Fate/Grand Memoir

by Rumieru

Summary

I'll think of a better title in future. ■(■ '△'■)
This is from me trying to cope with the feels from Part 1, so there'll be spoilers for the game.
It will be written from the POVs of several of the servants and NPCs, as well as from Ritsuka's point of view.
It will include and get into the experiences and backstories of some of the more prominent servants, as well as their own feelings while bonding with the Master. And also my head canons of the day to day life in Chaldea.

-It starts a bit earlier as opposed to what the anime material provides (due to the comment of Fou already having been with the protag for a year in babylonia)
-Canon divergence will not be until past Epic Of Remnant
Please do leave constructive criticism or advice! Thank you!
Guidance and insight into the future comes in different ways, for some, it might be glimmering spots of light that one isn’t aware are there, for others, a feeling in their gut that drives that to go against the ordinary. And for those who have been gifted, it may be possible to see visions of the outcome of their choices. All for the sake of guiding one / humanity to the best possible future.

Fuyuki - Autumn 2004 - October 11th

What had occurred was the future I’d deemed to be nothing more than a pipe dream. The vision which simply seemed to be too good to be true.

“, by the Command Spells, I order you to sacrifice your life to open the Gate of Akasha to The Root.”

“Ah, so that’s how it is.”, was surely how I’d have had reacted. Instead, what had occurred surprised me beyond measure. As an unknown feeling swelled in my bosom, I embraced just a small moment of selfishness.

Antarctic Base Chaldea - Winter 2018 - January 8th

The tension in the air has been tangible ever since the last week, today was going to be the day they started their mission, afterall. After finishing up on the medical checks of the last few candidates, the doctor went into hiding in a spare room and booted up his laptop, chanting words that are now part of his daily routine.

“Awawa.. Help me Magi ☆ Mari, Help me Magi ☆ Mari!”

On his screen, a pink, flowery web-page loaded up, with rhododendrons decorating the banner. Today’s update was posted 3 hours ago, but he had another reason for checking back here. Loading up the chat box, with fingers slightly shaking, he started typing.
DoctorRomantic: 'Help me Magi ☆ Mari! Please tell me my [Daily Fortune] for today! It's a big day, so please let it be a good one. (¬‿¬)'

Magi☆Mari: 'You'll have a faithful encounter today~ Isn't that just exciting?~(

*(≥V≤)*)

DoctorRomantic: 'Ehhhhhh?! Are you trolling me, MagiMari-san!!? (° eliciting)'

He did, afterall, just got chased out of the Command Room by the Director after finishing the health assessments of the Master Candidates. Since they were a secret organization hidden in a mountain 6000 meters above sea level, there was no way anyone would show up here. "Ehh.. hmph. I'll just go comfort myself with some cake.", pouting at his screen, he sneaked off to the cafeteria, quickly forgetting the false hopes given by the prediction as he distracted himself with watching videos while enjoying a tea break.

-- Base sequence: Human genome confirmed.
-- Alignment: Lawful-Neutral

"Welcome to the data centre for the future of humankind. This is the Security Organization for the Preservation of Humanity, Chaldea."

"-Eh?!!

"Fingerprint, voiceprint, and DNA authentication cleared. Magical Circuit assessment complete."

‘--Magi-what circuit? Wasn’t I at an interview?’

"Nice to meet you. You’re our final visitor today. We hope you enjoy your time here."

"-- We are very sorry. Another 180 seconds is required to complete the admission process. Enjoy a simulated battle while you wait."

"Regulation: Senior. Contract Servants: Saber, Archer, Lancer. There will be no record of your score. Please feel free to enjoy."

' A battle?! Servants? What's going o-'

"Activating Heroic Spirit Summoning System Fate. We hope you have a good experience as a master for these 180 seconds."

Overcome by a sense of falling endlessly, the girl found herself face to face with a monstrous golem, werewolves and warriors in red and blue. It was over before she could process what was going on, and she blacked out after all sensation fell away once again.

"Fou? Kyuu… Fou! Fou...!"

Stirring at the sound of squeaks and a small warm dampness on her cheek, opening her eyes, the redhead found herself staring up at a girl about her age, with short lilac hair and glasses.

"..Umm, Since it’s neither morning nor night, please wake up, Senpai."

Chapter End Notes

https://i.imgur.com/FJzLN6i.png

Magi Mari's blog design. It was made as a joke after discussing it with one of my
friends. The art used for the pic isn't by me.
Chapter Summary

Our very confused interview candidate meets her new kouhai, and gets into trouble on the first day of work.

"Uhh... Who are you?"

The girl standing in above her knitted her brows and grimaced.

"That's a difficult question. For now, please think of me as someone who's not worthy of notice. Ah, I do have a name, it's just that... I haven't really had the chance to use it, so I'm afraid I won't be able to give an impressive introduction and leave a good impression."

"Well... if you put it that way... Wait, where are we?"

The redhead was answered with a warm, bright smile and a nod.

"That's an easy question. I really appreciate it, Senpai. This is the passageway from the front gate to the Central Command Room, which is in front of the Main Chaldea Gate.", she then paused, letting the other girl who was sprawled on the floor sit up and look around in confusion.

"...Ahem, anyway, can I ask you a question, Senpai? You were asleep but I don't see why you'd sleep in the hall. Can you not sleep unless you're on a hard bed?"

"Ehhhh.", looking even more dumbfounded, the girl pointed as herself, "Was I sleeping here?"

She'd remembered feeling an intense wave of dizziness, but she was never one to fall asleep at random, let alone in a strange place.

Tilting her head slightly, the bespectacled girl replied. "Yes, like a log. It was such a deep sleep that it was almost textbook. -"

"Fou!! Kyuuu! Kyao", a white animal jumped onto her shoulders from behind, scratching gently at her face, as if asking for attention.

"..I completely forgot, I still haven’t introduced you, have I, Fou?"

Rubbing it’s cheek on hers and looking at the redhead with a steady gaze, it flicked it’s ears in contentment as it was given an introduction.

"This squirrel-like creature is Fou, He’s a privileged life-form allowed to walk freely around Chaldea. He led me here, and that’s how I ran into you, Senpai."

"Fou! Mmkyu. Fou."

"I guess I’d have to thank you for that, huh, Fou? Thanks for getting her to wake me up." reaching out a hand to scratch the creature between the ears, before it hopped off and ran away.

"Did he not like it?"
“No, that’s probably not it, Senpai. He probably ran off somewhere again. He does like just walking around sometimes.”

“I’ve never seen an animal like that. . .”, as she looked where the small creature had ran off to, she had to admit to herself that this day was just getting weirder and weirder.

“Normally he doesn’t go near anyone aside from me, but he seems to like you. Congratulations! You shall be the second caretaker of Fou in Chaldea.”

Eh?! I mean it’s certainly an honour but I still have no clue what’s going on here., before she could manage to ask, however, a voice from ahead interrupted her thoughts.

“There you are, Mash. That won’t do, you know, wandering about without permission..”

A tall, middle aged man walked up to them, dressed in a green coat with a matching green top hat, with long frizzy maroon locks surrounding his face. While he’d look out of place in a normal workplace, it seemed from the way he spoke that he was someone with authority here.

“. . Oh, someone’s already with you? I don’t think I’ve seen you before— I see, you’re the rookie who just got assigned here, aren’t you? I’m Lev Lainur, one of the technicians employed here. And your name is?”

Bowing at both him, and at the lilac haired girl once she realised she hadn’t introduced herself, the confused newcomer spoke up, “Ritsuka, just call me Ritsuka. Pleased to meet you, I’ll be counting on you.”

Lev looked at the girl, as though trying to assess something, “So you’re the last of the 48 candidates. Welcome to Chaldea. I’m glad you’re here. I believe you were selected out of many public applicants, how long was your training? A year? Half? A quarter?”

‘Training?! All I did was a blood test and some scans before I was asked to sign a paper.’, Slightly flustered at the misunderstanding, Ritsuka then clarified. “Um, I didn’t actually go through any training.”

“Oh, so you’re a complete amateur? Come to think of it, we did call for applicants to fill in numbers. So you’re one of them? Do forgive me, I was inconsiderate.”

‘Is this man trying to be polite or be rude?! I can’t tell!!’, her thoughts were then interrupted by a genuine smile from Lev, who continued, “But please don’t be discouraged because you’re a public applicant. We need all of you for this mission. Somehow we were able to gather all possible candidates, with 38 elite mages and 10 public applicants. That’s something to rejoice over. This year, 2018, all possible candidates capable of Spiritron Dives were brought to Chaldea.”

“If there’s something you don’t understand, feel free to ask Mash or myself anytime. . .Come to think of it, what were you talking about with her, Mash? That’s not like you, did you know each other before?”

Now that she’s noticed, it did seem strange to Ritsuka that the girl in front of her had called out to her with such familiarity, although she did find some comfort in it given she had no idea where she was at the moment, she couldn’t help but be curious.

“No, I’d never met Senpai before. I saw her sleeping here, so I just—”
“Sleeping? Ritsuka was asleep here? On the floor?”

Ritsuka felt her face flush a little, surely this was a horrible way to stand a new job, passing out in the hallway and being found by a higher-up and a stranger.

“You went through the simulation when you entered, right? Spiriton dives can get to you if you’re not used to them. You must have had walked over here before you returned to consciousness. It’s like sleepwalking, and after you fell, Mash must have found you. You seem fine, but I’d like to take you to the infirmary just in case.”

Lev glanced at his wristwatch, pursing his lips into a frown before looking back up at Ritsuka.

“Sorry, it seems you’d have to hang in there a little longer. The Director’s orientation is about to start. You should hurry over. It’s to greet the master candidates assigned here today, like you. In other words, for the big boss to welcome the careless newbies, she’s not the type to forgive and forget, so you’ll be on her radar for the entire year if you show up late. It’s in five minutes in the central command room, straight down this hallway.”

At these words, Mash seemed to bounce a little on the balls of her feet.
“Um.. Dr. Lev, do you think I’ll be allowed to sit in on the orientation, too?”

Lev tilted his head slightly, as though puzzled by the request, which confused Ritsuka a bit, wasn’t Mash one of her seniors here, afterall?

“Hmm.. Well, if you stand way back in a corner, she might look the other way, but why?”

“I just thought I’d take Senpai to the Command Room, it’s possible that she might fall asleep on the way again.”

Lev sighed slightly, before looking at his watch and jumping a little, ‘Well, I’d better go with you both. If I leave you alone like this, the director might yell at me, and since it’s almost time, she might still yell at me if I were to be late to the orientation. In that case, if it’s what you want to do, Mash, go ahead. You wouldn’t mind would you, Ritsuka? Or do you have any questions?”

Ritsuka jerked from her thoughts, she had too many questions to ask, but at the moment, there was only one coherent one that passed through her lips.
“Um, why is she calling me Senpai? If anything, she should be the senior here.”

Mash seemed to blush a bit at the remark, Lev simply smiled and replied smoothly, “Don’t worry about it, to her, every human your age is her senpai. But it’s unusual for her to actually call someone that, I’m intrigued, is there a reason for that, Mash?”

“Eh, well.. Ritsuka is the most human person I’ve ever met. I don’t feel threatened with her.”

“Haha. That’s important. Afterall, the people here are all a piece of work! People involved with magecraft do tend to be eccentric and anti-social! ”

‘Just how bad is the work environment here that you’d usually feel threatened?!’, was something that Ritsuka couldn’t bring herself to say. While she was happy that the people here seemed to be nice, Lev’s remark did make her worry a little about the rest she might meet at the orientation.

“Well, I agree with you, Mash, I think you two will get along just fine!”

Mash and Ritsuka smiled and nodded at each other, before Mash hardened her gaze and bit her lip a little. “If you like Senpai, Dr. Lev, the Director will probably hate her. Why don’t we hide in the bathroom to boycott the orientation?”
While she did balk at Mash’s remark a little, it did occur to her that missing the orientation at her first day of work would be a lot worse than being late and getting marked by the director for it.

“That will only make the Director more upset. We’d best leave it up to fate. Shall we jump into the lion’s den, then? Once you get used to each other, she can be a pretty sweet person.”

“I wish I could take you to the infirmary, since you seem a little pale, but hang in there, Senpai.”

After a three minute walk, the three of them had arrived to the Central Command Room, Lev and Mash taking their places near the back, while Ritsuka was directed by Mash to the front row of the seats that were occupied by others in a similar uniform.

Upon sitting down, a heavy wave of dizziness seemed to hit Ritsuka, and she found herself being stared down by the white haired young woman who was in front of a huge glowing blue globe in the center of the Command Room, a look glowering with displeasure and disdain. After glaring at the newcomer for a noticeable amount of time, she then directed her gaze to the rest of the people gathered in the seats.

“Well, that wasn’t on time, but it looks like we’re all here now.”

The girl carried herself well as a leader, although she wasn't much older than Ritsuka herself. While it was obvious that she seemed to be tense, her words and gestures remain sharp and composed.

“Welcome to the Special Organization, Chaldea. I’m the director, Olga Marie Animusphere. You have been selected, or discovered, from each nation for your rare --”

A second wave of dizziness hit Ritsuka, just as she had heard the sound of her head hitting the desk in front of her, a sensation of pain snapped her out of her stupor.

‘SMACK!’

The Director glared at her, gritting her teeth while Ritsuka looked at her wide-eyed with surprise from the slap. There was a mix of anger, disgust, and what seemed to be bitterness in the Director’s expression. She then balled her fists, and addressed Ritsuka with her hands shaking at her sides.

“W-why does even someone like you……!!! Get out! You’re expelled from the first mission!! Get out of my sight right this instant!”

Mash hurried down and helped Ritsuka out from the Command Room, telling the Director that she’d take her to her room and be back for the mission afterwards.

The steel doors had closed behind them, signalling that Ritsuka had really messed up on her first day, and in her first impressions to the Director. While she was rubbing her cheek and trying to laugh it off, Mash pulled on her sleeve with a concerned expression.

“...Are you feeling alright, Senpai?”

Ritsuka rubbed the back of her head a little, chuckling softly, “Haa.. I guess I really messed up, I was falling asleep, wasn't I?”

“Yes, but it seemed like the Director’s slap woke you up completely, so that’s a good thing. You’ve been left out of the first mission, so I’ll take you to your room now, Senp--”

A blur of white flashes pass their sight, heading for Mash.

“Watch out!”

It pounces on her and settles on her shoulder, playing smacking her glasses and cheek, “Fou..
Although a bit surprised, Mash adjusted her glasses, and patted Fou before returning her gaze to Ritsuka with a small smile.
“I’m alright, Senpai, thank you. This is no problem at all. You see, Fou likes to attack my face, slide around to my back and settle on my shoulder.”

“So you’re used to that, huh?”, Ritsuka extended a hand to Fou, letting him sniff at her fingers, before scratching him behind the ears. “Fou, Kuuu!! Fou, Fou!”

“Yes, it’s been a year since Fou came to live here.”, Mash warmly observed as Fou rubbed against Ritsuka’s hand, directing her fingers to his favourite spots to be scratched.

“Hmm, hmm. It’s seems Fou’s embraced you as one of his own, Senpai. Isn’t that great?” she smiled, nodding to herself before thinking back on Fou’s usual reactions towards humans. “Ah, but can a squirrel who sees humans as rivals exist in this world?”

Fou puffed his mane and stared up at Ritsuka with an unwavering gaze, it reminded me of the way cats or dogs try to assert dominance. She smiled slightly, pulling her hand back and did a small bow towards Mash and Fou.

“He sees me as a rival? Maybe he was jealous of me spending time alone with you, Mash?”

Both girls bit back a laugh, smiling and poking softly at the little cape around Fou’s shoulders.

“Well, knowing Fou, I’m sure he’ll forget it by tomorrow-”

Mash then pauses, prompting Ritsuka to follow her gaze to the door in front of them - a plain, metal door with the number 48 on the top right corner.

“We’ve reached our destination, Senpai. This is your room.”, gesturing towards the door, Mash smiles and turns towards the hallway where they came from, “I’ll have to excuse myself, Senpai, I have to make my way back to the Command Room for the mission.”

“. I see. Thanks for coming all this way. Which team are you on, Mash?”, the last she’d heard of the briefing before the doors were slammed shut was the division of the masters into different teams, though she could no longer be a part of it, Ritsuka looked forward to working together with Mash in the future, hopefully.

“First Mission, A Team. I’ll be heading back now, Senpai.”

“Kyu.. Kyu!!”, Fou jumps from Mash’s shoulder to Ritsuka, pawing at the scrunchie holding up the ponytail at the side of her head. Though surprised, Mash’s expression softens and she turns around to Ritsuka one more time before running down the hallway.

“Fou says he’ll look after you, Senpai. That sets my mind at ease. If we’re lucky, I’m sure we’ll meet again.”

Ritsuka watched Mash run down the hallway with Fou, waving until she was out of sight. Taking a deep breath, she pushed the door to her new residence.
"Yes, yes, I'm in here. Please don't yell at me too much."

A bright sunny voice greets Ritsuka as she enters, and she finds an older, orange haired man sitting in front of a bed table, with a laptop, a cup of tea and a fancy slice of cake.
"EEEEEEHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH?! Who are you?!! This is an empty room, it's where I secretly hide to slack off!! Who said you could come in here?!!"

Taking a deep breath and recovering from the shock of finding herself at the pointed end of a very accusing fork, Ritsuka bowed and introduced herself.
"I'm Ritsuka, Mash brought me here after I was kicked out of the briefing by the Director. I was told that this would be my room."

She was met with a small groan and a sigh, before the man stood up from the bed and walked towards her.

"I see, I guess the last vacancy was filled, after all.", flashing a smile, he extended a hand towards her.
"Well, I didn't expect to run into anyone hiding here like this, but let me introduce myself. I'm the head of the medical department, Romani Archaman. For some reason, people just call me Doctor Roman. Maybe because it’s easier to pronounce, or maybe because it has a nice ring to it, something cool and vaguely sweet. I'll have you know, I'm usually a healthy, hard-working and diligent doctor!"

"Sweet... Fluffy?".. After a few confusing seconds, Romani noticed that Ritsuka's eyes were on the thick ponytail behind him.
"Ahh, you mean my hair? I'm usually pretty busy so I just let it grow out.
He rubbed the back of his head and let out a small chuckle as Ritsuka bowed and apologized for staring. At the same moment, Fou, who had been clinging on Ritsuka's back peeked up and greeting him with a small squeak.

"Wait - Is that. The mysterious creature I have been hearing so much about?! Wow!"
Fou hopped off Ritsuka's back and made his way to the bed table, pawing at the cake crumbs on the plate. Romani ran after it, rescuing his cake and extending a hand towards Fou.
"It's nice to finally meet you. Mash's told me about you, but I didn't think you actually existed. Hey Ritsuka, do you think I could teach him some tricks? Here, shake, if you do it well, I'll give you a treat."
Fou answered with a cold glare, before bounding off and curling himself around Ritsuka's feet.

"Whaaa... He just gave a really pitying look before completely ignoring me.. Anyway... you mentioned getting kicked out of the briefing by the Director? What did you do?"

Ritsuka explained about how she was in Tokyo for a job interview after being signed up on a "Get the magical ★ job of your dreams" website by a friend. She'd thought it might have been a hospital job as they promised lodging and medical benefits, and since she had to go through a blood test. After said blood test, she was told she passed the interview, and was rushed to sign a contract, after which she fell asleep on a drive to the site. She then explained how she woke up in front of Mash and Fou, along with the waves of dizziness she felt and being excluded from the first mission after the Director had to slap her awake.

"Wait.. You had no idea what you were even getting into? Oh man.. Do you even know where you are?"
"Well... We’re in the Antarctic base of the Chaldea Security Organization, situated in a mountain 6000 meters above sea level. We are an organization that observes human civilization, with the help of both magecraft and technology, to assure that humanity has a future. Last year, we found that the light of humanity was threatened, and identified a singularity that doesn’t match up with the history we know. Hence why you and the other master candidates have been gathered here, to perform a spiritron dive - or Rayshift - to fix the singularity."

"Dr. Lev mentioned that the spiritron dive could be the reason why I was falling asleep at the orientation."

"Ah, so you’ve met Lev too.. - Wait, he said that? Let me just run a check on your records. You’ve had no experience prior to getting here today, have you? Monitor!"

Loading up the screen on the wall next to the bed, Romani entered her ID number, and scanned the record loaded up.

Name: Ritsuka Fujimaru  Country of Birth: Japan
Birthday: 16-09-2000  Gender: Female
Master Candidate #48

Simulation Log:
1 - Senior level, score unrecorded, Servants: Saber, Lancer, Archer, cleared.

"A senior level right off the bat? That explains why you spaced out in the hallway and in the briefing. You should sit down and rest for a bit, Ritsuka. I'll make you a cup of tea."

Taking a seat on the edge of the bed, Ritsuka glanced around the room, it seemed sterile, with the walls, furniture, and bed all being white or gray. At the other end of the room, by a potted plant, Romani pushed a panel on the wall, revealing a small drawer with an electronic kettle, and some tableware. The air quickly filled with the scent of tea, inhaling deeply and relaxing a little. Absentmindedly petting Fou, Ritsuka spoke up.

"Doctor Roman, could I ask why were you hanging out here?", Romani jerked a little at her question, but there was no disapproval in her voice, just a genuine curiosity.

“Well, you know the experiment is about to start, right? The entire staff’s been sent to help out. I’d just finished the last of the medical checks for the candidates when the Director chased me out of the room.”, putting on the sternest face he could muster, he tried doing an impression of the Director, barely biting back laughter, ""When you’re here, Romani, the mood lightens up too much! The atmosphere itself slackens off!”, then she kicked me out, so I came in here to comfort myself with some cake and Magi☆Mari videos. Well, the machines and coffins are more accurate at reading the vitals of the mages, so I had nothing much left to do. But hey, I got to meet you here, so that might be what they call a blessing in disguise."

The kettle beeped, signalling that the tea was ready. Pouring two mugs, Romani headed back towards the bed, offering Ritsuka one, thanking the doctor and taking a small sip. Ritsuka then countered his earlier impression with one of her own of the moment she was ordered to get out of the Command Room, prompting Romani to put his mug down and clutch at his sides in laughter. "Hahaha.. Well, since we both have no where to go, Ritsuka, why don't we spend some time here and deepen our friendship?"

"Yeah, sure.", it was a foreign place, but most of the people she’s met so far seemed to be good people.

“Yay, I’ve made a new friend! So, that means I’m visiting a friend’s room. Woohoo! It’s a new
event!"

“An event? Do you think this is a game, Doctor?!”

The screen of the Doctor's wristwatch lit up, and a small projection of Lev Lainur's staff card loaded up, transmitting his voice to the room."

“Romani, we’re about to start the Rayshift, could you come in case there’s an emergency? The A Team is in perfect condition, but B team and the rest have less experience, and they are displaying some slight abnormalities, it’s probably from anxiety, since the inside of a Coffin is like a cockpit and pretty cramped.”

“Noted, Lev, I feel bad for them, so I’ll go and give them some anesthesia.”

“Yeah, do be quick. If you’re in the infirmary, you can get here in about two minutes.”

Romani then turned the transmission off, before giving Ritsuka a small wave and a smile. "Well, I guess I've gotta go."

"Doctor... This isn't the infirmary, is it?"

Romani jumped and heaved a huge sigh, ears slightly red from embarrassment. "Uhh well... please don't mention that... It's gonna be five minutes at least, no matter what. I don't want anyone else to find out I've been slacking here, and... anyway, A Team is doing alright, so they will probably forgive me for being a little late. The guy from before is Lev Lainur."

"I met Dr. Lev in the hallway while talking to Mash. She's in the A team, isn't she? So she's doing fine. I'm glad.", Ritsuka smiled and nodded towards Fou.

“Oh, so you’ve already met him? He’s the mage who created the Near-Future Observation Lens, Sheba. It’s a telescope used to observe the pseudo-planet, Chaldeas. It also serves as a surveillance system for most of this facility. The previous director was the one who built the summoning and unsummoning systems, which is the foundation of the Rayshift System being used right now. A lot of different talents have been gathered to carry out this mission, it’s a little pointless for an ordinary doctor like me to be there, but if I’m summoned, I must go. Thanks for chatting with me, Ritsuka, it was fun! Come by the infirmary next time, I’ll treat you to some yummy cake!”

As he turned towards the door once more, the lights of the room turned off and a shockwave swept through the floor underneath their feet.
"Subject number 2", was what I had been called, after the incident, who I knew myself to be, for most of my life. Sometimes, the doctors and technicians would come visit the room, turning on the screen to teach me things, or measure my progress with needles and machines. Food and water were given at the same time every day, it was a very orderly lifestyle. I remember there used to be others like me, once, after checking on our progress, we were allowed outside our room, and that was when the incident happened. I don't remember much of it, but afterwards, I was moved into a room of my own. Although the way I lived hadn't change, not until I met the Doctor five years ago. Since then, I had learnt so much in such a short time, and was even given a name of my own. I was taught about the colours of the world, the flavours and scents of food and flowers, shown the worlds held within books and in images of scenery and seasons. Two years ago, I was allowed to move around the facility and be outside of my room. However, the was a sense of uneasiness in my chest, every time I looked out of the tall, wide windows of the facility. The sky here, usually a flurry of white from the constant blizzard, would sometimes clear to show a scenery that was different from the beautiful blue skies the Doctor had shown me in the photos. But now, surrounded by the stench of smoke and blood, with a hellish scenery of rubble, cinders and soot, I have finally realized. The sky from within the facility - the sky from here has always - yes... just like the rubble, soot and cinders that now filled the Command Room - The sky from here has always been... the colour of ash.

Antarctic Base Chaldea - Winter 2018 - January 8th

Just as they steadied themselves, Romani against the door and Ritsuka standing, leaning on the edge of the bed, red flooded their vision. The emergency lights that line the bottom of the walls were turned on.

"A blackout? What happened?"

An alarm tone rang through the room, followed by multiple smaller shockwaves. Ritsuka ran over to the door, almost bumping into Romani. After they managed to get the door open, they were greeted by the scent of smoke and an announcement.

“Emergency. Emergency. A fire has broken out in the Central Power Station and Central Command Room. The Central Area’s containment wall will activate in 180 seconds. All staff must evacuate from Gate 2 at once. Those who are in the Central Area, please evacuate immediately.”

"A fire? There's no way a fire would break out in there.. the shockwaves.. could it have been an explosion?", Romani paled at the thought, but quickly recovered and entered a command onto his wristwatch's panel.

"What on earth is going on? Show us the Command Room!"

A projection of a room dyed red in flames, littered with rubble, broken glass and crushed machinery. Chaldeas, the globe which usually shone blue in it's center, now had it's lights dimmed and fading.

"W-what's this..?!", steeling himself, he turned to Ritsuka and pointed her further down the hallway.

"Ritsuka, evacuate right now, I’m going to the Command Room. The containment wall will close soon, get yourself out before it’s too late!", he then turned and sprinted down the doorway, leaving
Ritsuka frozen in disbelief.

"Fouuuuu..", a small, soft paw swatted at Ritsuka's nose, snapping her out of her shock. Instantly, her thoughts went to the girl whom she met before. Mash.

"Fou, we have to go help her!", disregarding the Doctor's orders, she found herself racing down the hallway, heading towards the Command Room.

A pair of green eyes widened in surprised as she approached. She'd only have time to flash an apologetic smile before he gestured exasperatedly at her.

"No! What are you doing here?! Wrong way!! Gate 2 is back there!!"

"You could use a little help, Doctor!"

"Urrghhh.. Ahhh... There's no time to argue... Sure, the more helping hands the better, but- Make sure you get back before it's too late!"

The doors opened, revealing to them the carnage that has been wrought. A thick blanket of smoke covered most of the room, and from what little they could make out, huge slabs of rubble, the crushed bodies of members of the staff, fire and broken glass. The coffins used for the Rayshifts were mostly shut down, breaking cracks and gashes, streaked with blood. In the center, the dimming Chaldeas was a ominous sight. Covering his mouth and nose with his left hand, and prompting Ritsuka to do so by giving her his right glove, Romani was the first to speak up.

"Only Chaldeas is safe, I don't see any survivors. This was where the explosion originated. This was no accident, it was a sabotage."

--Generator operation stopped. Power level critical. Switching to the backup generator - error.

Staff, please make the switch manually. Containment wall will close in 40 seconds, those remaining in the Central Area, please evacuate immediately-"

Putting a hand on Ritsuka's shoulder, Romani nudges her back towards the door.

“I'm heading down to the underground power station, we can’t let Chaldea’s light go out. Hurry up and go back the way we came. You can still make it. Don’t stop anywhere on the way! Go outside and wait for help!”

Ritsuka watched as he ran out of the Command Room. She couldn't bring herself to run away, not when there was someone she could possibly help to save. Trudging through the rubble, as the sweat dripped and sizzled off the floor and her lungs burned, leaving her to cough harshly into the white glove she held towards her face.

"Is anyone there? Can you hear me? Mash! Can you hear me, Mash?!"


The mechanic voice seemed miles away, as Fou bounds off, squeaking loudly to the back of a huge slab of rubble. A small movement and a flash of lilac catches her eye, and she runs over, crouching over Mash to shield her from the cinders as she fruitlessly attempted to shove aside the chunks of concrete that have fallen on top of her.

“Ah.. Senpai....", Mash smiles weakly, her body was half hidden under the ruin, and the floor beneath it slick and red. Ritsuka tried putting on a brave front and smiled, as the tears started to flow down her cheeks.

“Senpai... It’s all right.. You can’t... save me.. Please don’t mind me, you have to run... Please.”

"Hang in there, Mash, you'll be okay."

“Warning, all observation staff. Chaldea’s state has changed. Now rewriting Sheba’s near-future
prediction data. Unable to detect the existence of mankind 100 years in the near-future on Earth.”

The alarm sounds once again as the two are blinded by a wave of light from the center of the room. They both turn to notice that Chaldeas has lit up once more, but is now glowing red.

“Chaldeas… has turned.. red.. Ah-”

“--Central Area, sealed. 180 seconds till internal containment procedure--”

“They shut off.. The area. Now.. you can’t get out, Senpai... I am... sorry.."
Mash lifted her gaze, finding Ritsuka crouching over her, with a big, warm smile as the sweat and tears dripped from her nose.


As the heat of the room centered on them both, threatening to rob them of their consciousness, Mash reached out a hand towards Ritsuka's.
“Senpai… um.. Would you mind… holding my hand?”

Grasping the hand of the girl in front of her and giving it a tight squeeze, Ritsuka exchanges another smile with Mash, before they are once again overwhelmed by the sensation of falling.

“--Rayshift starting in 3..--”

“All procedures, clear. First Order, commencing operation.”
To all those who have read this, thank you very much. I hope I'm not boring you with it so far.

Updates will probably come about once a week since this is where all my pre-written stuff went up to. I hope to be able to tie in the backstories of the servants and make my own for Ritsuka.

Thank you once again for reading! Have a good day!

Although he'd braced himself for it, as the door to the Command Room opened before him again, he had to keep himself from falling on his knees and retching. After switching the backup generators on and putting out the fire in the power station, where he met with about ten members of the staff who had managed to avoid the blast, Romani ran back to the Command Room, once again, where the flames had mostly been extinguished by the remaining fifteen members of the staff. Upon the angry, glowering red globe that was Chaldeas, he spotted a single spot of pulsating blue light. Unable to tear his eyes away, his heart froze and his breath hitched every time it shrunk. The staff called him over to the main terminal, where the staff had carried the prone and unconscious new Master to and laid her in an empty chair. Realizing with a start that the mission had commenced, he sat and loaded up a visual of Fou and Ritsuka running inside the ruins of a building.

Ritsuka had awoken once again to Fou licking at her cheek. The ground beneath her was now cool and dry, but the girl who was next to her was nowhere to be seen. Interrupted by a scratching noise, she turned back to find a dark red skeleton with only an arm and a torso crawling towards her. Letting out a small shriek, she'd scooped Fou and ducked into the nearest building, running full speed from the rattling noises that have started to follow behind her. The wristwatch that was included in her uniform lit up, and a visual of Romani and members of the staff projected in front of her. "Ritsuka! There are multiple hostiles near you, I'm sending you the route to avoid them right now!", the projection changed into a map of the surrounding buildings and ruins, with red flashing spots around, some stationary, and others closing in towards her. "I'm counting on you, Doctor!!", she had nearly crashed face first into the collapsed ceiling of a room, when she found herself surrounded by a group of skeletons, with a window at the side being the only way out, she made a running jump through it, crashing and rolling onto the ground. "Ritsuka, there's a surge of magical energy rushing towards you right now, you have to run!"

The darkened sky flashed red and a projectile headed towards her, with no time to get up, Ritsuka hugged herself and braced for the impact.

"CLANG!"

The sound of metal against metal prompted her to open her eyes. She found Mash standing in front of her, holding up a large shield.
"Senpai! -Maybe I should use the official title..I'm so glad you're safe, Master!"

The girl who had been moments from dying in front of her now showed no sign of injury, her bloodied clothes replaced with a rather revealing outfit of armour. A wave of relief crashed over her as she stood up and put a hand on Mash's.
"Mash, are you okay?"

A warm smile and an affirmative nod answers her question, but Mash's gaze quickly hardens as she focuses on the situation around them. Those who had been in pursuit of Ritsuka earlier had clambered down the walls and ruins, cackling shakily as they approached with their weapons.
"Yes, Senpai. I'm all right. I'll explain later, but for now... We have to fight, please, give me your orders!"

One of the skeleton breaks from the crowd and lunges at them with a spear, sparks flying as Mash deflected it with her shield, before pushing the skeleton off it's feet and plunging the bottom of the crossed shaped shield onto it. It shatters and fades into dust. The rest of the skeletons follow, lunging and jumping towards them with broad sweeps of blades and jabs of spears. Ritsuka could only stand behind Mash, directing her occasionally to one that was distracted or thrown off balance. Once the last of the skeletons had been destroyed, Ritsuka ran towards Mash and placed a hand on her shoulder, marveling at the smaller girl's composure and strength.
"You're really strong, Mash.", heartfelt smiles exchanged as they both sighed in relief, Mash gestured towards Ritsuka and stared at her hands.
"No-not at all.. Senpai. I wasn't good in combat training.. The reason why I was able to fight like that just now --"

A projection of the Doctor loaded back up in front of them. Brows furrowed with a look of concern.
"I finally managed to get through again! Hello? Do you read me?"
Mash's expression mirrors the Doctor's although with a slight hint of annoyance. "This is Mash Kyrielight, a member of A Team. At this time, I have completed the shift to Singularity F. My sole companion is Ritsuka, master candidate 48. Both her mind and body are intact. Rayshift compatibility and Master compatibility are both satisfactory. Please register her as an official researcher."

Romani's expression softens as he regards the two of them, he let out a breath he didn't remember holding.
"I'm really glad you two didn't 'lose your existence', but it seems Ritsuka got dragged into it too. At least you're both saf- Wait.. Mash, what's up with that outfit?! I didn't raise you to dress like that!!"

With their faces both turning red for different reasons, Mash with embarrassment and Romani with a small anger, Mash looked upon her clothes and remarked. "It was like this when I transformed. I couldn't protect Senpai wearing the usual uniform.."
"Eh?! What do you mean you transformed? Did you hit your head?"

Annoyance resurfaces on Mash's expression once again as she cut him off. "Doctor Roman, please be quiet for a moment, I think you'll understand the situation better once you check my condition."
The pair of eyes on the projection widens. "Your condition? Wait.. Whoa, whoa, whoa, WHOA!! Your physical strength and your magical circuits... they have all improved! You seem to be closer to being a -"
"-A Servant, yes. I don't remember how it happened, but I seem to have survived by fusing with a Servant. It probably lost it's Master in the explosion and was doomed to vanish. But at the last second, he offered me a contract. In return for the abilities of a Heroic Spirit, I was to eliminate the cause of this singularity."
Biting on his lip for a split second, the Doctor continues, "A Heroic Spirit fused... A Demi-Servant? That was Chaldea's sixth experiment, wasn't it?....", a slight frown crossed his face for a moment, "So it finally succeeded... I see. Does this Heroic Spirit still have his consciousness?"

"No.. He gave me his combat abilities before he vanished. I'm afraid he never revealed his True Name, nor his Noble Phantasm. I have no idea who it is that I have fused with.", Mash's expression was grim, as she stared at the ground, avoiding the gaze of the Doctor and Ritsuka.
"At this rate... I won't be able to protect Senpai or fight properly..."

Romani exhaled, giving her a small smile. "Hey, look on the bright side. Not every Servant who gets summoned is cooperative. Now that you have the abilities of one, this is in our favour. After all, you're completely trustworthy."
Ritsuka nods, and puts a hand on Mash's shoulder, giving her a small squeeze, "I'm glad you're here, Mash. It's alright, I believe in you."

Watching them with a warm smile, Romani then addresses Ritsuka, "Ritsuka, I. It seems you're the only one who managed to shift there safely, I'm sorry for forcing you into this without any explanation. I'm sure you're full of questions, but try not to worry."

Ritsuka nods and smiles towards Mash and Romani, putting her hands in front of her in a small 'don't worry' gesture. "I was the one who followed you to the Command Room, after all, Doctor, you can say I was the one who forced myself into this."

The doctor's face softens into a smile. "Well, you do have humanity's most powerful weapon with you right now - Mash.", Mash jumps in almost immediately, her expression wide with surprise. "I don't know about 'most powerful', I'm usually the one who gets blamed later, in combat training."
A small chuckle interrupts her, "Now now, as long as Ritsuka understands what a Servant is, it'll be fine. Ritsuka, while they can be reliable allies, they also have a weakness. Without the source of their magical energy, their Master, they disappear. I'm still analyzing the data, but it seems that Mash has become your Servant."

Ritsuka pointed towards herself, "I am... her Master?".

Mash nods, blushing slightly with a small smile. "Yes... It's why I called you Master earlier."

The projection flickers as Romani begins speaking once again.
"I don't blame you for being confused, I didn't get the chance to explain to you about Masters and Servants, anyway. I'll try to explain it to you in detail. The current mission has two new goals...--"
Mash glances at the wristwatch. "Doctor, you're breaking up. The connection will be cut in 10 seconds."

"Huh.. Sheba's output must be unstable because we switched to the backup generators. I'll brief you later. I'm getting a strong leyline reading about 2 kilometers from your current location. Try to get there, it will stabilize our connection. Don't do anything reckless, okay? I'll bring the power back up as soon as I can so for now, just head towards th-"

The connection cuts just before he managed to give them directions. Staring at each other in confusion, Mash shakes her head and sighs. "Well, that's the Doctor for you, you can't rely on him in situations like this."

"Kyuuu, Fou!!", Mash smiles at the squeaking Fou, her expression and shoulders easing up a little.
"Right, you're here with us too, aren't you Fou? Thanks for cheering us up."

"Ahh.. but I forgot to let the Doctor know."

Stroking Fou's mane as he squeaked by the side of her ear, Ritsuka tried to cheer Mash up a little as
well.
"Fou said not to worry about him. We'll find time to let him know later. For now, let's head towards
the c-"

"KYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH HH
Munich, Germany - Year 2005

"Say, Marie, this world around us used to be full of Mystery. In the earth beneath us, the sky above us, in the air and within nature around us. Right now, that only holds true to a much lesser extent for the first two, which are also depleting as human technology progresses to allow man to finally learn and understand them. They are also what we research on in the Astronomy and Archaeology departments at the Clock Tower, both I and your new teacher here, Mr. Lev Lainur."

I used to love listening to the stories he told when he was teaching me. That was the week before my esteemed father left for a business trip in Japan, when I met Lev, who was a man who loved research above all else. His lessons were too, dotted with many interesting stories of the past.

It was a year before my father returned on Christmas, bringing with him a young man with peach colored hair and green eyes. Eighteen years of age, sheepish and meek, shrinking back every time I spoke to him. Truly, he was a man who was most unsuitable to be involved with the world of Magi. So why did father take him in as a new student?

"Well, I'll have to help take care of him to make sure he doesn't bring shame upon the name of my father!", was what I'd thought, but after a year at the Clock Tower, he'd left to go to medical school instead. That same year, at the age of 11, was when I finally enrolled at the Clock Tower, taken under Lev's wing as my father was out on leave often, setting up his new research center. "Marie, my dreams will finally come true, we will be able to watch and learn from the stars, the planets around us, the Mysteries of the universe which have had gone untouched for billions of years. And all that, I shall leave to you when the time comes. We will navigate the future of this world, so as to make sure humanity can prosper." It was a grand goal, one that was perfect for the Animuspheres, whose pride is to serve the best under any circumstances. One that would surely make my beloved Father's name known to the world.

I'd visited the Observatory multiple times after, usually with Lev when he went to upgrade or do maintenance on SHEBA. Fours years after I'd initially met him, I ran into Romani Archaman during my visit. As always, he'd cower when speaking to anyone, and was almost always glued to his laptop during his free time.

"Marie, do you remember Romani-kun? He has been appointed as the head of the medical department here?" "Father, didn't he drop out of his classes at the Clock Tower? If this is to be an organization for Magi, surely there must be many others who are more capable. He seems to be too soft a person to be here." "Now, now, Marie. Romani here is a dear friend of mine. Although he may seem to be soft and fluffy, he is pretty capable. Now, let's head to the greenhouse and watch the night sky under the glass ceiling. The view from is absolutely stunning."
Afterwards, I got busy with my classes, it would be another three years before I returned, this time, as the Director. After meeting her, I'd learnt, that both my father and the world of Magi, wasn't as ideal as I'd thought it to be.

Fuyuki City Singularity F - Year 2004 / 2018 - January 30th / January 8th

As they headed towards the location of the scream, Mash spoke up. "Senpai, there are flames as far as the eye can see. But according to our data, it should have been just an ordinary city. There wasn't a record of such a disaster happening in the past. And the density of the Mana in the atmosphere here is also abnormal. It's like we returned to ancient t."

A second cry interrupts her train of thoughts. It was a familiar voice, one of a young woman. "Kyaaaaaaaaaaa! Why do these things keep happening to me?! Please help me, Lev, you were always there for me, right?"

They see a spark fly off towards the north as they finally spot the director, shooting red bullets at the skeletons surrounding her.

"Director Olga Marie?" A pair of surprised amber coloured eyes met their own, with Olga Marie taking several steps back and shivering at the sight of Mash. "Y-you two! What in the world is going on here?!"

Mash moves to block a skeleton as it makes a jump from a fire hydrant. "We'll explain in a bit, Director, but first, Mash Kyrielight, Engaging!!" Her words calm Olga Marie down, and she assists in picking off the further targets with magic bullets and detonating pieces of rocks carved with runes. Once the battle is over, Mash guards Ritsuka's and Marie's backs as they retreat into a building.

"Are you hurt, Director?", although the pair noticed that the Director didn't seem to have any visible injuries, she seemed to be extremely shaken, especially when she spoke to or looked at Mash. Shakily pointing a finger at Mash, Olga replies, "W-what's going on?"

Mash stared at the ground and backed away behind Ritsuka, "Erm.. Director? About my situation.. I know it's hard to believe.. but the truth is.."

"A Demi-Servant, right? It's pretty obvious that you fused with a Servant. What I want to know is why it's successful now all of a sudden!", having regained some of her composure, she then directed her finger towards Ritsuka.

"And you! The civilian candidate who was both late to, and had the gall to fall asleep during my briefing! How did you become a Master? Usually only first-class Mages can enter a contract with a servant! You didn't go through any official training either, have you? So there's no way you could ever become a master! What have you done to her to make her do your bidding?"

"Uh... well.. I'm not too sure either, and.. I haven't - "

"Director, there's a misunderstanding, I was the one who forced the contract."

Mash stepped up in front of Ritsuka, while putting her hand on the latter's to help her to calm down, before explaining in detail what had occurred in the Central Command Room just before the Rayshift activated.

"And that's how it happened, Director. No other master candidate shifted with us, you're the only human we've found, Director. And currently, we are trying to locate the Leyline of this land. The Doctor mentioned it should be around two kilometers from where we were before we ran into you, but the connection got cut before he could give us the exact location. But, since we've ran into you, Director, it gives me hope that there may be other candidates who were teleported here too."

A grave look overcame Olga Marie's face, and she thought back to the last moments she
remembers and what she'd heard of the sabotage from Mash and Ritsuka.
"There actually aren't, that much I'm certain of. I hate to admit it, but the reason why only the three
of us are here in Fuyuki.. Is because we share a common denominator - None of us were actually
inside the "coffins", unlike the rest of the candidates. Although Rayshifting without one isn't
impossible, it carries greater risk and has a lower success rate. The coffins have breakers, and will
prevent a shift if the success rate falls below a certain point. So we're the only ones here."

"Huh, so you weren't planning to Shift, Director?" Olga frowns and grumbles at the question from
a surprised Mash, Ritsuka once again notices a hint of bitterness mixed into her expression.
"... Is that a problem, what commander heads to the front lines? Didn't I say that you were all my
tools? Hmph, whatever. And you, since it's an emergency, I'll approve your contract with
Kyrielight. From here on out, you are both to follow my commands. First, let's set up a base camp.
Like Romani said, we have to search for the Leyline Terminal in this land, a place where magical
energy converges. So..in this town's case.." Reaching into her pocket and removing a rune stone,
Olga Marie focuses on it as it begins to glow, before disintegrating into dust and floating towards a
certain point.
"Let's head over, then. Once we get it setup, we will be able to contract Chaldea again."

After a 20 minute walk, occasionally fighting off a stray skeleton, they'd reached a small hill. After
inspecting the ground beneath them, Olga ordered Mash closer.
"Place your shield on the ground, I'm going to set up a summoning circle with your Noble
Phantasm as the catalyst."

"Understood, Director."

The summoning circle activates and a brief vision of a modern room is shown.
"This is.. this is the summoning experiment chamber in Chaldea?"

It then cuts away and reverts back to a small projection of Romani, eyes wide in concern and
yelling into his headset.
"Testing, Testing, Hello!! Ah, the connection's finally back! Good job, we have a secure
connection now, we will be able to communicate and even send rations, and maybe have you send
back samples we could stud-"
He nearly jumps out from his chair as the Director's voice answered him.
"Huh? Why are you running the show, Romani?! Where's Lev, put him on instead!"

"Waaaaaaaaaaahhh!! uh.. uh.. Director, you're alive? And you're unharmed?" Seemingly trying
to find a way to cower under the chair, Romani's utterance seem to offend Olga, causing her frown
to deepen even further.
"What's that even supposed to mean? Did you want me dead? What's the head Medic even doing in
charge? Where's Lev?"

At the repeated question, Romani takes a deep breath and tries to settle in the seat, sitting upright.
"Well.. I know fully well that I'm not cut out for this job. But there's nobody else. Currently, the
surviving staff of Chaldea, excluding Ritsuka and Mash, only number 26. The reason why I'm here
is because there's no one ranked higher than me left. Those who were supervising from the
Command Room, like Lev, there's no way he could have survived that blast."

Olga's face immediately blanches, and she started looking towards Mash, and the projection of
Romani. Biting her nails, she presses him further for answers.
"No way.. Lev.. no... please, forget that, wait.. wait... 26 survivors? What about the Master
Candidates? And the coffins?"

"Out of the 47 activated, 40 of the coffins are heavily damaged, all the 47 Candidates are in critical
condition. We're too short on medical supplies, so while we might be able to save a few.. we couldn't possibly-"

"Don't be ridiculous! Cryopreserve them immediately! Your top priority should be keeping them all alive! Think about reviving them later."

The announcement causes a stir from the projection as the members of the staff jumped to their feet.
"Ah! I forgot the coffins had those functions, we'll get to it right away, Director!"

After watching Romani run off from in front of the screen, Mash raised an arm towards the Director to get her attention, a concerned look on her face.
"Director.. that surprises me. Cyropreservation without prior consent is a crime. Yet you made the decision right away, you put those human lives ahead of your own reputation as a Director."

Olga Marie scoffed the notion. "Don't be stupid! As long as they aren't dead, I can explain myself later! What other reason could there be? And if you want me to be accountable for 47 lives... on top of the over 200 that we've lost with only 26 left... there's no way I'd want to carry all that! Ugh.. please don't die, I'm begging you.. If only Lev was around, he'd know what to do.."

As they mulled around, trying to process the weight of all that has been lost, Romani returned to give Olga Marie his report.
Into the Flames (2)

Chapter Summary

Romani displays his 'Inability to read the room EX' and gets a promotion, while Ritsuka gets her briefing—well, half of it.

Images of the wreckage from both the Central Command Room and the underground power plant came onto the projection, together with the Doctor's voice. "As you can see, the energy generated from the plant is at only 30% of the previous capacity, most of the coffins are heavily damaged, as are the observation and communication equipment. With only the 26 of us left, a lack of supplies and the means to full repair them, Chaldea has lost 80% of its functionality. There's only so much we can do, so I've shifted the available manpower to Rayshift repairs, and maintaining Chaldeas and Sheba's current states. As soon as the external communications are back up, we'll request the supplies to start rebuilding. And that concludes my report."

Olga Marie begun to pace back and forth, rubbing her temples at the information they'd just received. Things were way worse that she'd imagined. And given the current situation the three of them who were shifted were in, carrying a greater than usual risk, although she'd never admit it, Romani was the best choice to take over as the commander, as he'd know what to look out for when the singularity causes their existence and their vitals to flux. Huffing a small sigh, she looked towards her two companions before turning back to the projection.

"That's fine. I'd have done the same. ...Ahh, Romani Archaman, I don't like it, but, until my return. You're in charge of Chaldea. Make the Rayshift repairs your top priority. We'll be investigating this town, Singularity F."

Once again, the doctor seemed to jump back and try to shrink into his seat. "Ehh? Director, you're not afraid to be at ground zero? Since when did you become so brave?"

".....Seriously, you don't know when to shut up. First you speak as if I were dead, and now you're implying that I'm a coward? As much as I'd like nothing more than to go back now and take command, it's going to take time until you finish the Rayshift repair work. This town only has low level monsters, so with Mash as a demi-servant, we will be safe. Accident or not, the Animushpere pride ourselves on doing our best no matter the situation we're given. So I'll be looking into Singularity F with Ritsuka and Mash as investigators. Since my field staff are inexperienced, the extent of this mission will just be to discover the cause of the anomaly. Analysis and eradication will have to wait until I can send a second team, after Chaldea is restored. Are you okay with that?"

A look of confusion crosses the faces of Ritsuka, Mash, and Romani. The master and demi-servant exchange a small glance, as if to say 'Just discover it?', before they turned to the Doctor, waiting for him to give them a confirmation as their acting commander. Romani meets eyes with them for a moment, and pulls himself upright, giving them a small, stern nod. Indeed, the pair was too inexperienced to be able to deal with the singularity alone, and time spent arguing with Olga Marie would just be time wasted.

"Roger that, best of luck to you, Director. We can communicate in short bursts now, so feel free to
contact me if there's an emergency."

Olga Marie scoffs and waves her hand in front of the projection. "Hah! Even if we send an SOS, nobody would come to our rescue. I'm cutting off the connection, Romani. Go do your job.", cutting off the communication between the Command Room and themselves.

Picking up her weapon, Mash begins to voice her concerns, "....Director, are you sure about this? There's also the option of waiting here for help.

Gritting her teeth, the Director waved Mash's comment off, "I can't afford to do that, after we return... who knows how long it'll take to select the next team? A month won't be enough to gather personnel or funds. Do you know how much the Association will harass me in the meantime?", she resumed her pacing, biting on her thumb, while trying to compose herself.

"Worst case, they'll blame me for mismanagement, and I'll lose Chaldea to them. If that came to pass... I can't go back empty-handed, I need something that will shut them up! I can't afford to..... I'm sorry, but you're both stuck with me. Come on, let's start investigating this town, we should probably get to a higher place so we can survey the area, like the large red bridge over there. The cause of the twist in history must be here somewhere. We should also send samples back for them to analyse. But first... before we start. You, isn't there something you want to say to me?"

Olga Marie gestures towards Ritsuka, who points towards herself, confused, "Uhhh... Nothing in particular...?" This prompts Olga Marie to heave a huge sigh in response, as she looked toward the master with a look of annoyance.

"You aren't very smart.. are you? Remember what happened in the Command Room?" You had the gall to be late to, and fall asleep during my briefing!" I'd thought you were good and obedient compared to those candidates sent from the Clock Tower who've only ever known to curry favour, but you proved to be a complete amateur who wasn't even paying attention! Do you even know what we are meant to do here?

Olga Marie grimaces at the goofy, embarrassed smile from the other girl's face, along with an apology she didn't really want to hear. Although she did hear from Lev that Ritsuka was the newest of the 48 candidates, and a civilian one at that, without training or combat experience, but she'd had hoped that the girl would have been more serious for the job.

"Well.. I did ask Lev to assign you to Romani to get at least some basic training in."

Ritsuka looked up at Olga Marie, with a small smile and a knowing look. "Ah, if it's the Doctor, I met him after I was brought to my room, since he was sla--"

The projection from the Command Room opened up once again, showing the face of a rather flustered Roman, who waves his arm towards Ritsuka sharply before trying to compose himself. Even through the pale green of the projection, it was pretty obvious that his face was blanched.

"Ah! W-we met in the h-hallway, Director! I got to explain to her about where we were, and what some of the systems do, but wouldn't this be a good chance to have her hear a better explanation?"

Olga Marie grins at herself as the waves the projection away once again.

"Very well. Listen up, Mash, Ritsuka, what we shall achieve here today will be written in history. Why were you and the other Master Candidates summoned to Chaldea? This will explain that. The science of learning, the invention of religions, acquisition of navigation, even the voyage into space. Our legacy, born of an unprecedented fusion of magecraft and science, will surpass even the "Pioneers of the Stars."

Nodding to herself once more as she finds the pair focused on her, she continues. "Rather than expanding civilization, we shall be the hands of God protecting it. By stabilizing human history,
we will transform the future into a solid resolution, to ensure the continuation of humanity, which is one of the principles of mankind. You shall know that that is Chaldea's, and now your only and absolute purpose. You are to be nothing more than tools to protect humanity now. Chaldea has achieved many results to date, the development of the observation cyber daemon, Laplace. the Global Envi--"

An ear splitting screech forces the Director to stop her speech, as the pair with her turn their focus to a group of approaching skeletons. Slightly annoyed, she gestures at the pair before firing some Gandr shots at the skeletons who were further out from the group. "Wait, I wasn't done yet! Come back here and listen to what I have to say!!"

With some direction from Ritsuka and backup fire from Olga, Mash makes quick work of the rest of the skeletons. "Director, if I may.. We should probably get to the bridge to get a better view of our surroundings. You can continue giving Senpai the briefing while we make our way there.
Vermilion Hope (1)

A vermilion blaze burnt against the sickly purple-red of the sky. Nearby, there was a wide ring of glowing carves to be found.

"Burn up, Tree Giant! Wicker Man!"

With a smirk as the horde of skeleton soldiers dissolve into ash and dust, a man in blue dusts his clothes off as he stands from the boulder he was perching on. Luring that big of a group over to his trap was satisfying, although, he'd done it so many times in the past week that it was getting old. This Holy Grail War has been rigged, but the one whom it was giving itself too would have none of it.

"Tch. Ideal King, my foot." he stretches and yawns, a true ideal king would be one who'd let his subjects be happy, not one who chooses to pursue order over the smiles of their people. His ideal king would be one who'd go out drinking with him instead of forcing him to do work overtime like this. The battle has already been decided here, each passing second was one second wasted. The rest of the participants have been brought under her control, and while he'd be lying if he didn't consider doing it too - it'd make things easier for him, after all, not having to think or be pitted against multiple opponents. But just as he had lived, he wasn't one to back off without a fight now. If he was going to go down, he'd do so standing. He might be a hero who's associated with hounds, but he sure as heck ain't gonna be like that annoying Archer and serve a king who doesn't even really know what she's after.

And so he sets off again, not yet knowing that the wheels in this machine he'd thought to be jammed would be turning once again.

Fuyuki City Singularity F - Year 2004 / 2018 - January 30th / January 8th

"The bridge is clear now, Senpai. Give me your hand. Here, now you too, Director."

As she pulls the pair onto the bridge, Mash notices with a slight surprise at how comfortable she was with her newfound strength. She'd often been teased by the other members of the A team for her weaker parameters before, and doesn't want to risk overestimating herself when it comes to the safety of Ritsuka and Olga Marie. The enemies they've met so far were mindless, skeletal soldiers who seem to react to noises, and shadowy, slow moving wraiths. If they were to meet a Servant-one of the heroes from Mankind's extensive history, summoned by the Holy Grail with the offering of a wish were they to win the war against 6 others, surely- she wouldn't stand a chance against them. As they climb to the top of the guardrail, all three swallowed their breath as they looked out upon the city around them.

The familiar green projection and soothing voice comes on once again. "It seems you are in the center of the city. We do have a map, but only visual is limited to a radius around where you are. Is there anything you can see that seems off or of concern to you?" Olga's brow, still furrowed from how absolutely clueless Ritsuka was at any and everything she'd just explained, sighed and composed herself. She had the city's layout memorized, having studied the data the researchers have managed to collect extensively. Taking mental notes as she scanned the skyline, comparing what she now sees to the visuals that are etched into her memory. Rubbing the back of his head, Roman chimes in. "Haha.. I can feel the tension from across the screen. The Director is grumpy as usual." Mash shoots the projection a sharp look, silently chiding the Doctor for possibly making the Director's mood worse or distracting her. "Well, I can feel some sympathy for the Director's ill
temper. Senpai, there's too much about Chaldea you don't know, I don't really know what to do with you either. It's like you're a lost little kitten. Not that I'm any different, however." Her gaze lowers as she breathes a soft sigh. "It's been about two years since I started here, and I still don't understand a lot of things. I kind of sneaked in after all, like an alligator."

"Alligator?", Ritsuka's slightly dazed state perks up a little, the flood of information from Olga's lecture having left her more than a little confused.

"I read it from the database, that alligators have no clue. I've learnt as much as I can from it, so I'll share it with you. Chaldea watches over a world that couldn't be observed by magecraft, or be measured by science. We're a special organization with support from the UN, created to prevent humanity from reaching a "bad end. While we receive financial support from across the globe, most of our funding is from the Mage's Association in Londo, from Director Olga Marie's family, the Animusphere family. We're a research organization, but due to the importance of our mission, we operate on a military level. As such, there are extremely strict rules and punishments for everything, so the Director's behavior now is actually pretty reserved. Usually, she'll get rid of any staff member she doesn't like. Uhm- I'm sorry, I wanted to give you some encouragement, but I'm not too used to cheery words."

"Haha.. well, when the Director is calm, she's really reliable. But, Ritsuka, please understand that she's in a complicated position as well. She was initially a master candidate like you are, but three years ago, when her father passed, she had to take over the operations of Chaleda, when she was still a student. She had to take over as the head of her family, and keep Chaldea running. Ever since, it's just been one tense and busy day after another. And after that year, when we could no longer be assured of humanity's future in a hundred years from now, there was a wave of huge criticism from the Association and our sponsors. At the same time she was ordered to bring the situation back to normal as soon as possible, they found out that she had no aptitude to become a Master. Being a member of the noble Animusphere family, one of the Twelve Lords and the head of the faculty of Astronomy at the Mage's association, you can image the gossip and naysayers that happened behind the scenes. I'm sure those rumours reached her too. She worked her absolute best as our Director, through all those rumours and the other Mages treating her as a child. She's worked hard and stretched herself. What with dealing with those rumours and the other Mages belittling her opinions due to her age and lack of experience. I'd like for her to come for counselling, but.. well..I'm sure she doesn't hate you or anything like that, Ritsuka. She's evil, not in a cruel, nerfarious or dishonest way, however, she's just really serious. I hope you can get along with her, Ritsuka."

Olga Marie cleared her throat, silencing Romani immediately. "Do you want me to shut off communication with you again, Roman? I didn't say you could share my life story. Leave the gossip for when we get back to Chaldea. For now, listen closely as I list down some of the differences from this Fuyuki and the one we have studied. Ignoring the differences in the layout, there are areas where the flames are a bright vermilion instead of the deeper dark red. Some buildings and landmarks seem to have been carved into by a large wave of energy. Most buildings are burnt down or burning with the dark flames. Furthermore-

her observation report is cut short by a high pitched shriek from behind them. Turning to see a wraith approaching, clawed hands snaking out towards them, Olga freezes up, prompting Ritsuka to grab her and pull her into a crouching position, as Mash readies her shield. "Senpai! Please help me bring the Director down to safety!" Launching herself off the guard rail as the other two begin to slowly scale back down. Mash could only hope that the noise hadn't alerted anything else to their presence here.
Amid the sound of metal clashing against metal, Mash breathes a sigh of relief to see Ritsuka and Olga Marie arrive safely back on the base of the bridge. Taking care to not let her fight get too close to their location, she deflects a swipe from the wraith before using one of the guardrail’s pillars as a launching pad, before kicking off on her shield to twist in midair and slam her opponent into the ground. Her two companions run over to her as the wraith disappears into ash and dust. Olga seemed to be especially shaken, with Ritsuka putting a hand on her shoulder supporting her from behind. Puffing her chest out and shaking off the hand of the girl behind her, Olga Marie tries to compose herself as she meets Mash’s gaze. "I expected nothing less of a Servant's body. Such power." Despite noticing that the director's hands were shaking, Mash sets her shield down, shaking her head slowly. “Not that it makes fighting any less scary.... but still, Director, the Fuyuki in our data and this Fuyuki are just too different. What could have happened here exactly? What are your thoughts?"

Olga paused to think for a moment, if even the layout of the city was different, then surely- "There is only one reason I can think of, history must have been slightly disrupted. Chaldea observes the future from the Earth Model, Chaldeas, and at the same time, a familiar tied to it by Lev compiles the past records. Sometimes, those records are history that wasn't made public, or information that was intentionally buried in darkness, that no one now knows. According to it's observations, an unusual Holy Grail War was confirmed to have occured here in 2004." Mash's eyes widen at the revelation. "Holy Grail War? The Holy Grail from the legend? The magical chalice that is the root of all magecraft, the one that is said to grant it's holder's wishes?" With an affirmative nod, Olga Marie continues. "Yes, that's the one. The mages in this city competed for it, and in order to do so, summoned seven Heroic Spirits. That was how it begun, unknown to anyone, Servants were summoned into this town. The Fuyuki Grail War system is simple, the Seven Masters and their Servants do battle, the last pair to remain gets the Grail." Chaldea learnt about this in 2010. My Fath- The previous Director used the data gathered to build our Heroic Spirit Summoning System. Our third invention. In the end, it seems that Saber was the one who was victorious here. The town wasn't destroyed, and the Servants shouldn't have been noticed by anyone, but -"

Romani's voice rings out again from the Command Room, it seems the tension that previously rolled off Olga Marie had gotten to him to. "D-director! Mash, Ritsuka! We've been refining and studying mana extracted from the coordinates you provided before about the fires and the buildings that seems to have been gouged out. We are detecting leftover traces of multiple Servant's magical signature there." Olga Marie was the first of the three to recover from the shock of Roman's report. Pulling her arms over her chest, quietly hugging herself before folding them and facing the other two, she pointed at Ritsuka. "You, keep track of our surroundings. A-anyway, now that this is happening, and with Servants' magical signatures being detected. we should assume that the outcome has changed in this Singularity. And as a result, brought about an alteration to human history, causing us to no longer see 100 years into the future. That's why it's our job to repair it, as the history here has been disturbed. Once that's done, we should complete our mission and be able to return to the present."

Ritsuka glances over Mash before turning to Olga Marie, if Chaldea has the Summoning System, then surely, they should have other Servants to assist them instead of letting Mash shoulder everything. Olga Marie follows Ritsuka's gaze, noticing how it seemed to harden as she was lost in thought. Breathing out a small sigh, she continues. "The Summoning system didn't go too well, however, and there weren't many successes. According to our data, three were summoned. The first by the previous director, but their identity is classified data even I cannot access. the second and third arrived after I became Director. The first of the two is the one fused with Mash, and the
second... well.. Romani can introduce the weirdo to you when we get back. Leonardo Da Vinci, who now lives in Chaldea." Olga rubs her temples, before turning to Mash. "Speaking of which, Mash. Is it possible that you can't deploy your Noble Phantasm?" Seeing Mash seem to shrink and lower her head, Ritsuka was the first to respond.

"Noble Phantasm?"

"That's right, Senpai. Every Heroic Spirit has a secret weapon, the power of their Special Arts, called the Noble Phantasm, derived from each hero's legends and their deeds. I- I'm sorry for explaining this so late. I don't even know the name of the Heroic Spirit who fused with me. They'd disappeared right after, and the next thing I knew was that we had been Rayshifted here. Hence, I am unable to wield mine." Gesturing with the shield, she sets it on the ground, illuminating a small radius around them. "It's output is decreased, but I'm somehow able to use it as a weapon. I can't even release it's True Name, in fact, I don't even know what it's origins may be. In any case, whether you think of me as a failed Servant is up to you. I don't have any leads on the Heroic spirit I'm fused with, but as long as I'm with you as my Master, I will try to figure it out as I grow."

Putting a hand on Mash's shoulder, Ritsuka gives them a warm smile. 'You're not a failed Servant, if anything, you're a capable, dependable one that can get even stronger. We just have to figure things out as we go along. Both of us." Cringing at those words, Olga Marie's glare shoots daggers at the pair. "Well, even if it's true that Masters have the ability to analyze their Servants' parameters and skills to get a better idea of how to utilize them, but that's only if you become good enough. Any servant you contract with from this point will be the same, you'll need to learn their True Name and Noble Phantasm. Given the fact that you can't use Mash that well, it shows that you don't have much potential in you. Once we get Chaldea back online, we're going to shift a first-class Master here. And when we get back, you're fired. You can spend your time terrified in some lonely corner of Chaldea, maybe pushing boxes around with the slacker and the weirdo. Be glad I'm not kicking you out the gate into the tundra."

"Behind you! There's an incom-" The voice of Romani's transmission was cut short as Mash whirled around to deflect a bright red bolt. As it ricochets, they realize it was some sort of an arrow. As the three of them make they away across the bridge to somewhere with more cover, Romani continues in a semi-panicked state. "There's no mistake! That attack definitely came from a Servant. We can't seem to pinpoint where they are, it must have been a long ranged attack." As they make it into the ruins of a grocery store, Olga Marie slumps against the wall, holding her head in her hands, beads of sweat dripping from there. Noticing Ritsuka's hand approaching hers, she swats it away gently and turns to address Mash. "Are you hurt anywhere? I should be able to heal you a little with my magecraft." Mash shakes her head, biting her lip before speaking. "I'm alright but, now that we're in here, we might have trouble escaping if the Servant shows up here. Even though I'm not a participant in this Holy Grail War, I guess it's only natural, given the circumstances, for Servants to target each other." Romani interjects, his face concerned. "But it's too early for you to engage in battle with a Servant!" A glare from Olga Marie silences him, "Then how do you suggest we handle the situation if it comes up then, but anyway, once we should get going once we manage to rest up a li-" "Sorry, Director! But there's a Servant signature rushing towards your location now! We should have noticed it sooner, but it might have been concealing it's presence! It's an Assassin-class Servant!"

"I found it... new prey. The Grail shall be mine!"

The shape of a man covered in a tattered cloak and bandages approaches them, blindly thrusting it's hand in their general direction. There are multiple cuts and wounds on his body, each oozing thick, shadowy smoke. Pulling Ritsuka behind Mash's shield, Olga yells back after they speak. "But Mash has nothing to do with the Grail! Cou- could it be? That this is a wandering phantom
gone mad? Mash, as a Servant, as inexperienced as you are, you should be able to find a way to handle this."

With an affirmative nod, the lilac haired girl squares herself up as she draws a deep breath, focusing her eyes on the blindly charging adversary. "I can fight! Stay behind me, Senpai, Director!"

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