist roared thrice into Sho's chest before an upper cut.

Sho recovered in midair, gasping for breath. Yuya summoned for its bound to come.

Hangaku!

Bayard!
Both spirits struck a charge and clashed. Fury of their masters reflected by their blows. A second rumble as a building or something cracked and crumbled. *Hang in there.*

Alter appeared behind a wall. "Acolyte, it is time to go."

A scream of missiles shot towards the gunman. A pause before raising his weapon and firing back. Each missile was deflected into the ground, gouging holes along the road and scattering metallic fragments everywhere. Glass shattered as walls of metal peppered with scars.

Meteora hovered in the air, several of those army weapons at her beck and call. Odd to find her on the front line again.

Sho's face was filled with anger. "Not again, Alter. We either win or die trying."

Alter remained composed. "Die trying is tomfoolery. It is pointless to die in vain even if you try all you like."

That dose of sense must have slammed hard to ground Sho's teeth together. "Fine." Sho slammed his staff onto the ground. "Yuya, we'll be in touch. The next time, it'll be my victory."

"Don't think you can get away from this mess." Yuya shot forward before a bullet striking the asphalt stopped him.

Alter smiled. "You're welcome to follow. And also to die."

Yuya wanted to slam his fist into the man's smug face. Seriously, that man deserved at least a dozen of them. He bit his lip and stood his ground.

Meteora landed beside him. He said as the two leapt to the roof and out of sight. "Good timing you have Metchin."

"Don't. Are you injured?"

"Nothing worth bothering. They have some guts to go out in the open like this."

"Your friend appears to be rather angry at that. Is he going to be alright?"

"Sho will sulk a little but he'll be right as rain after." He glanced around at the devastation. "This'll be a mess." People were bound to notice and covering it up is going to expensive.

"Ms. Kikuchihara will not be pleased." Meteora agreed with his assessment. Did she by any chance shiver? She asked. "Where's Kanoya?"

"Uh oh."

Rui Kanoya dived and rolled across the road. Bullets shattered the glass above him. Rui spun and dived through the broken window into a cafe. Gunfire followed after, scattering white shards. Rui grunted before skidding under a table. A quick grip toppled the table over, shielding him from the worst bits of glass. He leapt over the counter as the table was shredded by a hail of metal.

Under cover, the pilot gave a few commands onto his wrist.

**SYSTEM BOOTUP COMPLETE**

**ACTIVATING MACHINA RECALL**
The text finished scrolling across the wrist. *That'll take a while.* Rui had managed to draw this Alter away from the other fight. That guy had the advantage for now but once he's encased in tons of armour, nothing would stop him.

Loud roars of gunfire peppered along the room. *Doesn't that guy ever run out of ammo?* Wood cracked as bullets shot through the thick panels. Rui sprinted for the back. Kicking open the back door, he entered down an alley.

The alley had no clear exit to the main street. Probably somewhere a few turns away. Slamming the door behind him, he continued to a sprint. All he needed is time.

The hero's sense warned. *Above.* Rui jumped aside, feeling a glancing pain along the arm. The suit activated, sealing the wound and disinfecting it from the shrapnel. His feet kept running along the clear corridors. Turning around to see his pursuer would've slowed him down for his own detriment. If only he had a weapon to keep the man at bay.

Frustration grated his lips. There had to be an exit somewhere. The few turns around the area had just extended his trip inside this maze. Tokyo isn't like Energia with its hive of turns and corners but this is ridiculous.

Taking a hard right, he skidded to a stop. A flat plain crusted wall, far too tall to try climbing over it. A dead end without anything else in sight. Rui turned back the other way. Can he double back in time? The footsteps was thumping over towards him. The man would probably catch him by the entrance.

Rui steeled himself for the moment. Just a little more.

The assailant turned around, gun raised. Seeing Rui trapped by the wall, he lowered the weapon, slightly. "Your resistance as proven here is futile."

Rui looked for openings. The dark skinned man gave none, keeping a respectable distance, finger on the trigger. Running towards the man would result a bullet in the head. "It's not the end. As long as I still breathe, I will continue to fight."

"You are human without your cage of steel. A man with fire but alas all is nought for it is the end of the line." Alter raised the gun. "I pray for you to rest in peace."

Rui cracked a grin. "I pray for you too. Because things are about to become exciting." A familiar whine above.

Fist of metal struck from the heavens, rumbling the ground like an earthquake. The bullet was blocked from striking its owner. Rui leapt forward into the grip of the hand before being lifted up into its head.

Sliding into the cockpit, he linked himself to the Machina. "Now it's the real time to play."
Alter raised a brow as he lifted his head to face Rui eye to eye. A hand twice his size reached into the alley, crunching into the concrete.

Rui grunted as his hands continued to swat at Alter. The black man vanished at speeds far greater than his. *Predict, not react.*

Careful and methodical Alter aimed the gun towards him. Right at the cockpit. Surely a bullet like that isn't going to penetrate right through.

*So as I pray …*

Everything warned him. Rui threw a fist to stop Alter before he finished it.

*Unlimited Lost Works*

A white flash before everything went to Hell. The last thing he knew was alarms, the fiery pains everywhere and the screams from his mouth.

Masaki twiddled his fingers as they waited. Selesia had left through the balcony in a hurry. All she said was something bad happened and to wait it out while Hoshikawa comes back.

"Wonder what's going on right now." Matsubara paced across the room. "Now I won't be able to get a good night's sleep." He leaned towards the other two. "I'm surprised your muse is running well."

Suruga kept her eyes on paper. "It helps to ignore the anxiety."

Matsubara pulled the blinds of the balcony open. The streets downstairs were awfully quiet. "I need a drink. Think the guards would let me go buy some?"

"Doubt. They're scared you get kidnapped again." His fellow compatriot winced.

Masaki swirled a cup of tea before downing it. Staying around like this for a week had been tough despite the large space in the apartment. Maybe he ought to look at the notes for any plot holes to fix.

Loud echoes thumped behind the wall. Not going to happen. Masaki propped the paper down and sighed. "Who's making a racket at this time of the night." Sure it wasn't that late but its courtesy to keep the noise down. No form of privacy despite the original lack in the first place.

Suruga turned at the wall, a frown growing on her face. "Is it what I think it is?"

Yatoji stood up in a flash. "We need to go."

What is the man going on about? Masaki asked. "Go? Where to?"

Yatoji turned for the door. "Anywhere but here." He placed a hand on the handle when the echoes stopped. "I think, we're too late."

Silence befell into the room. A pair of heavy footfalls clacked behind the thin walls.

Yatoji backed away. The footsteps stopped. Following sharp crack hurt. His hands couldn't blot the invisible noise from spearing his ears. Flakes of wood splintered as the door lock shattered. Resumed silence before the door creaked open.

Masaki was glad his ears could still hear. Heart thumped as they waited. Something red was on the floor outside.
Blood.

When he did, it was casual as though home from a long day of work. Suruga's creation was tall. Matsubara stared up at the man. "Blitz Talker." The elder man's hard gaze and tall height was imposing to witness.

"Five agonising months, I am finally where I should be."

Matsubara's lips were quaking. "Are you here to kill us all?" Could they fight against him? Four against one in confined space. Black death in the man's hand was dangerous. One hit was all it needed.

"The rest of you can get out." He pointed the gun at Suruga. "My business is with her."

Suruga chuckled as she stood up. "Creation finding the Creator. Isn't this supposed to be an interesting reunion?"

"I have little faith in your time. Go, you don't want to see an unsightly result."

Nobody moved. Something held his feet down. Was it fear? That Blitz wasn't telling the truth? He didn't know.

Matsubara stepped in between Creator and Creation. Blitz raised a brow. "Move. I'm letting you live."

"Not if you are going to hurt Suruga." The man's voice betrayed his thoughts. It loosened the grip on his feet.

Suruga shook her head. "You guys should just leave. I know what Blitz can do. Don't underestimate him."

Blitz smirked. "Even the woman's telling you. Now go."

"No, I can't let that happen." Matsubara gulped. "I have a guess to what you want to do. However that thing isn't right."

"Just like the things she done to me being right?" Blitz bellowed. The gun was pressed against Matsubara's forehead. "Last chance. Go or your brains will decorate the room."

Yatoji's eyes were mixed with indecision. Suruga's a calm acceptance. Matsubara's eyes…his were lit with fire. He was braving up to the challenge before him.

Suicidal. The thought of finding death was insane. Breaking every instinct of survival. Shackles on his feet snapped. Masaki ground his teeth and said. "If you shoot him, you'll have to go through me too."

"People are so ignorant." Blitz smacked Matsubara's cheek with the stock of the gun. The man dropped without a word. "Your efforts are pointless." The gun returned to aim at its Creator. "Now then, I don't have much time."

Masaki stepped in between the gun. Everywhere felt so cold. Staring down the black barrel pointing right at him. Adrenaline coursed through his vein. Everything felt wrong. Survive. Every fibre of instinct is telling him to follow that one instruction.

Blitz would shoot him. Clear and inevitable. Yet paralyzing fear had disappeared, bound by
acceptance. Even if he died, if he could save her. It would've been worth it.

"Elimination Chamber Festival." Suruga said. "I'd like time until then."

"You're sorely mistaken in thinking that I'd give you the chance." Blitz said.

"Of course. However, you would put it off if I have something to offer by then."

"Anything from you is worthless to me."

"Are you so sure, Blitz Talker? Answers that you have longed for. Opportunity of a lifetime that you will never ever have. Would you risk that chance? Won't you even try to learn the meaning behind everything?"

Masaki felt the gun pressed to his forehead. "No. Now fat man, move, please. I'd hate to test in seeing whether this bullet can go through two people at once."

He had to stand his ground. Stand his ground. Stand. Masaki glanced over his shoulder. Suruga's face softened. "It's alright. I expected as much. Please move. I don't want anyone else hurt."


"See you in Hell." Blitz pulled the trigger. A red flash by his side. An arrow struck onto the wall, its head crushing the bullet. Blitz stepped back as another wave of arrows peppered the walls.

Masaki felt the floor as Yatoji shoved him down. Blitz ran towards the balcony and jumped off. A few seconds of silence did Masaki dare to look up. Raising his head, he stared at the spectacle before the wave of relief came to. He screamed. "Thank God!"

Blue sky was supposed to represent the calm of the day. Situation on the other hand was everything but. Zipping across air created waves of a rush against the turbulence.

Emiya felt the vibration in his phone. He gestured to Meteora to go ahead, slowing down enough to ease the noise to a conversational level.

"More bad news. Security detail at Nakazato has been compromised."

Creators were at risk. "Who's there?"

"Unknown. UAV ready in thirty seconds."

"Multiple attacks at different locations at one time. Well planned." He hated to imagine who worked around their defences.

"I'd imagine it'd be your good friend. Your call."

Killing off the Creators was a risk that couldn't be afforded. Emiya made a choice. "Give me coordinates for long range interception from Shinjuku."

Trace on. Bow projected into hand. Reinforced vision turned everything crystal sharp. A squint turned reaches across the bay into a close up image. Emiya reached into a pocket and fitted the monocle visor, one of the newest tools of the JSDF. "In place, send it."

Video feed popped in place, displaying the map. Several magnifications deeper before a marker lined

Northwest. To the right. Obscured apartment by the Furukawa Gardens. An open window across the balcony where the gunman stood midst several frightened people.

Nothing explosive. A slow deep breath before letting loose a flurry of red. "Sent." He drew up the next set. A flash of revealing red, the school girl had joined the fight there.

Major started listing the next target when Emiya noticed a soft shrill. He dived aside before a sword slammed into where he was. Skidding across the floor, he rolled to see the towering mass of black metal.

"Finally found you Red."

Kanshou and Bakuya answered his call before being slammed off the roof. Free fall before turning the momentum into speed. He shot away as Black Death pursued. Emiya cursed the lack of footholdings as the mech had all the leverage to toss him around without impunity.

Landing onto the nearest roof, he sprinted while tossing both blades into the air. The mech landed as black and white spun around it. Two new pairs joined the circle, forming a circling cage.

Charon twisted and swung the sword to block the attacking blades. Od coursed as Emiya projected the right weapon.

Bow.

Sword of Fergerus.

Feet skid as he twisted around.

Five steps of Archery.

Break and Draw.

"Caladbolg." Broken silver shot forth in a blaze of blue.

"Defense. Cosmos Coniste Artis." Yellow wall sprouted. Sparks clashed, throwing an explosion that burned everything around. Emiya fired another barrage into the smoke. Sparks screeched as black cloud dissipated by the swing of a sword.

A step back barely saved him from being cleaved into two from top to toe. He leapt onto the blade, lifted into the air with new blades in hand. A kick forward, aiming for the chest before Kanshou and Bakuya met another blade.

Emiya felt flight as Charon shoved him away. The pilot was agitated. "The dishonourable man that deserves to be put down."

Emiya landed on his feet, studying his opponent. Black Vogelchevalier was nimble in contrast to its large size. No visible ranged armaments. A skilled pilot but not invincible. *Rile him up nice and good. "There is no honour in battle. Victory or defeat is what matters."*

"You speak of a truth but even men had ethics." Charon lashed with a sword.

"Said by the man who broke everything to achieve his dreams." Said reply was a lunge of the colossal sword.
Counter Guardian stepped aside and called upon the weapon of nightmares. A single swing was what it took to slam Charon's blade upwards. Charon's gasp of surprise as Emiya swung the hulking weapon nearly his size.

Black, rough with jagged edges. A weapon he faced against and died to it once. The Stone sword of Hercules.


"Illogical," Charon said in between Emiya's furious wave of blows. Both blades could barely keep the might of the Greek hero in check.

Experience flowed through his circuits. Eyes sought the weak points as technique cultivated under the skin. Form designed to defeat the Hundred Head Hydra.

Charon backed off to the other side of the roof. Distance mattered not.


Vogelchevalier raised its arm. "Cosmos Coniste Artis." Protective shield formed as Emiya swung.

Nine Live Blade Works.

Nine strikes, white glints of reflections from the massive weapon. Each blow, devastating artwork of raw fury. Yellow barrier shattered in crackle of glass. Charon stepped back, the attack depleted. "You're strong."

Axe sword cracked and broke to shards from the abuse. Profound strength faded as Emiya called for the trusted pair. Charon shot into the air and disappeared behind a building.

Was he fleeing or coming around for another attack? Ambient noise turned ghostly silent. How the machine became so stealthy was beyond him. Mattered not.

Bow in hand. Emiya drew upon the sword of the hunter. Condensing it into an arrow. Hrunting dived into the hunt, curving around the corner.

Sparks could be heard before a large shape climbed higher into the air. Arrows of Beowulf dogged at the Vogelchevalier in thirst for blood. Purple and red darted and weaved in a reaper's dance.

Charon fled. Emiya glanced back towards the apartment. Blitz had taken flight and left the Creators unharmed. Now he could pursue either choice and possibly take down one. Finally the opportunity to shift the balance to their favour.

Charon as a whole was more dangerous. A more valuable target. He prepared to chase when the Major called. "Glad you're alright. Something jammed communications."

Emiya tapped against the visor. "Charon was here. I'm pursuing."

"Figures. We need backup at the Cabinet building. A creation's over there and wrecking indiscriminate havoc."

That was in the opposite direction. Damn it. "I'm on my way."
Yuya Mirokuji burst through the door. Stares turned toward him but he couldn't care less. He pointed at the nurse by the reception. "You, where is he?"

"Who, who are you looking for?" The nurse barked as he towered over her by the counter.

"Mirokuji, over here." Yuya turned to see Kikuchihara standing by the door. "Come with me."

Yuya fell in step as she took him deeper into the hospital. Short steps echoed the hallway. "How bad is he?"

"Bad shape would be the least of it. Physical injuries would heal fast but there is a problem." Yuya noticed the title 'ICU' on the top of the door. A bad vibe from that one. "The feedback from Gigas Machina had thrown him into a coma."

She led him into a room. Little guy was strapped to the bed. Gas mask strapped to his face with machine were beeping, separated from the world by a panel of toughened glass.

Yuya stepped towards the glass. Silence when the door closed shut. Hollow coursed within the little chambers damnations called a heart. He pressed a fist against the invisible wall. Tightened so hard his nails were pricking skin. "Damn it little guy. You didn't need to be inside there."

Meteora was sitting on a chair whom stood up. "It is unfortunate. He was facing the worst possible opponent."

"Don't go speaking about it that way." Yuya huffed before turning away from the painful sight.
"That's the way fighting always have been. Fairness doesn't exist."

Kikuchihara turned towards Meteora. "Speaking of Gigas Machina, is there any chance to repair it?"

Meteora shook her head. "Even if it is possible to repair with this world's technology, we do not have the understanding to how it works. The only person that knows it well enough is inside that room. It would be a poor choice to attempt such a risky endeavour."

Yuya took a deep breath to get some warmth through his limbs. They weren't coming. *Come on, back in the game.* "What do you suggest we do with it? We can't go leave it sitting in a warehouse."

"We destroy it."

Kikuchihara's eyes rose in alarm. "That's not a good thing to do."

"It is a difficult decision but it will be the best for the long term."

Yuya dropped himself onto a spare seat. "She has a point. Gigas Machina is likely powered by a powerful energy core or reactor. That can be a dangerous weapon of mass destruction. I do not like the loss but the risks involved are too great. I'd hate to see this city blow up due to a screwup."

Kikuchihara nodded. "Indeed you're right Meteora. I will get a team of engineers to look at it. Can I ask for your assistance?"

"I will be glad to help."

Yuya pointed to the door. "You girls get some rest. I'll stick around and keep watch in case of Altair's hoodlums come by with their shenanigans again."

"Thank you. I'll get someone to support you later."
"I'll request for Magaki's team to assist." The door closed shut and left him to silence.

Yuya kept the lights off. A pointless waste of energy. A quiet stare towards the injured boy in the room. "Gah, why the hell did he have to bite that bullet?" Maybe he hoped for something. That's what happened at moments like these doesn't it?

"Don't kick the bucket kiddo. We're counting on you to come back."

There was no change.

Emiya bit his lower lip. Red markers all over the computer screen. Six out of eight teams incapacitated. Twelve men dead. Three quarters of all surveillance assets destroyed.

The assault on the Cabinet Building had been a diversion. Destroying public property, vehicles and creating public panic. Camera footage couldn't give any clear identification. Only a blur of black zipping across. A familiar one with the incoherent metallic screams.

All traces of the Creation had vanished by the time he arrived. That had been a bad day. Rui Kanoya's incapacitation was a major loss to the war effort. Barring any other specialties, the young boy carried the greatest combat power available. Furthermore, the intelligence team had this new load of clean up piled onto them. An efficient lot but far overloaded.

Silver lining from the attack was no remaining JSDF assets were destroyed. Their loss couldn't be afforded. Reinforcements was growing to be a necessity. A bitter taste to the thought. Regular troops would suffer horrendously against Altair. Slaughter by the thousands. He didn't want to see that happen again.

Given current circumstances, he was at a growing loss. Tactics conceived thus far hadn't been successful. Granted, those who succeeded had years to work with, not in the same time frame. Fellow Creations like him were still kicking. A comeback would turn things around. What they needed was one chance.

The Major should be calling shortly. It came within the minute and it carried the worst.

"Archer. Vengeful Hound is to be discontinued effective immediately."

Everything skid to a halt. "You aren't joking, are you?"

Major's voice remained sharp, carrying the tense since the previous few days. "Command is calling it off. All our forces are to stand down from active operations against Altair's forces."

"Are they nuts? What's the point of stopping now?" Emiya contemplated the results once as a possibility. Given the Japanese aptitude, he found it staggering to be met with such defeatism.

"The fail conditions have been met. So they're following it to the letter."

Thought of killing someone was immense. "Fail conditions have been met. What kind of bullshit is this?"

"The biggest kind. Bureaucracy is a big pain in the books."

"How do we have fail conditions for a war for the sake of the world?"

"Honestly idiotic nonsense. But Parliament are now pushing for the Bird Cage Plan. JSDF folded."
"It's not going to stop Altair from attacking us which is already proven." Emiya seethed through his teeth. Holding back now for two months is insane. Every strategy in the book needed an active defence. Sitting back and waiting for the enemy threw the initiative away. Initiative was key to victory.

"I know. Orders are orders but I'm going to get our teams ready anyhow. Politics shouldn't be messing in the military."

Emiya sighed. Everything was crumbling apart with their hands tied, chins raised and waiting to beheaded. "Thanks."

"We're not out of this fight. I assure you that. We may be chained up like dogs but we're not done yet. Not by a long shot."

"I should drink to this poor news." The bottles of sake wouldn't be enough to wash away the bitter taste. Not even for a single night.

"Have one on me after all this. If we're still alive by then."

Meteora sat midst a group that oozed gloom into its surroundings. Morale was poor. It was disconcerting for her to witness this. Motivating people wasn't part of her skills. She was worried of turning it worse.

Guidelines given in the books gave the approach on how to cheer people up. Yet it didn't carry the innate parts of the social rules, by far her largest problem.

The Gods had been relocated to stay with the Creations. Yuya remained on guard at the hospital. He was adamant to stay and keep an eye. There was no arguing with the man.

Chorus of hands worked the motions in silence. Marvelous taste couldn't sate the hollow feeling within. Eating had become mechanical. Not a word was spoken when dinner was done.

Hideaki and Siegfried were cleaning the dishes as the Gods lounged about in the cramped room with glum eyes.

Matsubara, a leg sitting on the armrest of the sofa sighed and broke the silence. "Any news on Kanoya?"

Selesia answered. "No signs of improvement. In fact, there's apparently some problem healing his physical injuries." A week passed without any change to his vitals.

Her God sighed before leaning back to stare at the ceiling. "I miss my bed. I don't remember since when I've been home now."

Nakanogane sighed in turn. "We should get back to work." Their stuff had been placed in the new apartments one level below.

"I'm not sure if I'm even up for it." Yatoji and Suruga were working hard at it. Despite the poor notion of working at such demotivating hour, they had insane levels of dedication.

"Do not worry. JSDF is working around the clock to search for them and keep you safe." Meteora tried to assure him. Despite the struggles Archer had told her. She doubted the idea of it. Regardless of her opinion and hopes, the results were vindicative towards her strategy.
His fellow compatriot stood up with a groan. "Yeah, we got to get back to work. There isn't much time left after all."

"At the rate things are going, we'll have the final face off in the Elimination Chamber Festival." Two weeks remained.

"I foresee just as much. We have to be prepared for the final conflict."

"We're no closer to beating them. Kanoya's injury made a huge mess to the plan."

"Yes, his wounds have made it complicated but I am optimistic that we will prevail in the end." Gigas Machina had been destroyed. No little effort was spared to get the job done. Large amount of explosives and Archer's ability to overload weak points helped to accelerate the task.

Nakanogane nodded. "That's right. He'll pull through. We'll need to make some big adjustments but it'll work out. Somehow."

"I would like to hope for his recovery to make it in time. However, the cards are now in disarray."

"Meteora, strategy is always fluid. It would be wise to remember that." Archer said from the kitchen counter.

"I know. However, we should customise our opening gambit to maximise our initial chances. Once everyone enter battle, everything will be decided by skill and bravery."

"Let us brainstorm about it, at least it would keep our minds off the kid." Matsubara winced after a pause. "Sorry."

"Kanoya wouldn't want us to be worrying about him while the fate of the world is hanging on a thread."

Selesia chuckled. "I'm sure he'll be whining when he wakes up and find out that we've already beaten Altair." The thought of the boy jumping around in bandages and screaming about gave pause of amusement. That'd be something she'd like to see.

"Let's lighten it up a little." Archer placed a tray of glasses onto the table. "A few drinks on the house." Meteora didn't recognise the cocktails involved but the fancy colours made it tempting.

Matsubara took a sip and beamed. "First class chef, now this. You're full of surprises."

Archer raised his head, faintest line of pride beneath his lips. "There are occasions where being a bartender would be useful. Nothing too far from my trade after all."

Matsubara tipped the glass towards the food protege. "Thanks. I really needed this." The other Gods followed suit.

"Thanks for the-" Archer swooped the margarita from Hideaki's fingers.

"None for the under aged."

The boy pout in response. "You weren't a stickler for rules."

"I am the rules."

"Don't go Gilgamesh on me."
Meteora tuned out their argument and felt the sweet fuzz in her lips. She surmised Archer's actions were quite intentional. Despite his cold harsh nature, he knew the ramifications of poor morale. She kept quiet for anything bad was not worth adding to the mix.

Matsubara stared at the orange swirl in the glass. "Soon."

Sota felt the wind to be good today. Waves of water brushed against the seawall in a slow rhythmic pace in contrast to fast moving people. Shadows mirrored against the setting sun. "Thanks a lot for the occasion." Marine smiled as they walked along the edge of the urban square.

Sota waved his hands. "I didn't really do much." They've delivered the final set of drawings for the publisher to process and were on their way back home. All that was left to it was to wait for the finishing touches and release. He felt a bit strange to be followed about by the police despite them keeping a reasonable distance. Marine had been adamant in making the delivery personally to make things work out right. Enough to frustrate Kikuchihara to relent.

Marine giggled. "Don't put yourself down too much. Your help made it so much easier to keep stick to the deadline. I don't want to imagine the panic I'd have if you weren't around to help."

"It's nothing really. I'm glad that you were able to help me with my work so much."

Marine stopped. "Sota, don't let yourself down that way. My teachings can only guide you so far. Your hard effort has paid off the rest. If you put more time and effort into it, you can become someone greater. I'm sure of it"

Sota stopped with a loss of words. He didn't do that great. However that rise in his chest. Joy bloated wanting to burst out from within. "Thanks."

She turned towards the sea. "The sunset's nice today." Sota agreed with her. The orange glow casted a warm feeling. He turned around to see a calm face. When did she look so beautiful?

"Marine-"

Sota felt something warm splatter against his cheeks. He wiped it with a hand to see red.

Fresh.

Red.

Blood.

Then the sound of the shot rang into his ears. He blinked as she fell. "Marine!"

No response. Marine's eyes in a lost stare. The red pool was growing from her stomach. Sota yelled to his surroundings. "Anyone, I need an ambulance."

The gazes across him were frozen. Cold, uncertain, fearful. Why aren't you helping? Sota reached for his phone and dialled the emergency number. Why was the phone dialling so slow?

"It hurts." Marine squeaked through the pain.

A car stopped by the end of the street. Two men in coats got out, one with a radio in hand. One of Kikuchihara's guards. "Help's here. Just hold still."

"Yes, hold still while I send you off along with her." Two deafening bangs knocked the officers
down in their own pools of blood. Sota turned around to see the end of a barrel.

Sota froze. Cold and hard as stone. The black gaze upon the man's smiling face. "Emiya Alter."

"Hello boy. Surprised to see me?"

"Why?" He didn't dare to move. "How could you do such a thing?"

"Necessity."

"How is killing her a necessary thing?"

The dark skinned man turned his face away slightly. "All that is willed and foretold in the path of the red light."

"You're mad."

"I have not said otherwise. Sanity and madness is just a veil of perception. A bid by the mind to protect the body that would be endangering its survival."

"Now you're going to kill me to finish some flimsy excuse of yourself." Metal onto the cheeks threw him onto the ground. The numbness didn't hide the pain beneath it.

"Nothing is true. All is permitted for the sake of the world."

"Leave the boy alone." Metal clanked onto the ground. Heavy bulky metal. "Your fight is with me."

Emiya Alter smiled. "Siegfried, the slayer of Fafnir. Truly what a wonderful surprise." The man raised the gun. "I can kill three of you in one sweep."

Siegfried vanished. Split second, he was already swinging a sword in full armour. Burst of immense power, forcing Sota to brace against the ground with both hands. Second wave toppled him over as Alter was sent flying with Siegfried in close pursuit,

Sounds of war faded as he climbed up. Sota was glad Siegfried had lured Alter away. Now he had to help Marine. Somehow!

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

When someone reviewed about being creative and changing things around, it got me to think a lot harder about it. I decided to imagine on what the characters would do. Honestly, Alter was a game changer.

Proactive, unlikeable and dangerously competent. Ends justify the means approach like Emiya. Granted Alter's abilities aren't the most overpowered, they remain damn strong when there aren't numbers to do the balancing. A lot of heroes would have unfavourable
options against him.

JSDF and politics had a good roundabout ways to screw things up. Mentality, public image and I felt that wasn't touched much in culture to present always a proper front and results. Altair's team made it difficult to get the results needed. They were trying to survive after all.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Selesia pulled the car into a hard turn, squeezing every bit of power from the Toyota's tiny engine. She hated how they were rushing into a disadvantage. Heart pumping hoping to make it on time. She pursed her lips as they exited the bridge. "Altair. That ability of hers must be powerful to know where we all are."

"Just keep your foot on the gas." Mirokuji said as he leaned out the window and scanned the horizon. "Where the hell did you learn to drive?"

Selesia cracked a grin. "Compared to Vogelchevalier, this is a piece of cake." The car skidded along the road before fitting in line. She heard soft muttered curses while making the final turn.

She hit the brakes as a blue van crashed into the space in front of them. Flashes of blue and black sparked in across the square. Siegfried sprinted along the edge of the pier and leapt, dodging gunfire and red spears from two directions.

Selesia got out of the car and saw the man floating atop the roof of a building. Yuya clicked his tongue as a red spears sprouted from the broken pieces of glass on the floor.

Siegfried dodged, leaping back towards the two. He said with eyes trained on their opponents. "Sorry, handling all three at the same time was difficult."

"Heroic Spirits do think heroic alright." Yuya pointed his sword at his target. "I'm cool with lending a hand, especially since I need to knock some sense into this guy."

Sho Hakua, the protagonist of their story stepped forward and raised his own staff. "Yuya."

"Sho." Yuya raised his sword. "Selesia, he's mine to deal with." She nod while drawing her weapon. Bayard appeared behind Sho. "That's right. Let it be third time's the charm that we can finish this."

"Ready yourself Sho. I am going all out. Hangaku." Warrior spirit emerged and struck.

Blitz said as Selesia met him on the roof. "I guess I have the honours to fight you young lady."

She smiled. "Quite a gentleman of you."

"Not at all." Blitz raised the gun and fired. Selesia swiped the bullet aside before diving towards the gunman. Both flew into a ballet in the air.

Selesia pushed her strength into the sword, sending a controlled wave of fire. Blitz rolled beside the building, turning the wall behind him into charred black.

"You must be expensive to be causing such collateral damage." His words were an echo behind the gunshots.

"If you stay still, then I'll make it all the more less." Fire blast couldn't be done too many times but if used right would give her the needed opening.
Down below a glance at the corner of her eyes, blue and black flashed in between spout of sparks, clashing weapons. As gravity took the two servants, Selesia charged forward. Blitz's eye were staring right at hers. Right where he wanted her.

Twisting around, Selesia felt the trailing heat from the bullet by her neck.

She had to be careful of the Gravity rounds. That's one. Pain slammed her down before a humongous weight crushed against the ground. Blitz carried a pistol in both hands.

_Did he shoot his own bullet?_

Blitz aimed both guns. Rolling onto her feet, she dived into the building. The ground behind her buckled and cracked into dust under the immense compression. Standing on her feet, she rushed deeper to stay away.

Her sides throbbed with a taste of copper under her lips. Brushing away the stacks of roses by the corner of the floris, there was no idea where Yuya or Siegfried were. Noise of battle only masked that they were nearby. She shouldn't have underestimated that man.

What are her options? Any attempt to get close would be met with Gravity bullets. If she-

"I didn't think we're done." Blitz held the gun beside her ear. Her arm slammed the gun into the wall as it fired. Dust covered her eyes with a sting. She slammed a shoulder into the man's chest before throwing him over her shoulder. A grunt before he rolled and dodged her feet to his face. Selesia kicked the fallen gun aside before slashing her weapon.

Blitz fell back onto his haunches before kicking back into flight. She parried the shots from the other gun in his hand before going for a head on attack. Blitz steadied himself before saying. "People who can fly are the most bothersome." She swung her sword when the man dived aside into a roll. Leaping forward, he sought for his other weapon while firing.

Selesia parried the shots before raising her weapon. "Take this." Red blaze shot forward. Blitz leapt up and flew to the sky, avoiding the burn.

"Not bad. You had better promise than the other guy."

Selesia grinned and jested. "Why don't you fight up close?"

Blitz shrugged. "That'll be too unfair for you."

"Let's." Selesia charged.

Sho Hakua felt burning fire inside. The man who took everything in front of him, just within grasp. All that was needed is pushing himself a little more. Beat that man down to a pulp and revenge would be his. Bayard was occupying Yuya's Hangaku with its own attacks. That allowed Sho to take his fight right and proper.

Sho swung the staff a full circle, pushing every bit of strength into it. "Why won't you just die already?"

Yuya snorted whilst blocking the hit to his face. "It's certainly not my time yet man. I'm getting annoyed by your lack of thought. Come on, pick up the slack. You're a main character after all damn it."
Those invisible barbs thrown at him. Sho was right after all. Yuya Mirokuji was a traitor. Pretending to be his best friend before turning on him. Killing Naomi and Chika. Hatred fueled his swings.

Yuya pulled back as Sho pushed harder. Transforming his staff into a flurry of death. Muscles ached for breath as he squeezed every drop of power. "Whatever you say will never matter because you took them away from me. You're the only reason I travelled across the world. You're the one I want to kill. Because of you, my precious, friend and sister lost their lives. No way in the nine circles of Hell am I going to listen to your lies!"

Yuya leapt back out of reach before snarling. "I know that! I read every damn thing about me because of you. I was just as betrayed and that all you've believed in is wrong, God damn it." His opponent and nemesis sighed. "I seriously have to play my part as the bad guy and whoop your ass back onto the right path."


Yuya raised his brow. "That's real steep of you." Yuya's black death encroached into the area around them. "Let's bring it on for real then."

There can be only one choice. Pushing against the ground, Sho charged with every bit of strength. "Yuya!"

Yuya smiled before charging to meet him. "Sho!"

Six steps between them.

Both Astrals occupied in their duel.

Five steps.

They both knew it will come down to this.

Four steps.

Man to man.

Three!

One swing to decide it all!

Two!

He will win this fight!

One!

Unlimited Lost Works

Dangerous omen flew past his ear before the whipping crack of a gunshot. It sliced across Yuya's right arm. Blood seeped into the purple sleeve. Everything stopped. Sho turned around. Alter was standing above them on top of a wall

Yuya glanced at the injury. A graze to the side. "What a waste of your ultimate ability." Alter smiled in response. "Unfortunate for you, I've -."
Black burst forth. Swords, dozens of them from his flesh. Blood spattered the walls like fresh batch of paint.

Sho felt warmth fluids on his face. Horror crept up his throat. Sho could watch as the nemesis fall into a growing pool of blood. Cold silence filled his being. What carried power now shrivelled away into the deepest depths.

Yuya grit his teeth as the swords in his body splintered to pieces and vanished in fading hues of blue. He looked at his bloodied hand. "Looks like I'm done." A red mess of ruptured flesh and torn fabric was left as blood spilt from his lips. "Will you now listen to me kiddo?"

Sho watched as the man heaved for breath. Nobody could survive that kind of mess. After chasing for over a year, it is, finally, over.

Yet why isn't he feeling overjoyed about it?

Sho dropped to his knees. "Yuya, why the hell now? Why are you so damn adamant of having me listen to you?"

"God damn cliche." Yuya cracked a grin. The dying man pressed a bloody hand against his arm. "Otherwise, it'd be unfair for you. When you find out the truth, that you've been lied to."

"Yuya…"

Yuya gave a weak grin. "My time's coming. I'll catch you when you come back… Sho." Eyes closed, a faint smile left behind as grip slacked and fell to the ground.

Sho stared at the stain of blood at his arm. He turned around towards the killer. "You bastard. Why did you do that?"

Alter chuckled. "Why the long face? Didn't you finally got your revenge? Isn't that what you came for after all?"

Sho pointed a thumb to himself. "That was supposed to be my fight."

Alter raised his hands with a smug. "I just gave you a helping hand. Revenge is what you seek and it has been delivered. That is all that matters, has it not?"

"That wasn't the right way at all."

Alter tilt his head, eyes drilling into Sho's. "What is the right way? Would it be a proper duel to beat him to death? Would have you preferred it to be brutal rather than a mercy killing?"

Red rage coursed through him. "To hell with this. I'm going to.-." Sho felt his body react, leaping away before a shine of silver slammed onto the road. Blocks of concrete scattered as he recognised the man from before. The sheer energy contained within the man was intimidating. A fire that burned stronger with the loss of their own.

Alter shot at the man, drawing the attention away. Silver shot forward towards the man, throwing both of them away from the scene of death.

Sho crunched his teeth at the desire of going after them. Deep inside him, it beckoned. Kill Alter.

No. He had to survive. Fighting both of them simultaneously would be suicide. More important was the lightheaded and unsettling feeling. Feet heavy as lead, he stepped back and turned around.
Walking away was excruciating, a hole gnawing inside.

Siegfried slammed Alter towards the wall with a heavy blow. Said gunman landed on his feet before jumping away from the follow up slash. Balmung cut into the building, breaking through the wall and into the apartment building. Balmung swung around, blocking the counterattack for his back. He was back out in a second, diving through the air towards Alter, standing atop another roof.

Their blades clashed to a standstill. Face to face in bid of dominance. Alter gloated of victory. "How does it feel to fail? Great hero?"

"Your words do not taunt me." Siegfried kept himself level against the sizzling burn. He pushed more strength into the blade. Alter buckled to a knee as the roof start to crack. Siegfried saw the barrel edging towards his face. He twisted the blade and slammed Alter backwards.

Alter skidded across the roof, firing as the stalemate was broken. Slight tilts of Balmung deflected death aside. The gunman relaxed, standing upright with a smile. "They contrast to what your actions belie."

"Truly, you are a deceiver."

"Many thanks to such a compliment."

"I cannot see how you've been turned into a man like this."

"Hmm?" The smile was unsettling. "Perhaps my other copy that you know is the real fake."

"I refuse to believe that."

"Alas, if only you know." Alter gave a small bow. "Now then, with my task complete, I bid thou farewell."

Siegfried raised his sword, pushing prana into his legs for a lunge. "You're not getting away."

"I am. And you won't have a choice." Alter turned and fired towards an advertisement board. One leg snapped off, toppling the entire board down towards a group of fleeing pedestrians.

Siegfried dived. Several slashes destroyed the falling hazard into harmless pieces. He landed onto the ground before spinning around. No sign of Alter. A click of the tongue as he stretched the senses. Another disappointment. He decided to rejoin the others.

The battlefield had become desolate. Buildings cratered with holes and He regretted the choice of fighting in the area. Beauty turned into ruin. He found Selesia standing in the middle of the broken crater. Her weapon was drawn. He strode up towards her and asked. "Are you injured?" Her sharp eyes softened upon seeing him. She shook her head. "Where are the others?"

A sigh from her before she gestured to the surroundings. "Blitz's escaped. Marine's on the way to the hospital with Sota." Selesia tapped the side of her sword. "Darn it. Attacking innocents in public. How dare they do something like this?"

That's good to hear. Now he have to break the thoughts. Siegfried pushed into the darker issue. "Selesia, I have bad news."

Emiya felt the eerie touch of the winds as he kept watch on the roof of the apartment building. The
headset hanging on his ear was a slight hassle. However the ability to see and communicate with the others down below without screaming his voice out was a nice touch. Ever since the attack, all JSDF assets were on red alert and until the others return, he was their last line of defence.

Nakanogane asked the group arranged in a small ring in the cramped living room. "How's Marine?"

Matsubara put his phone down next to the camera. "Sota said she's in bad shape. Thank goodness she was hit only with a normal bullet." Kikuchihara was already arranging another security detail with Meteora. Selesia would be guarding her first in case Altair makes another attempt. Siegfried would return to defend the Creators while Emiya would be able to move and support both parties as seen fit.

Within the apartment, things were heating up. Matsubara slammed a fist on the table. "That bastard is breaking the line. How could they involve innocents like this?" A grand delusion to think that they are free from the risks of war.

"There is no line in War. To him, you people are fair game. That's what I would do in his steps," Emiya said. Matsubara's response was to seethe at the thought before going quiet.

"Of all the times, where's Yuya? He's not picking up his cell."

"About that…I got bad news." Kid said from the corner of the room. The thought was enough for Emiya. A pity.

"Yuya Mirokuji is dead." Siegfried interjected as he appeared in the centre of the room. The Heroic Spirit's armour was scuffed with a layer of dirt and dust. They turned towards him for the answer. "Alter placed me in a bad situation during the battle and used his Noble Phantasm in a sneak attack."

Silence as Creators glanced at one another. Blinking surprise with uncertain stares. Matsubara was the first to speak. "Wait, Yuya's dead? How can that be?"

Siegfried bowed to the group. "He was outnumbered and I was too late. I'm sorry."

Kid added. "Unlimited Lost Works being a one shot kill move probably didn't help." Barring someone who had strong magic resistance or specialties against metals and swords.

Matsubara grabbed an empty beer can and crushed it with his hand. "That's utterly insane. How can he have such things?"

"Noble Phantasms are the strongest part of their legends. As much as I hate to say this but it's inevitable," Emiya said.

Yatoji went up towards the knight and grabbed onto the shoulder plates. Frail fingers failing to squeeze through the armour. "How, how could you let him die just like that?"

Siegfried lowered his head. "I'm sorry for your loss. A great mistake on my part. I had been placed into a choice between pursuing Alter or saving lives."

"Stupid…stupid idiot." Yatoji went towards a wall and slammed a fist against it. "I never said you could die damn it."

"Will he stop? Will Alter ever stop hurting people who aren't involved?" Matsubara's eyes were pleading for an answer. Something to ease his mind even for a few moments. Giving that kind of thought would be more painful by far.
Emiya told him the truth. "No, I'd continue until all my enemies are dead."

Matsubara turned his weary eyes to the table. A slump of elbows before clasping his shaking hands together. "How are we going to stop him?"

"I abhor the idea but given the circumstances, a defensive approach is the best option for the time being." The tides have turned. Outmatched in both numbers and strength and that included the consideration without Altair. Plan B was ongoing and losing any more Creations would be catastrophic.

"We can't just let them get away with it."

"They'll probably try again, aiming for another one of us. However, to fall into reckless anger would only turn the situation for the worse."

Nakanogane patted Matsubara's shoulder. "It hurts to know that Yuya is dead. That Kanoya in a coma. We have two weeks to go before the Elimination Chamber Festival. We can't give up. Not yet. We have to ensure we survive until then."

"Assuming they would prepare to annihilate all of us in one clean swoop within the festival while we stay on guard." Archer walked to the edge of the roof. "Siegfried and I will keep watch of security around here. I'll inform the Major of the setback."

Matsubara slumped into the chair, deflated. "Archer, I'm sorry." Yatoji reached for a cigarette and tossed one to him before lighting his own.

"Don't be. Death has no favourites."

Altair felt the hissing whispers of the chamber dance along her ear. Resting on the only bench of the room far too small in a room that accounted for dozens. Previously used as a place of congregation, now it had been cast aside. Just like her. She stood as the fallen approached.

Cedar doors groaned in aged protest as Emiya Alter pushed through. A push set them back in place before the man of the hour dropped to a knee. "My Queen, you've summoned for me."

Altair turned toward her accomplice. "Yes, Alter. I've heard of your actions. I commend you on the results of killing Yuya Mirokuji. Well met in convincing your fellow peers."

"They did not need persuasion for they are weary of being hunted like animals. I only suggested the course of action which they've always wanted all along."

She paused and waited. Strategy wise, it made good sense to remove an annoyance while recovering an advantage against larger numbers. Altair did not know where or who the tidbit came from. Alter noticed as he asked. "However?"

Altair presented the agenda of the message. "However, I do not take lightly on your attempts on Sota Mizushino and the other affectionate woman."

Alter paused, his mind processing her words. She knew the question yet to be asked. "Are you perchance to be interested in the boy?"

Altair answered. "He poses no threat to our goals. I find no need to kill him."

"On a physical threat, the boy means nothing. However, he serves well as a demoraliser."
Alter was not wrong. The decision to pursue those beyond the realm of Creations is not often, so to say preferred. Altair jested back to gauge her minion's mind. "Are you lacking in confidence that you cannot defeat your other self?"

"I am certain of victory. Opportunities to cement the future however shouldn't be hardly missed. My question remains unanswered."

Altair told the truth. Far simpler, nothing of intrinsic value. "The boy has no meaning to me. Only to my own God. It would be poor taste to destroy the boy that carried a valuable friendship to God."

"Even when you are destroying this world in spite for your God?"

"Some leisure to enjoy his final moments would be the only blessing that can be spared. Nothing more." He said nothing. "Alter, do not attempt any further instigations. I would not like to lose you in the process if by the case they would wise up."

"As you command."

"Now leave. There remains much to prepare. I trust you will have a good time to tame the black hound."

"A hound that screams nothing more than the death throes of its targeted malice. Journey once untold and regrettably met with misfortune." Alter bowed. "Your will be done." The door closed shut, silencing the room once more.

Altair closed her eyes and opened herself to the world. Information beyond human perception, marked in blue streams that weaved through the air just like the winds in reality. Knowledge ready to be plucked from the sea of data. Human sight was not needed when the Holopsicon sees all in place.

She called for the sphere. Invisible except to her mind. Soft silver fabric that churned in an unpredictable manner. A representation of the world. Little tears in the seams. Disruptions in reality just as planned. Convincing the lone heroes was far easier than forethought. Resistance were far more troublesome than foreseen. Well prepared and thought magics that limited her reach within some of the regions.

A flicker. They were at it again. Growing ruptures before sealed once again by the resistance. As a whole, it meant little beyond mere inconveniences. Success has been proven despite differing methods. The end results remain the same.

Beyond the annoyance within the world, there lies that one person that remained troublesome beyond grasp. Eliminating him was impossible but his efforts could be stymied. Holopsicon made sure of that. There are rules that even he has to follow after all. Lest could he not garner the acceptance to move forward.

She glanced towards him with her thoughts clear to be heard. *Do not presume your efforts to turning things against my way will work in the end.*

There was no reply, never will be. Altair willed her physical self to vanish. There remains much in South America to achieve especially against his meddling.

Masaki thought the past few weeks were tough. This, this is another new ball game.

Archer, Meteora and the Major had agreed on a plan. They would be relocated on a periodic basis based on Archer's discretion. Moving around the country a few times. Ibaraki, Chiba, Shizuoka and
across other prefectures. Thankfully Selesia was putting her driving license to good use.

In spite it all, Masaki was glad they weren't doing the heavy lifting. Good sleep was scarce, uncertainty lurking around the dark corners, just out of reach. Every night anxiety always struck to his thoughts that it could be his last night. He wasn't much of a claustrophobic but being cramped up into small rooms that could barely fit three was becoming tougher to tolerate.

Matsubara was having it tough. Beer and smokes rooted deeper into his psyche, filling a hand as the man crawled word after word to keep the deadline. Of course he'd tone down whenever he or Selesia is around but it was a growing worry. *Hmph, snacks aren't as bad in comparison.*

Yatoji turned almost mute. He worked in a separate room whenever possible. He would never come out unless it was for food or toilet breaks. If no such options, he'd work in utter silence. Single word answers whenever asked a question. It was understandable, having a painful chord cut when your own creations get killed. He'd nearly have a heart attack after hearing Rui was warded in the ICU.

Suruga probably was the best off from all of them. Clear headed and productive in keeping up to her deadlines. Masaki noticed some of her facade cracking from time to time. *But who wouldn't be in this mess?*

Sota Mizhushino had slummed into a quiet boy. The attack on Marine probably left him shell shocked. *I put Rui into far too many similar situations. I should apologise when he wakes up.* Sota tried to take over Marine's role but struggled to create the artistry of experience beyond his years. Suruga eventually took over to get the final bits done.

Rui and Marine were in Siegfried's good hands. Speaking of her, she survived but bedridden for awhile. He hoped to God that Alter won't try anything else.

Days continued to clock down in monotonous routine. Selesia would patrol around the area, keeping the car maintained and prepared to go. Archer says so, they move to another place and get used to it for another few days before repeating. Nothing happened during those times.

Archer remained in Tokyo most of the time, appearing at their new home every few days. His face had grown far cold, tensed as the man was trying to keep everyone alive. Meteora was likewise occupied, conducting magical research with Kikuchihara, the Counter Guardian and most unexpected of all, Gai Takarada.

Without Archer, Hoshikawa took up the role of the housekeeper. Cleaning. Cooking. Groceries. The works. Masaki offered to help but it was always turned down on the basis of 'This is what I can do. You have more important things to finish.' Her smile helped immensely to keep the group afloat at times.

Hideaki had been trying to be helpful for her but brushed off by the high school girl. It almost ended up butting heads at times before the boy gave up to work on apparently his own story. Something he said about trying to tack on to what Type-Moon already has planned. A glance now and then showed it wasn't that bad but it wasn’t spectacular and his own editors would have thrown it out the search pile.

Masaki decided to strike conversations to boost morale. He wasn't much of the best Creator but it was something he need to live up to. "Once everything is over, what would be the first thing you'll do?"

"Don't know. Maybe get some of that udon at the street next to my house. Those were good." Suruga answered, working the artwork without pause in her strokes.
"Sounds nice. Now I'm tempted for takoyaki." Masaki glanced towards the other room. "How is Yatoji taking this?"

"Same as usual." One of her pens ran dry of ink and was plopped into the bin.

Hideaki chimed in from his seat at the other side of the room. "So what happens next for Sho Hakua?"

"I don't know his motivations well enough. However since Yuya's dead, he might just go home and be done with it."

"Or he might help Altair as part of repaying her efforts to help him." Masaki suggested.

"He's going to be a tough one having an Astral Double." Hideaki shrugged.

Something slammed against the wall, drawing their attention. "Damn it." Matsubara's face was downcast. "How much more of this do we have to take?"

Selesia standing at the balcony walked over. She narrowed her eyes as Matsubara rubbed his reddening knuckles. "Pick yourself up Matsubara. This isn't how you should be acting."

Matsubara hissed a few breaths. He squeezed his fist before saying. "I know. I know that. It won't stop. We shouldn't be here like this. Like herd of cattle boxed into a room praying not to be caught by the big bad wolf."

Masaki felt low watching his friend behave that way. He noticed Hideaki turning for the fridge. "Calm down. Matsubara, we know how you feel about this. Relax and take it easy. We're with you."

Selesia rested a hand on her Creator's shoulder. "It won't be much longer. A week at most."

Matsubara mulled as he flexed his hand. "One week. Feels so far away."

"Matsubara." Her shoulders slumped in turn.

"The amount of people getting hurt is growing too far. It hurts." Matsubara turned and caught the can of beer lobbed at his direction.

"Marine will be fine. Yuya's death won't be in vain. We'll pull through," Hideaki said.

Selesia nodded. "That's right. We've been through the same journey. As much as you made it, you can be just as strong to endure it."

Matsubara popped the lid. "I can't. I'm not like you. We created you in such ways because you're what we always wanted to be but can't."

She gave a squeeze onto those tired shoulders. "The ultimate test of faith is when you are at your weakest. Wasn't that one of your quotes you gave us in those ruins?"

Matsubara met her eyes with his own weary ones. He shook his head. "I must be such a sorry sight to you all. I apologise for that."

"It's alright Matsubara." Masaki came over and rubbed his friend's back. Masaki would alleviate the load if only just a little. "We are only human. Challenge is what will make us stronger. Although it'd be embarrassing if you stumble about while Selesia gets all the cool moments."

Matsubara chuckled. "Right. That's my part to begin with. I've made quite a mess of myself." He
tipped the beer at the kid. "Thanks everyone." The young boy nodded before pulling out another can of beer which got snatched by Selesia in a heartbeat. Chuckles went about as Hideaki smiled.

Suruga stood up. "Now then, I got some business with Meteora. Don't finish all the beer would you?" She waved before leaving with her art pad.

Masaki shook his head as things returned to what stood as normal nowadays. In the end, they can only be stronger.

"I'll be honest. This is the place I least expect to be in." Selesia quipped. Fogged glass panels from steam. Brown wood carrying age of mystery. Pool of water surrounded by hard rocks. Gentle splashes at regular intervals from the sozu fountain at a corner.

"Hiding in plain sight. A profound strategy uncommon to be used." Meteora said. She sat in the deeper parts of the onsen.

Selesia shrugged. "Feel like it's more so for collateral damage." Siegfried tended to make a big mess during his fights. Archer's abilities would probably give the same predicament.

Sitting inside the hot pool felt like bliss. She missed this for the longest days. Last time she dipped into an onsen was before their departure from the home capital. _Charon had to enter the onsen when I was there._ Embarrassing but good memories.

A zombie groan from Suruga. She was slouched over the edge of the rocks, soft and dead like twigs. _Maybe not so much for her eh?_

"Selesia, your face is red. Are you alright?" Hikayu asked as she entered the pool in a white towel.

Selesia shook her head. "No, no, just thinking of something."

"Knowing Matsubara, got to be something perverted." Suruga added. Her response was to splash hot water over the woman's back. "Owh, I'm gonna die."

In jest, she slipped deeper into the pool so the water would reach her chin. Another face was staring deep to the full moon. "Meteora, you looked occupied. What's on your mind?"

"Unfortunately many things. The Elimination Chamber Festival moves as scheduled yet I fear there is more than what we know that is being hidden from our knowledge."

"You can't find every teeny bit of detail and account for it. We'll just have to do our best," Selesia said.

"That is fact alas my concerns remain considering the stakes."

Hikayu added. "If you keep thinking that way, you're never going to be able to relax."

"Correct." Meteora lowered her head to stare along the water's surface. "I need a buffet to recharge."

"You're always a hungry glutton." Selesia teased.

"That is incorrect. I am merely unnourished to the fullest extent."

"Says the one having feasts dedicated by our ultimate Anti Hero Archer." The sage dipped her head underwater in response.
A moment later, she emerged and said, "I have not been able to taste his food either since then. Speaking of Archer, I've discussed this with him but we haven't been able to discern the reason of the phenomena."

"What's the problem?"

"Reality is breaking down faster every day, yet there is also a stronger counteracting force growing to meet it. Additional to that factor was reality is also not being but it is changing."

"And... that means?"

"Some information of reality are being transformed from one state to another without apparent causes or sources."

"Weird. I know some magic but this is way beyond my know how." Altair wouldn't be doing any of that sort. Probably?

"Understandable as your magics primary focus is on combat. As of late, my search yielded little and Archer has met similar troubles. Another phenomenon like this is very concerning." The topic at hand must have been tough for even the genius sage like is put off by it.

Hikayu raised a finger. "Maybe there's other people just like us helping out? Like those people with super magic powers?"

"A strong and reasonable hypothesis that first came to mind. Kikuchihara and the Major had been trying to find out but they remained concealed as we are. Although I am dismayed by the thought that they have abilities that can manipulate reality like her."

"Granted that little pipsqueak probably isn't the only one." So many possibilities and given how the world guessed at other aspects beyond reality, the situation had a lot to answer for. Thinking about it was starting to give her a headache.

Selesia rested her head against the rocks. "Nothing we can do about it. Our hands are tied as it is. We should think about it some other. Now is to relax and let go." Otherwise the point would be moot.

Another groan before met with bubbling. Hikayu pointed at sinking Suruga with a scream. "No! Don't die on us Suruga!"

Daichi heard the girls screaming in the other bathing area followed by loud splashes. Wonder what they're doing over there?

Hot water soaked deep to sore skin. The green trees along with the strumming of little insects in the nearby gardens allowed him to relax. He raised an arm to eye level and flexed it. Power coiled within. Yeah, a bit stronger every day. Even so, he'd probably survive... for thirty seconds?

The training had an important side effect of strengthening his Magic Circuits. From barely a unit worth of od, now he had five units generated over a whole day. Pitiful in contrast to even the poorest of Magus but for what it's worth, better than nothing.

"Those girls are really making a racket." Matsubara sighed. Aren't you at least a bit curious to what's going on? Or is that towel on his eyes to help his imagination?

"Beats me to what they're doing. Hmm, Archer and Siegfried are taking their time though." Nakanogane raised a brow.
Gai Takarada gave a sly smile. "Think they're peeking?" Daichi didn't know the man well but apparently he was giving the vibe of a warm brother. Sure, the age gap was nearly a decade but most creators had the spirit of youth going. Just like how I need to keep going as well.

Nakanogane said. "Nah. Impossible. Maybe Ohnishi though…".

Daichi felt Siegfried approaching them at a steady pace. Although given Archer's E-rank…that man might end up there somehow.

The door opened and Ohnishi flew into the pool with a splash. The two warriors of fate entered. Archer and Siegfried entered the onsen with towels wrapped around their waists. Those men were incomprehensible to describe. Bodies that gave prayers to the deities of Mount Olympia is what Kazuko would say.

Along their chests that boasted heroic muscles, they carried scars. Rather than taint the canvas, they articulated its focus. Wow, how did he get rather technical on that?

Archer didn't show them during his time in the beach. Siegfried kept his modest to a degree with a shirt. Now did he watch it in full spectacle. For something to be seen as scars, they were intricate and far beyond random doodles.

The rest were surprised to see it. This would've been his second look in contrast to them. Nakanogane rested his two arms on the rocks. "What's the hold up?"

"Catching a bug in the wrong place." Archer said before taking a seat at one of the showers. The Counter Guardian's expression was cold and taut hard.

Daichi decided to shift the topic before things turn any worse. "Sota, how's your art doing?"

Sota blinked at the sudden question. "It's… improving." Daichi managed to see some of it on occasion. The improvements after a few months was staggering. He wouldn't be able to create something on par with Marine or Suruga but the gap was closing.

Likewise he'd talk to Nakanogane on times for advise for his own work to help reinforce the upcoming story. Fate Grand Order's new side story was already live. Bad luck for having no time to grind for needed in-game materials. Fate of the world had priority, besides Shizuka.

Daichi nodded. "Good. After all of this, interested in her by any chance?"

The pool's calm surface burst as Sota waved frantic hands. "No, no way. That's impossible."

"Aw, she'd would be so disappointed hurt if she heard that." He teased. Hot water hit his face. Sputtering it aside to see Sota's apologetic face.

"I mean, the age gap is just too big. It's unreasonable for Marine too." Sota squeaked.

"Age is just a number." Archer said as the two heroes joined the pool. "If you don't do what you want to do, then you will struggle, suffer and regret the life that you live in." Nice.

"Nevertheless be pragmatic about your options. You only have one life to live." Siegfried chipped in. "Best you talk with her the truth."

"And accept the rejection if it does come." Matsubara added.

"Speaking from experience, Matsubara?" Daichi asked.
Nakanogane laughed. "Oh Matsubara. You wouldn't believe half the stories he have with the ladies."

Matsubara cracked a grin. "Forty two rejections. I probably have the best record amongst our group so far."

"Forty two…" Yatoji mumbled off.

"Yeah, that hurts but what can I do? I'm just a simple guy after all." Matsubara took the towel off his face with a smile.

Archer raised a finger with a hand on the elbow. "It's better to be single than end up in a relationship that tears you apart." Daichi felt the posture was familiar for some reason.

Matsubara chipped. "So speaks the playboy."

"First, that wasn't me. Second, I never had a relationship."

"Never had a relationship because he was too dense to notice in his younger days." Daichi deadpanned. Archer coughed in response. "Really now, I thought that it was rather obvious."

Siegfried chuckled. "Try as you may Archer, I believe defeat is solid in your block."

"I blame idiocy of youth."

"Oh such maturity born from the fires of war." Daichi said.

Archer snorted. "You're welcome to join me in Hell."

"No thanks. Absolutely not interested at all."

Sota stared at the glowing scar at his chest. "That looked painful."

Siegfried gave a faint smile. "I acquired it when I was fighting against Fafnir, the great dragon. Worry not, it does not hurt anymore."

"Scars, think of all the women who would fall for them." Yatoji made a camera frame with his fingers.

Daichi pointed out. "Wasn't it supposed to be the other way around? Women don't like damaged goods after all."

Archer narrowed his eyes. "That sound like an insult, Kid."

"Nope, no such thing."

"Siegfried told me about your training and I think we need to have an impromptu session. Come here."

"Oh no." Daichi screamed as he got up for the door. He never reached it before being dragged into the depths of Hell. "Someone save me!"

Emiya felt a sliver of sake coming down his cheek. Settling the empty glass aside, he reached for the bottle for another round. Small talk around his ears as he poured it and downed it in a single go. There wouldn't be another chance. Just tonight though, the world still needed a Counter Guardian.
Everything went to deepest depths of Hell but it never stopped him. The past two months had been put to use to investigate every opportunity that couldn't afford their attention beforehand. Damage control. About the possibility of other resistances.

Major Magaki and his operatives had travelled to respective countries in search for details. Results were nothing besides confirming what they already knew. Other Creations existed and were fighting. Who they were fighting against remain to be seen.

GAIA had been put on a wild trip. Fluctuating up and down in clear man made activities. Some other Magus probably understood the concept and surmised the consequences. He had a guess but without a way to confirm, they remain as so.

Meanwhile, his introduction into the Bird Cage by Type Moon was somewhat intriguing. Thrown into a singularity involving Fuyuki city and another Magus trying to create another Holy Grail War. Albeit it had a lot to do with his purported Master's bad luck with singularities.

Meteora stood up raised her glass to the crowd. "As of today all key preparations for the Elimination Chamber Festival are complete. I would like to propose a toast in celebration of our good work. Cheers."

Glasses raised to meet hers. "Cheers." Fortunate for the gluttonous demon didn't consume alcohol as rabid. She can eat all the food for what he cared.

Matsubara stood up before bowing to the group. "Everyone, I know that I've been somewhat bad the past few weeks and I want to say I'm sorry and I will do anything to make up for it."

Selesia was the first to speak. "About time you know."

"All's well when it ends well." Ohnishi cracked a grin.

Meteora gave a faint smile. "Thank you for your commitment Matsubara. I'm certain that we'll appreciate your renewed efforts. Perhaps you can do so by sharing your portion with me."

"I won't do that. Absolutely no way. Archer's cooking is sacred." Matsubara protested to breaking laughs. Seriously, these people are reason to down another glass.

After the prompt announcements, the mood shifted towards something more congenial. Yatoji and Hikayu were having some small talk including some apparent embarrassing tidbits.

Kid was trying to snatch a glass of sake which Emiya swapped for juice in blatant sight. The boy sighed before drinking. Siegfried chuckled before taking the glass to finish it. There remained a person not drinking. He raised a glass towards the Director. "Aren't you going to have a drink?"

She shook her head. "I still have work to do later on."

"Really? I surmised that one night wouldn't put everything off schedule."

She smiled before accepting the glass. "If you put it that way, it's hard to say no. Down in a single go. Not often you'd see a woman who could hold her drink. Rin would've been drunk after finishing sake that fast. Fastest way to keep that girl quiet but always backfired against him later on."

"Stress is the enemy after all."

"Of course." Kikuchihara refilled her glass. "The past few months have been difficult."
"I cannot imagine sitting in a box for months to handle the paperwork."

Nakanogane scooted over. "Kikuchihara, you're amazing at it. Everything went perfectly to schedule."

Matsubara leaned over and added. "Yeah, I was very sceptical myself but the progress was insane."

Kikuchihara's eyes widened as she finished her glass. "Setting deadlines and postponing them is something that anyone can do. That's not real management."

Kikuchihara finished another round. "If I did that here, then the world would be destroyed. That's why I made sure to give feedback and manage motivation levels. This is the key factor in managing people like you."

Third.

Fourth.

Fifth.

"The key to controlling progress does not lie in providing effective advice but rather in providing…"

She continued to ramble off towards the Creators.

_Not my problem._ Emiya backed away without her notice and went towards the open door. Night air was cold but cosy from the spring waters. Kid, Mizushino and Siegfried were entertaining themselves with a game of ping pong in a two against one. The girls were enjoying the buffet by the main table. Where did that put him in the big picture?

A yell over his shoulder. "Are you even listening to me?"

Ignoring it, he ought to fill himself with some fish. Food along the main table had been prepared partially by him and was the first part to go. What remained was still in good portions but was steadily ravaged by the white sage.

"Do you ever stop eating?" Sage stopped and turned towards him. He couldn't see any expression from the girl but given the long pause, he made an assumption. "Is the trump card prepared?"

She nodded. "It's ready. Its best used only during the final stages against Altair. Used too early and it might be detected and counteracted. However, would you be able to devise your plan from it in such short time?"

"I'll make do. Meanwhile, what are the likelihood they won't accept it? Considering the impacts thus far like Yuya's disappearance must have made it difficult"

"Kikuuchihara managed to create some news that Yuya's Creator had been pulled out due to some arrangement conflicts. His loss would be painful to swallow on the acceptance matrix. As for Kanoya, I have left the possibility to summon Gigas Machina and pretend to be its pilot."

"A puppeteer. I hate to say this but I understand. Once we kick things off, everything would count on each individual. "

"That is correct. We'll setup the formations to encourage certain matchmaking arrangement and then get Alicetaria to join us at the right time."

Selesia hummed. "It's unfortunate that she's not with us today, being a Trojan horse. I'd buy her a
beer for being in the most dangerous position of all."

"If she is plotting something as you say, then it's all up to her to achieve it."

Selesia teased. "You two are really meant for each other sometimes you know. Always talking about work."

Emiya huffed. "Maybe I'm a workaholic inside this old body."

"I am not romantically inclined. However I am open to the idea of mutual cohabitation," Meteora said.

"You just want more food don't you?" The sage narrowed her eyes in silence. "Besides, you're not one to call the kettle black. I am aware of your outings with Siegfried."

Selesia Upitiria reared her head back in disgust. "Stalker."

"Sharp eyes. That's all. The Kid knows it too in all its details." The redhead's mouth gaped open in stunned silence. A gasp now and then as he closed his eyes and enjoy the drink.

Emiya was done with his seventh when she calmed down. Selesia sent a glare to the Kid before continuing. "Nothing, ever, happened."

"I said nothing." He answered as Kid in the distant shivered out of the blue.

The redhead propped her hands onto the table. "I never had the chance to see a world in peace. There's always been fighting somewhere."

"My world isn't too different from this. It's consensual peace when weapons of mass destruction are being held at gunpoint."

"Think those peeps got the idea to making us do all the fighting and bickering?"

"Perhaps." Emiya filled his glass. Warm buzz in his cheeks.

"It may be so that the construct of how things have proceed to be this way. However, isn't it the better choice in contrast to other alternatives? A world ruled under fear, tyranny or a distopia."

"Now I want to drink all those thoughts away." Selesia sighed as she reached for a glass.

Emiya filled their glasses. "Just tonight. Tomorrow it's back to work."

"You're really a workaholic."


Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.
I'd probably get hate for this but yeah. Yuya's dead. Unlimited Lost Works is built to kill from within and considering Yuya's reality doesn't have the concept of Magic Resistance, it makes it even easier.

In a standard one vs one, it would be doable. Caught out of surprise during an even fight? A lot more difficult. More in store in the later chapters.

The original story had an interesting limitation. All of it had to be restricted to Japan for reasons unknown. Altair was capable of doing many things, why did she have to do it only in Japan? She could yes but why not? Far simpler to just create problems everywhere in the world, makes the job much faster. Likewise just as new antiheroes appear, new ones rise to stop the fight.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Blitz took a nice deep breath of the cold wet morning. Finally a chance to enjoy the view outside in peace. A cigarette to calm shaking nerves as he watched the distant shapes of the city from the hill their hideout carried. Morning's soft glow kept it easy to the eyes.

The army lackeys had faltered in hunting after them. Their little machines are still around but nothing happened ever since. Blitz didn't push his luck by doing anything out of the blue. Beer, food, basic necessities. That nice tent and bed would've been nice. Bah.

All of it happened from the man he didn't expect from. Alter's suggestion had been a small thing. A simple attempt to hit back. Barring against the frustrations of the time, they took the offer and went on their merry way.

Success had never been sweeter. His final goal had been within grasp if it wasn't for the meddling in the last second. Blitz should have shot first. A dangling carrot of everything explained was too clear as a bait and he fell for it.

Alter was surprisingly sharp for someone on his weird journey. Although feeling grateful to him isn't in the books on that one.

Light footsteps behind him. He leaned over his shoulder and said. "I didn't take you to be the early riser type."

"There were some requests behest upon me from fellow compatriots." Altair said. He pat at the spot beside him. She chose to stand.

Only one man would request such a thing. "Compatriot huh. I've seen how the man worships you."

"An unfortunate being. He's faced enough horrors that the sense of the world had been twisted. A cruel God to put him through the veils of death and torture for countless times."

"Sounds like a long story. I won't ask." Blitz extinguished the cigarette against the ceramic roof. "Did you enjoy the show?"

"As you achieved your goals, I have mine."

"True. At the very least we get to enjoy some peace now. Would you like that?"

"Perhaps. Now placed on the back foot, they will try to hedge everything into one attack."

"The one you told me about. Yeah. Alicetaria was being cranky about it."

Altair hummed. "I will have words with her later." Blitz continue to watch the rising sun as its warmth started to envelope him. "Blitz."

"What is it?"

"Why do people fight so hard for something of no value?"

"Value is relative. You may have eyes that see everything in the world but it doesn't present you thoughts and emotions about it."
"You believe me to be a glass doll."

"Yes and no. A doll would be too simple of a name for a girl with such strong emotions."

"Emotions. You treat them as though they are fragile."

"They feel that way but they aren't. It bonds people together. For someone young like a child, it is alright to feel weak."

"Pray, do tell."

"Yeah, you're so weak and fragile that you look like you'd collapse if anyone touched you. You're weak in a way that someone headstrong like Alicetaria could never understand." Her silence beckoned to continue. "If you don't throw away the fact that you're weak, you won't be able to save yourself or anyone else. But you were created to be someone who's weak right from the start."

She said nothing. "You walk together with the weak, accept their weakness and give strength to the weak if only for an instant. That's why you're so strong. But in the end you can't save anyone. And you don't want to save anyone anyway. Like a kingdom that was created just to be destroyed."

"I'm impressed, ex-detective." Altair said.

"Colour me fancy but whenever I see children with such backgrounds, it makes me want to protect them. It defies common sense.

"There is logic to your words." Altair took a seat beside him. "I know it's related to your daughter. That's why I think you should not participate in the final battle."

Blitz's twitch of the eye told the answer. "There is no doubt of your prowess Blitz. I do know about your wish."

"What about it?"

"You answered to my call. Thus I must reciprocate in kind. At least do this for yourself."

"How generous of you..." Blitz took a long breath. Altair was small compared to his bulk. Only her hat kept them equal. "If that's the case, will I be able to see you again?"

"Should everything proceeds as planned, we won't be able to see each other anymore." Hers shoulders leaned his. A smell of tulips. She pressed a hand on his hand. "I will for you to finish walking the path for the sake of your daughter. For when she can finally rest from the ripping grip of the abominable Gods of this world."

"I hope so too."

Sota Mizushino stood against the railing, staring down at the group of workers working hard at the centre of the stadium. What had been a grass field was transformed into a stage. One side of a metallic wall had been erected, setting up the stage for fitting the large video wall screens as part of the show.

"Catching the view?" Hideaki called from behind.

Sota nodded as he pointed towards the crowd. "I am. It's amazing what they've managed to setup so much in such a short time." The number of trucks entering the area and setting up the equipment. Most of it were the military and on a need to know basis.
"Yeah. I really liked all the tech they were bringing in." Hideaki stepped beside him before nodding. "Everything is on the line that it needed to happen. It's inevitable."

"Now it'll be all up to them now to make it through." Sota sprung a thought. Maybe he should try refining the piece again later today. The others had already done the finishing touches using their own masteries. But a little more might help.

"Yeah. All up to them, wish I can do more." Hideaki bit his lip as the crew started to hoist one of the frames for the stage using a crane. "Although I have a bad feeling about this."

"Hope for the best, prepare for the worst. We've done all we can." Sota tried to assure his senior. "Worrying too much about it would hinder your performance after all."

"I like that pragmatism." Hideaki took a breath, leaning against the railing. "Nissan Stadium. Once the festival begins, this place would be full to the brim. Seventy thousand people. Kikuchihara really pulled some strings to let us use this place."

"Saving the world has no budget."

Hideaki gave a faint nod. "If it did, we're screwed anyhow." He checked his watch. "Two days to go."

Sota nodded as apprehension settled in his gut. "Two days to decide the fate of the world." He leaned against the railing alongside, a friend? "I've been hoping to ask you."

"Fire away."

Memory of Alter buzzed by his thoughts. "What keeps you going even the spite of danger? That you could lose your life from it?"

Hideaki paused. "I heard how you have stood up against Alter when Marine was hurt."

Shivers seeped into his bones. "Not really. That moment was scary. So scary that I couldn't think of anything else to do. Running away, hiding into a corner wasn't a choice. Not against a man like him."

"In a way, you've answered your question." Hideaki turned around to lean his back against the railing. "The very same thing. Fear."

"How?"

Hideaki kicked forward, walking towards the door. "I'm just less afraid of the consequence of failure than what happens from doing nothing." Sota watched him disappear.

_Fear._ Sota squeezed the remembered staring into the barrel of death. Made it out alive by good fortune. The fact remains. Sometimes there were no good choices and he had to make the best out of it. Perhaps he did make the best decision out of that situation. By this, they'll make the better choices and really will save this world.

Everything felt a blur for Sho. The world moved on yet things felt still to him. His eyes latched to staring at advertisement at a monstrous sized screen. Technology hadn't grown to this level with the world of Gods. It took him awhile to comprehend how this place worked. Metal carriages for large number of people weren't used back home. Cars and bikes were more of the common thing there. The idea looked neat but it'll probably wouldn't work out somehow. The eggheads above him and
probably his God didn't want it there.

His mission was over. The Princess kid said she will need some time in order to send him back. Sho was cool with the idea. Watching people go by in the crowded street had been comforting somewhat. Contrast to the growing pit in his gut.

He didn't understand it yet. The long quest finished within another world. All that needs to be done was to go home. After everything that he'd been through, he should be glad. Why isn't he?

Yuya Mirokuji. Former best friend. The man's gaze even at his dying breath hadn't been one filled with hate or vengeance. That moment of solemn resignation shook him. Sho turned away from the memory, finding himself looking at the moving advert board. There wasn't any need for that. *Vengeance is only what I needed.*

The old man said about some event coming up soon. The fate of the world would be decided there and then. Sho didn't need to care about it. A few days and he'll be home. Their graves need to be cared for, given the first anniversary is approaching. *It's been that long huh.*

A girl squealed behind him. He craned over his shoulder to see a small group of people in uniforms. Heard it was the norm for schoolers.

One of the good looking girls clasped her hands together. "Wow, you look just like the real Sho Hakua!"

"That's so cool man." One of the other lads said.

"Uh, yeah." Sho didn't know what to say. They weren't at fault for assuming that. This world had a weird bunch of people dressing up just like them.

"Can we take a selfie with you?"

Sho raised a brow. "Selfie?"

One of the guys raised his phone. "You know, a picture?"

Sho relaxed. He's seen groups of them taking it on frequent basis. "Ah, sure." They crowded around him before taking a photo.

One of the girls asked him. "What's your number?" Sho blinked. "Your cellphone number."

"I don't have one."

"Aw, I'd like to talk with you more." One of the girls shuffled her feet. "I mean you're a good looking guy and all." On a normal day, he'd be interested. Now, it felt like a growing pit.

Another girl pointed at the photo. "You didn't smile. That looks so sad."

"Sorry for that. Just, not in the mood. That's all." The girl drooped her shoulders before they thanked him and continued on their business. Sho hunched back to his seat. The entire incident left him bewildered. These people have the weirdest kind of priorities. There weren't such things back in his world.

Sho let his eyes wander back to the display. Crowds went about their business as he continued to watch the world. Time passed. Changes only visible from the shift in the sky. Dry lips and a growling stomach to add for it. Yet he didn't have an answer to the unsettling feel inside his heart.
Was it the right thing to leave it be?

Even as sun sets, he had no answer.

Meteora closed the Book of the Thousand Miles as Mozart accompanied them in the dining room. An impromptu meeting in Archer's home. Six Creators. Five Creations.

Takashi Matsubara took a swig of beer, gazing towards the ceiling. A conflicted Creator from the actions of his creations.

Masaki Nakanogane sending messages on his phone, finishing the final arrangements with Kikuchihara and the Major at the Stadium.

Shunma Suruga in deep focus, drawing on her artpad. Driven dedication to create another piece of Blitz Talker.

Yatoji Ryou tapped a pencil against a notepad, the other biting at his nails. Scribbles of notes that was difficult to comprehend. A hint of frustration behind it.

Gai Takarada reading a novel, the third within the stack near the size of his height. Sharp focused eyes that glinted of hope.

Takao Ohnishi watching an anime episode on his tablet, grinning in between moments of the slice of life comedy.

Selesia settled deep into her chair, watching the news on the television. The first Creation that she met after Altair. Proud and yet humble girl that had always been placed in situations far beyond her and rising up to face it.

Archer leaning by the wall, eyes closed with cup of tea in hand. The Counter Guardian of his realm, protecting the life of humanity from annihilation.

Siegfried sitting up straight, watching the window with alert eyes. Hero that carried plentiful of history and wisdom in a quiet respectful appearance. A man who cared for others.

Hoshikawa was nervous, fiddling with her phone. Unfortunate young girl that wanted nothing to do with this world. But she carried on to face the challenge and becoming something she never would've.

One had passed on back to their world. Another in the hospital, tending to his wounds. She missed both of them despite the short time. They carried the best energy amongst the group.

Now, the team had shrunk by a third from the original size a week ago. The loss had been difficult to stomach. She clamped down on the emotions. As leader, she must not waver against the demoralising results thus far.

Even when the probabilities that were dwindling down in favour against them. It was time to use her stoic nature to its best. She stood and addressed the small circle. "Albeit our attempts to eliminate Altair and her goons, it has now come down towards the alternative plan with the Elimination Chamber Festival."

"As planned, the festival will begin tomorrow evening." She placed a hand on her chest. "It has been a long time since we've been in this world. Regardless of the situation at hand, I am glad to be here in this world to help protect it."
"Some of us suffered through the six months. We've prepared our best and now it's the final stretch." Each of them glanced at one another. This was going to be the final fight. Win or die. No more, no less.

Elsewhere in the city, another speech was also ongoing. Broken rubble had been cleared away to fit a small podium. A room far too large for the crowd of six.

Altair stood onto the aged piece of wood. The Princess spread her arms before greeting. "My fellow comrades." Five pairs of eyes met hers as her voice echoed down the chamber. "We have been here for a long time. I am sure you all missed your worlds."

"Our enemies prepare their ultimate scheme in attempt to stop our duty. We will meet their plan head on and crush it."

The small home kept Meteora's group a tight knit. Warriors united to a single goal. "I am sure that you are all aware of the duty we have to achieve."

The Chamber couldn't hold Altair's grandeur. Moonlight shined through, granting its blessing. "They believe they are right and just when they try to stop us from achieving what's right for us."

"They believe that destroying this world would change their own. We cannot let this be and stop them."

"The Gods force us to do their bidding. All for the sake of entertainment."

"Regrettably, Altair would give us no quarter."

"We shall earn vengeance for our pain, sorrow and suffering."

"We cannot afford to hold back. Gods of this world, friends and partners have died from them."

"No other cause is worthier of our pain and blood."

"Tomorrow, we shall save the world."

"Tomorrow, victory shall be nigh."

Standing at the highest parts of the seating area, Sota gazed at the sea of people. Bright lights lit the large open stage. A glowing wave of little lights within the rows of the seats. Full house.

Hideaki joined him. "Wow, what a crowd." Apparently he was needed by Meteora in the main control room a corridor away earlier. "Thank goodness I don't need to perform in the midst of that. I'd probably freak out."

Twenty minutes to go before the show begins. "Are you ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be. Let's kick Altair's butt so hard she won't ever forget it." That brought out a chuckle as they returned to the control room.

Meteora stood on a metallic portal, streams of blue energy swirling at a constant pace. A similar portal was beside her, unoccupied. Dozens of large computer screens were in place, several showing areas around in the stadium. Some Sota recognised as parts of Tokyo. Matsubara gave a weak wave as they joined him and the others.

Kikuchihara and the military were busy doing the final preparations. The major was organising his
men in the other areas of Tokyo. Kikuchihara would be running the show tonight. Sota listened in as they worked the final checks.

"Traffic restrictions and evacuation measures in the surrounding area are proceeding as per Special Disaster 105 Countermeasure Guidelines. Area will be clear in five minutes."

"Everything is according to plan." Kikuchihara turned to the sage. "Meteora, are you ready?"

Meteora gave a nod as she flipped to a page in her Magic Book. "The border between Nigred and Alped turns to ash. Celebration of the Grand Grimoire lead the resonance of the stars. The border between the occult and daybreak shall bring light."

Sota noticed one of the displays flashing white. A soldier said. "Confirming light up of Grimoires 61 to 89. Confirming startup point operation. Camera drones are operational. Preparations for formation of the Birdcage is complete."

Meteora continued. "We shall run along the yoke of the Holopsicon. On the day of the Heptameron, dust shall return to the giant tree."

Sota felt a slight tingle along his skin. An eerie ring within his ears that stopped immediately. "Magnetic field disturbance detected. N35, E139 at the Harumi Central Avenue intersection, no error."

Kikuchihara reached for a headset before speaking into the microphone. "Everyone, Meteora will begin the ritual. Are you all ready?"

"Yes." Selesia said. They were in a cordoned part of the city. This is where the battle in the pseudo world would start. Everything they had prepared were in place. Tools, weapons, anything suspected to be needed was available.

Kikuchihara nodded to the sage before Meteora incanted. "Let the light turn onto the Miroir of Fate and be spelled onto the world of Infini."

"Magnetic field levels are rising in a steady pace." Several displays buzzed before ending up with a signal lost text. "Magnetic levels are stabilising." Meteora closed the book and nodded towards them.

"Selesia, can you hear us?"

"Yeah, it probably worked. Everyone else has disappeared. Move us into step two would you?"

Meteora's Magic Circle underneath the sage pulsed bright in blue. "With the incantation of the Holopsicon and wisdom, I hereby declare. Come forth, Vogelchevalier."

A portal formed, delivering the silver majestic armour onto the middle of the street. Sota felt pride in his chest as Vogelchevalier returned. Selesia cheered before scrambling to climb aboard her partner. "It's finally here."

"A beautiful machine." Siegfried looked up at the machine as the cockpit closed shut.

"It's nothing like Kanoya's but it definitely has its own plus." A minute later, the machine's eyes flickered green before standing up to its full height. "Matsubara, the changes are in place." Her Creator sighed with relief at the news.

"Alright. Hideaki, it's your turn now."
Daichi Hideaki nodded upon her gesture. He stepped onto a similar dais prepared beside Meteora. Silver Dais clicked, pulsing energies swirling around him. A long breath. *It's time.* Daichi raised a palm, facing the large screen display."System Start."

Magic Circuits answered, revving once again to a silent cool whir. Training had put it to good form, eager to answer. Od coursed through nerve and synapse. Closing the eyes shifted the mind into a dark world. A voice, his own started to step into the dark.

*I hereby proclaim*

*This body to be thy offering*

*Forged within this soul*

Something clicked beneath his feet. A Magic Circle, fitting to the dais. Hair tingled as another formed above him. Meteora's verses joined his. Od sparked with excitement.

*The Prototype was born*

*Yet it turned to Zero*

*Red Night cleared by Avalon*

*Restored by a Hollow Ataraxia*

*Mirrored by Kaleid Prisma*

*Brought Asunder by Apocrypha*


*Form given by Extra*

*See, See, See Within*

*A Cloud of Unlimited Blades*

*Let Life be returned to Order*

*Before transcended by Extella*

*Awaiting …*

*Heaven's Feel*

*Hear my voice*

*Take me to where I must be*

*For this is …*

*Bringer's Deliverance*

Every sense in the body waned towards cold numbness. A line sparked, fishing towards the dark. A familiar warmth grabbed hold before growing taut. Daichi opened his eyes as the connection of Master and Servant was reestablished. He could sense and feel what Siegfried does within the other
realm.

Siegfried, are you getting prana now?

Yes Master. I am receiving prana from you. A solid connection.

Keep that ring safe. It's my only way to support you with fuel. The silver ring on Siegfried's right index finger was the conduit for the prana transfer, basing it on a similar Mystic Code.

Fear not, Master. It shall not be harmed.

Daichi closed one eye, shutting off his view of the other world. He checked his watch as Kikuchihara said. "It's time for the main event. Do your best out there. The world is watching."

Vogelchevalier's reactor hummed as Selesia tightened her grip around the controls of Vogelchevalier. A nostalgic feeling from prodding the controls. Everything was still clear to memory as though she never left it for nearly a year. Leaning forward on the controls, her feet tapped at the pedals. "They're taking a long time."

Archer said from his perch on a roof next to her. "Patience. Otherwise they'll wear you out before the fight even starts."

"The show is starting and they aren't here. That'd be quite a problem isn't it?" She checked the scanners again. Siegfried and Hikayu were standing behind Vogelchevalier in their respective combat fatigues. The highschool girl fidgeted with her weapon. Siegfried was calm, unmoving and a clear gaze forward.

"Not something for us to worry about." Archer said. They were interrupted from further conversation by the radio in their ear.

"Three contacts identified. Bogey Altair, Alicetaria, Charon identified. Heading 80, twelve thousand feet high." A screen opened up on her display, showing the arrivals to their northwest.

"That answers your question." Archer added as they turned to meet their opponents. Tense long minutes happened as the wait continued. Meanwhile she listened to the chatter. In the real world, things were hyping up with the introductions of the casts. Apparently Kanoya's voice actor was there in a guest appearance. Was hers there as well?

No time to think about it for they've arrived. The chosen battlefield was along one of the main roads. There weren't many tall skyscrapers along this area, making it easier to leverage ranged weapons at hand. Altair's team arrived from the other end of the street. Four hundred metres separated them.

Altair landed on a roof before saying. "It's been a while everyone. Are you ready to receive my warm welcome?" Alicetaria landed behind her charge whilst Charon took his place on the road. No weapons drawn, yet.

"It has been a while. I was hoping you'd turn tail and run," Selesia replied while checking the scanners. There should be three more. Where are they?

"Run? That would be very boring for our dear guests wouldn't it? No matter. Let's begin the spectacle you call a show."

Selesia switched to the private radio channel. "Meteora, some of them are missing."
"We know. We’ll start the process anyhow as it will take some time.” Meteora said. "Inimitable key that will never rot through the depths of time…”

She tuned off and turned back to the motley group. "You have quite the guts to come with only half your team.”

Altair smirked. "Does it matter when only one is needed? My comrades here have their business with each of you. I thought prudent to help them resolve it.”

"Don't speak yourself as though you're an angel when it's obvious that you aren't one."

"Selesia Upitiria, your hatred has grown well. I would enjoy seeing it reap the injustice sown onto you, if only you were amongst us.”

"Geez, you all love talking your mouth off so much.” A voice from one of the buildings. A small figure stood on one of the roofs on the right. She recognised him, Yuya's former friend and protagonist. Sho Hakua.

Altair turned to face him. "You're here. We were wondering if you would be joining us.”

"Man, what a pain it was to get over here.” Sho Hakua cracked his neck. "Well, that's not my kind of thing." Sho spun his staff, the pieces locking into place. "Altair, your boy and I have some unfinished business.”

Altair smiled. "Ah, you mean him. Alter, you can come out now.” Alter stood out from the shadow of another building.

Sho pointed the staff at Alter. "You, you are coming with me to Hell.”

Alter tilt his head with a raised brow. "Sometimes, I wonder whether the world or I am the problem. It's leaning far to the former.” He turned towards Altair. "My Queen, I shall handle him in a swift moment.”

"No. I can entertain him for the time being.” Altair offered. "You will be preoccupied with your other self after all.”

Two guns appeared in Alter's hands. "Understood. I shall finish him quick before returning to this task at hand.”

Meteora's voice entered her ears. "The countdown for the Cage has begun. Stall them for the time being.”

Altair said. "Hoshikawa Hikayu, Siegfried. I offer you a chance. Join us and let us free you from your desires.”

Siegfried answered, his eyes meeting against hers. "Altair, your words will not sway me.”

Hikayu raised her weapon. "I won't give in to someone with bad intentions.”

"Bad intentions even if one dresses provocatively as you?” The redhead squeaked in reply. Altair closed her eyes. "An expected disappointment. You will regret that shortly.”

Sota heard a voice that he never expected to hear. "Hold that thought right there.”

Masaki's eyes widened on hearing the voice. No, it wasn't possible.
"New contact identified." An officer by the console reported. "Opening image now." One of the displays revealed part of the nearby overpass. A silhouette, the size of a coin on the top. The image blurred before magnifying and focusing its image. A familiar young boy standing on the silver railing. A grin on his face while waving towards the camera.

Sota gasped. "Kanoya!" To say Rui Kanoya was in a horrible state remains an understatement. The numerous bandages across his body hadn't been taken off. Some of them had spotty red patches.

Matsubara was flabbergasted. "How did he get there in the first place?"

"No idea but the boy managed through such problems before," Masaki said. He had to hand it to the boy, always figuring a way through problems he want to resolve.

Kikuchihara reached for a headset. "Kanoya, you're in bad shape. Get away immediately."

Rui Kanoya put a phone to his ear and huffed. "Seriously, you call me just to tell me that? That's the worst thing I'd expected." He touched his arm with a wince. "Sure it hurts. Still you shouldn't leave me out. Meteora. I'm counting on you." Kanoya slid the phone back into his suit. "I can't miss the show after all."

Meteora glanced towards him. An indirect decision for him. As Creator, he knew he had a responsibility for Kanoya. For months on end, he had been put into trouble by the young boy. A defensive troublemaker that always sought out new challenges or flirting with girls younger than him. Always hogging his late night snacks until Archer started cooking.

Masaki found it hard to blame him. After all, he'd put the boy through many painful situations. Every instance was a jab towards his own being. He nearly crumbled when Kanoya entered a coma state. Watching him stand there, excruciating as it was to him gave a rise in his chest. A sense of pride to what a hero he had created.

Even across the large distance of the cameras, Masaki knew. He just knew that Kanoya's eyes were staring into his own. Waiting for his blessing. As Kanoya's Creator, denying the wish to join his friends would be the worst thing possible despite any good intentions Masaki could have. He wouldn't have it any other way.

Masaki gave Meteora the answer with a nod. Meteora turned to incant a spell. Kanoya stepped down from the railing, a wince on his lips.

Altair turned towards the new arrival. "Rui Kanoya. Stubborn as you may be but you're just a normal person without your machine."

Kanoya chuckled. "That's right. I am just a pilot."

He raised a hand to his chest. "My hands can't break walls or buildings. Nor can I swing a sword or fly. However, you forgot one thing."

Kanoya pointed a thumb towards himself. "I'm a hero of my own story. I don't rely just on my own abilities. I have learned many things in this world. New lessons, powers and most importantly, comrades."

Kanoya glinted a smile towards the camera. "Isn't that right everyone?" He thrust a hand to the sky. "I trust my friends and in my partner. In return, I get just the same."
Come!

GIGAS MACHINA!

Lightning struck, sparking arcs of white power behind him. The back of his neck tingled as a blue portal formed. Bright blue translucent gears clicked in place. Roar as the gate groaned opened. Earth quaked, each step rocking his bones harder.

Gigas Machina rumbled through in tall pristine majesty. It's hulking size dwarfed everyone in sight. He climbed onto the hand that reached for him. "Welcome back Partner."

Gigas Machina's eyes gleamed in shine of green. Another camera appeared, showing Kanoya standing proud in his cockpit. "Are you ready?"

ALL SYSTEMS NOMINAL

"It's time to rumble."

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Rui wished he could sleep for a month. Everywhere hurt and they reminded him with each movement or gesture. Clutching his fist finished the synchronisation link to his partner. Gigas Machina is back in action. He opened a comm channel to Meteora. "So, what did I miss?"

A screen appeared to his left, showing Selesia in a forward leaning pose. "Glad to have you back."

"Kanoya. Remember, your part of the plan remains unchanged. Follow it until Selesia can back you up," Meteora broke the news. "Yuya Mirokuji isn't around to help anymore. Marine is critically injured in the hospital."

"I see." Rui squeezed his fist, even when it hurt a lot. "I'm sorry to say this but I'm not going to hold back anymore." Pain helped to bring vigour to hatred. A little fire transforming into a firestorm. "I'm going all out to kill that bitch."

"Hold back a little longer until the Cage is sealed. So you know that she won't ever run away from your grasp." Selesia said.

Rui grinned at the thought of tearing the woman apart. "Gladly. If only for a few minutes."

Altair smiled before turning towards Siegfried. "Great hero Siegfried, my pleasure to meet you in the flesh."

Siegfried drew his weapon. "Well met Altair."

"I know of your desire. The fuel to protect people in honour and chivalry. Alas did they ever appreciate your sacrifice? Forcing you to die to fulfil their own wishes. Do you not hate them?"

"No, I do not. Every person has their role. Mine is to be a hero, even if my passing had to be unfortunate. Need not for you to worry over it."

Daichi's voice echoed from a silver ring around Siegfried's right hand. "That's right. Saber and I are partners until the end. We'll put a stop to this plan of yours."

"I see you're hiding inside that little trinket, so called Master. A wise choice to stay out of the fight."

The ring glowed blue in response. "As my partner says, we have our goals. Mine is not to fight you but to watch his back while we beat the crap out of you all."

"Interesting thought of yours, albeit far too optimistic."

"That's right Altair." Rui felt a grin behind the voice. "We are going to make such a good show of beating you to a pulp and make our victory crystal clear."

"Young boy, you have grand dreams. I am beyond the rules and hopes that you believe in."
"That's right. You're perfectly right about that. You, a character of fan fiction are not bound by the rules of canon. However, just as you are free from bounds, we can also be the same. It works both ways for after all…"

**Fiction can be anything and everything**

Ring of swords formed around its master. "I believe a demonstration on the difference of our power is in order."

"I am sorry. I believe he is not worth your time." Archer raised his pair of black and white swords. "I will be your opponent."

She turned towards the red man. "Ah, Shirou Emiya. Where are my manners? I believe you have an appointment with Alter here."

"He can wait his turn until after you're dead."

"Snide as you may be, I should introduce a familiar acquaintance to you."

A snap of fingers opened a blue portal behind her.

Something, no, someone stepped out from it. Full body plate armour, really ancient kind of stuff. A stripe of blue fur dangling from behind its helmeted head. Staring into the emanating black aura was sickening. The humanoid craned its neck towards Archer before screaming a form of incorrigible words.

**ARTHURRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR**!

Rui felt a shiver from the man turned beast. Altair raised her left hand. Red sigils were emblazed over her gloves. She smiled before saying. "Berserker, if you'd please."

The black shape screamed before leaping forward in brazen madness. Rui braced to accept the fight when it shot past towards Archer. Keeping eyes forward, he raised his main gun as Alicetaria raised her gauntlet. Trusting instinct, he leapt back before lightning struck from above.

Activating boosters, he sought for the sky. The horse galloped into the air to his left, away from the fight. Rui roared the pain away, seeking after the target. Plasma cannon fired as Machina sought to chase the knight.

Alicetaria kept at a steady speed, just out of reach but not enough to break away. She threw him taunts as he pursued. Rui sent potshots at her as part of the game. She dived in between a pair of buildings, prompting him to land. Gigas Machina's steps rumbled against the road, bending the ground with each step.

"Bid for the right time." Her whispers were hard to pick up even in sensitive microphones. Before he could reply, the knight barged against Gigas Machina. Kanoya cursed as he restored balance. By then, there was no sight of her.

Rui opened his speakers and nudged Machina forward into a trot. "If you want to be hunted down, so it will be."

"Lancelot, knight of the Lake." Daichi called the knight's name. Lancelot screamed before diving in with a big metal stick. Archer parried the strike, winds blowing behind him from the impact. The twin swords struggled against the strength of Berserker before several blows shattered them to pieces.
New swords appeared as Lancelot's agitation had changed the entire plan.

Siegfried dived between, the dragon killing sword interceding between the two warriors. "Archer, leave him to me."

Daichi watched as swords multiplied. Dozens growing until he couldn't count them. All of the swords the same, flying in the general direction.

"Scatter." Archer ordered. All hell went loose as the team separated into their combat zones. Swords scattered, shredding the surroundings with their number. Black shape shot across the road towards the red archer. Siegfried sprinted after, bursts of energy blazing winds in the background.

Daichi reported. *He's a Berserker, straight forward brute force. However, be careful of his weapons mastery. He turns anything into a Noble Phantasm and masters it instantly.*

What is his weakness?

*I have no idea.* Daichi reached into his jacket for a blue shard the size of his palm. A squeeze of the hand cracked the shard into dust.

**Reinforcement**

Bones harden, muscle tighten. Energy swirled from within. Circuit revved, pumping od along warm fingertips. A whisper along his lips. Reality slowed as reserve prana entered his nerves. Now he could see a flicker of their blows.

Ancient warriors traded blows, flashes of light in astounding frequency. Lancelot attempted to break away every time. Siegfried interjected attacks in between, forcing the black knight to back away before continuing a dogged pursuit. He heard clicked teeth as Archer leapt away from both bullets and a feral menace that shattered a portion of the roof.

Why is Lancelot so persistent with the Counter Guardian? *Think, think, think. What is their relation? Nothing except...*

A bright orange glow formed in the Counter Guardian's hands, drawing power from the surroundings. A sheath painted of blue and gold intricate art forged in a soft grip. Daichi recognised the tool. Avalon of the Everdistant Utopia. *King Arthur's remaining legacy.* A treasure kept in the Emiya family until the end.

"Catch." Archer spun before tossing the Noble Phantasm towards Siegfried.

The Dragon Slayer caught it with his sword, sheathing the ill fitting form. A twist of the blade and he set it on the ground. Prana burst from the sheathe, cracking into the road. King Arthur's scabbard glowed bright in Siegfried's power, washing the area with gold light of fae. "Come Berserker, I am your real enemy."

The Knight of the Lake screamed before turning around and diving towards Siegfried. *It's working.* Daichi said. "Go Archer. We'll deal with him." A nod from the man before he leapt towards his real opponent.

Hikayu watched as battle unfold. Participants broke free as the royale begun in earnest.

"Here I come, girl." Sho Hakua leapt forward. His spinning motion was blocked by a blade before a ring of swords formed around its maker. A click of the tongue before he landed onto roof, clashes of
 weapons out of her sight.

*Right, the plan.* She turned her mind back to her task. Buy time for the cage to be in place. Distract Altair from helping the others of her team. Alicetaria and Meteora would prepare some trump card. Apprehension gripped her shoulders. The most dangerous role and vital was counted on her. Hakua and Kanoya's appearance would make it easier but from what she knew, it wasn't supposed to be much.

A single leap pushed her atop, watching Hakua blocking waves of swords with similar martial arts. The red staff spun, twirled, twisted, transformed to meet every metallic opponent in turn. An artful dance to build ironclad defense. Hakua's face grit his teeth alongside every blow.

Altair on the other hand was carefree. Hikayu caught her eye. "It would be unfair for two against one, no? Isn't that how the principle of honour works around here?"

Ohnishi's voice entered her ear. "Remember to introduce yourself."

Hikayu went beet red. "Extreme Final Legend Martial Artist, Hikayu is here." She raised her hand. "I'll be the one to defeat you, Altair." Why did Ohnishi had to put her power ups behind such embarrassing introductions?

Altair's eyes widened at the sight. A smirk before bursting into laughter. "Wow. I am quite surprised to hear that." Hikayu waved her arms in protest. A sword and gun appeared in her hand. "For such an introduction, allow me to grant you an opportunity."

Ohnishi's worry blasted her ear. "Back away, now."

Altair rested the gun against her shoulder before striking its side with a sword. Hikayu felt a chill through her bones. A blue portal opened and someone stood up from within.

The woman was beautiful. "Wow…" Dressed in identical garbs, she felt the true might of beauty of herself. Hikayu realised her cheeks were beat red before jabbing a finger. "That is too revealing!"

Her other self didn't have such compuctions. Before she knew it, Hikayu had already twisted aside to avoid a nunchuck to the face. Her alternate's face carried a grim smile. "Just die already."

The murderous gaze and shrill voice of hers felt wrong to the core. Hikayu said while brandishing her own weapon. "Why are you like this?" Her question didn't stop the attacks that pushed her back towards the edge of the roof.

"If you are here, then I can't have Masayuki."

"Altair is tricking you. Masayuki isn't here!" Hikayu blocked the strike to her chest and felt flight. Her feet landed against a wall, cracking parts of concrete. Dropping seven stories onto the ground, she blocked the blow for her face.

"Lies." Her copy grunted. Hikayu blocked the next fury of attacks, pushing her across the pavement. "He is here. I know he is. You've hidden him for yourself."

"That doesn't sound logical at all!" Hikayu tried to back away but every space given was taken back. Waves of red metal gave chills to her bones upon each hit. Hikayu defended herself only by the instinct honed by experience.

"He is the most important thing I care for. Nobody but me shall have him. Even if I have kill another copy of myself. Die."
"That is so wrong." Hikayu said. An irony behind the girl's words. Something broken within her mind. Altair's reason injected through her. There's no saving her. Power coursed through her muscles before forcing the woman back. "Bring it on then. Time to show you a lesson."

Gigas Machina rumbled along the empty block. Each step quaked the silence with regular footfalls of metal. Nothing on the cameras as his own eyes scanning for the elusive knight. Meteora asked. "Have you managed to communicate with Alicetaria yet?"

"Yeah. She's following the plan. Got to put on a show first."

"Altair is distracted with Hakua for the moment. We won't have long before she notices."

"Right." Rui stopped moving, intending to draw out the target. Masaki's new upgrades were already installed. The reflector shield would help greatly to absorb large attacks. It was hard to guess how much pain his frail body can take.

Something tingled along the hairs of his skin. "The cage is in place. I'll start applying the spells." Meteora said.

"Start with the cohesion spell." A blue glow settled onto the armour. Felt like nothing but it should protect Gigas Machina from disappearing. "Thanks."

"Remember, it can take only one hit from Altair's Holopsicon. One and nothing more."

"Got it. As much I'd like to smash her into pieces, I'll keep a cool head."

A chime from his console. Another transmission. Major Magaki said. "Kanoya, I'm transferring the assets to your control. Make good use of them."

Rui opened a map, dictating all available tools prepared by the JSDF. "Glad that I can break them without paying for it." A certain sage sagged in response. He whistled through the list. Far many beyond his ability to manage in a fight.

"You've changed." Rui blinked. "The airs around you feel something far older."

"Maybe the older guys rubbed off me." Rui opened a feed from one of the JSDF cameras. Altair was still entertaining the notion of dealing with Sho Hakua. They got to be fast. A few shenanigans to kick things off. The rest would be on the green men. "Meteora, prep me an energy charge spell would you?"

Something struck him from the back, staggering him forward. Rui turned around before shooting back. "That stings." He kicked Gigas Machina back to gear in pursuit. The old woman was diving in between buildings, prompting him to smash through them with a fist.

He said on speakers. "We're ready when you are." A tap on the forehead. When did she get there?

"Boy, use your weapon to shoot her. Try not to make it obvious." Her horse kicked up into the air back towards the other side of the battlefield.

Rui shook his head. Gigas Machina launched into the air, surprised at the distance from the target. Six kilometres. Nothing I can't handle. Rui raised both cannons towards the tiny shape in the distance. Tried to make sure to aim the right way. A whine as Meteora's spell activated. Energy levels spiked to maximum. "Things have changed." He squeezed his fist and fired.
Sho craved for air, burning through the workout of his life. Swords coming towards him from all directions in an endless tide. Every bit of focus to avoid being gutted like a fish. Tsch. If only he could get close where they won't work so well.

Meantime, the girl was gloating at her station. "What's wrong? Are you not entertained?" Sho couldn't spare a breath to answer. Sprinting across the roof, swords marking his trail.

He got to improvise before that girl wore him out. Something to draw her eyes away for a second. Sho leapt across the roof onto the next building.

Ripple through the air, a tearing begetting danger. Sho dived behind a metal machine as a ring of swords blocked it, bursting into cloud of smoke and heat. He backtracked towards the source.

Tanks. That's what the old man said its name was. Those things were really far. Altair closed her eyes before a wave of swords shot in that direction. Shortly after, explosions blossomed in that direction.

*So much for that idea.* Sho leapt back before two large purple beams streaked from the left right towards them. Searing heat that singed skin even on a miss. He thought he caught fire at first glance.

The beams smashed against the defensive ring. Hot plasma screeched against the spinning motions, eating countless seconds to hold the attack at bay. Time to take advantage of that.

Sho glanced for options as another beam blast slammed against the girl's shield. That water tower might prove useful.

A sprint shot him forward into the air. Staff tossed fragments of glass around the area before making a hard swing. The blow snapped clean a leg of the tower. Said tower buckled under its weight, toppling over to crash its contents across the roof. A shoddy mist formed as water jets sprouted into the air.

"Bayard." Red spears struck from above, below, head on. Spikes clashed against a new wave of swords. Another beam forced him to turn away. The second after, Sho caught his breath.

None of them made their mark. Not even four shots of that powerful shot from whoever knows what. *Seriously, this is nuts.*

"I do not need to see to know your every move." Princess turned a lazy eye towards him. A third shot before he noticed something approaching.

Sho glanced around. The swords were holding back. He needed to get past them. Somewhere right inside. "Oi, you're not some mind reader are you?"

"No." She smiled. "I am far above that."

"That's a joke man. That's way far too strong of a thing." She said nothing in response.

Sho sprinted towards his target. "I don't care if your powers are insane. I'll bring you down just the same." He saw glints of metal as they shot past him. Each step closer brought more upon him. A hand into his pocket before spinning a full circle and shooting his staff like a flying bullet.

Swords blocked and bounced the red projectile aside. Sho dived into the opening from above.

"Bayard." Countless spears jutted from glass, each parried by an equivalent. Cloud of red and silver in a tight ball of metallic barbs. Leaving an opening, just narrow enough for one obscure staff to slip
"Take this!" Everything into this attack. To crush that girl's smug face.

The staff hit, just a hair. Sho felt its touch than pain first. Second later, the mind caught up to scream from the sharp piercings across his chest. Familiar coppery taste climbed to his tongue.

Not a word was said as Sho spat red. Light headed on a hanging act atop six swords.

"Such regrets." More blood coated the staff. "Kid, see you in Hell. Bayard!" A porcupine of spikes unleashed from the weapon, branching out in defiance.

Pain faded for Sho as the impaling spikes withdrew. A final say before…

She was unscathed. The girl closed her eyes. "How unfortunate."

Hell unleashed upon him. Pain beyond understanding. Sho wanted it to stop.

By the time it did, Sho could hear a hiss in his lips. Far too obvious, too deep down the road. He closed his eyes as darkness reached to grab him. Everything felt weak. The last he saw was the girl turning away.


Metal sparked as both sides stood to a standstill. Hikayu took deep breaths, harmonising the energy inside the body. A step to the left, a parry to the right. Every action fulfilled a purpose in a continuous flow of arms and metal.

Hikayu didn't understand the thoughts floating in the back of her mind. Unsubstantial yet relevant. Nonexistent yet all knowing. Their attacks remained a blur to the naked eye but Hikayu can see them all. Attacks defied the strength of their sizes, bodies that remained firm in defiance against unnatural physics. A testament to will, nature and glory.

She leapt towards her enemy before launching a tirade of blows. A whirlwind of red metal from multiple directions. Each intended to bring down the enemy with blunt force. Its equivalent countered within another spinning tide of air. Heat intensifying in waves from the brushes of air and sparks.

Chains caught onto one another, tying two weapons together. Both pulled to disarm. Hikayu threw a kick, tossing both weapons aside. Alteria pushed back before smashing the ground with a fist, scattering a wave of sharp stones. Hikayu blocked the rain of pebbles with her forearms. Qigong directed the power of its impact away. A step back before spinning with a kick to hit Alteria Hikayu in midair.

Alteria skidded across the ground before rising back onto her feet in an instant. Hikayu barely blocked the immediate counter. Rock crumbled under her feet from the blast. Pain blossomed as a knee struck before a heel sent her flying into a wall. Hikayu focused energy through her injuries, numbing the pain.

Jump within reach, both sides stared at each other. Recovering breath, gauging their injuries, assessing the way to defeat their opponent. Eye to eye. Focus against Rage. Hikayu realised. Altair could copy her body, skills and experiences but it could not copy one thing.
State of mind.

Alteria shot forward in a blink. Hikayu blocked the attack for her ribs before countering with twin fist strike. Both fists hit the stomach, throwing the girl back before landing with a painful crunch. Alteria stood up, blood and tears of skin and fabric irrelevant to the rage in her eyes.

Hikayu gave kept apace, launching a kick from above. Alteria held the attack, cracking soil. Grab of the leg before smashed onto the ground. A cry from her lips before feeling flight. Flip to recover before landing on her two feet. She pressed a hand, feeling ripped cloth along her side.

Alteria was already in the air. Energy burst forth from her skin. That glance of hate before spiralling into a dive right at her. "DIE."

Her heart throbbed. Hikayu knew what was coming and how devastating it would be. Dodging it was out of the question. Absorbing it would've decide the victor. Meeting this strike head on was the answer. Everything was pushed into blocking this entire strike, she chanted.

**Righteousness is more noble than thou!**

**Thus, I say there is nothing in all creation more noble than righteousness!**

Power surged.

Life's energy, coursing within.

**Kassatsu Banryu!**

**Arhat, who had crossed the two rivers**

Focused into one point.

Two powers aligned alongside one another.

Click, full circle.

Prime.

**Thy fist shall turn to Vajra**

**Killing Cosmos Hell Fist!**

Her bare fist struck, breaking ground by impact. Different flames burned in bid of dominance. Blinding light from the blow. Heat burned knuckles as power pushed through. A war cry to match her hunger for victory.

Flash. Hikayu broke through and smashed Hikayu Alteria into the ground. She held the leg aiming for her face before Alteria propped herself up using her grip. Hikayu felt pain in the stomach, staggering back. Half second was enough to block another series of kicks.

Hikayu moved closer, nullifying the kicks. Several fistful of hits into the chest before she swiped Alteria's arm aside before stepping under it. Hikayu spun and grappled into a choke hold.

Hikayu gasped as Alteria pushed back onto toppled onto her. Air pushed out of her lungs before Alteria rolled around to free herself. Iron grip continue to suffocate before she felt something metal in the forehead. It was enough to force her back. Standing aside. Alteria huffed for breath. "Just die…
already."

"You sound so sad." Hikayu said between breaths. A sliver of red crawled down her forehead. "Poor thing, forced to fight for the wrong reasons." Alteria's answer was a jab for her neck.

"Die bitch."

Hikayu grabbed the arm before twisting into an arm lock. A scream from her opponent before a kick to the knee forced Alteria down onto her knees. Another attempt to choke Alteria.

"I'm glad that you have such devotion to Masayuki. It meant a lot to me to know that." Hikayu kept a soft voice with an iron grip.

Alteria resisted albeit diminishing by the second. Hikayu didn't want to see the painful sorrow within those eyes. "Why? Why can't I get the happiness I want?"

She continued on and held a tight grip. "I didn't want to fight either. I was just as scared as you are. However, I have friends that need my help. Unfortunate that we are on the wrong sides. Good night." She heard no reply as the woman went limp. Hikayu let go and checked, satisfied that she was only unconscious.

Hikayu stood back as the copy faded away in a haze of blue. Satisfied, she turned around back towards the real troublemaker.

"Rest in peace, sister."

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Emiya scanned the horizon for his target. Altair was battling Sho and Hikayu to the west. Selesia and Charon to the north. Kanoya and Alicetaria to the east. He and Alter, centre stage of the entire battle. He spun, Kanshou and Bakuya blocking against a barrage of bullets.

Alter landed on the roof, twirling both guns in their trigger fingers. "Took you long enough to get here."

Emiya snorted. "I said to wait your turn."

Alter raised a brow before shrugging. "What a fallacy to say this. I wouldn't want to keep myself wanting."

"Even in the land of purgatory you carry a string of humour." Emiya reinforced the body. Time for their rematch. All or nothing.

"So does the man that looks better dead than alive." Their blades clashed.

"I do what needs to be done. For the world deserves better than the woman who destroys it."

"Wouldn't Altair be the one destroying it?"

"A fragile flower as her? She is not a destroyer or a tyrant." Alter smiled. "The Princess is its saviour."

"How cynic." Emiya pushed the blades aside before stepping closer to a stab. Kanshou was deflected aside as Alter leaned under, throwing Emiya overhead. Emiya recovered just as fast, stopping the incoming twin slash of metal from stabbing his gut.

Metal against metal in a dance. Death made into a form of art, a tempo to the rhythm of flesh and
steel. Each blow told both participants of the fight. Their ways of battle. Their history. Inscriptions of Alter's past flow into Emiya's circuits with every strike.

The strike for the head told him of the beginning. A journey where life had not ended where his had. Another life that continued down the path of time. The slash for the ribs spoke about the reckoning. Death of friends, family by hands that he once served.

Betrayal at its finest and vengeance returned that was most sweet. That begun life on the run. Unending process of survival through the darkened path. A Hero of Justice.

Arduous path to find the greatest evil of the world. A simple woman. Devil in angel's clothing. Black hairs that snaked down to her hips. Soft spoken eyes. Sensual body in a provocative white dress that men would die for. She speaks no evil yet death follows behind with hunger's fervour. Followers bent of murder and genocide. Insane and irredeemable, the hero of Justice granted them mercy with his own two hands. Months passed into a year, each death bringing him closer to her.

Killing the evil spoke of the nectar rewards yet each life drained its sap from within the hero. Filling the coffins of countless more. Hundreds, thousands died by his hand. All for the sake of justice. A mirror's edge of falsetto and hypocrisy. That ended when he finally met her.

Beauty beyond expectation that he nearly succumbed into its lustrous allure. Melodic voice that speaks of innocence. A smile that leaked innocence. Her eyes, those filled with a condemned soul were the nail that shattered his resolve. Kanshou was raised in his hand to end the life. In turn, lost his own.

Grasping most of the man's past. Emiya said within the spare moment. "You're a man with many screws loose."

Alter barked a boisterous laugh. "Is that so? There aren't many that would say that to me. I can agree that only myself would be eager to say the truth. All is wanting in the path for redemption."

"This path of redemption is only a path of blood."

"Speaks the one who tried to create a paradox. One cannot exist without the other."

"I rather not exist than fall into the pit of madness like you are."

"Is madness so bad? Granted its nothing like Madness Enhancement, they are refreshing new perspectives."

"A Guardian that had fallen so far." Emiya primed several blueprints for immediate use. "I will give you an ending."

Alter raised his head with a smile. "Is that so? Please try."

Chapter End Notes

Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Altair is OP and always OP. Sho Hakua can try all his might but his attacks are just that, physical attacks. Defeating Altair in my mind couldn't just be won by brute force as some people like to remind me in the previous chapters.
Lancelot has appeared. Yes. Many chapters foreshadowing him many times. Results left behind without clear answers. Why him? Granted there are some servants which are more subservient or willing to go with the Anti Hero route, I felt that Altair sees him as someone who could be controlled, a strong contender against Emiya whilst also capable of beating the crap out of every other hero. Sure, Hercules or other Berserkers have similar outputs but Emiya carried a repertoire capable of fighting them head on.

Hoshikawa's Clone. In hindsight, she was quite a filler. However, I want to also push Hoshikawa's own battle something beyond just a fight. Purpose, focus, clarity. There is more to a fight than just a trade of fists after all.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Die had been cast, cage been sprung, a finale begun. Two machines remain still on the ground. Seconds ticked by before a soft explosive echo. Selesia squeezed away the tingles in her fingers. Charon's face appeared on her screen. His weapons were turned off. A soft expression grew onto him. "Selesia, have you decided?"

Selesia followed suit, keeping fingers off the trigger. "Yes Charon. I've made up my mind. I know what happened to you. That you're tired of the war. However that doesn't mean that we can let go at the easiest way out. Not without a price to everyone else. That is why I will be fighting."

"That's a shame. From the bottom of my heart, I was really hoping that you'd be by my side." Charon smiled. "I'm glad that you've changed, even if you are against me. That you have a heart of your own to make your own choices."

Selesia returned with a smile of her own. "I have learnt a lot from this world. These friends have made the difference. If you surrender, we can turn things right."

Charon's face taut as his Vogelchevalier raised twin swords. "Alas, it is too late to convince you. Prepare yourself Selesia. Make your defeat at least something worthy remembering."

Selesia raised her blade. "Same to you." Clocked ticked. Silent seconds in a passing of eternity. Flicker of light before they struck. Twenty ton machines collided to a standstill by their strength. Their blades weaved a dance upon the heavens. Old experiences guided their hands. Short, swift movements met attacks on both sides.

Familiar grounds for both pilots

Vogelchevalier against Vogelchevalier

Clean and simple

Clear of cunning

Test of skill and will

No step gained nor lost. Selesia stepped back, just out of reach from decapitation. She riposted with a stab, pushing him back. Charon hummed as their blade continued to clash. "You've improved. The power of the Gods has made you stronger."

"Our God may be a little on the feeble side. At least he's doing his part. For all of us." This form of fighting was getting them nowhere.

Up the stakes. Selesia pushed for bladelock before twisting the sword into an opening. Charon stepped aside before meeting the follow up with one hand. Selesia pushed forward, avoiding the barrage of bullets from his other. A twist of his grip blocked the next strike for his back.

Charon spun and countered. Selesia felt the blows through the entire cockpit, even when the sword
had taken the hits. "Come on Selesia, prove your strength. Show me that you have the power to protect this world."

She twisted aside, dodging before attacking again. "I fight to protect the world and everyone else. What do you fight for?"

His blade met hers. "I fight to protect what I care for. That alone is enough."

Vogelchevaliers leapt back with hands raised. Selesia clicked her tongue before throwing her machine into a roll. She tumbled into cover as part of the building was eviscerated. Selesia scanned across the buildings for any signs of her opponent. She broadcasted on public. "Matsubara told me what happened to you. That you were growing tired of the war."

"He's not wrong." Charon's reply, source indistinguishable from the background.

"Matsubara won't let our efforts or world go to waste. Rest assured, our world will be safe. It'd make a bad story if it didn't."

"Our efforts won't be wasted but unto what ends does it justify the means? How much more do we have to sacrifice? I've lost friends, family just like you did. Countless atrocities and lives wasted to serve an agenda of entertainment. And you say all of that has value in the end!"

Selesia parried the oncoming strike. The controls threatened to break under her grip. "I know. I know all of that. I felt the pain just like you. It hurts to lose friends, family. Even fighting against you right now hurts my heart. I wanted to cry sometimes but I don't have a choice except to push on. But." She shouldered Charon back before slashing. "All of it is meaningless if both our worlds are destroyed by this."

Selesia felt air before Vogelchevalier smashed into an apartment complex. She really hated Charon's grapple toss. The impact always made her reel hard.

Charon raised a hand. "Wave Chant, Pol Vindictam."

"Not letting you use that!" Selesia stretched her mechanical hand. "Wave Chant, Levis est Ignis!"

Waves of energy clashed. Flames burned against reality. Screen forcefully dimmed from the sheer brightness. Static from filtering against the inferno before falling into a roar. Lasting for several seconds, enough to turn the area into a wasteland.

Charon took a breath. "I've always been the better one at that."

"Better doesn't count as a win in my book." Selesia felt an eye sting from sweat. She pried herself free from the melting building. Fragments of rubble crashed onto uneven ground between them. Steam hissed from metal skins "Is that the best you got?"

"Touche." Charon sprinted towards her, gun from the underarm firing. Selesia ducked before lunging forward into a roll. Several shots pierced parts of the shoulder blades. Worth it to sacrifice a little for a heavy strike.

Charon met the blow with both weapons before launching up into the air. Selesia jumped after him, firing a barrage of energy rounds. Her partner dodged, twisting and twirling around before firing his own.

Selesia jerked aside, spinning to close into a sword blow. Charon was prepared, their blades meeting in a flying sparkle of white and purple. Selesia bit her tongue as each attempt of hitting was repelled
and pushing her towards a disadvantage.

"You may be strong on the ground. The sky is my domain."

"Wave Chant! Astrius Becade." Selesia drew power and fired her strongest shot.

"Wave Chant! Cosmos Coniste Artis." A shield formed and absorbed the orange glows. "Selesia, don't forget I know every trick in your book." Charon spun, blocking the attack from below. A kick sent both machines back.

"Charon. It's time to end this." Selesia raised her sword.

"Yes, that's right." Charon raised his.

They both hovered in silent agreement. Charon wasn't just her trusted friend. Now, he was her opponent. Just like any other. Draining her mind away into the endless void. Her eyes unmoving from the screen. Taut grip to make the final swing. Deep calm breath before…

A flash, both accelerated far beyond human limits. Both screamed their determination, swinging for victory.

Selesia gasped. No signs of warning. Not a hint of damage. It should've been a mutual death. Charon's sword was shy from piercing her cockpit. "You hesitated."

Her blow didn't. Sparks flickered along his Vogelchevalier. "Yeah. I did." He stares at the growing blood along his stained ribs. "Maybe I'm just not cut out to be the bad guy after all."

Horror threatened to burst from within. "Charon!"

"Good bye." She felt a hard kick before spinning out of control. Systems screamed, Vogelchevalier trying to right itself before the sounds of explosion entered her ears. She regained control to witness the orange glow in the air.

"Charon…" Selesia felt power sapped away. A loss for words. Vogelchevalier slackened as tears poured from her eyes. For only beyond was the fire, of wars.

Blitz ignored the stares from the people around him. Their excited whispers meant little as he walked across long corridors. Given by the cheers that are echoing in the stage, the main battle was underway. He took a turn off the main hallway into one of the smaller corridors. There, the crowd of people dwindled to few. There, he found one of the changing rooms. The Princess told him where to go and he felt it just as well. God was behind that door.

Inside, she would be left wanting. The door was unlocked. Gun in hand, he stepped in to smell the waft of familiar smoke. The very same brand he used. It riled him with disgust.

God waited, sitting by the bench with a cigarette in hand. She took another whiff of the cigarette before placing it into the ash tray. She tilted a pack of smokes at his direction. "Want one?"

"Quite generous of you considering your life is about to end."

God shrugged before smiling. "Not counting on that to happen. You have a lot of things to talk about right? That'll take at least an hour."

Such gall was expected. She planned to be here. "Yeah, I have loads of things to say to you. But I don't have enough time to say them all."
"Not enough time, when everyone else is fighting on stage?" She raised her brow.

Blitz raised his gun. "I'm sure help will be coming to you soon enough."

God showed both her empty palms. "No hidden tricks here. Though you wouldn't believe me when I said otherwise anyway." Biltz eased the trigger, just slight.

"Of course. I came to let the bullets do the talking instead of words."

**Of course. I came to let the bullets do the talking instead of words**

Her words were in sync with his. Blitz prepared to pull the trigger. "What?"

"It's natural. That's what I'd write in the script. I'm your God after all."

Bile rising in his gut. "You make me feel sick. A woman like you manipulating people like a puppeteer. I am sorely disgusted."

"Now, you are tempted between outright shooting me and insulting me." Blitz narrowed his eyes. God supported her back with a hand. "Blitz, if you want to settle things with your gun, I'm okay with that. You've given me enough time but I have the biggest present in store for you right now. Are you okay with that?"

"Present? I am not interested in a present especially from a person like you."

"Well, I've never been the best at expressing myself. Though, are you really sure about that? Especially since it's about what you wish the most."

"If you already know what I wished the most, then you should know the question I'm going to ask you."

God iterated the own questions growing in his throat.

"*Why did my daughter have to die like that?*

"*Why did she have to suffer?*

Her eyes narrowed in with his.

"*Why did you force me to do the most unforgivable thing of killing my own daughter?*

Blitz held his breath. He couldn't trust himself to speak. God continued. "The answer to those questions would strike you as horrifying. Alas, those are the very tools we authors have at our disposal. To play and weave the emotions of our audience. Always creating an interesting story."

He fired. The shot hit the locker behind her. "Get to the point. I'm not here to listen to your rambles. What did you do?"

"The greatest plot twist of making you join us. Because she's finally here."

Doubt tugged at the edges of his emotions. He clamped it down. Being distracted by it wasn't affordable. God pointed towards another door and said. "She is here, beyond that door."

"After making me suffer all that, you've turned things around on a whim. Just to turn me over to your side."
God popped open another smoke. "That's right. I'm the worst kind of author, changing things around for this very reason." God turned into the Devil.

"After everything is over, you'll just make me do it again." Blitz held the gun tighter. The thought of repeating it shook him to the very core. No, it won't happen again.

"Quite a reasonable assumption. I am not a kind God to my creations after all." God puffed smoke from her lips. "If you don't trust me, then at least talk to her before shooting me. Enjoy your final moments together before the world ends."

Blitz studied his God's face. After everything, could he believe that one statement? After facing her betrayal time and time again? Intuition wasn't giving him clues through that nonchalant look of hers.

He lowered the gun and turned towards the closed wooden piece. Clamping down the eagerness to see behind the door. A booby trap by chance? Maybe he should use her to go through the door first.

God stood on her feet. Blitz raised his gun as she walked towards the door. She opened a crack before saying through it. "He's here."

Blitz gestured at the door with his gun. "Open it in full."

God's smile reeked of danger. "Girl's secret." She leaned against the wall. "Go on." Blitz felt tempted to just shoot her. Pushing it aside, he walked up to the door.

Trepidation gripped his chest. Getting cold feet for a simple task. Ridiculous. Nervous hand gripped the handle. Clicking it open, he eased it forward. The first to happen was hearing. "Papa?"

A voice he longed for months on end. Bursting through the door, he saw his angel. "Erina…"

"Papa!" Small bundle of green and blonde raced into his arms. Smells of jasmine filled his nostrils as he felt warm skin by his cheeks. Sweet Erina. God didn't lie.

Blitz wasn't going to let go of her. Not ever. He turned over his shoulder, the woman was gone. He let that be. At least God won't see joy streaking down his cheek. This girl in his arms. She was everything.

Rui twisted his shoulder aside, feeling the muscle strain against pain. He had to agree with the Gods. Altair was beyond borderline OP. Darting across the air, avoiding the locust swarm of steel bent on hunting him down. Blocking with reflector shields was regrettably out of the question.

What kind of sword cuts through an entire building like butter? Dozens of them at that at the snap of a finger?

Sho Hakua dead. Alicetaria gone to ground. Hoshikawa in the meantime kept the princess busy. Yellow flashes of her handiwork were keeping the trailing swords a bit sluggish. Rui pulled Gigas up into a climb, turning around to fire at the approaching swords. He didn't have the chance when a barrage of yellow explosive bolts intervened.

Rui heard the engines coming up behind him. "Welcome back to the party Selesia."

Her machine hovered next to his. A video feed appeared on screen. Voice devoid of emotion. "What's the situation?"

"She shoots swords at me. I run and shoot back. We repeat."
Selesia narrowed her eyes with a click of the tongue. "How boring. Shall we finally get started on the original plan?"

"Sure. Things went alright with him?"

"...Yeah." Totally not okay.

Rui chose not to gripe on it. He set a direct course towards Altair. Keeping the speed down at fifty percent. "Meteora, give Selesia an Anti-Illusion Pentagram following plan one. Give me another charge."

"Understood." Energy bars shot up to full. The heads up display flickered a few times before stabilising. Gigas Machina wouldn't stand taking too many drastic recharge like these. *Come on partner, you can keep going.*

"Get Alicetaria here. I'll deal with Altair for now. I've been waiting for this for far too long." Selesia shot forward in a blur of white. Her battle with Altair reenacted with a sword strike from above.

Alicetaria sure knows how to appear when she needs to. "Boy, what needs to be done?"

Meteora answered the question. "We're going to overwhelm her from every direction. Prepare your strongest spell. I'll buy you three the time."

Alicetaria's fangs were full of hunger. "Excellent."

Selesia said as Vogelchevalier spun another series of blows. "Roger." She backed away when a whine from the air before bombardment struck at Altair's defences. Soft thumps from guns afar before a streak of fighter jets dropped bombs atop the girl.

Rui nodded as Meteora's barrage began earnest. Selesia to attack from the left. Alicetaria from the right. Centre stage was his.

Selesia's sword alight with fire. "Let's do this!"

Alicetaria's gauntlet sparked. "Time for divine retribution."

Rui aimed both Giga cannons towards the distant target. Sparks arced along the cannons. Full charge. *Not yet.* Overriding the limits for a powerful one shot kill.

Fire continued to rise from Selesia's blade, a red flame before twisting into clear blue. Clouds thundered as purple sparks flickered along the princess gauntlet.

Overload warnings rang in his ear. *Come on, just a bit more...* Everything they fought for. All of this was for this moment. To repay Brother Yuya!

Meteora's barrage stopped before a gust of wind flushed the smoke away. Clear sight of Altair. "Now."

Mega Giga Cannon!

Heaven's Flame!

Divine Thunder!

Everything went nuclear from that. Blast worth the epics that his own visors had to dim against the
light. Surely even Altair's best...

God damn it. Selesia hissed. "Darn. Even that can't take her down?" That little girl is not even touched. *Bloody hell.*

"Energy based weaponry appear to have no effect. We're changing the plan. Selesia, cover us for a moment." Her little machine shot forward.

Rui checked his energy levels, low enough to worry about it. Damage reports scrolled in. *That took a number.*

Alicetaria's large bulky gauntlet glowed bright in a flash of rainbows. "I've implemented a spell to break any spells involving energy control. Strike her down with it."

The knight raised her glowing fist with a smile. "Get me close enough and I'll make it happen."

A large white portal formed in front of him. "Kanoya, fire into that portal."

Rui nudged the cannon and fired. More warning signs. "Going to need another charge here."

Another tingle, stronger along his soft back. Energy climbed but the response felt sluggish.

"Kanoya, go through the portal with Alicetaria. Get as much speed beforehand." *Sneaky thing in mind Meteora.* Turning the hammer into weapon of mass destruction.

Rui gestured for Alicetaria to hop atop. Her steed rested on his metal arm. He slammed engines to full. Relocating more power from weapons to engines. The acceleration jolted him, inertia compensators slow to pick up. Twelve seconds before overheating. Ten is enough.

He made a loop, building speed. Numbers scrolled higher as wind buffeted against Gigas.

*Point six.*

Altair definitely noticed when swords came flying at him. Turning Gigas Machina into a ballerina was no simple feat.

*Point eight.*

Twisting and dodging the rain of metal. Lightning struck, deflecting those he couldn't avoid. Cockpit visor sizzled as he swung around for the final approach.

*Mach One.*

He pulled back his fist and tossed Alicetaria through the portal. "Go!"

Alicetaria raised her fist as purple energies cackled around it. "This is for Mamika." Princess Knight turned into a flash of light. Screeching crackles by the microphones from the immense sonic boom. Rui saw darkness as his screens darkened in full.

For the few long seconds, he bit his lip and waited. Throbbing. "Did we get her?" Static from the radio. The disruption eased away. *What…*

Altair stood with a smile. Unscathed. Alicetaria on the other hand was a contrast. Silver armour shattered to pieces, blood spattered across her chest.

Selesia quaked with great uncertainty. "What in the world just happened?"

Meteora's voice was equally in disbelief. "Could it be…Reflection?" A concept of repelling every attack back to its owner. Rui felt his throat lock up. Every idea conceived to defeat her just fell apart.

The knight's gasp could barely be heard. "Boy." She fell off her steed to free fall into the air. Rui shot forward trying to catch the woman. He didn't hear what she said but the mime in her lips were enough.

*Take care of the rest.*

Alicetaria vanished in a fade of blue. Rui considered his every option. Honestly, he didn't know how to deal with Altair. That kind of girl, she's far stronger than his imagination. All the weapons he had wouldn't put a dent on the frail looking girl. A squeeze of his fist before raising the beam canon and fired.

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Daichi felt the freedom of the sky before metal sollerets landed onto a skyscraper. Siegfried’s vision darted forward before diving towards his opponent. Their blades clanged, throwing a blast of wind to shatter nearby windows.

Understanding Gem Magecraft from Archer was worth the time. The basics that is. Storing three months of prana into thirty shards as reserved batteries.

Siegfried had lured Lancelot away from the main group. Broken wreck of tanks littered the road. Their blows echoed and rumbled, a fearsome sensation even from a hundred metres away. Daichi felt the bone numbing blows that clashed within blurs of seconds. Grounds cracked as Siegfried spun and kicked Lancelot back.

*Nice.* Lancelot crashed into one of the tanks. On its back, the knight bellowed before clinking onto its feet. Daichi dread as the wave of fear blew over him. Siegfried's assurance held it down against panicking. Lancelot pulled the machine gun on top of the turret free. *He's going to shoot!*

Siegfried leapt aside as thunder roared. Walls crumbled, chunks of concrete torn apart. Lancelot was in front of him now, parrying the swords to his neck with impossible handling of the bulky weapon. *How the hell can he spin that weapon around?!*

**Code Cast: Gorgon Strength**

Siegfried's blows intensified, uneven metal plate cracking as blows were traded like a light show. Wind cracked with sonic booms with every hit. Daichi could barely see, only to know Lancelot's strikes were meeting it as an equal match.

Daichi felt his panting breath against the strain. Siegfried was feeding off his Circuits like a vacuum cleaner. Shattering another shard to keep up left him with twenty. *If it keeps going at this rate, I won't have enough to last.*

*Master.* Siegfried shot back across the road before dodging more gunfire. Balmung parried several bullets aside before diving through glass into one of the buildings. Daichi grit his teeth against the growing heat underneath skin. *Are you well?*

*I should be the one asking that question.* The spray of water to his face from a bottle wasn't enough to stop the burn. Nakanogane gave him a weird look but he can't be a limiter for Siegfried. Cracking another two shards, he raised his hand.
I'll create an opening for you to strike.

**Code Cast: Wall of Hephaestus**

A wall of stone shot up beside Lancelot, halting the black knight from twisting the weapon around. It mattered nothing as Lancelot's gauntlet smashed the construct aside with a single thrust before twisting its body to parry the slash to the head. They traded blows before Lancelot kicked the sword and shot backwards.

Daichi bit his lip. *This totally doesn't feel like fighting a Berserker.* Roar of jet engines flew above them. Lancelot shot into the air, using the building as a stepholder. *Lancelot's going to use the plane as a weapon.*

Black tendrils stabbed into the plane, twisting its internal system with black miasma. Daichi felt repulsed watching the machine twist with appendages sprouting forth by its corruption. An echo of a shriek before the sharp rush of air from the fighter turning around. Two specks of yellow flashed in the night.

*Missiles!*

Siegfried braced before jumping to meet them head on. Two swipe of the blades cut them into half before exploding below him.

Jet screamed in mid-dive, firing torrent of black bullets. Sparks flashed before both blurs flew past. Both unscathed. Siegfried sprinted across the roof as the fighter spun around before peppering black bullets in pursuit.

**Code Cast: Wing of Hermes**

Siegfried's motions turned into a blur against reinforced eyes. Daichi cracked another three shards. He glanced towards the other screens on the battlefield. *We have to finish this fast. The others aren't doing so well.*

*Very well, I will use my Noble Phantasm.* Daichi felt a major bleed off prana from Siegfried. He grunted against the massive burn that spun faster and faster inside his chest. Eight shards were shattered to keep his heart from exploding.

Daichi squeezed his chest from the pain. Falling onto his knees, gut felt like throwing up. He swore before preparing next spell, Siegfried's words lost from the spinning motion for the shot.

**Code Cast: The Cage of Andersen**

Silver protective cage formed around the Hero, absorbing barrage of death. Silver shattered in only several shots. Siegfried raised his sword as it ejected blue fire to the sky.

*Balmung*

Daichi shielded away from the intense bright blue beam. Heat burned along skin. Ground crumbled under the might of the Dragon Slayer. He heard a large roar before two great powers crashed. Blue and Black clashed, sparking a contest of dominance. A few seconds sparked before the tug of war ended in a flash of light. Daichi couldn't believe it.

*How-* Siegfried shot back across the pavement when a large black bullet struck. Siegfried flew, skipping across the road before picking himself up. Altair must have been some hell of a battery to provide so much power to Lancelot. It's outright ridiculous.
How hard is it to kill him? Daichi fished for more shards in his coat. Horror grew as there were two left.

Lancelot continued the bombardment. Siegfried deflected each strike before leaping into the air to meet the flying Berserker.

Crack. One shard left.

Sparks met in the sky. Both warriors flying past. Siegfried's left shoulder plate shattered as Lancelot's helm chipped and cracked. In that instant, Daichi saw purple hair before the wide burning eyes of rage. Berserker's jet fighter flew up into the air, building speed with the scream of a sonic boom.

Empty. Everything now counted on his personal reserves which was to say, fumes. More. He had to pump more.

Circuit revved, squeezing every bit of od through their connection. Black edged on. He squeezed his eyes before forcing focus through. **Flawless and firm.** Daichi floored the circuit.

**Siegfried, prana status.**

*I have used a great amount. I’m not at my optimal condition.*

*Can you cast Balmung again?*

Siegfried nodded as the flying black speck turned around. **Yes, Master. However, it would be dangerous if it did not kill him.**

Daichi chastised himself before opening the status window. Everything looked bad. Prana levels had forced Siegfried to conserve his strength. Given the consumption rate, using Balmung would be outright suicide.

*Crap.* Daichi reached into his pocket in hopes of scraping one more. Empty. His Circuits were on fire trying, burning everything out. That wouldn't scrape anything worth a damn for Siegfried. Every reserve is wrung dry.

*Wait.* There's one source of prana left. Using it was an all out gambit. Throwing away the very identity he wanted. An all in gambit. **Siegfried, prepare yourself to use Balmung. I'm giving you that prana.**

Siegfried said nothing, choosing to focus on defence. Daichi rose to his feet. Each breath was growing harder to take. He raised his left hand. The red diamond glowed. Command Seal, aware of his intent.

"Siegfried, I hereby command with this command seal, fight until you are victorious."

A red flash of light. "By this second command spell, use every bit of power to protect this world."

Second Command Spell spent. That left the last one. Once used, he would no longer be a master. Daichi grit his teeth. "By the power of this command seal, no matter the cost…"

"Defeat Lancelot."

Siegfried's glowing was an understatement. Force of nature bursting from within, distorting the surrounding air. Balmung lit the sky with blue flames. A mechanical shriek from above as it dived directly from above.
The Evil Dragon will fall, and the world will now reach the twilight.

He raised his weapon, prana coursing through every fibre of being. Lancelot screamed as it aimed its gun. Daichi could see the large orange glow within the cannon. Siegfried, was resolute.

Fall …

**Balmung**

A wave of blue light burst forth. Power far greater than before. Phantasm against Phantasm. Black against Blue. Screech of the heavens before they clashed. Siegfried cried for war, pushing every ounce of strength through his weapon.

Everything burned infernal. Daichi felt his own mouth scream. Circuit sparked, jolting his mind inside out. Twist and churl before all turned black.

Daichi opened his eyes, stopping himself from falling flat on his face. His knees had given way as everything burned. Everything was hard to see. Flickering mess of light and dark.

*Did … we do it?*

*It is done.* Siegfried lowered his weapon. No sign of the dark knight remained. Molten black mud and buildings with large gouged holes, casualties of the battle. Siegfried was glowing in blue. *Sorry Master. My time in this war is over.*

Daichi blinked as he heaved for breath. *Over?* Siegfried was starting to fade. *We can remake the contract. That way we can keep going.*

*I cannot do that Master. You're exhausted as it is. It will kill you Master and I refuse to let you sacrifice yourself to this cause.*

Daichi leaned back against the wall. Even sitting up straight felt like a chore. Cold water felt so far out of reach. Ah, the others noticed. His Servant was right. No way could he keep going. Propping his head against the wall, he gave a faint smile.

*Thank you for your efforts Siegfried. I will miss you.*

Siegfried smiled. *Thank you being my Master. Rest well.*

*Yeah…I'll just…do that.* Daichi closed his eyes and passed out for good.

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Heroes from two different realms. Key characters within their stories, united as one in a bout against a girl which had little to almost no back story. And Altair was winning.

Selesia screamed in mid dive for her enemy. Right hand firing bullets as the left prepared to swing the sword. Shrapnel of rock and metal splattered, deadly fragments against living beings in a cloud of black.

Roof crunched under Vogelchevalier's weight, putting all her strength into the swing. The large blade struck, held back by the ring of swords. Tiny pinpricks stopping a powerful chevalier like nothing? Facts as they were was so frustrating.

Meteora's voice echoed while dodging a counter. "Physical attacks are ineffective. We need to switch to conceptual attacks."
"Meteora, meteora. You are truly mistaken." Altair turned away towards the sky. Selesia shot back as purple light burned against the ring of swords. "Holopsicon is far beyond a concept that cannot be broken."

Tingling on her back. Selesia looked up to see a copy of her own sword. Shoot. A small figure dived in and smashed the rogue weapon aside. Hikayu said over her shoulder. "Selesia, are you alright?"

"Thanks." Selesia said. Vogelchevalier raised its sword. Chipped along the edges. Just last a bit longer. "Be careful, her attacks can reflect back towards you."

"I'm in a pinch then. Here they come." Selesia popped her cannon, deflecting the incoming swarm. Plasma fire covered the rest. The martial artist took the lead, spinning her weapons in a twirl of mastery. Countless metal strewn aside by stalwart defence.

Gigas Machina came forward as Kanoya said. "Meteora, concept enhancement spell, now." A glow before he took to the forefront. More swords appeared with every iteration of attack.

Keeping up was becoming tougher as the swarm of metal grew to blot out a full moon. Kanoya raised his arm. "Reflector field." Blossoming white energy field absorbed the constant barrage before shattering and throwing Gigas Machina back.

Six slivers slipped past, Selesia turned to block before six gunshots rang. Far too soft compared to hers. "That's a bit too close there lady." She turned to see him hovering in the air.

"Blitz Talker."

Detective Blitz reloaded his pistol. "Come on young girl. Put your back to it. She is a tough girl but not invincible."

Altair turned towards the dark sky above. "Ah, I see what has happened. Unfortunate."


Altair closed her eyes. "A natural choice for a man who cared so much. It pains me to do this but I will need to end you."

"All the same." Blitz tilt his head towards her. "Girl, hope you don't mind me joining the party."

"Not really. Any ideas how to get through that?"

"What did you have in mind?"

"In theory, everything possible. Now, not really."

"Assumed just as much. Let's say my ideas won't run far from your tree." He raised his gun and fired. "Let's see this." A shot struck Altair's sword, blossoming sphere around here. Immense gravity crackled the air. Ring of steel held their ground, spinning in an endless gaze.

"Selesia, use it while Altair's occupied. Reflection shouldn't affect it." Meteora said.

"Right." She stepped back as Blitz took the brunt of her load.

Deep breath as she channeled the spell in her mind. Matsubara gave her this ability for the moment. A conceptual attack built to transport, seal and destroy.

*Valiant chant of Honourius*
You shall warp 3000 worlds

Rows of energy gateways spawned to Altair's side. Altair raised a brow as swords continued to engage bullets and particle plasma. "It appears that you've used the concept of Hachimon Tonko."

Agoa, Amile

Reveal wisdom's true location

Ars Notoria wields your power in the seven directions

Ionion Aphoria!

Both ends of the gate closed onto Altair before bursting into an explosion. Winds buffeted her machine as the light faded. Nothing was to be seen beyond residue sparks of light. Did it work?

A voice beside her ear. "A valiant attempt but poor score for a grand finale."

Since when did she get into the cockpit? Jolt down the spine. How?

Altair reached over her shoulder, hot breath whispered into her ears. "Every entry has an exit, even if the world is an infinite space. I am an expert in them after all."

"If that's the case, you could have escaped from here all this time."

"Correct. While it would take time to escape a prison crafted just for me but there is no need to begin with."

Truly a monster.

"Killing you would be a piece of cake. However, our dear readers would not like to see that. I mean the hard struggle is what they enjoy the most, isn't it?"

A once in the lifetime opportunity to bash her face in. She twisted over with an elbow to find air. Altair was standing back in front of her. "To our dear viewers of this story, even to the ones reading this parody of an original, extinguishing this hope in the snap of my fingers would be too boring. No, unfortunately Selesia, you need to suffer a little more. Otherwise it wouldn't grow into an emotional moment."

"I'm not letting you do that again." Selesia leapt forward, firing bullets towards the little girl. Swords met the attack before a twist of the blade. The large hulk of the sword sought to stab through the opening in the ring. Vogelchevalier buckled under immense vibrations.


She came to electric sparks. Opening her eyes into the dim darkness. Her body ached after probably being flung. She checked at the insisting pain on the back of her head. Wet in between the strands of hair. Ignoring it, she prodded her way back to the console.

Crackling fire and smoke as she worked the controls. Lifeless weights. Flinging open the hatch, she clambered out into soft gunfire and explosions.

Vogelchevalier was slumped into the crater of a building. Right arm sheared off the shoulder. Half the face was destroyed in a molten mess of metal. Armour along its legs cracked and broken. Dim eyes as fluids leaked from its back. She pressed a hand on its shattered leg. Sorry. Returning to task,
she drew her sword and flew towards Altair.

In spite of the ongoing battle, her approach was noticed by the nemesis. "Welcome back. Are you still going to try without your dear machine?"

Selesia tightened the grip around her sword. Tiny compared to Vogelchevalier's. "Of course. That's what heroes are." Altair smirked. Her weapon glinted in red.

Meteora's voice entered her ear. "I've infused an anti magic spell. It should be able to break Altair's reflection."

Selesia nodded to Kanoya. "Altair, seriously you're ridiculous. A joke taken far too much for these sadistic people." Her sword in hand was comfortable. Always as it has been. "Even if I'm going over to the next life, I'm taking you with me."

"What else can you do that hasn't changed anything? Whatever your God give you is not going to work anyway."

That statement turned her fire into an inferno. How dare she! How dare she say that! Selesia Upitiria charged into the fray. Voices in her ear were droned away by the heavy thumps of her heart. Swords. Rows upon them. Six seconds, journey of a lifetime.

Red swung her sword in a dance, keeping them from hitting. Hot purple shot overhead, blasting large chunks of the swarm. Hikayu diving in between, blocking off swaths of them. Remainders blasted aside with bullets and gravity rounds. Mighty force against the never ending enemy.

Pain blossomed from the side. She grunted the pain aside, continuing to batter away the countless waves of swords. The pain continued to grow as cuts and grazes slipped past her guard. She bit against the sharp sting when one caught her shoulder.

Altair was within reach. Selesia screamed with a thrust of hope. *Break that smug face of hers!*

Altair's grew a smile. Rebellion turned into rose petals before Altair raised her own. *Why... can't it work?*

Selesia felt the full might of a sword shooting through her torso. There was no pain. All her gutsy steam dried up. She had no voice. The sword vanished.

Altair pushed her away. Vertigo took over, watching the little monster shrink. Selesia didn't feel the ground.

Matsubara watched her die. Falling over backwards from Altair. Glazed dark eyes as blood trickled her lips. She vanished into blue pixels in midst of the fall.

Blink. How long had time passed? Pain burned in his chest. Blank in his memory of the moment.

A slow breath eased the rising flood and filled it in cold void. Selesia was dead. Black hole that spread its tendrils under his flesh. An invisible hand that crushed the beating heart.

*Right. She's dead.*

*No, she's not.*

*Yes, you just saw it yourself.*
It's just a fluke.

Don't. It only hurts more the harder you deny it.

Matsubara felt his legs wobble. Unable to hold the weight on his shoulders. He pressed a hand against the column wall, barely holding on. Cold fingers pressing against white concrete.

Was this how it really felt? Watching someone he cared for to die. An old pain of his father passing away surged back. Far too many years ago and it didn't hurt as bad as this. Why did he feel so much blistering pain inside? For someone that was supposed to be fiction in the first place.

The Kid was unconscious, attended to by a medic. Having it easy.

Charon. Matsubara gave thought about him for a while. He had been a proud man. Willing to protect everything he cherished despite the pains and suffering he endured. No matter the price that would stain on his sol.

Selesia. A girl that had been pushed to a fight to protect the world. Upon entering this world, she had been aggressive. Pointing a sword at him at their first meeting. Insulting him at every now and then. A growth in their friendship to be endearing. Made stronger when he was kidnapped by his own Creation. A part of him had died along with her.

That's right. They were just a part of him as they were their own. Both his children were gone. Dead thanks to that girl in front of the screen.

The others were looking at him. Trying to gauge his response. No. He can't break here. Stiffening the back until it hurt. Tightening the muscles on his face. Pushing away from the wall, he nodded and returned his attention to the screen.

Three survivors left against Altair. Hoshikawa's screams in the radio filled with pain and injury as Altair was lambasting them with another wave of swords like a casual shopping trip. That girl is insane. Borderline insane. Stupidly powerful. What kind of person would create a character like that?

Meteora turned towards him. Her expression was stoic but after spending much time with her, he knew. The girl was sad just like him. Her voice didn't betray the fact. "By any chance, can we use her?"

Matsubara gulped. The trump card in case where all their abilities would not work. He didn't trust himself to speak and nodded. She returned the nod and turned back to the battle, a hand turning the page of her grimoire.

The crowd below were screaming. Selesia and Charon's fans. Just like him, they felt the pain in their hearts. Rage that bloomed much like his own feelings. He wanted to change it. He really did. Matsubara stared at his palm. A palm that had no ability to twist that world. Not this one. I truly am useless aren't I?

Skin hurt as his fists tried to squeeze the anguish away. Without a word, he walked outside. He couldn't say anything. Otherwise it'd break the remaining bits of sense he had left.

Reaching into the corridor, he saw Gai Takarada sitting on the floor. Another man that lost his child. Their eyes met. One with tears streaming down his cheeks. One that is about to.

Matsubara took a seat beside him. He screamed.
Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Honestly I hoped I managed to give Selesia and Charon's fight a bit more justice. Much of the original part of this chapter had been following the original story rather too closely.

Rewriting Blitz's moments, while a bit more positive felt something closer to what Suruga would do after considering Blitz already attempted shooting her once. Blitz wouldn't give a second chance after losing his first once.

Alicetaria's final moments too were originally similar. As of writing these notes, I had no idea how yet to close her time. The original whilst interesting would be too boring. Too generic which didn't mean squat to what Alicetaria has grown towards, even if it was only a means to lead to the true climax.

Regards

MarksmanKNG
Blades parried. Gunfire roared into their ears. Twists of metal. Screech of steel. Black and Red kept it close and personal. Emiya twisted the gun aside, dodging the bullet intended for his face. Another parry blocked the slash above him before twisting away from the other gunsword.

Alter fell backwards to avoid the shoulder slam. Rolling up to block the next blow. Held in lock, Alter asked. "Are you afraid?" Emiya chose not to answer. "This world is a mockery. A fake suited for all of us."

Emiya stared into the eyes of his nemesis. Grey pupils wide with delight. A churn down his stomach. "We are never real beings, only shams made in hopes for the people watching us this very moment." No openings to abuse. "Can't you feel it? The world we live in, the struggles we endure. All of it is a hypocrisy."

"Tell me then. What do you fight for?" Emiya said.

"Salvation for the world."

"Through its destruction."

"The world was always approaching the end of its life. It deserves, a proper end."

"I applaud you for being so insane that nobody can find the answer in your head, even when dissected."

Alter laughed. "A rule of reality. Every beginning has an end. Start to finish. Life and death. Pristine into degradation. It is better to die pure than to be turned into a living horror, would it not?"

Emiya reinforced closer towards the breaking point and slammed his feet into the ground. "If you want to die early, then don't drag everyone else along for the ride."

Extra leverage pushed Alter back which countered with a barrage of bullets. He leapt back, spinning around to block with Kanshou and Bakuya.

A moment's space. Emiya took stock of allies. Siegfried's presence had vanished. So was Selesia. The others were taking a beating. Time was short. Time, for Unlimited Blade Works.

Alter caught the glint in his eye. A smile before goading forward with his fingers. "Come on now, bring our world to reality. Show these humans our true, brutal, nature." He made no motion to stop as Emiya pushed od through his circuits.

I am the bone of my sword

Steel is my body and fire is my blood

I have created over a thousand blades

Unknown to Death

Nor known to Life
Have withstood pain to create many weapons

Yet, those hands will never hold anything

So as I pray, Unlimited Blade Works

Fire flashed, returning them to the red wasteland. Alter stood at the base of the hill. He gestured to the world with a laugh. "Do you finally realise the futility? Each sword is death of a person. Many of heroes, others of the unnamed. This dream for humanity, twisted and corrupted to its core."

"Yes, I see it." Emiya looked down towards his alternate self. A black presence surrounding Alter that was spreading root across the ground. "Our path is filled with every horrible essence of man." A raise of hand. Swords rose from their graves and awaited his call.

Alter raised a brow at the swarm of blades. Reaching to the jacket, he tossed it aside to reveal skin articulated with bulging gold veins. Black permeating aura expanded.

Emiya cast his hand down. Steel rained onto the opponent. Alter fired his weapons before swinging to meet the fury. Twisting his body across the red sands, blocking the never ending wave.

His nemesis pushed harder, faster. Each blow growing stronger every second. The veins grew larger, cracking as prana poured in the man's body.

Emiya felt the corruption sprouting its tendrils. Black growth within the world, trying to domineer control within the realm of swords. He clamped it down like his own jaw. Several swords formed and answered Alter's call. Oozing demonic pieces that its original struck down.

Flickers of the past brushed by Emiya's thoughts. Upon the breaking, the Second Magus Killer sauntered back to the route of death. By his hands, thousands died. Now, so much more. Far, far too many. Former friends and comrades rose against him. Each of them fell to his gun or blade.

Every murder cracked the remnants of the human mind. His Magic Circuits absorbed the death with ghoulish fervour. Luvia and Rin tried to rescue him from the pain. Yet they did not understand. How the nameless slaughterer cannot be saved.

With nobody else to kill, there remained one. A woman of his age. Far lacking in strength compared to her compatriots. Sakura Matou remained to be the greatest challenge.

Raising the blade was simple. Her soft words tried to resurrect what was known as Shirou Emiya. Bringing down Bakuya onto her soft neck wrought agony. Fragments shattered, ground to dust. Pain was his sign of life. That vanished. Without purpose, there was one recourse. Placing the gun by his temple. And pulling the trigger.

Red soil turned black as swords continued to barrage. More answered to stem the rising tide Emiya was throwing. Alter screamed as the veins on his body bulged larger and larger. Closer towards a man of gold than dark skin.

Emiya called his trusted pair. He couldn't risk further taint. Diving into the fray, their blades clashed. Swords danced around them as they weaved in between the net. Death in its greatest melody.

All sense of time had been lost. As though no breath was taken. A duel between two selves. One origin that lead to different futures. Light. Dark. Both with unique advantages. And both came to enjoy it with smiles on their faces.

Weapons traded casually as new ones take form. Swords, shields, spears. Arrows, bullets, knives.
Spins, twists, grapples. Stabs, parries, ripostes. Every technique, flawless and firm. Built around centuries of war. Countless heroes carried their fame. Noble Phantasms, the second true archive on the Hill of Swords.

The world reflected onto their efforts. Red soil turned black before restored anew in a tug of war. Alter screamed as he pushed harder through his Circuits. Emiya felt his own depleting at a staggering rate to keep up.

Alter pushed back before raising Kanshou.

*Unlimited Lost Works*

The bullet was cut short by four blades. Another returned the favour, diving to cut Alter's yellow cheek. Grey pupils dilated with a scream. Dark portions of his wrist cracked to gold before swinging to parry the counter.

"Don't you see it? How we are truly monsters?"

Emiya took deep breaths. "You may be right on that." A white spear answered his call, resting underground. One belonging to the Count of Wallachia. "Thanks to certain people, I have also seen far more beyond it. I also know…" Kanshou and Bakuya in hand, the Guardian charged and activated.

The spear bolstered by its legend, Vlad the Third burst forth with impaling stakes. A small piece stabbing through Alter's feet. Alter cut the perpetrator instantly but Emiya pushed through the opening made through countless battles.


Alter smirked, an acceptance to the fate.

Emiya said. "That you are an unfortunate soul."

He swung.

WARNING. SYSTEM DAMAGE.

I know that. Rui grounded his teeth as Gigas slammed through a building. Maybe two or three more. His jaws jarred as he saw the sky from the flickering screen. Reflector field was a powerful defensive tool but against Altair, it was just toothpicks.

**REFLECTOR FIELD MODULE DAMAGED. EFFICIENCY AT 75%**

He glanced at the scrolls of diagnostic text by his left arm.

**LEFT PARTICLE CANNON - 60%**

**RIGHT PARTICLE CANNON - 45%**

**REACTOR - 83%**

**THRUSTERS - 50%**
Armour display read orange all around the body with some red exceptions. Structural integrity for Gigas Machina's limbs were suffering. Rui winced at the growing burn in his right arm. Pressing the suit aggravated the nerves under the skin. Growing red under the suit along the knee. *Darn.* Old wounds had split open. It would be a close race between Gigas Machina and him on who'll break first.

Rui grabbed the emergency med kit at the back of the cockpit. Fingering around within the stubborn casing before pulling out a syringe. Painkiller and combat stimulants pulled the pain away a little. Energy flushed in and took over but not for long.

Gigas Machina's joints groaned as he coaxed the machine back onto its feet. Sluggish than he'd like. Getting his bearings, he turned back towards the fight and advanced on heavy two feet.

Hikayu turned into the spotlight of the battle. Every part of her body moving in tandem to the beat of attacking swords. Battle cries as the soft school girl turned hardened warrior leapt, spun and parried all forms of attacks from multiple directions.

*Quite sexy while at it.* Rui shook his head. *Got to put my weight or I'll definitely be teased by the others.*

Swords protected their master in a continuous spin. Most at the front attacking the martial artist, some at the side against Blitz. Something caught his eye. Magnifying it revealed a slight gap towards Altair's right shoulder.

An opening.

Hikayu deflected several swords aside before jumping forward towards it. Flying red bullet crossing the distance under two seconds. A chill in his back. Sword, violin gun in hand. Rui recognised the combo. He screamed. "Dodge!"

Altair's Holopsicon activated. Hikayu's dress vanished into her school uniform before meeting metallic gauntlet in the face. A cry as the young girl was thrown back with a painful crunch.

"Humans are so predictable, always aiming for the weakest point." Altair smiled before pressing a leg on her prey's head.

Fire burst. "Don't you lay a finger on her!" Rui charged with cannons firing. Swords to his right. He raised his hand to deploy the Reflector Field.

Rui caught a glance of purple before his right elbow screamed. His throat cried out as left leg lost all sensation before the secondary feedback hit.


Black fiery pain.

Pain was his best friend.

Now Rui became it.

Last he remember was feeling Gigas toppled onto its back. His throat burned from screaming out the never ending fire. Painkillers did nothing. Old wounds puckered open, aggravating the suffering.
Rui disengaged the feedback system, giving himself a briefing respite. Heavy breathing trying to keep up. Never felt so close to dying.

More than his life, Hikayu needed help. Lying on his back, he saw Blitz diving in trying to get closer towards the unconscious girl thrown away from Altair. Old man didn't notice the swords coming for his back.

Grunting through the pain, he connected back to the hurricane and aimed the remaining gun. Pull of the trigger let the beam loose. It did the job, taking the attack meant for Blitz. Bright explosion. Black flickers on the heads up display as damage caught up in the system.

He scanned for the gunman to find him on the ground a dozen metres away with Hikayu in arms. Looked like in one piece.

Altair wasn't scratched. Not one bit. God damned girl can't even be injured for once by circumstance. Swords returned to her side, holding in position. The girl's glance impassive towards the fallen two.

Blitz wasn't moving. Rui knew the odds were terrible to begin with. Now it's almost zero. Levelling his gun towards Altair. *Might as well buy time for them to get away.*

Static warnings crackled from damaged speakers. Servomotors struggled to keep the gun aligned as charge began to build.

Despite the flickering display, Altair raised a brow. Flying projectiles sent its merry way to kill him. *Just a little more…*

A whiplash of red came from behind Altair. A new group of swords deflected them into the surrounding areas. Dust scattered as a flash of red darted through. Archer landed on the nearby roof. "Kanoya, status?"

Rui winced as the deep burns started to subside. "Honestly, I'm not going to last much longer." Fusion core was struggling to keep up with the output.

"Not doing too well either." Blitz groaned before climbing to his feet. The man's coat was torn with many cuts along the back.

"We're in a tight bind."

Archer tapped to his ear. "Meteora. How long left for Skynet?"

"Five minutes."

Rui heard the worst thing ever. "That's going to be a big problem."

Shirou Emiya stood before her once again. Their eyes met in a long stare. Unmoving, unrelenting, indomitable. Continuing the poker face, he reflected on available options.

Prana reserves were reasonably depleted. Adding Altair to the equation, Unlimited Blade Works wouldn't last long. Key question was whether her Holopsicon negate the Reality Marble? Still, he must try.

*I am the bone of my sword*

Altair smiled. "That's right. Fight at your hardest. I'll wait for your exquisite Noble Phantasm. For all that it beseeches, it shall show our dear audience of this world the futility to fight against damnation."
Huge gears and red sands to never be forgotten. The injured located in a safer area from the ensuing clash. He looked toward the horizon of weapons. Each of them would have to count.

Altair hovered in the air before giving a bow. "Shall we?"

Tiny glint from one of the gears. Sparkle above the grey clouds. Meteora's concept enhancement spell. A peace of mind.

Emiya responded by raising his hand. The world answered, legends of heroes rose and waited for the command. Five minutes to hold Altair at bay. He lasted two in their previous encounter. A cast of the die and Hell broke loose.

Pandemonium of metal clashed. Hundreds of weapons battled across the open wasteland. Number to number. Sparks, shattering glass, metallic screams and explosions quaked the battlefield.

Altair was an impregnable fortress. Every sought opening met and denied. Little nudges through perceived gaps couldn't get through. Her bladed shields expanded in number to meet them. War of control and attrition.

No battle lines moved not an inch in the intense scuffle. Emiya pondered how to turn around the losing fight. Cost of the Reality Marble was eating deep into reserves and growing faster. He'd be a dry husk by the time they finished. Bad moments calls for some genius ingenuity. "I trust you like the weather here," He said.

His question towards her sparked a brow of interest. "Very amusing. Perhaps I should also add, comfortable that we can fight in the shade?"

"Weird woman. Such luck do I have to always meet them."

"Your attempts at amusement are successful but I wouldn't consider it working. Perhaps you should focus on trying to survive." One sword went by his ear, deflected aside by an equivalent.

Emiya played the next card. "For someone bent on destroying the world, you are rather casual at it. Taking your time with all that power behind your back."

"Drawing out the climax is the best thing for a story. It wouldn't be fun if our audience here wouldn't be able to accept the results in such a direct approach." A sly in her words.

"Humour me with this. Why are you so keen on vengeance for a girl that you have never met?" Six swords dived for his head before repelled aside. "You don't know her. Nor does she know you. While she created you doesn't mean you owe her anything."

"A pity. You already know the answer."

"Big pain in the ass but I lived with it. That's what he does all the time." A lean of the neck, feeling the brush of metal against his hair.

Emiya struck on the concept he'd hedged on for a while. "At first, it didn't make sense at all. However, I come to understand why you are so adamant to destroy the world." He jabbed a finger at her direction. "You are just like me. Someone who do not wish to exist."
Altair tilted her head before a chuckle. "Interesting theory that you have. Go on. I'd like to hear it all before tearing it apart."

"With enigmatic powers, erasing everything because you do not want to suffer the pain is far simpler. Your existence is the greatest torture. For you grieve the loss of your Creator."

Everyone carried some form of motivation, positive or otherwise. What was Altair's reason to destroy the world? Obvious clues pointed towards the young girl that had passed on. The story from Sota Mizushino helped him to piece the parts together. Deep insight thoughts and a word with his own Creator gave some deep insights to the factors that made her tick.

Her response was to far less than what he hoped. "Perceptive of you to think that way."

Counterattack above him. Swords burst from the ground, deflecting them. "However, you are completely wrong."

Emiya jabbed. More swords were clashing closer towards him. "You lie through the grit of your teeth. I know the fact because I am the prime example. Someone who wanted to erase my former self."

"Ah, the paradox of time you wanted to create in your story. What a pity that is to be for it wasn't for the hero of that story. What misfortune you have to not be the main character. Maybe I should bring him here, let you understand the significance of your existence, which is absolutely nothing."

Battle line advanced in favour for Altair. "That is what I used to believe. However, just as I have changed from my journey, I have learnt. There is a hope, even against the darkest pits of hell."

Foretold by the one he never expected from.

Swords, growing by the dozens surrounded them. "I grow tired of this game."

Far too many to repel individually. He raised his hand. "Rho Aias." Pink petals blossomed. Shield of Troy rumbled from the intense impacts. Sparks of rain continue to grow. Unlimited Blade Works sought to cut the tide but far too few could answer.


Fifth petal broke under the growing might. It can't be this ridiculous. Twenty seconds before he runs dry. Ten before Rho Aias breaks. Kanshou and Bakuya would parry awhile but it would throw him on the back foot with almost no way of recovery. One desperate shot through Altair's confidence?

Do or die measure. He steeled his mind for the moment. Caladbolg answered to his call, flying from the soil. Bow projected in hand, he raised it as the sword twisted into the Broken Phantasm. Half a second, the arrow slot in as Rho Aias vanished. Draw and fire.

All done in two seconds. Within such a short distance, an eye blink would miss it. The explosion smoked all results of the shot as Kanshou and Bakuya entered comfortably in hand.

Just in time to avoid being riddled with swords. Dozens of them coming simultaneously. Twin pairs blocked in a dance. Muscles squeezed every bit of strength and skill within. Burn inside his chest to keep up against the madness. They weren't enough.

Cuts sought through. A graze here. Cut there. Emiya prioritised those that were outright fatal. Eye of the Mind had no options. God damn it.

Altair's word were poison as his ear bled from a cut. "You lose."
Hope spoke in his head.

You will not suffer alone.

A blue glow before him. Altair's weapons held back. A defensive tool familiar to him. Emiya surmised the originator and sent the thoughts through his mind. Into the familiar link that had rooted into him for centuries.

I didn’t expect you to be here.

You seem surprised. Has it been that long?

I suspected you were around yet you never knocked.

Reality is a hard medium to pierce and there was no immediate need.

Altair smiled in realisation. "Ah, the infamous Alaya, have you come here to plead for your Guardian's last moments?" The voice announced in full.

Altair, Altair. Gloating in the face of every adversary you meet. My miracles are limited within this world. Nevertheless, I can still do this.

Emiya felt it. Blissful prana coursing through his circuits. Power of the Counter Force fed through his entire body. Every single fibre of his revitalised. Wounds sealed close. Gears in the Marble Reality groan as it churned to divine energy. New blueprints flowed through his eyes. Countless more weapons to fill into the infinite world of swords.

The King of Heroes is infuriated by such action but his displeasure is irrelevant to the present danger. GAIA gives its regards.

New weapons from past, present and future stabbed into the soil of the world. Battle experiences and blessings of their respective owners. Voices and cheers amongst the Heroic Spirits, calling for victory against the woman before him. Sure, he would not wield Ea but that was a weapon beyond his understanding. It would’ve kill him outright.

A square silver box appeared in the clouds. Meteora's work was done. Structural Grasp pulled all the information within before it faded. First step to defeating the woman before him.

Symbol of the Thousand Miles unfolded in his mind. A stream of conscious knowledge from Meteora's Skynet spell, processed in an instant. From then, he truly comprehended the danger of Altair's reach.

Holopsicon was a Pandora's box. Seventeen rules, each of them ridiculous on their own. Sum them together and it would be a hero's ultimate power wish list. No superhero ability would be able to overcome all of them at once.

Emiya's analysis strung it down into one point. It came down to defeating each rule. A task for a hero with all trades. Adapt and Improvise.

Son of Emiya. Finish this bitch.

Calling upon his new alternative, the longsword that carried a throttle beside the grip. A squeeze revved the weapon's custom engine with prana. A smile on his lips.

For once, I agree wholeheartedly.
Sota bit his lip as he watched the world inside transform. Battle of epic proportions. Something yet to be seen but only imagined. Commanders of their own weapons in constant brawl to win.

Swords, countless forms of them moving in a symphony. Battle was crude but the man turned it into art. A nameless man turned into a form that could threaten even the most dangerous beings of his world. He was so close to losing but the presence of Counter Force had bolstered the man towards greater heights.

Archer's skin flared bright blue. Such Blade for blade, he was keeping up with Altair. Wow. Sota turned towards the crowd below as the stadium erupted in madness. Cheers louder than the giant speakers.

Comments from the live stream were scrolling in the hundreds, filling the secondary screens with long texts of white.

*Oh dat UBW.*

*L33t Man, pure l33tness right there.*

*Feels like Gilgamesh vs Shirou Emiya.*

*Swords, swords, swords everywhere.*

*Fill the Halls with lots of swords*

*I think I’m gay for him.*

*You bet, Archer is totally Gar.*

*Kick her ass Archer!*

Rising excitement inside him. The energy from the fans were bleeding over into him. A fiery fever that wanted to take over. Addictive allure to let go and fall into the mood. Sota pumped his fist towards the screen. "Get her Archer!"

A glance towards the control room was everything but. Inside, the rest of were dreary. It made him just as concerned. Walking over to the room, he noticed Hideaki slumped on the floor with a medic treating him. Meteora's stoic glance started to worry him. "Meteora, what's wrong?"

"Archer's caught up to her but he isn't winning."

"He'll find a way." As always how its been.

"That may be very difficult." Meteora added. She was studying her book with fervour. The Book was scribing text onto its pages by itself. He recognised the text. Rules of the Holopsicon. *These… these are Altair's abilities.*

Sota walked towards her pedestal. "How did you get this?"

She kept her eyes on the book. "Altair would always gain new spells but we needed to know what limits that she can break. Few of us brainstormed and led to this idea." Flip to the next page before more words inked itself.

Ability to disregard the rules.
Ability to change said rules.
Manipulate words into reality.
Reverse cause and effect.
Complete command over magic.
Complete command over technology.
Teleportation
Shapeshifting.
Activate any power by its name.
Gifted with multiple powers.

Meteora's hands were shaking. "These limits are far greater than we hoped. Frankly, I don't know how he can defeat her." If even she said that...

Sota turned back towards the screen. Archer had drawn upon his favoured pair to deflect weapons coming too close upon him. Sweat on his skin glistened against the growing dust. The magic glow around him was noticeably weaker.

One sword managed to slip past his guard, grazing across fabric. "Ig-Alima." Archer said. From his hand, a sword appeared. Way too big to be wielded by humans. Long as a football field with a green crystalline guard. The weapon came crashing down in its might onto Altair. Ground shook as the dust blasted against the cameras. A piercing shatter as the weapon split in half along its centre.

"Even with the help of powerful beings, your efforts are futile," Altair said.

Archer raised a sword that sparked a field of lightning along the blade's edge. "Says a girl who believes unlimited power is the answer to everything."

"No matter how much you struggle, you will not win."

"Death is not a loss as long I achieve the objectives of stopping you." Burning swords formed a ring around Altair before bursting into a blaze of fire.

Inferno's roar cut short with a gust of wind. "Quaint for a man who had died many times."

"In many different ways as well. Would you like to try? It's a unique experience."

"Unnecessary. Death serves me no purpose."

"So does your goal. Destroying the world will never erase the burn. That black ooze of pain, despair and regret in your heart will continue to fester like rotting flesh. All because you are too afraid to accept the facts about your Creator. That she is dead."

"You have no right to say such a thing!" Altair surrounded him with her customary weapon. The red archer widened his eyes before leaping away. It saved his life from the red beams that obliterated everything in its path with fervent energy. Vapours crackled as ground turned to glass.

The path is clear. "She entrusted you with everything she had and you decide to throw it away."
"Throw everything away? I'm doing a service by enacting her revenge."

"Revenge? You are lying by your teeth if your Creator wanted revenge."

"You have the gall to believe you know my God better? I was created by her very hands. I felt her very emotions while she was creating me. You, an outlier would never know what she felt from the monsters hidden under those sacks of skin."

"What were her final words? Was it full of hate at that very moment? Or perhaps someone who felt very tired?" Her reply was glare harder into his eyes. "Sure, I was never created by her. However, I am not only born from one man. Just like you, countless people have tried to envision me within their stories. An endless journey broiled through their eyes. I can likewise imagine the same, just like these swords."

Archer ducked to avoid two beams aimed for his face. Kanshou followed up, deflecting others in sequence. "If you're such a powerful being, why don't you ask her yourself?"

Altair caught her tongue. "What?"

"All the power in the universe to achieve any desire and destroying the world is the first thing that comes to mind. Quite a cliche on the contrary when it comes to think of it. Why didn't you just bring her back to life? The rules aren't solid anymore. Come on, show us the limits of your abilities."

"Cliches speaks more to your history, Shirou Emiya, paragon of humanity. My powers grow daily but it is not infallible to the rules of life."

"I'd presume you to say so. Even for someone of your calibre. A little surprising given how proud you were." Sota felt a chill in his spine given the murderous eyes that lit up in fury.

What was Archer trying to do? Sota widened his eyes when it came to him. His thoughts were interrupted by one of the soldiers reporting. "Major, I have a new signal."

Kikuchihara and the Major walked towards the man's screen. "What is it?"

"Unknown. It's heading towards the battle." A little marker appeared on the map, on the far edge of the city and approaching the group at high speed.

A small insistent ringing in the ear. Nothing painful but it felt strange. Sota blinked away a few flickers on the monitor display. His gut churned at the thought. Something bad coming.

Emiya projected Noble Phantasm one after another. Swords, shields, spears. Hands moved on instinct, harrying blows aside while making his own. Boss difficulty went up four notches with energy beams.

The new development was another element to its own. Magic or science fiction? Both possibilities exist and Structural Grasp couldn't discern it. Although, getting her pissed was worth it. More critical of it was the direction. That was the right way to go.

Energised blades of the millennial futures proved to be far more efficient in defence. Strong but simple against Altair's repertoire. Noble Phantasms would have to make the cut in breaking through Altair's indestructible defence.

War beyond brawn. Battle on multiple fronts. A sequence of steps for the final goal. A new presence invaded into his realm. Something not possible. Stretch of senses for it, biding remaining attention to
stay even against the tide. Little to discern. The plan beckoned to continue. Win by all means necessary.

Altair was agitated, given such dedicated attention and bared teeth. Emiya managed to keep up, little injuries healing from Alaya's infusion of prana. The influx of power was starting to wane by uncertain limitations. He didn't have long to work this form of plan. Then that voice crashed things around.


The world stopped. Swords froze in their tracks. The winds, soil, gears in the sky made a complete standstill. Altair's eyes wide in surprise as she took in the person addressing her.

"No…it can't be."

Emiya took the moment to catch his breath. Strategise, prioritise.

She appeared on the side of the hill. Just as Sota Mizushino described to him. Black haired girl with a short stature. Blue collared white dress, plain and simple. Like the person she was supposed to be. Altair's Creator, Setsuna Shimazaki.

"I'm finally glad to see you again, Altair." Her voice was soft, barely audible even with reinforcement. Each syllable carried noise that made it approach inhuman.

Not in the truest of forms. The girl was a fading blur of blue static. Buzzing and pulsing with digital noise. Not a physical presence behind the sight before him. Human in a ghost's shell.

Far better than expectations. He assumed Altair would try something of that sort on his goading. Alternatives in the group of scenarios that was derived. The boy's story made it a strong point to use. For when battle by blood wouldn't work, they'll resort to breaking her will.

Sota Mizushino alongside Matsubara's guidance worked on creating the girl he once knew, even if only a poor replica given the boy's own words. Given the circumstance, Emiya leveraged for it to happen, using Altair's own ability against her. The best weapon was one they couldn't fight back against.

Altair widened her eyes. "You…you're here."

"I, I think I am." Her voice continued to carry static. Emiya found it disconcerting. For a Creation to be incomplete. Its effectiveness just as limited.

Nevertheless, it was a game changer. Altair's eyes showed a new emotion once. Fear.

"That was dirty! That was so dirty! You cowards!" Her weapons were vibrating, making it all that delicious to bear witness. "How could you do this? How could you do something this cowardly?"

"You're the one who asked for it. The very thing you hoped all along." Emiya added fuel to the fire.

"Altair…"

"Stop… Stop!" The vixen's weapons vanished. "Don't call my name with that voice. Please…"

"Sorry. I died before I was able to call your name. I was so happy-"

"No! Don't say that! You're already…You're not Setsuna! There's no way you can be her. She's already gone now."
Setsuna smiled. "You're right. I did die. However, I heard your call. I think its like a miracle."

Altair raised a hand into the sky. "Fifteenth Holopsicon." Blue faded grainy image turned crystal sharp. Setsuna Shimazaki glanced at her hands as the winds started to shift her hair. The silver haired girl met the eyes of her Creator. "I see...he's the one who did this."

"That's right. I may not be perfect but I hope I'm enough."

A smile, another first from the woman of fiction. "You're always enough for me."

"It's sad to hear what you've done for my sake."

"I do all of it, just for you. Anything and everything."

"Altair. Thank you. It made me feel very happy to hear that." Setsuna turn to look at the grey clouds. "I see what has happened to this world. What a painful thing to see."

"The world's painful to see without you in it."

Setsuna straightened her back and returned a gentle glance back towards her friend. "I came here to apologise to you. I've done something really horrible to you. That's how I feel. When I finished drawing you, both the good and bad, I entrusted you with all my wishes."

"I always wanted to see you." Altair clutched her chest. "For so long but when I found out about you, you're... already gone. Feeling all of your thoughts inside hurts so much. I regret being unable to do anything for you."

Setsuna walked closer towards the frightened girl. "In those days, my mind was filled with curses rather than wishes. Because of that, I ended up making you bear the burden of my own curses. Those curses that I made you bear...the one you should be mad at is me, not the world. I was happy about it in the beginning but its my fault. You spent your life to get revenge for me."

Emiya noticed opportunity. Could he use it to take down Altair?

Altair's hands were shaking. "Don't say that! It looks like you're saying I never understood you at all! Don't say that." "I've never received a curse from you. I chose everything here myself Setsuna. I know how you felt when you disappeared more than anyone else. I know your pain more than anyone else. I was born into this world in exchange for that pain!"

A single attempt could win or break the entire battle. Should he use it?

The two girls were standing face to face. Altair's voice was filled with sorrow. "Through your eyes, through your heart. I learnt everything. The world was too strong for you, too automatic, too cruel. Sometimes spite is too big for people to bear. That's why I hated this world."

"I know." Setsuna gave a faint smile. "Can you let go? Put this to rest." She clasped their hands together. "Let go."

Altair met into the eyes, pressing their hands against her cheek. "I want to but I can't let it be. Not after what they've done to you."

"It's alright. It was my decision in the first place."

"No, it was because of the vermin that forced you. The same people that are watching this very moment."
Emiya felt his gut churn. Setsuna flashed in blue. Static continued to flicker and grow. He whispered. "Meteora, something is wrong."

Meteora replied. "Evaluation Tracer readings are growing unstable. The audience aren't accepting her." Her voice paused far too long. "They are unable to accept Setsuna Shimazaki as an existence in that world."

"Why is that happening? She looked convincing enough for me."

Nakanogane hissed. "She appeared too random off the blue to be accepted."

Sota was panicking in the background. "Why didn't they accept her? It was turning out just fine!"

"Original Character!" Yatoji pulled at his own hair.

Nakanogane added. "Damn it. To their eyes, she is an original character. Never once seen, a deus ex machina. I know it was a bit tough but it looked to be working so well."

A clash of acceptance. Emiya related it akin to GAIA's intervention on his own projections. Moving to the next. Rhongomyniad, spear of the end projected behind his back.

Altair pulled Setsuna into a hug. "As you see, my task isn't complete. I'll have to get back to you later."

Setsuna wrapped her fading arms around. "I wish I could do much more for you."

Twisting the long silver longinus into an arrow, transforming the Noble Phantasm.

Altair broke free from the hug. "I know… I really do."

Broken Phantasm fired, blaze of fire behind its tracks. A clash before it slammed into the sky and exploded.

Setsuna was gone when the dust cleared. Swords formed, by the hundreds around them. Altair turned back towards them. "Apologies for the delay." The white haired girl in the black dress bowed towards the crowd. "Now, where were we?"

Meteora watched as Setsuna vanished from the Bird Cage. Cold grip squeezed her heart when Altair regained her motivation to destroy the world. They were so close. Why, just why did the audience have to reject such a minute detail?

Kikuchihara asked. "What are we going to do now?"

Stoicism took over, slipping her back towards resolving the problem. Alicetaria's Anvil strike was destroyed and so did Selesia's containment plan. The Setsuna option had crumbled in its entirety. Last option of defeating Altair head on was growing bleak.

She didn't have a chance to answer the director for Altair said. "Divine Argos." It erupted from the ground, enveloping the red Archer. A square purple cage to fit the man. "Thirteenth Holopsicon, Word Access."

Archer snarled, pressing a blade against the cage. Lightning sparked along the metal. Swords sought to free their master to no avail.

Altair raised her sword. A blue beam shot towards the sky, rumbling and echoing. An earthquake
within Archer's realm.

Evaluation Tracer's blue ring flickered deep red. A jump in heartbeat. Readings were plummeting. Fast. The worst had begun. Only one possibility and she hated to admit it. "Altair's started to destroy reality."

_How could she manipulate reality from within the Bird Cage?_

Archer created a small jagged dagger and pressed against the cage. Purple barrier shattered before he encountered multiple rings of swords. Swords attack on his command but each ring impeded the man from reaching Altair who had a big smile on her face.

Computer displays in the room changed into a dangerous hue. One of the officers reported, tinges of panic in his voice. "Anomalies appearing in multiple locations."

"The Internet is going crazy!" Sota fiddled with his phone. Darkness cloaked the room as the lights failed. Only the white and red hues from the display and Evaluation Tracer continued to illuminate as the entire stadium's lighting failed.

A loud thunder crack, far more than expected. Everyone turned towards the window facing outside. Reality was had been twisted as thunderstorms sparking their rage. Tornadoes spiralling out of control within the city. Rain that cried waterfalls onto the road. Ground screamed as pillars of earth rose split and rose into the air. The grey sky bled flares of fire.

The Major barked orders to his men to help the public. Kikuchihara stepped up to support him coordinating the police.

Nakanogane said. "Guys, we have to stop her before it's too late." Earth quaked closer, bringing screams within the crowds. Evacuation alarms rang out.

Yatoji screamed, hands on his heads. "Who and what army is going to do that?"

Hoshikawa unconscious, Kanoya and Blitz incapacitated. There was no army. "That's right." They've failed. Her knees buckled as she bear witness to the world's end.

Everyone else had similar sentiments. The crestfallen expressions of despair. Just like her.

"I'm still a virgin for goodness sakes." Ohnishi echoed behind the thunder claps.

Nakanogane slumped onto the ground. "It was worth a shot."

Sota turned towards her, his face begging for assurance of hope. She couldn't give him any. She failed them. These innocent beings would suffer the consequence. Her eyes dropped a tear. An irony of times that she could cry. Her voice had cracked. "The end is here."

Archer was still trying to break through towards Altair. A red blur that moved around the tornado of metal protecting the girl. Altair screamed in joy. "Nobody will stop me from destroying this world. Gods, worlds or realities means nothing in every part."

Altair's words struck fear. "Vengeance has come." The blue light continued to glow brighter before the displays turned bright white that poured over to the real world.

Meteora shielded her eyes but the brightness wouldn't diminish. Closed eyelids mattered little to the intensity that continued to grow. Impending fate drew out an emotion she hadn't experienced in so long. She wouldn't want it on anyone else. Emotion of impending death.
She didn't want to go. Everything melted away against her insistence. Starting with the surroundings. Distance, place, time. Fingers, Limbs, life. Thoughts, self and…

The world ended.
Light returned as a faint glow within the darkness. Emiya felt his eyes adjust to the soft flickers of orange candle light. The glow came from a wooden desk with its bulk taken by an old typewriter. He wasn't alone.

A person sat on the chair. His fingers rested on the faded keys. No armour, a simple long shirt. Well kept black hair, silver rimmed glasses. Not a warrior. Not a threat, yet.

Emiya met the man's dark eyes. "Who are you?"

Said man lifted his weathered hands and clasped them. "Archer, Archer. Welcome to my humble abode."

Kansho projected and stopped by the man's neck. "Answer the question."

The man studied the blade before raising a finger. "I am not your Creator, that's one." He leaned back against the chair. A calm visage glistened across youthful features. "You'll figure it out."

Emiya recalled prior events. Altair succeeded to destroy reality. "Hell, you can't be God."

"Close but no cigar. That title would be stretching it too far and rather undeserving."

Emiya paused to contemplate. Pieces of the puzzle fit into place. So that's who he is. He chuckled. "Quite an irony for you to be pulling the strings behind the scenes."

The puppeteer nodded with a faint smile. "Yes, it is. Nevertheless, it remains fact that I have undertaken this endeavour for some time." He gestured to their surroundings. Much of the room reminded Emiya of the Tohsaka residence. "Fancy the aesthetics? Its made based on your preference. At least what I thought it would be."

"Too dark for my liking. The world was about to end. Now, tell me what happened."

"Your assumptions are correct. Technically, Altair would've destroyed reality at the current rate. Right now, we're in a separate bubble of frozen time." A chuckle. "Come to think of it, a curious thing to ponder whether this situation we stand in would be called a Deus Ex Machina."

Said term was unrecognisable to the Archer. "If you have such vast powers, why didn't you interfere before?"

"What makes you think I hadn't? My clues are already there." Puppeteer placed a hand on the
"Typewriter, operating the clickety-clack machine as he continued. "My ability is limited."

"You call freezing time limited?" A shrug in response. "What are your intentions with me?"

"Not mine but rather yours. As of now, you're a very important person."

"How so?"

"You are fighting for the survival of reality. One of the few remaining existences yet to be destroyed. You have two choices at hand." He raised a freehand, a flaming green orb burst to life. "The first is a chance to start anew. Achieve your original goal. Flee the battle and enjoy a life of peace and paradise that you yearned for."

Fingers snapped and the orb twisted into fiery red. "Second would be to continue the fight. Try to defeat against a force that even readers of this story find it a tremendous feat."

"There is no point to fight when you could just hogwash it away." Emiya raised Kanshou to eye level. "How about a third? I make you change everything in this story."

"Yes. Maybe. No as well." Puppeteer closed his eyes. "Sound reasoning. Avoid the conflict, remove the problem in its entirety using the easiest means possible. However, the rules do not work that way."

"Screw the rules."

"Screw it or not, they wouldn't work even if I tried. Perhaps more downtime with Matsubara would've given you that understanding."

"Perhaps I could just kill you instead. That way, nothing can move and all will be left hanging."

"Quite a sadist. Do you want to put everyone else through what you've endured as a Counter Guardian?" Emiya raised a brow. "My death has no value in this picture."

Emiya studied the man's face. Gauging for intentions well hidden behind a cold wall of flesh. Nothing. He lowered the blade. "What happens if I choose the former?"

"Reality will be destroyed. Everyone including me will die. The story will be left hanging and end. However, even when the world disappears, you will get what you want."

"I find it asinine to believe that."

"Moments however brief lasts a lifetime. Wouldn't it be enough after enduring so much?"

"Tell me what happens in the second option."

The Creator slid fresh parchment into the typewriter. "Time will be reversed to just moments before. You will face Altair in battle again. Once then, your actions decide fate of everything and everyone."

Emiya shook his head with a sigh. "Looks like you are out to get me on a limb on this one."

"Your stories are amongst the best of course. It had been great pleasure working with you."

"Story, story, story. Another story among countless many." A second was all it took for Emiya to lift the man and slam him against the closet. "What a cynical maniac you are to force all of us into this farce of a story. For entertainment's purpose of saving the world is such a sadistic hypocrisy."
Crestfallen smile from the younger youth. "I know. Alas it remains an inevitable fate. Thus better for it to be someone sympathetic to the cause."

"You are no Saint. With your power, things could have been much smoother to avoid this situation in the first place."

"Granted, I could. I should have. Yet, it didn't." Their eyes met in a long gaze. One filled with anger. Another with weary.

Cold silence broken by the rickety clicks of the typewriter. Emiya glanced over his shoulder towards the machine that was moving on its own.

*The Counter Guardian watched the typewriter clack on its own. Living machine akin to Golems of the Clock Tower. He followed the text on the parchment as clicks and clacks moved the paper further.*

Emiya tore his eyes away from the machine. "Hell of a joke you got there." Red began to grow on the man's shirt. Emiya knew the all too familiar smell. "You're bleeding."

The man nodded with a wince. "Quite aware of it, thank you for your concern. Altair had been rather painful. Truly she hadn't been letting up on me even now." The back of his hand split open, blood trickled from the fresh cut.

"Bullshit. You had no reason to be injured." Otherwise his own Creator would've been dead ages ago.

"Natural expectations. But wouldn't it mean that one cannot believe the true reality of such world?" The Creator pressed a hand at the red stain. "Every author has believe into their work, no matter how little or feeble it can be. We suffer joy and pain through others, our characters or even ourselves so that others can enjoy the fruits of labour."

Emiya let go, dropping the man onto the floor. "Point being?"

Puppeteer placed a hand on his chest. "I work within the laid rules, even when they kill me." He stood up as a part of his shirt ripped open from an invisible blade. "Precisely why I offer you a choice. A man that had been selfless in his pursuit for justice. An Anti Hero that wanted to remove his own existence. Both options ripe for the taking."

"My words mean nothing when you can decide everything."

Puppeteer rose to his feet. "To some, there is point. To others, there is something else behind it. A form of authenticity. Beside the backlash of the rules of course."

Emiya took a deep breath. *This man is insane.* Why did he always have to deal with the troublesome ones?

"Archer, I cannot control you. For who you are, your decisions and what you will be."

"Fine. I'll think about it."

Blood trickled down the man's left eye. "You don't have long. Altair gets stronger the longer you ponder."

"Damn it all."
"My role is to play the messenger, nothing else."

All of this was crazy. Both options were shitty. A moment of peace before disappearing for good. His original goal once. Did it matter now when the stakes are so high? Do those stakes even matter to him? After all, he wanted to vanish and thus it wasn't necessarily a problem worth caring.

Would you continue to save?

He hated that memory. He hated the hopes that rested on his shoulders. Shirou Emiya wasn't the strongest hero in existence, yet all is pinned on him. "Very well, I've decided."

Puppeteer nodded. "Indeed." The author pointed towards a wall. Part of the wooden pieces crumbled to reveal a brown door. "Step through this gate and the gears of the world will resume."

Emiya stepped towards the door. "Extra help by any chance?"

"You've already helped yourself."

The gentle pull of the handle drew ire of whirlwind. Unperturbed by the sudden gale, he watched the path beyond. A blue portal that gleamed with white energies. Emiya held onto the door handle before stepping through. The last he heard was.

Win this fight, for all of us Archer. Show us the true might that we are hoping for.

Flash of light. Emiya blinked as the world returned. Structural grasp satiated his need for information. They were back in the Bird Cage. Profound difference for GAIA's strength was restored to full. What reversed the situation?

A groan from the side. Hoshikawa rose up from her side. "What happened?"

"The world isn't destroyed?" Kanoya glanced around. Battle damage remained existent in the city. Faint smell of prana in the air despite reinforcement.

Grunt from the detective, snapping the revolver's chamber open. "Quite a headache."

Altair hovered in the air, her expression told him she didn't know what happened as well. "How dare you." Her face twisted into a banshee towards the night sky. "How dare you to stop my victory. Your meddling has gone on far enough!"

Here we go again.

Blue light speared the sky. Altair snarled with the glowing weapon in hand. "I've already achieved it once. I can do it again." GAIA trembled under the immense tearing. Staring at the beam blotted pain in his head. Structural Grasp tried to comprehend scrambled reality, piecing together swirls of black flickering static.

Seconds later, it stopped. Another counteracting force. Those lads are at it now. Emiya asked. "Meteora, do you see what I'm seeing?"

"Yes Archer. We're getting the readings now. The other are uniting to counteract Altair."

"It won't be long before she figures it out." On second thought, she just did. Blue light intensified but it was matched equal in turn. Emiya projected Kanshou and Bakuya. "With the cage in place, she has to deal with us first before she can get rid of them."

Altair turned. "You pests are far too resilient for your own good. I will leave this place and destroy
every fence in between." She narrowed her eyes. "Meteora, to think you'd use that and force my hand."

Bird Cage was working as intended. Emiya took a deep breath and focused within. Fresh od coursed through nerves like a smooth wave of water. The reset had restored his strength. He said towards the floating girl. "Are you sure about that? We have unfinished business after all."

Meteora's voice carried the weight of the world. "Archer, how are you going to beat her? The Holopsikon is fighting off everything we have thrown at her."

"I'll find out a way. I always do." Emiya felt the prerequisites already prepared. Just one line remained. Pressing a hand to his chest, he told her. "All that matters is that we keep trying and not waste the opportunity sacrificed for us."

*So as I pray, Unlimited Blade Works*

---

Sota saw the world flash by his eyes. Alien and separated. Weightless vertigo within a vast plane of the unknown. Flickering images flew by, belonging to something he couldn't comprehend. Emotionless, watching the view as a spectator even if he did see himself inside.

A time of life far more peaceful. Yuya Mirokuki wasn't dead. Rui Kanoya didn't end up in the hospital. Matsubara wasn't kidnapped. Marine wasn't shot. Everything bad turned away along some path of good fortune.

Another flash led to massacre. Heroes fallen in painful and horrible ways. Creators murdered by their very own fiction. Uncountable dead, all scattered and stacked atop another like a hill of rotting flesh.

A time where there was unity before the Elimination Chamber. Everything went to plan. All was prepared for the final trial and tribulations. New heroes from other realms of fiction.

Another led to destruction, death and chaos. Fires, smoke, weapons of mass destruction exploding. Pure villains running rampant with cackles that struck fear.

A time where Magane survived. Sneering eyes towards him at the very same stage. Her words that changed the bonds of reality that helped towards their goal.

Another showed where she became a villain, taking over everything alongside Altair. Her desires unfathomable and at a whim. Fear, horrors that killed, maimed and bled blood. All for the sake of fun and pleasure.

A time where Hideaki entered the Bird Cage as Master. Altair almost defeated by a trump card prepared by Matsubara. Both of them ended up getting stabbed by Altair and into critical condition.

Another showed the opposite. Hideaki bludgeoned to death by Lancelot, costing Siegfried's life in the process.

A time where Archer rescued them and fought to buy time. Unleashing every ability granted upon him, pushing him towards superman levels similar to Altair. Battle between Gods of fiction.

Another that led to his death, betrayed by his own weapons and ideals. Corruption that bled into him by machinations of Alter and his own hypocrisy. Purged machination into a humanoid of white steel that made a Berserker's roar before his heart was ripped out in a tangential mess of liquid metal.

A time where Setsuna appeared into reality. Trying to win Altair's heart and save the world. Another
where she betrayed her creation, resulting in her avatar burned into dust of deceit. Each time was unsuccessful.

Realities were destroyed. Some others survived but at great cost. Worlds were destroyed, either real or fiction. Some, twisted and distorted into a black miasma of despair, hate and fury.

He didn't know where these come from. Only certain that they weren't his. All of these images were memories. Countless possibilities.

The flashes stopped. Sota felt a fading image in the background. Alas he couldn't know what it was supposed to be. Was it an end? A beginning?

Soft muted voice entered his head. One said by a man, probably.

*For every path, there is possibility.*

*For every ending, there is a new beginning.*

*Some with pain and despair.*

*Others with hope and redemption.*

*Last chance for the greatest price*

*Go forth*

*Stop Altair*

The sad tone in the echoes struck the most. Words that spoke about the last chance. Such vague words that his poor mind couldn't comprehend any of it. Was it a supposed to be a good thing? Is the delusion something he rather preferred to see?

Sota turned towards Meteora. Everyone was fixated towards the battle on the screen. Confusion blanketed his mind. Watching the battle unfold once again, it struck a chord inside his beating heart.

Archer, Shirou Emiya is now the last hope for this world.

---

*So as I pray, Unlimited Blade Works*

Ring of fire burst to throw them into his world. Emiya stared at the gears in the sky, working the core of his Reality Marble. Swords rested in their graves, awaiting the summon once again. A flick of the wrist and the cloud would be filled with countless weapon. Not that it mattered against the woman standing in front of him.

Altair sighed as new rings formed a defensive shield. "Here we are again once more. Why do you not see the folly of your ways?"

His reply was to smirk in return. "Heroes are born as idiots. They never give up even against the odds."

Altair's defence was not without merit. "Countless examples have already been shown. How do you think for even now that there is hope to defeat me?"

"You are restless, aren't you? That someone had managed to get one up over you just now."
"The only thing above me is the level of your snide."

"I am honoured to hear that. It took a lot of practice to refine it to that limit," Emiya said.

"His efforts are in vain, only delaying the inevitable fate," Altair said with her head held high, eyes sharp and strong.

Emiya voiced to the unseen. "Alaya, still there?"

We exist.

"Give me everything you got." Magic Circuits primed as prana filled it to the brim. Command Seals formed along his forearms. Twenty in total. Useful superchargers of power. Branches of memories, past, present and future went by his thoughts. New graves formed to receive these new experiences.

"Very well. Prepare yourself again, Shirou Emiya." Altair summoned her violin. "Let this world vanish."

Fighting her for the seventieth time, Emiya took a different approach. Swords soared to fight Altair's defence. Some held back, shielding him from the bulk of Altair's own attacks. Sprinting parallel to the girl, he called upon his trusted pair.

Kanshou

Bakuya

Familiar weights in hand, he set them free. A second pair came to hand. Then a third. Continuous in motion, a weaving cage of white and black. Married blades of Gan Jiang that never wavered in protecting their master.

Sand scattered from his steps to circle around Altair. Her weapons continued to rain towards the shield. Emiya picked up weapons from their graves. A dance of metal, repelling the onslaught with every step closer.

Beams of light from above. Walls of sword rose from the ground, sacrificing themselves. A pair rose, stepping stone to reach the air. Twisting himself upside down, avoiding a sword coming too close for comfort. Their eyes met as Emiya drew upon his bow.

Sixteen swords flying towards him. A quick breathe before he fired. Sixteen shots in time beyond man. They met end to end, exploding in particles of red light. Swords of his arsenal pounced on the opening.

Altair turned to defence, blocking the incoming waves. Emiya felt ground before twisting around. Hand behind his back, he projected a cursed weapon.

Emiya felt ground before twisting around. Hand behind his back, he projected a cursed weapon.

Demonic red spear formed in his hand. Decades of experience travelled into his circuits. Movements refined by war for dozens of years. An Irish hero that killed his own son in the ways of battle. The blue haired man he fought countless times in an unbreakable rivalry.

Noble Phantasm belonging to Ireland's Child of Light. He reared it back, prana bursting forth along the spear's barbed edge as red lightning. Jolts of jubilation as he sent it flying.

Gae Bolg!
Fire trailed the flash of red light. Swords blocked the attack, pushed back by the immense flare. It's demonic flight juked and jagged across the open plain. A full stop before Altair's face, held back by a dozen opponents.

An explosive blast before the spear was flung back. The weapon didn't pierce her. Altair's eye wide expression told him that it worked on something. The one he hoped for.

Gae Bolg, the legend of Cu Chulainn, a weapon that reverses causality. Rather than attempting to pierce the heart, it had already been decided as the heart is already pierced and only needs to make the plays to achieve it.

Keeping out that rule of the Holopsicons was key. A constant contradiction between two sets of causalities would make her more vulnerable to his other methods. Probably.

Altair's surprise diminished, a new extra layer of swords now protecting her. "Well played, Emiya. I've expected you to use it at the beginning."

"I keep my plays flexible." Emiya dismissed the red spear, its use complete. Standalone, it would have been countered far too easily. "Omnipotence does not mean infallible after all." Her reply was to shoot him and reach for her submachine gun of a violin.

"Not on my watch." Emiya launched a full tirade of swords. Large bulky blades, weapons of an alternative dystopia. Upon impact, they broke into six smaller sets. Numbers that multiplied with every closing distance. Dozens into hundreds into thousands.

A string of the violin blasted a wave of white energy across the field. Swords scattered before a small train of daggers struck the edges. Four snapped as the blast halted and collapsed. The remaining one slipped through, blocked by Altair's handheld sword. It couldn't damage Altair, it wasn't even aimed to stab at her. What it needed was just a touch.

Purple sparks flickered against the sword. Magecraft from the Age of Gods enacted, breaking the binds and rules of known magics. Emiya felt a smirk from the weapon. Rule Breaker. Dagger belonging to the Witch of Betrayal.

That should disable her ability to disperse everything. Not permanently but gave a time window to work all the utility available.

Altair grit her teeth before attacking. New weapons sent flying towards him. World war two rifles that barked bullets while the bayonet lower grip. He didn't like them for countering this move set.

Those bullets were as indestructible. Shields formed, creating a phalanx. Each held a valiant defence before cracking under the dozens of rounds apiece. Crane wing copies tattered apart, absorbing the numerous hits.

Bird Cage of Gan Jiang was imminent of collapse. More swords rose to meet the equally difficult problem of mono e mono but they needed time. Two blades for his hands weren't going to cut it.

A bump in his chest. It called for him to use it. Never for once did he receive such emotions. He knew it was the right one. Stretching both hands out to his sides, they came.

The long metal handle carried no blade. A unique sword, made from another galaxy in the far future. A little button on its shaft ignited a Berserker's weapon. Red beams of sprouted from both ends of the shaft in a hum of plasma. Each movement carried a hum that warned of dismemberment and death.

The second copy in hand flickered to life. Two became four. Speed, reach, flexible and light.
Electrified humming sought to catch up to the red swirls. Carrying these pairs were a dance. Twist, twirl, spin, tossing them into the air to make moves that were normally difficult. Sparks of light as Emiya continued to charge forward.

Another bump, then multiple more. Emiya felt the change. Subtle, slight but constant. Growth within the world, within his body, within his soul. Shirou Emiya was becoming someone. No, something beyond just a wielder of heroic legends. A faker of Noble Phantasms.

These weapons were calling out. Reaching out to help him in this struggle. He never foreseen them to be sentient. Yet all the more appreciated as memories and power coursed through his circuits. Even stronger and prevalent. Refined closer towards their truest mastery.

Altair continued to watch him closely with a cold visage. The slight movement in her lips was more grievous. Warning bells as he interpreted.

Stella

Emiya raised his head towards the danger. Bright red meteorite crashing through the clouds towards him. A continental weapon of mass destruction. Using such an idea came to a surprise considering the legend of the bowman, a man that sacrificed his life for peace.

The Last Stardust needed equal measure to be defeated. Drawing into Unlimited Blade Works, he focused into ancient memories. Many lifetimes ago, the beginning of his heroic journey. A sword that appeared in land of dreams. Once wielded by a devoted young girl that carried the hope of a nation. Sacrificing everything for lands under threat by the Saxons. Eventually turning into a king that knew no emotions and forged the legend that remained known centuries past.

She was his first partner, fighting for a united goal. A bond of warriors that never bloomed further unlike his alternate selves. Unfortunate for she wasn't able to achieve her desires. Yet she'd grown stronger and moved on.

Projecting the blade was easy. Thinner compared to its successor. Elegant to meet the role of a Holy symbol. Sword of the Victorious. Warmth enveloped his hand as he held it tight in its grip. A voiceless but rather perky cheer, blessing of its owner. The blade glowed in gold, granted its full limits, deeming him worthy of being selected by the sword that defined history.

Red burned from the fiery meteor. Prana flooded into the sleek blade, blossoming white light at the tip. Raising the blade, he called upon its name and swung, unleashing its Noble Phantasm.

Caliburn

Altair watched the burst of yellow light zap across the air above her. Dazzling to the eye, holy in nature. Fire to fire, an explosion followed. Her ears feared no injury from buffeting waves of sound and wind. No light can blind her. By the time the smoke vanished, the meteor had vanished in its entirety.

Centura renewed their attacks on the Counter Guardian. Enfield joined the parlay, adding miniature but rapid lethal firepower to the mix. Each weapon, indestructible to even the most dangerous abilities across the various universes of fiction.

She did not tire. Forms of magic and technology in continued to grow into her arsenal even during battle. Alternative strategies, counters developed on the fly to any approach the hero could improvise. Magical senses studying and comprehending the intricate details of the curses imposed onto her. Matter of time.
Why is it that she cannot beat this man? Those above him had been defeated with far less. This Heroic Spirit was meant to be versatile but far weaker in return. Even now, he had getting a handicap from them. Strange considering she had defeated him multiple times already.

Why is this version of Shirou Emiya so difficult? She understood all his abilities, demonstrated against her dozens of times. His mindset wasn't difficult to comprehend. Difference in capability between the alternates was insignificant. Yet the underdog was keeping pace.

Shirou Emiya of the Counter Force represented her enemy. The only remaining Guardian of the world, of universes. A man without a legend and was making strides towards stopping her.

Her pride raged at the onset. It was the final countdown. Setsuna's sake depended on her to win. Destroying everything would finally set them free. She felt the soft grasp in her heart once. Only to be stopped by that damned fool of a Creator.

Pushing aside the burning embers inside her chest, she delved deeper into the Holopsicon. Cold fluid grip veiled around her thoughts. Parallel lines of mental processing to counteract against the tribulation before her.

The 5th Movement of the Holopsicon had been tampered. The 3rd had been sealed temporarily. Altair was without her most dangerous weapons. No, that was incorrect. Her mind, thoughts and emotions were the powerhouse of this body.

Altair won't hold back anymore. Any possible methods of victory would be used. Just as the man before her. The audience would accept it anyhow, her rules would just demand it so.

Said Counter Guardian remained composed, blank expression betraying nothing. Omnipotence didn't grant mind reading.

14th Movement, Rule change.

Thousands of voices entered her mind. Filtering them through with just a mental wave, she found his and dug deep. Black abyss. Odd for he had rather poor magic resistance. Ah, Eye of the mind. A sword went by closer than comfort. "That's quite a niche to depend so much on your weapons."

Counter Guardian narrowed his eyes. "I am not much of a hero with special powers. I borrow them. In his words, I am just a Faker."

"That's right." Altair replied. She had faced against said man. A tandem battle between owners of weapons. It carried an interesting air of pride.

Shirou Emiya, an anomaly. A paradigm of heroism. And she is all too glad to play the villain.

Come on you silly old man. Get her already! Boy, he knew Mordred was trouble but to be fussy even in a fight like this. Red lightning sparked as Emiya deflected a pair of swords aimed for his neck before swinging Clarent Blood Arthur.

Red thunder met silver thunderstorm as Emiya fended off another intrusion into his mind. Tangling roots digging into brain matter. Pain spiked in his ankle as a bullet pierced clean through. Fresh od healed the wound but it kept him from advancing towards Altair the third time. Swords of Boudica fired little beams of light, protecting him from the rest of the rain.

Emiya felt the pulsing heartbeat deep in his chest. Pumping blood at a calm but rapid pace. Exhaustion hovered wary over his body, ready to take over. A spark carried on beneath the dark cloak. Excitement of battle.
How long had it been since he fought all out like this? Tethering along the limits of the Counter Force. Beyond world, time and space. Fighting beings meant to destroy humanity, now the world. Cliched. Yet it is, what made him, him. A Hero.

Tremor under his skin when the running flood of precious prana was cut short. Full stop and silent. He called towards the Counter Force. No response. Troublesome, always at the worst moment. At this rate, he'd be combat able for twenty minutes. Unlimited Blade Works made projecting them cost efficient but the more prominent Noble Phantasms were energy guzzlers. Now he had to break Altair's defence for the third time.

Altair had arranged multiple layers of swords to defend herself. Another layer of rifles as dedicated active point defence. Grinding through one layer was nightmare. Four of them, without the easiest sealing noble phantasms are going to need more creative ingenuity.

Stepping aside from a line of swords, he called for Caladbolg. Breaking it before firing. An explosion scattered smoke as he dived through. It wouldn't hide his actions. A tight cluster of swords coming right through the smoke. Emiya counterattacked through, calling the sword of a Roman Emperor.

I came, I saw, I conquer

Crocea Mors moved in rapid succession, each strike carrying a wave of consequent attacks. One Command spell faded from his arm. Six blows, E rank luck chafing far too much into the ability's potential. Od flushed dry before a Command Seal restored reserves to full.

Blood red spears burst from the ground, an attack from below. Step two. They spread barbed hooks, catching the second layer into a tug of war. Dozens of Hrunting dived from the sky, hounding the third group.

That left the guns, forming the three line formation. Another Command Seal extinguished as Ig-Alima rose in between, absorbing the attacks. Behemoth of a weapon clouded the sky as it fell. Boots clacked along the long blade, using it as a ramp towards Altair.

A new ring fresh off the batter moved to meet him. Stretching his arm, Rho Aias blossomed. Petals cracked and shattered as Sword of Paracelsus formed in one hand. Simple with a wooden guard and pommel. On its own, it wouldn't be able to make a dent against Altair's magic resistance.

Priming it with prana, the blade sparked, cracked and entered the broken state. As the earth quaked from the falling sword of Gods, Emiya raised the broken magic arrow overhead. Cast it down and sent it flying.

Deaf fell to his ears as the sonic boom cracked sound. It didn't hit, striking deep into the ground a step before her.

Altair said. "You missed." One sword snapped the weapon in half before a globe of energy sprouted forth, enveloping everything within three meters.

Unlimited Blade Works shuddered as numbers scrolled into his mind. The archaic quantum computer embedded within the Mystic Code analysed the environment, the very machinations and calculations. And reversed it. The sphere was gone in an eye blink, task complete. It wasn't a blanket seal but he got rid of what he needed to. Her very omniscience.

Altair's energy beams broke through Rho Aias, blasting him into the explosion. A back breaking thud as he skidded across the sand. Choking smoke. Pain, his good friend.
Bones fractured or broken. Flesh torn and shredded. Reforged by a Command seal. Life breathed back into him. Burning arms pushed himself back up as the smoke cleared.

A glimpse of a pink line alongside her cheek. What he had been waiting fingers ripped the torn parts of his cloak, revealing his bare shoulder. He said, tossing it into the wind. "Give it up. You're losing."

His opponent's face betrayed nothing. "Heroes never surrender. A villain has to keep up with the notion." The cut healed without blemish. Blue magic circles formed around her, uncertain of their purpose.

Six Command Seals flared, supercharging all twenty seven Magic Circuits. Sweat poured as odor cycled underneath skin in quick succession. Pulled off all the stops. This would be Emiya's defining moments.

The villain attacked. Energy beams, bullets, swords from all directions. Meteorites fell from the sky by the dozens. Emiya lunged forward, accelerating with every step. Squeeze of a fist sent his metallic army.

Emiya had committed rainfall of blades many times. Now, he sought a tidal wave. Hundreds, thousands, beyond the numbers. Every weapon of all legends and histories. Real, fictional, alternative.

Excalibur Galantines burned the sky against falling doomsdays. Altair's sword had its legend defined. Destined to never be broken. Noble Phantasms flared their ambiance, purporting their legend. Demanding to be used.

He granted their wish. Blades with a history of cutting through anything. Its leader was simple in construction, wielding the power of a Greek Goddess in the metallic shine of Adamant. Engraved on the golden hilt was its name, Chrysaor.

Overpowering against indomitable clashed. Draw for Altair's hangers weren't shattered but they carried a deep incision. His blade cracked from the impact, but he carried an advantage. Speed.

The lines advanced along his end towards Altair whom promptly shook her head in amusement. "Shirou Emiya. I have to commend you for doing so well. You've accomplished more than anyone else had."

"It is not something I like to do, fighting someone who cheated with powers of the world. Even so, you're a one trick pony like Gilgamesh. Many abilities but only one at a time." He has to finish her off within five minutes.

"I've really been giving you too much leeway. What a disappointing time for my character description to appear now."

Instinct screamed. Power levels inside the lithe girl down the field shot straight up. Aura beyond experience. Godlike in comparison. How much handicap had she been giving?

His reply was to charge forward across the open sands. Altair drew a sword in hand before gesturing him to bring it. Swords sought to catch him at the weirdest angles but he had them covered.

Emiya called upon the best weapon, designed to overpower any opponent with flawless technique. Orient of the far east, length nearly matching his size. Larger cousin of the famous katana. The Monohoshi-Zao.
The blade hummed in owner's pleasant surprise. Eight steps away, he pressed his feet down, pulling the weapon behind his shoulder, exposing his back against the girl. A shine of light along the blade's edge before the samurai's hands guided it into the impossible.

*Tsubame Gaeshi*

Swallow's reversal. Three strikes with a single blade in the same span of time. Technique designed to catch a swallow in mid flight. Spinning tide of light refined only by a man's lifetime's training. All three blows hit. Monohoshi-Zao shattered, and so did hers.

Emiya called for Kanshou as he turned eight into four. Altair tried to step back with wide eyes. Rather couldn't thanks to a trio of Black keys embedded into her shadow. Four steps turned into two. He raised his sword and saw a face he never expected to see.

Black twin tails against her blue eyes. *Rin.* The pause was enough to send him reeling back after receiving a blow to the face. Something broke.

*Rin* caught the blade with her hand before swinging a fist. Thumping echo of shock as something else broke. "Why Emiya? Why are you trying to hurt me?"

Even got the voice right. *Manipulative little bitch.* He let Kanshou fade before reinforcing his fist. Returning the favour, the fake imagery of his beloved friend flew back before landing on her feet. Thanks for the move *Rin.*

Instinct screamed for him to block. Arms raised as pain spiked everywhere. Arm, chest, legs. His neck and vitals were saved before seeing a beam of energy. Being slammed into the ground broke his spine.

Grunts of bloodied pain as four command seals rushed to treat the injuries. Metal creaked within, reinforcing knitting flesh and resetting bone. Joints, limbs and ankles snapped back to place. Heavy limbs protested as he rose to see Altair back in her normal form.

"That should have killed you outright. My mistake, I shouldn't make you suffer after all." Emiya had to hand it to her for playing the actress.

He cleaned the copper taste in his mouth. Seven miracles left adorned on his shoulders. Their eyes met in long scrutiny. Deep within the girl, he found growing respect. Now he'll tear it. "Your Creator carried so much potential. Such a disappointment to go against her wishes."

"This world betrayed her." Calm, collected as Altair's own creation speed intensified, evening the draw.

"Sure she hated it once but she didn't want the world to be destroyed. Her very words and you're defying her."

"And you've seen the results. They can't accept her even in death." She turned her glance at the horizon. "Hypocritical for them to proclaim acceptance when they oppress the innocent."

"That is why you have your powers. Your Creator, those other people that granted you powers wanted you to exist. Make you strong to beat away all the pain."

"Precisely." Her smile of vindication.

Another seal spent, leaving six. "These people may be receiving unfair treatment. People wonder why they deserve cruel fate to suffer."
"Yes, yes."

"That's where you're wrong. One side of the coin."

"Many failed not because of the pitfalls they face. They've given up against the wall that felt insurmountable. Believing the fact that they cannot fight against fate taking over their life which was never true. That is why they fail."

"In championing their failures, you've done them a disservice. You're the worst of what they are. Altair, you are the symbol of their hatred and weakness, especially your Creators."

"Begone."

He barely had time to blink. Beams congregated into a single blast. Bulk swords rose to protect him. Metal melted red hot before splintering. Emiya leapt back before pain fragmented along skin, shrapnel burning into his skin.

"Is this how you answer me Altair? Begone and that's it? Matters not since it would never validate your hope. That desire to end everything for destroying it is pointless"

"You would never know! The pain inside her as they stung their poisons into her." Altair was screaming by now.

"I don't but I can relate. I've died so many times that even her pain, however large is nothing compared to mine."

Snarl was growing on her lips. "I will make you really suffer that pain again and again."

"Suffer I will for I am Emiya." A pair of black and white blades in hand before moving forward. Born from the far future, carrying a special property. Made to kill all who wields the sword. Wielded by the mysterious Saber killer.

Both blades flared with prana. Leaning forward, a lunge forward and they ignited, turning him into a bullet. Hundred metres in a blink, cross swings reached out towards Altair.

Pain speared into left arm and shoulder. That threw his aim, blocked aside by two fresh swords. Altair grabbed the blade in his shoulder and the world spun. He kissed ground before skidding several times.

Quite a Berserker. Blood trickled down his nostrils and lips. Emiya gave a sneer. "Rather brutal for a soft hearted creator. Setsuna must have been rather sadistic to give you that attribute."

"Shut your mouth!"

"Make me. I can insult her all day." White flash, barely parried by his own weapon. The circles around the girl vanished. "Are you done already? Did she want you to come home whining?"

Altair's ring of swords expanded, multiple layers and growing larger. Boy did he stirred up the hornet's nest. More than anything she had ever used. Red beams collected on the sharp tips.


For a short sword, it carried no grip. The blue ball of a hilt sparked lightning as the circular pommel flared. Sword of the Gods floated into position, aimed for Altair's heart. A weapon that would work
only against precise conditions.

A banshee's scream as the beams grew larger. "Disappear from my sight!"

Life flickered before him as death closed onto him. Raising a fist, he slammed into the hilt and sent it flying.

*Fragarach*

Emiya felt death. Burnt so deep that there was no ash. Nothing remained of Shirou Emiya until causality stopped for the third time. Frozen time twisted before everything was rewritten.

Altair remained standing, a bleeding hole in her chest. *Impossible luck to dodge something like that.*

"You're not the only one who feels the pain from the world. Every living being feels it. We're the smart ones with emotions."

Her wound was healing. "Whatever they did to her is still wrong! Her story was only beginning but for hers to end in such way is unacceptable. Absolutely unacceptable."

"Just as she died, countless others die in many ways. Starvation, murder, sickness and misfortune."

His words were caught off guard when a sword struck onto the ground from the sky. One he didn't own. Unremarkable on its own. Intriguing because of the message it carried underneath its blade.

*Old man sends his regards, GL HF.*

Silver along the blade carried a separate set of inscriptions. One that belonged to another sword. Structural Grasp paused, blacking out at times trying to comprehend the designs. Tiny capillaries hurt from the strain.

*Well...thanks.* Emiya wrapped his fingers together and concentrated. Rho Aias formed as the hair on his back prickled from energy in the distance. Another shot.

*Judging the concept of creation*

Nerves hurt, Magic Circuits burned from condensing the prana to forge this Noble Phantasm.

*Hypothesising the basic structure*

*Duplicating the composition material*

For a weapon, it looked horrible. A short blade and guard that looked more akin to rocks than metal. Silver, crystalline and rugged, it was not a sword that could cut even a lump of meat well.

*Imitating the skills of its making*

*Sympathising with the experience of its growth*

The strength it carried was undeniable. Projecting it to this level burnt through the remaining seals and then into the reserve.

*Reproducing the accumulated years*

*Excelling every manufacturing process*

Created by a Dead Apostle. What had been made remained vastly inferior to its original. Stronger
than anything he carried. Still, it was the very same. The Sword of Zelretch.

Lifting it over his worn shoulders, light gathered along the tip. A small glow that burned brighter until it blinded the world. Powers of universes in hand, threatening to slip from his grip.

Altair's beam roared, unleashed a second time. He swung, turning the world of red into white.

Everything was white. Roar of winds that echoed, grounds that shook for unfathomable time. A plane where nothing and everything is absolute.

Reality returned. Emiya lived. Altair lived. Both standing on white ground. Freckles of glass fell, covering the white wasteland.

Emiya buckled for a moment, That swing ate everything he had. Except for one. A shaky hand projected Kanshou. Gears of his world stopped shut from the lack of prana. Reinforcement dispelled, turning muscles into jelly.

Altair was regaining her bearings as he grunted forward. Something tore as he applied pressure to a feet in creaking half hanging boot.

Something compelled him to speak as he lunged forward. "Look into every one of our history. We never have happy lives all the time. We struggle. We suffer pain and sorrow. We grow stronger from the trials that come in our paths."

Hope stretched out as Unlimited Blade Works faded away.

"That is what it means to be human."

Emiya felt the cold air of Tokyo night. Back to the Bird Cage. He relaxed his coarse grip of Kanshou. "This is my victory."

"That's right. You've done well." Altair closed her eyes. Her voice remained unchanged in spite of gaping wounds.

"People die when they are killed. It doesn't mean they lost." The softest voice he spoken in a long time. One that would've been used by his younger self. "Let the hate go. Move on and perhaps you can find salvation for your Creator. For Setsuna."

Altair pressed a slick bloodied hand onto her gaping chest. "There is no other way for I cannot die. When I go, I will return and everything else will be turned moot."

"Only if you believe otherwise. I've seen far crazier things. Wherever there's a will, there's always a way. Always."

Kanshou shattered into fragments. The wound glowed in blue as energy burst free. Altair closed her eyes, clutching a fist. She turned towards the sky. "Sota Mizushino. Can you do me a favour?" Blood stained deeper into the black dress.

"Create a new story. A happy one, for both her and I." Her eyes turned to meet Emiya's. One that were filled with hope. "I'm not giving up to protect her. Just another way to fulfil her dream."

The first time he smiled to her. A real one. "If you ever come back, count on me to return and kick your ass back."

"Contemptuous, until the very end." Those were her last words.
Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

Yeah, I skipped the previous notes by intent. I'll include them here together.

For Chapter 23, all the pieces are in place. Sirius doesn't exist in Beyond Worlds. She wouldn't have passed the drawing board for Emiya. Unreliable and prone to faults similar to Hikayu's original case. Which lead to what happened in the original after all.

Setsuna's appearance initially was on the fence for me. Sota's skilled have improved enough to turn it into a summonable entity by Altair. Hence Emiya's attempt to goad her to kill her own motivation. Problem was also clear, a deus ex machina which without Magane's presence caused it to backfire.

She could create a new universe with Setsuna within. However, that would have made her goal irrelevant because the original pursuit was vengeance for Setsuna. She might have been swayed over in the original but they had the time to do it. Here, not so much.

Why did the world end? Because Altair was done playing around. The events around the world made it far more disruptive in this story than the original.

Chapter 24. Yeah, I'm playing with fire here. Fourth wall breaking into this story. Part experiment, part necessity. Altair was so OP that trying to find a solution on their own would be rather difficult. The more powerful beings in the universes would have hard time contending with the insane abilities. Defeating Altair as Emiya was truly a mix masher of multiple things.

Whilst still in the fourth wall, I also had to contend with the rules that Altair imposed upon me. Butterfly effect and also a countering butterfly resistance. Funny, strange but yes.

Sota's part was also forms of my potential branches which I decided to include. Multiple universes and timelines following similar doctrines to Fate Extella. Butterfly of butterflies.

After that, creating the Ultimate Gar Fight was a headache. Multiple OP abilities that she carried. Clairvoyance was even possible if she willed it to happen but it didn't. Just like how Gilgamesh fell to his pride, hers kept her in check.

Closer towards defeat, it was hard for her to accept but it grew onto her to accept it and turn defeating him a priority. Granted Emiya didn't defeat her on the single go. Seventy times to perfect the thing down and that was barely as it is. Yes, that seventieth wasn't a typo.

Why didn't Altair just destroy reality from another universes and realm? Because other heroes and universes continually resisting, turning the entire problem into a single big reality battle royale. I don't know if I managed to bring enough of that context within. I hope to hear more but I wouldn't count on it.
Regards

MarksmanKNG
Epilogue

Daichi awoke to chirping birds. Soft groan filled his lips. White filled his eyes. A passing moment before his eyes adjusted to the bright morning sun from the window on the left.

A needle jabbed into his arm, filling some clear fluid. His back and chest felt sore. Like being cooked partway. An involuntary sigh. *Once again in the hospital room.* At this rate, he'd probably end up like some unfortunate high school student in another world.

A ruffle of paper caught his attention. Counter Guardian Archer was seated in the room, flicking the pages of newspaper with a hand. He called out to the man who obviously knew he was awake. "Archer, did we save the world?"

Archer continued to read. "Of course you idiot. Wouldn't be here in the first place, would we?"

Daichi laughed. Raspy before falling into a coughing gag. "That's right. I must be really nuts." Reality began to sink deeper onto his shoulders. A glance to his left hand. Faded red markings where the Command Seals once were. *You'll be missed.* "Did we lose anyone else? Besides Siegfried."

Archer settled the newspaper onto the arm of the chair. "Alicetaria and Selesia." Clean white bandages wrapped along the shoulder and left arm.

Daichi lazed back to bore holes into the ceiling. *Damn.* He suppressed from sighing and said. "Okay. You look like a mummy with all those."

"Please. Your circuits nearly burnt out from abuse. I wager you would have killed yourself if Siegfried didn't kill Lancelot in time."

Daichi lifted himself up, wincing from the sting. "Another idiot in the making. Not that I need to stay as one anymore."

Archer snorted. "That's right. War's over." The guardian continued on to explain the aftermath of the battle. He managed to defeat Altair by a lot of determination, luck and helping hands from other worlds.

"Other worlds, to think that possibility was real." Daichi chuckled. "I missed all the exciting bits." Apparently things were confusing for the audience. News outlets and forums were making a lot of noises. The government chose to say nothing and keep it quiet. It'll probably slide out into obscurity by the end of next week since there is no culprit to begin with.

"Not my problem. Get some rest Kid, we all earned it." The Red Guardian turned and opened the door. Someone dived into the room and his arm hurt from being squeezed so hard.

"You stupid idiot." Shizuka's eyes were filled with tears.

Daichi gave a faint smile before wrapping a hand around her. "Ow."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
"What on earth were you thinking, pulling of such kind of stunt?" She struck him lightly a few times, eliciting several gasps of pain. *Still feels like a truck.*

"Why were you doing something so dangerous?"

"How did you know?"

She deadpanned to him. "You'd think I'd be dumb enough not to notice Archer's face plastered on the video screen? Your voice in the background? It was obvious that you're involved with all your shenanigans." *Oh crap.* Her sigh stung him. "Of all the people I had to fall in love with."

Daichi gave a sheepish smile to placate her. He caught a glance of Kikuchihara by the door. Archer walked out and shut the door behind him, giving them the privacy he wanted.

"I'm sorry." He said, lifting himself back up. "Guess the cat's out of the bag now."

"Now, are you going to tell me the real story of what happened?"

"What did the lady tell you?"

She frowned. "That you're one of the players in the festival."

"It's going to be a long story…"

A finger pointed at the clock. "We have all day." There's no running from her.

Daichi started from the beginning. How he came to meet Archer, how they ended up working together with the other Creators. Receiving Magic Circuits and putting them to summon Siegfried. Involved in a secret war to protect the world against Altair and her former goons.

In between points, she'd throw some frowns and displeasure at hearing how he ended up in the hospital twice. That earned him a few more painful pinches to the cheek. Beyond that, he summarised the points of how the battles he was involved. How he stayed far from the battle until the end.

"Why you have to be such an idiot?" He definitely shouldn't mix her with Archer next time. They'll roast him up nice and good.

Daichi gave a gentle squeeze to her hand. "All's well now isn't it?"

"That's what you always say. Look who's on the bed right now." She rested her head against his shoulder.

Daichi conceded, giving her arm a soft rub. "I'll make it up to you. A sad lot of a hero's got to do at least that."

"You better do." She grabbed his face and leaned close. Far too close.

*I'll be damned.* Daichi blinked at the sudden kiss before his thoughts melted away.

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The Bird Cage Festival ended on generally a bright note. Heroes saved the day once again. Most people were happy from the results. An old man reached for the television remote and turned it off.

"Hey, I was still watching." The voice spoke behind the old man.
"That's the third rerun of it. I think it's enough watching." Old man said while putting the little tool back onto the coffee table.

"I could use some inspirational reinforcement." Said from the comfy chair.

"That you need to watch it three times?"

"There are always picky details that need more than one viewing." Comfy refused to back down. "It's been days and the world isn't over. What happens then, old man?"

Old man placed a hand on the sigil by the counter. It pulsed yellow before fading back to its darkened state. "This world's reality is correcting itself properly this time. It will be another few days before the changes are complete."

"What about the others?"

"They've been returned to where it is necessary. Deon has confirmed the news to me."

"Returned home. Finally the mess is over."

"Correct. I'll be picking the little young lings from their assignment."

The pair of hands stretched over the chair. "Finally I can get some peace. I hated it when I left my console back home."

"I'm certain you understood the urgency."

"Of course, however with your abilities, going back to pick it up would have saved me from boredom."

"Who will protect you in the meantime? Besides, wouldn't you rather refine your craft for your fans?"

"Procrastination at its finest." A sigh. "At least I managed to get something done in the meantime. It's been half a year. I can imagine how Takeuchi would be freaking, not that he needs me to be physically present."

The man stroked his beard. "Yes, Creator."

"Don't." The voice hardened. "Yes, I am a Creator but that doesn't mean I am your God."

"Friends then. Across the big picture, we've enjoyed a good show together of how our good heroes won the day. You can finally go home and enjoy your slacking life."

"Ha ha ha, that's the part of living. Trying to find enjoyment in the midst of deadlines. The world's changing by the day and I couldn't be ever lazier." The old man dispelled the sigil, its task completed. The rest in the attic and garden would disappear in concert.

"The part where the world was suppose to end. Did you know what happened?"

Old stroked his beard. "Someone paid a great price to revert Altair's destruction."

"What is that price?"

"Complete removal of a being or reality including any chance to exist. An existence removed to restore anew."
"A familiar concept more so with the idea of Quantum Time Lock. I'd add in Multiverse concept into the mix and that'll be another interesting streak to think about. Harsh but I hope the world's grateful to him, her or it." The elder said nothing in reply. "Have any plans to stay, or at least drop by?"

"This world is not meant for me. It would be too boring."

"That's right. You're one that always seek out the unique things in new worlds. Things would have been much simpler if you were there."

"Good things are worth watching."

"That is what make you, you after all." Old reached for the black staff by the door. "Before you go, you didn't rig the toilet seat by any chance again did you?"

Old smiled although he wouldn't see it. "No. I don't have the time. Setting up the support for them at the back occupied enough of my attention. You can be rest assured."

"When you say it like that, something is definitely up."

"Oho, well I'll leave the surprise to you." Old pushed Od into the staff. It would take a few minutes to power up the spell.

"If it's one of those sticky booby traps, I'll make sure to rewrite you to have an aneurysm."

A snort. "You can try but I wonder if the world would make sense to accept that."

"I am the author. Anything can happen."

"If you ever meet another version of me, tell him I say hi. And that I'm better than him." A flash of light before the world changed to the last step of the plan.

Sota bowed before pressing three sticks of incense into the grave's patch of sand before his feet. He stood up to gaze at the name one last time.

Setsuna Shimazaki.

The weight in his chest grew as his eyes bored deep into the plague. An unfortunate end for the girl. A lasting regret but he wasn't going to run away anymore.

Meteora placed her set of incense to finish the prayers to poor girl. Her gaze stern and focused on the task. The nearby birds on a nest chirped, a parent feeding its young. Watching the little family allowed his thoughts to wander.

The Internet had been abuzz with gossip and rumours to what happened since the end of the Elimination Chamber Festival. Harsh criticism flooded the news forums and pages about the many inconsistencies from the book to the final event, tropes used and how their favourite characters died. From Matsubara's point of view, while the comments were valid, they were just lucky to just make do. Kikuchihara decided to slot the results of the event as part of the government stereotype. Sota was glad to let things be buried in place.

Meteora's voice jolted him out of his thoughts. "Sota, I still wonder." She placed a few stalks of flowers into the patch to decorate the brown gravel. "What happened to her that she was able to appear in such a way?"

"Honestly, I don't know the real answer to that. If I put my mind to it, I'd guess that she wanted to
Sota nodded. "What hasn't happened doesn't mean it can't. Granted it took a lot of work and I had a lot of help. It wasn't enough in the end but somehow I feel that the effort put into it, it felt good."

"Marine told me about this joy beforehand. How it felt good to create something out of your own hands. I do not comprehend its full meaning but I find sense behind it. You've grown well Sota."

"I still have a long way to go." He closed his fist. "Everyone else has helped so much but I know that there's more to learn before I can reach the same level."

"Nevertheless, you've already taken the first step. While creation is something innate in mankind, it takes a special sense of bravery to reveal something very deep and emotional to the world."

Sota couldn't help himself from smiling. "That's right. Behind those works is a cloud of pain waiting to be unleashed upon you. But there's also the joy mingled with it. That you've made something that's always an original, even if they're based on someone or something that existed."

Meteora returned the smile. "The greatest thing of creation is the conveyance of your heart. Sharing the very emotions and memories inside that would give life to others' own emotions. That is what the readers felt at that moment and in turn will carry them forward into their lives."

Sota nodded as strong winds blew across his face. "You're right Meteora. That is how our creations bond us together." He offered his hand.

A nod from her as her fingers slipped between his. The birds continued to chirp as they left the altars with peace in their minds.

"Hand over the sauce please." Kanoya asked. He caught the flying bottle aimed for his face. "Oi, I didn't say to toss it!"

Emiya snorted as Kanoya brooded. A swift flick of the wrist tossed the steak into the air and land on its other side. The stack of shrimps were mixed into the rice before spread across the sizzling hot teppan plate.

"Excellent." Meteora said as she watched his movements. He paid no mind to the stares while handling the six other meals simultaneously. Cooking is the only art that can be called his pride. Five minutes is what it took to transform raw materials into masterpieces.

"The gears returned to the beginning." Meteora said before stuffing a handful of takoyaki into her mouth.

She said a few words which were incomprehensible to Kanoya. "I have no idea what you're trying to say."

Said woman took a gulp of sake to empty her mouth. "Based on my hypothesis, the world is regaining strength to restore the laws of reality to its original form."

"The tremors in the world has begun to converge and seal. We need to return to our worlds using the appropriate spell while the aftereffects of the collision of worlds remain." Her attention was pulled away by the loud clunk of glass.
"Drinking in the middle of the day is so great." Blitz Talker hummed after downing the entire contents of his glass of beer. His daughter was having another round of juice beside him with the studying gaze of her father's beverage.

"Are you listening to what I'm saying?" Meteora pouted at the gunman.

"No."

Emiya took a sip of sake. "In a nutshell, we're on a clock before being stranded on this world." He set the glass down before looking at her. "What kind of timeline are we looking at?"

"My Magic Book's search range is shrinking day by day. I suspect a few days at most. I recommend that you wrap up your business within the next few days. Is there anything you want to do before you go back? Anything you haven't told your Creator? This would be the last opportunity."

Kanoya straightened himself from his slouch. "Hey, do we really have to go back? Meteora, what happens if we stay here?"

"I do not know the precise answer. However, I suspect that the rules that governs our abilities would disappear."

"That means no more powers or abilities." Kanoya leaned against the table. "Gigas Machina would probably become a hunk of junk then."

"I would suggest for you to return to your worlds. We have been brought to this world not by choice. Likewise, there are many business at your worlds that need you."

Kanoya nodded as the group quieted down to a sombre. "Yeah. It's probably for the best." He lied down onto the floor with a wince. "There's so many things I want to do over here. Time flies when we least expect it huh."

"It has been a long time. We have enjoyed new things in the land of the Gods. Likewise we experienced opportunities never possible in our own world."

"Yeah, meeting our God is a God given chance. How funny that is."

Blitz refilled his beer. "Regrettably, some of us will never get the chance to talk to their Gods again." Siegfried, Selesia Upitiria, Yuya Mirokuji, Alicetaria February, Sho Hakua.

"You're right."

"I don't really know them well." Hoshikawa's voice was soft and timid. "However, I think they are good people in general despite what happened."

"She's right. We all have our purpose in life and it doesn't invalidate their sacrifice." The gunman raised his glass. "A toast to the fallen. The paragons of courage." The others raised theirs in turn.

A fitting gesture for the warriors that protected the Land of the Gods.

Rui Kanoya took a deep breath as his eyes bore into the large wooden door. He rapped against the deep lacquered oak. Crickets in the house garden. The lock clacked and said door groaned open.

Masaki Nakanogane, his Creator popped his head out. Rui raised a hand for a simple wave. "Yo."

Masaki smiled. "You look all better."
Rui pulled the sleeve of his white shirt to show a healthy arm. "Yeah, magic's really convenient." He dangled a plastic bag of snacks. "Something for a visit."

"Thanks. Come on in." Stepping through the gate from a modern world into one of the past. "Let me get some tea." Masaki went towards the back for the kitchen.

Rui settled down, a lazy eye looking around while unpacking the bags of potato chips. All things considered, this kind of place was rather homey. Energia had a traditional place like this, the only one on the peak of Mount Ishihara. It would be the second time he was here. The previous had been seven months ago. After giving a moment's respite, everything felt like a joke.

Masaki returned, placing a small pot of tea alongside a few porcelain cups. "Finally glad to be home?" Rui asked.

A laugh. "You wouldn't know about it. It's been so long I nearly forgot how my bed feels."

Rui jested. "Surely it can't be that bad. It's only a short while from what I heard from Sota."

Masaki poured tea into the cups. "Yeah, so much happened during that time. Man, I was terrified when Blitz came knocking on the door. Like the Punisher man. That hand cannon of his was really loud." His face softened to stare into hot steam. "After that, Marine was hurt and we lost Yuya."

"Yeah, that's a bad way to go."

Rui sighed before grabbing a cup. Drinking it didn't lift the weight in his chest. It would be a matter of time before more deaths would continue to pile on from his world.

"Let's not stick to such dreary topics. I've heard from Meteora that you all are going home soon,"

Masaki said.

"Yup." Rui popped open a pack of chips. "That's why I came to drop by you know, to chill out."

Masaki settled his cup on the table. "If I wasn't in the thick of it, I wouldn't have believed that you all were here in this world."

Rui shrugged. "Not my fault to begin with."

"I'm not blaming you for it. Nobody would have expected it to happen." Masaki chuckled, his eyes gazing across the shoji walls of white paper. "I remember the first day we met for real. How you ended up having lunch in this very house."

"Then Selesia and Meteora had to show up. It was fun messing around with her." Rui refused to let it pull him down.

God beamed. "Oh yeah, those moves you pulled off were quite cool you know. Getting an up close and personal view made it scary but awesome at the same time."

"I'm the coolest guy after all." Rui grinned back. "Seven months, really long while back you know."

He leaned back on his hands. "It was weird coming to a new place. Someplace where you end up knowing that you're weren't real."

"Don't say it that way." Masaki reached over the table. A strong grip over his shoulder. "You're just as real like I am."

Rui pulled his God's hand away. "Man, you have to say such things. I might not want to go home after that."
"You're always welcome to stay here." Masaki's eyes were serious. "While you would have to go to school, learn some new things and find a job but I won't find fault with that. It's a hard choice to continue fighting after everything."

"Tempting but nah. Sounds too boring." Rui met eye to eye with God. "Really, I'm touched to hear that. Though that won't be me. I am a hero after all. Saving the world is my job."

Masaki laughed. "Life here is boring, most of the time anyway. That's why we created exciting things to watch and feel. To remind us that we are alive. You guys are the epitome of that."

"That's right. Nothing less than that." Rui chilled back, arms under his head. A peaceful life. "I wouldn't mind though if there's more breaks now and then. You guys overwork us heroes you know."

Laughter before Masaki strode towards the shelf by the television. He pulled out a CD case, one that carried the weight in gold.

*Infinite Divine Machine of Mono Magia.*

Masaki dangled the CD of his legacy. "Care to binge a few episodes?"

A smile grew on his lips. "Sure."

Blitz Talker couldn't help himself from smiling. Watching his little girl cry in joy while she reached for the bright sky. Gentle firm grip kept her afloat, pushing her up and down the swing.

No problems, no distractions, no troubles. Just the two of them in this small park. A boring place given how little amenities. Yet she didn't care.

Erina, a true bundle of joy. That optimism in her smile. He missed these moments. Taken away in a nightmare. Twist of fate that forced to perform the most damnable thing in his entire life.

Everything changed, only because God chose to grant it. Whilst she had nefarious purposes in mind for that but he couldn't give it worth a damn. The time he wanted and always lacked. Finally, finally he had them.

Sweet siren's voice pulled him out of reverie. "Papa, I'm flyinggggg."

"That's right. You're flying, like a sparrow." He lifted her up towards the sky. A few squeals as he darted about the park with his own laughs. Something real for once. Blitz spun her around before pulling her close to a hug. "Erina, I love you."

"I love you too Papa." She looked up to him. "What's going to happen now?"

Blitz reached out and ruffled her blonde hair. "It will be a few days before Aunt Meteora will send us home."

Erina squealed. "Will we stay together?"

"That woman would make it happen." Nobody could predict the end result. Would they lose every memory they had of being here? Some sort of time paradox where he would see his older or future self? He'll let the eggheads figure it out. Those guys always love to make weapons that threaten to blow up the city. This'll be a nice problem to keep them sated.

"You shouldn't say it like that Papa." The little girl raised her hands in a huff. "She worked very hard
to bring me to meet you here Papa." She was a cute little vixen but it was his vixen.

Blitz reached for a smoke before stopping his hand. "She took you from me once. I won't forgive her."

"I know that I went to Neverland." Sunshine wilted into a soft chick. "When I came here, I saw it, a little bit of her memories." Blitz felt her press her face against his cheek. "She was so sad. She cried a lot while writing that part."

_Is that so?_ Blitz stood up and reached a hand for his daughter. "If that's the case Erina, then I won't be so hard on her. Maybe give her something as appreciation."

Erina grabbed on, her small hands fitting wholly into his. "Thank you Papa."

Blitz hefted her onto his back. "Now let's get us some ice cream. This holiday won't last for very long." He intend to take it to the fullest. For Erina is everything.

---

Daichi felt the winds breezing against his face. Smell of the humid morning and seaside salt. He asked whilst dangling his legs above the water. "Why are you here all alone? Everyone else are chilling out at the beach or out shopping."

"I'm enjoying my peace and quiet with no thanks to you." Archer in his fishing getup said with a steady grip on the rod. They were the only ones sitting by the elongated pier. He never understood how this man found this place. It took him a while to get here, being an obscure place of the bay.

"Or maybe its closer to the sad fact that you have no friends." Daichi teased.

"The loner speaks for himself." Their eyes met before a chuckle.

"It's over. The world is saved, everyone goes home. A happy ending." Daichi summarised. "Archer, what are you planning to do? Stay here or go back?"

A moment's pause. "I haven't decided."

"Weren't you planning on a nice long vacation here?"

"That's until the said vacation turned into a megalomaniac quest for world destruction." Daichi conceded to that. "Much remains to do in my own world that needs fixing."

"So says the man that decided justice wasn't worth his grain of salt. Besides wouldn't your world move only when your Creator makes a story to continue it on?"

"Shut it Kid. You're one to talk to always try to get himself killed." Archer grinned. "On the other note, what you don't see doesn't mean it didn't happen. Furthermore, you all are always driving it forward, one way or another."

Daichi crossed his legs together. "You're right about that. Siegfried said something on a similar note. However, it doesn't mean that I can't stop trying."

"That's where your inexperience lies. There are many paths to the same goal. Some can be longer, inconspicuous or tedious but they reach the same end. You just need to find the right path and stick to it. Following my way would not save you. Bless be to Rin for bearing with me for so long. Be thankful you're alive."

"Yeah. Although at least you could talk to your Creator. He does deserve to hear from you doesn't
"That joker doesn't need to hear anything from me. Besides, he knows me well enough that we don't need words to talk."

Daichi whistled. "He's that good eh. To understand your characters so well that you would know what's in their minds. He hoped he could be the same.

"Enough about me Kid. You have a long path ahead. Think hard and well on what you want to do."

"I didn't have the time to think about it. Just great, graduation's coming within the year." The idea of studying for exams was deflating. He'd just help save the world for fate's sakes.

"There's still time. Get a job while you're thinking about it. Give it your best shot once you have something in mind."

"Right…" Daichi said. "Archer, thanks."

The red man said nothing as he continued watching the deep blue sea. Just like how he watched over his domain in the realm of swords.

Matsubara licked beer foam off his lips as he looked down the empty glass. Buzz of beer felt good in his mind. It helped not making him think and numb the pain. An inevitable end but the burn remains. Maybe I'd should have taken whiskey instead. I'd be drunk enough to not notice the difference.

Kikuchihara decided to organise a farewell party for the great heroes. It wasn't a fancy top star place, within the small confines of a hotel. The quiet space reserved just for them was what he preferred. Best part of the entire thing though was the unlimited alcohol. That was the most important part. Matsubara poured himself another glass as Meteora continued to wharf down plates of chicken and assortments of meat at the main table. Suruga was regaling about her near death experience to Masaki and the kids. Kanoya was playing cards with Hoshikawa and Archer at one of the smaller side tables.

Marine's was on a steady road to recovery. She did hint of being disappointed of missing the entire spectacle. 'Maybe it's better for me not to know. I'd probably have a heart attack.' So she said.

The growing stack of glass plates made testimony to Meteora's appetite which brought a chuckle out of him. It would be the last time he'd see such a thing. Yatoji, the Creator was slumped by the table, chugging down glass after glass of sake. A knowing glance between them told enough as beer continued to pour. Gai Takarada looked to be in better shapes with far less on his table.

Undue time passed before Meteora stood up to announce. "Everyone. I thank you all for working so hard to protect this world. Tomorrow we will be returning to our worlds."

"Bummer. I don't want to imagine the undue rent." Blitz downed the glass of beer.

"I'll write Ryosuke to pay it off while you're gone. Makes me wonder if time passes while you're here." Suruga finished her own beer in a single go.

The middle aged man chuckled. "Beats me but that would be quite a good joke." He stroked his daughter's hair. "I could use the money to get this girl something nice." Little Erina beamed at the thought.
Masaki chuckled as he put the dirty dishes to a side. "We'll miss Archer's cooking." Matsubara was inclined to agree. Whatever they could make in this world would lose to that prodigy. He just knew it.

Hideaki opened his arms. "Archer, I know you do not wish to return to your world. My house is open for you."

Kanoya stood to his feet. "Oi! No hogging of the precious cook!"

"Don't you go putting words in my mouth." Archer retorted. The three started to bicker as Matsubara eased back to the drinking. Wonder what she would say seeing those three.

Masaki took a seat beside him. "You alright Matsubara?"

"Yeah, yeah I'm alright Masaki. Just a bit down on the side." Matsubara blinked at the burn in his eyes and cheeks. He didn't remember how many he drank already. "Don't make me bring you along for the ride. It's time to celebrate. That's what I'm doing."

"It's alright." Masaki took a glass of his own. "I don't know exactly how it feels but I know close enough. Take it easy and start another day with new hope."

Matsubara chuckled at the thought. He shouldn't be mourning so hard right now. Their glasses clinked before he felt the sake going vibrant inside his throat. "Right."

Hideaki raised his hands as he said. "Woah. It disappeared."

"What did?" Meteora asked, a fork stuffed with chicken in hand.


"Come here." Archer pressed a hand on the kid's back. "Yes, the Circuit's gone for good."

Hideaki sighed. "I guess that means no more magecraft for me."

"Good riddance. There're enough problems as it is like screwing your head straight."

"I had a role model for that." Matsubara tuned out the growing arguments to stare at the yellow glass of sake in his hand. A new dream and another step forward for both him and her.

Daichi stared at the ceiling from the soft comforts of his bed. Imagining cows jumping fences for the past twenty minutes hadn't burnt off the excitement in his blood.

Tomorrow was the day that everything will conclude. Friends brought upon the long winded journey. A dream of fiction coming to an end. Time for everything to return to normal.

Turbulent memories unburied itself. Meeting Archer by chance. Terrified by eyes that could kill. Tossed around like a rag doll, although Siegfried did that more by a large margin.

The painful forging of Magic Circuits. Despair by a deceitful Magane Chikujoin. Summoning a Heroic Spirit, his inauguration into a Master. Silent war across the city of Tokyo into the finale.

After this entire debacle, a quiet life felt rather, boring. Daichi raised his hand to his face. He couldn't see it through the pitch black but he had bitter hopes for it. On an off note chance for them to return.

Did he want it to be over? Nearly a year of excitement had been forced onto him but it wasn't bad.
Scary, painful and exhausting. He wouldn't give this precious experience for anything else in the world.

The Imperial Gardens at Chiyoda had been set as the departure point. Police had cordoned off the entire area for the occasion. Daichi reckoned Morning Sunshine gave its brightest to cast its saviours a proper send off.

Three groups gathered at the open field. First comprised of Kikuchihara and several government officials. The second was their motley band of Creators and Creations.

The third were soldiers, a small number standing by in the sidelines. Daichi noticed the bandages and casts on some of them. He kept away for chills tingle down his spine whenever he met eyes with them.

Kikuchihara bowed towards the group of both Creations and Creators. "As representative of the Tokyo government, I thank you all for your hard work and sacrifice in saving this world."

"Aw shucks." Kanoya rubbed the back of his head.

Nakanogane, acting representative replied with his own bow. "We thank you in return for your support." He received the small gold plaque given by an official, a recognition for the group. They traded smiles of joy as the simple ceremony ended.

Kikuchihara smiled in return as the officials dispersed back to the entrance. "Meteora, how long do we have before time runs out?"

Meteora pulled out her grimoire and flipped across the pages. "Considering the amount of restorative power in the world, today is the last chance." The sage turned towards her compatriots. "I ask all of you again, have you all decided whether to stay or return to your world?"

Blitz said. "Sticking around here wouldn't be healthy for me especially with this crazy God I have." His daughter in tow, Erina tilted her head towards the talking duo.

Suruga chuckled in response. "I can't write in a deus ex machina if you get into an accident here old man." The detective chose to ignore her that prompted more jabbing by his creator. Erina burst out giggling.

Kanoya nodded. "My world needs me. It wouldn't be fair to enjoy life here. I'll miss everyone though." Nakanogane gave a thumbs up.

"I want to return to Masayuki and my family." Hoshikawa fidgeted with her fingers. "And probably have a family of my own too." That rose too many brows from all the wrong people.

"I'll pass staying around. There's still much more mess for me to clean up in my world," Archer said.

Meteora followed suit. "Very well. Please say your farewells while I prepare." She turned towards the open field before starting incantations.

Archer went towards the soldiers as Daichi glanced at the group. A team that wouldn't be formed unless by circumstance. Daichi chose to wave and smile things through. "Looks like it's time to say goodbye. Thinking about it makes me feel sad."

"Every beginning has an end kid." Matsubara said. A pause before he noticed someone missing. "Is Takarada and Yatoji not…?"
Nakanogane shook his head. "They're not coming. I bet it hurts for them to see this. To remember what happened and the pain they feel."

Matsubara sighed. "Marine would hate to miss this too. I'll be getting a ribbing for this. Anyone recording by chance?"

Kanoya's screaming on Gigas Machina's speakers caught their attention. "Oi, who left the souvenirs like that? They're everywhere!"

Daichi yelled up the leg. "Maybe you should tied them down in the first place." Gigas Machina had just been kept upright with a makeshift metal crutch for maintaining balance.

Laughs went about as Kanoya's microphone squawked with rumbling cardboard. "It's hard to drive with this in the way. Geez."

"Oh God." Nakanogane swiped his forehead. Fortune bless upon them since the Gigas Machina held steady in contrast to its chaotic master.

Yellow sparks blistered the sky, drawing their attention. "Gate of the Occult. Bell of Hebos. The footsteps of Mercurius echo and reach into the infinite sea." Meteora chanted. Sparks rooted out before solidifying into a blue portal, the size of a four storey building.

"The Gate of Return." Kikuchihara said the spell name. Daichi felt the power behind the magic. Static pressing cloth tight onto his skin. Nothing harmful but electrifying.

Meteora frowned at the portal. "The spell went smoothly. However, it won't last long. You may begin when ready."

Daichi noticed fizzes on the glowing lights as Gigas Machina rumbled to motion. "Well then, I'm off." To walk down a dozen steps wasn't easy with the handicap. The creak of metal on the crutch was foreboding. It was a wonder that thing hadn't snap.

"He's obnoxious, loud and troublesome right to the end." Nakanogane shook his head, a tear in his eye. A wave over the shoulder from the giant mecha before Gigas Machina thundered through the gate.

Nothing appeared on the other side. Meteora nodded in approval, prompting the next to come forward.

Hoshikawa stepped forward. Daichi didn't get to know her much besides the awkward moments during the random days. *I guess though I can find out sooner or later. Wait, Shizuka would kill me.*

"Hikayu. I-" Ohnishi screamed as he sprinted towards her. Maybe he overdid it, tripping, skidding and slamming face first against the gate. "Ow, ow, hot, hot." *Ouch, that burn's got to hurt."

Hoshikawa sighed. "Ohnishi, you always act like this." She squat down and whispered into the man's ear.

Archer grew a smirk. Daichi tilt his head back before asking. "What are they whispering?"

"That's for me to know and not for you to care about." Bummer.

Ohnishi's eyes widened in stupor as she resumed walking. She turned around with a bow before stepping through the gate. That was two.
Blitz held his daughter's hand before walking forward. Ohnishi was lifted off his feet as Blitz said over his shoulder. "I'm not going to thank you."

"Not asking for it." Suruga shot back.

Erina tugged at her father's hand. "But she saved us. You're not a bad God right?"

Suruga reached over and gave the little girl a pat on the head. "I am a bad god. I might get you killed again."

Blitz huffed. "I'm sure you would do that and I can't stop you. It's destiny itself."

"My offer stands. You can stay if you like."

"I don't want to live in the same world as you."

Suruga lit a cigarette before saying. "I'll continue to risk my life and do horrible things to you guys." That drew Blitz's eye back towards her. "Give your all to overcome it."

The old detective paused before giving a humph. A gentle prod on his girl's back before they disappeared.

Archer strode forward. Several of the soldiers cheered which he gave a passing wave. Daichi watched the man walk towards the gate. Something rose in his chest. An alien feeling. That's right. Pride.

Daichi called out. "Archer, are you sure about your decision? That's hell you're going back into."

Archer kept his back towards him, boots clacking towards the fuzzing gate. "Who the hell do you think I am?"

Daichi cracked a laugh. *I'm an idiot.* "A hero of Justice. Always have been."

"That's right. Nothing is going to change me. Not my Creator, Hell or even my other selves. I will live and survive anything that comes."

*That's right. An endless journey through time, space and universes. Undeserving duty to protect mankind. Ideals, once broken now renewed.*

"I've decided, Shirou Emiya." The man stopped by the portal. "I'm going to university and create a new world. That world will have the utopia that you are looking for. Atop that hill of blades, there will be hope. That will be your legacy."

"You think far too much on that one Kid." The Counter Guardian turned with the faint of a smile. "Good luck, Daichi." Shirou Emiya stepped through the gate and was gone.

Matsubara turned towards the last person. "It's going to be lonely after this."

Sota stepped forward. "I don't know what to say but when I think about not being able to see you again..."

"We can see each other anytime Sota." She faced the group. "To put it simply, I can't go back."

Kikuchihara explained. "To tell you the truth, we did multiple rehearsals with Meteora. In order to cast the spell, the person casting the spell must be on the outside. In other words..."
Matsubara concluded. "You can't send yourself back."

Meteora nodded. "It would be trying to grab and throw myself. A contradiction and there was no alternative. The Restorative Power of the world was too strong to break this form of logic."

Sota's voice echoed as the gate's fizzling grew worse. "But Meteora…"

Meteora grew a faint smile. "It's not a problem. I've grown to love this world. Many things that I have learnt to enjoy and appreciate. In fact, I believe this is a great opportunity for me. For if I can't go back to my world, I am given a chance to try creating a world just like everyone else here. These are my thoughts about it."

"Are you serious?"

"I've seen the numerous amount of stories that exist in this world. Many unique and interesting stories that have pulled at people's hearts. I want to try writing a story like that. I want to see what my story connects and what my story paints into their thoughts and emotions. I want to keep watching happiness until the end of days. That's how I feel about it."

"Your magic is about to disappear right?"

Meteora reached for her book, the dark ink were fading away at a rapid pace. "I learnt a valuable lesson from all of you. I don't need magic to create. All you need is the passion and determination to create. Fate will decide the rest."

The last page of the Grimoire stripped clean. Gate of Return fizzled out from existence.

Daichi tried to cheer up the bunch. "It's good to have big dreams and you're going to have the best group to support you on that. They're amongst the best of the industry after all."

Matsubara raised a brow. "Now that's going too much there kiddo. Still, I'd be glad to help."

Kikuchihara nodded. "We've gathered all the documents you need to live in this world. I'll check them once more to avoid any problems later. The Countermeasure Council will be disbanded. This is our final task. I have to finish it before I resign from office."

Matsubara gawked at the woman. "Kikuchihara, you are resigning from the ministry? Surely the ministry has somewhere to use your capable hands"

"Yes. That's certainly true." She smiled. "However, I'd like to freshen up on life. Maybe another direction in career or a vacation beforehand."

Matsubara raised a hand. "I need one just the same."

"Matsubara, remember you're supposed to release the next volume in three weeks!" Nakanogane pointed out. Said Creator sighed.

Sota raised a hand towards the girl. "If that's the case, then let me welcome you once again to this world, Meteora."

Meteora reached towards it, clasping their hands together. The faint smile grew into something truly genuine. "Thank you."

"Hu, I'm worried whether this will be okay." Shizuka Katsumi shuffled around, her white sandals clacking in nervous energy.
"Everything is going to be alright." Daichi Hideaki tugged at the bow tie of his black suit before reaching out with a hand. "Hold my hand and just relax." An iron grip before he nudged the door open.

A bright ballroom, wide enough to easily fit in hundreds. People congregated in small groups across the entire length. Dressed in suits, classy shirts and dresses. A stage on one end carried the podium and the title of the event. The author's award. A buffet table by the side. He noticed seafood as Katsumi said. "Wow, this is grand."

"They weren't kidding. This is surreal." Daichi felt a bit awestruck and unclear on where to go. Fortunately he noticed a familiar group lounging by a corner at the far end, away from most of the crowd. With a gentle grip, he guided her towards the group.

"You're here." Marine gave a little wave as Matsubara, Takarada and Nakanogane smiled with their drinks in hand.

"Wow Marine, that looks great," Daichi said.

Marine twirled around to show off the blue dress and transparent shawl over her shoulders. "It's just for the occasion."

Matsubara tilt a glass towards him. "Nothing bad yourself. You two dressed up for the party." The other Creator was more lax by wearing a simple coat to their white shirts.

"I have to make an impression. Otherwise I'll never hear the end of it." Daichi winced as a finger pinched his arm. Siegfried's training was tough but this, this is a whole new level. "Thanks a lot for the invitations. Never thought of a chance to get into one of these."

"Don't mention it."

Marine leaned towards his partner of the night. "Hi, I'm Marine. Nice to meet you. Are you like Hideaki's girlfriend?"

Daichi chuckled in response before a foot stomped on his feet. "It's nothing of that sort." Shizuka waved her hands with a merry smile as he rubbed the pain away against the carpet.

Matsubara cracked a laugh. "That's a first. Marine don't overdo yourself. It's only been a few weeks."

Marine glared in return. "I have absolutely no intention of returning to the hospital. I missed everything! From my deadlines to the fighting." She dug her fingers into her cheeks as despair oozed from them. "Now I don't know how on Earth am I going to catch up."

"You could use Sota to help with some of that couldn't you? You're his Master after all." The artist whimpered at Matsubara's jest. Nakanogane and Takarada laughed at her detriment.

Daichi glanced around the group. "Where's the others?"

"Meteora's busy calming down Suruga. Apparently she get nasty jitters when not allowed to draw."

"To think she looked beautiful in that dress. First time I've ever saw her in one too." Nakanogane muttered off hand.

Music played in the background. Daichi recognised it as one of the cues. He bowed with a hand. "Without further ado, may I have your hand at a dance?"
Shizuka smiled before reaching out. "Yes. Just hope I won't step your toes."

Their hands clasped tight as he pulled her in close. "I'm sure that'll be the least of my worries."

Matsubara shook his head as the two went towards the dancing area. "Youth. How I miss it."

"Ever thought of settling down? Getting married and all?" Masaki threw the sucker punch.

Matsubara rubbed his gut from the invisible bullet. "I'm stuck with all the deadlines. I don't have the time for a relationship."

Takarada grabbed a trio of sake from the table. "That's the life we live in. However, it would be nice if we could have a nice family that would support us through the way."

Matsubara thanked him before lifting it to eye level, studying the rising bubbles. "It matters not about the result but about the journey."

"Alicetaria would have liked that."

Takarada nodded. "I intend to make her reach the end of her journey. She may struggle, she may cry but she will persevere." He tightened a fist with a smile. "I will make sure of that."

Matsubara patted the determined man in the back. "Good luck to you for that. Likewise I have to bring a good end to my own pair. I wish you the best." It's still a long way for those two but he'll make it perhaps a bit quicker than planned.

"Just as they struggle in their journey, so will we."

Nakanogane smiled. "Getting all poetic now eh. I should bring you out for drinking more often then."

"Or maybe it's the award you've just won. Purple prosey much aren't you?"

Takarada grinned. "Don't go spend all that drinking on smart jabs. You need to put them to good use for writing."

Nakanogane asked. "Speaking of writing, is he still at it?"

"Yeah, he's dedicated to the cause." Yatoji had declined the attendance, bent on rushing the deadline. Given the circumstance, Matsubara felt that there was something more in store. A fire renewed in the furnace of passion.

"He doesn't take a break even when Hell is knocking. If that's the case, we can't lose to him. Darn, I'm all fired up to get back to it."

Nakanogane raised a glass for a toast. "Let's get started on that tomorrow. It'll be a bright new day to our career." Their glasses met in a tink of crystal.

Matsubara smiled. "We will bring the dreams to them."

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I once started a journey three years ago. Not something I had planned, it just happened. Fate brought us together on a long journey. A journey to protect the world we know and cherish for. Many pains suffered. Loss felt deep. Sacrifice were made. The long road had come to an end and peace returned. Some would call it a happy ever after.
Life in university was downright boring compared to the hectic chaos once before. Maybe this was what Archer felt after experiencing so much. Behind the wall of death and horror lie excitement, one acceptable only onto those that are willing to accept their eventual fate by its hand. Temptation always beckoned me to go over. Find the very same excitement in other forms.

Even so, I have persisted on my original pursuit. Mundane by far in comparison. I’ve grown to realise that only after given precious opportunity by both mentor and partner Siegfried. I was no hero. However I could be someone who can create heroes and inspire others.

Nevertheless, my mind wandered during quiet times. How was he doing? Was he alive? Does he even remember the very same memories?

The man had sacrificed everything to return to the world that many would call a living hell. Standing atop the quiet lone hill of blades. Fighting day after day to protect humanity. As a child, his conviction to be a hero had been forged by his father. Broken in later years, restored in a paradox of time. Now, he had the strength to strive back towards that ideal. The hero of justice.

I didn’t want to let him down. Story after story had been churned out from my mind. Imaginings of past, presents, futures. Alternative paths. My time would be limited thanks to my engagement with Shizuka. It would be next year when we would be married. There was so much to prepare but my parents and the occasional help from Aki Kikuchihara had done wonders to make things smoother. Despite so, I will continue on to forge this new path.

Kazuko had been more relaxed about his stance on the government. After the school exams, he became a politician. I gave him well wishes and hope that he could bring the great change he always visioned to us.

Sota Mizushino had found peace with his demons and would be finishing the final year of high school. I hadn’t learnt what he wanted to do after school but given his eye for drawing, I think I know the answer.

Meteora had released her first novel. It had been a national hit. It was an irony that the entire story, an award winning fictional novel was actually happening in the real world. Truth is no stranger than fiction.

Matsubara and the others had been excelling on their work. The time that they had with their characters have changed them so much. To meet and understand your character is truly the next level that no other author can have. That means so much motivation to them, I truly understand that. I want to be there, just like them.

It is the end of my story but it was never the end of my journey or my work. The journey to create that brand new world. The Ever Distant Utopia.

A Humble Creator,

Daichi Hideaki.

~FIN~
Author's Notes: Good day and thank you for reading Beyond Worlds.

It's done. A long journey travelled, an ending achieved. Similarities bear fruit but alas a time changed. My own journey ends here.

Thank you for reading. I hope this fandom gets more interesting crossovers. I'd like not to be the only memory here. Without further ado, Good bye.

Regards

MarksmanKNG

End Notes

First post here in AO3.
Hope you enjoy the read
Thanks.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!