

## Fate/Bonds Beyond Humanity

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### 80- He Who Reached The Stars

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“DODGE!!!!” Shirou didn’t need to scream as everyone was already moving but when beneath a bombardment logic tended to fly out of the window. His first main concern was making sure everybody was safe first and foremost so he prepared to call one of his Noble Phantasms.

“**Peerless Armor!**” Turned out the Mage’s efforts were unnecessary as his knight and lover was already on the prowl, Noble Gear exploding with light.

An instant later she was wearing her combat outfit and armor but more importantly Durandina was on her left hand with its bronze aura flaring with power from a swing which created a dome to protect her companions.

Hundreds of spells and projectiles hit the barrier exploding with every collision as none of the blasts were strong enough to break through. That dome of energy was as strong as the walls of Troy during the times when even Achilles failed to surpass them. Better yet, despite being attacked by dozens of sacred gears, Xenovia barely felt any strain.

Yet sacred gears weren’t the only weapons at play as Gilgamesh watched Durandina’s power with a frown before smiling savagely. “That power, is it your creation, my friend?”

“The knight is still out.” Jeanne pointed towards Xenovia’s figure as the woman stood guard in front of the dome. Several spells also hit her but she wasn’t bothered by them. “This way we are going to run out of gas before getting to them.”

Heracles grinned as an orange aura full of Divinity surrounded his body. “I will handle her!” Only for a huge ax to fall in front of him, stopping his charge. The giant glared at his commander with obvious anger. “What?”

“Save your strength for the others, I will take care of the wall.” Gilgamesh declared that the Gate of Babylon retrieved the best weapon he could use. ‘That sort of power is stronger than any sacred gear. If either Heracles or Jeanne fight, they are just going to waste energy.’ Just like how their allies were doing, utterly failing to damage the barrier. Despite the problems it offered, the blond was pleased. ‘Such a challenge must be properly answered.’

Behind the dome Ise was angry. “Why aren’t we attacking?!”

“Because our win condition isn’t ‘kick their asses’.” Shirou replied half mockingly. “It is to get out of here.”

Kirei nodded in agreement as Caren replied. “Once we are back in Fuyuki we are going to

have a small army on our side.”

“Not to mention we are still inside Dimension Lost.” The priest pointed out. “Depending on the user’s control, we are fighting against a whole world. I can only imagine it is something similar to facing a Reality Marble.”

“A daunting prospect.” The silver haired woman concluded and the armored devil didn’t really understand what the problem was even as he noticed Shirou acting as inconspicuous as possible.

But the Red Dragon Emperor got the point. “So we just need to hit the right guy.”

“I think it is Faust- that one with the glasses.” Shirou pointed to the man leading the magicians and ordering a cease fire. Several warriors then prepared to step forward with the redhead doing the same. ‘Peerless Armor or not, better to not let Xenovia deal with that many-’

His train of thought died as soon his nose twitched with a familiar smell of Divinity he could never forget. The whole Dimension Lost sparkled with light as the gold weapons that once defeated the Mage of Swords made their grand entrance. Their ethereal glow could easily outshine most stars and they were in Gilgamesh’s hands as swords.

“That can’t be good for us.” Kirei stated the obvious as the blond combined Enki into a bow.

A bow whose string was made of pure light and a similarly impossible arrow took form, thin and bright with as much Divinity as Durandal. More in truth for it was an older Noble Phantasm, one that the Mage of Sword’s mind still failed to fully comprehend.

But at least that time there was no headache as his mind actually could process Enki’s form and power without blow back. Unlimited Blade Works still failed to recreate its magnificence but was able to process enough information to remind Shirou how powerful the weapon was.

He didn’t need a reminder and was already acting, bow and arrow ready as he turned into another direction of the battlefield. “I will take care of the user!”

It was all that could be said as Gilgamesh released the arrow which became a streak of light cutting through the air towards the dome only for Xenovia to jump forward and block it with both her blades.

The bluehead instantly regretted her decision as the arrow carried far more force than it should be possible. Enough to break her guard leaving it free to keep going right through her left shoulder pad, also tearing some of her cape off, just because she wasn’t perfectly on the way.

In reality the only reason she survived was because of a last second dodge.

And because she wasn’t the main target as Enki’s projectile collided with Durandina’s shield

opening a huge hole in it, breaking the structure apart. Sure enough the former Exorcist could rebuild it but upon seeing Gilgamesh prepare another shot her priorities shifted.

Hundreds of magical beams, blasts of dozens of elements and all manner of projectiles weren't a threat, not when compared with that single arrow.

It managed to damage the Peerless Armor, her left shoulder slightly cut thanks to its passing even when her Noble Gear had managed to deflect the attack. Her mind made, Xenovia lit her boots' thrusters and flew in a mad charge before Gilgamesh could shoot another arrow.

Several things happened at once as everybody changed their plans upon seeing the knight's action. Considering how dangerous Enki's arrows were, nobody expected someone to challenge it even if they were fast enough to stop a second shot.

Nobody but Shirou who knew Xenovia well enough to figure out her train of thought and her necessity of facing the main threat head first so he was the first to act the moment Durandina's shield broke, sprinting towards Georg.

The impact when Durandal and Enki clashed was deafening, sending a shockwave that had both Jeanne and Heracles jumping forward to avoid it while charging towards the enemy. They noticed Shirou sprinting in the opposite direction but both were willing to let him go as they had more suitable and desirable opponents to deal with.

So the fight inside Dimension Lost broke out with the Hero Faction holding several advantages.

And organized as a small legion could be.

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During his run Shirou didn't hesitate pulling his bow and shooting several Muramasa arrows towards his target. As he was the first to react to Xenovia's assault he hoped to catch Georg off guard and defeat him quickly. Even if he wasn't Dimension Lost's owner, taking down the enemy commander would be a boon nevertheless.

He underestimated the Hero Faction's top magus as Georg recovered quicker than expected. "So he is attacking here." Whispered the man to his closest allies before adjusting accordingly. "Focus on the Mage of Swords!!"

It was like the place itself was boosting his voice so everyone could hear the command clearly no matter where they were. As one the army of sixty people directed their attention to the redhead, several men stepped forward with their weapons while the rest unleashed their magic.

Most of them actually moved to neutralize his arrows which were destroyed quite explosively. Not only magic but also sacred gears managed to break his Noble Phantasms before they did any damage. But there were still plenty of attacks left, all aimed towards the redhead who lost speed as he ducked and rolled around the barrage.

Suddenly stopping in place the magus was forced to retreat when a gust of icy wind almost caught his legs. 'Shit! They came ready for me!' He began running to the side while firing his arrows but every single one was being intercepted. Gritting his teeth he turned on his right foot and tried to advance, barely outrunning the explosions. 'How is this not them trying to kill me, huh?'

Of course he knew the answer, it was clear for him to see. There was barely any fire, lightning or anything dangerous by itself flying his way. Most of the spells and sacred gears being used were made of ice or concussive force. Anything dangerous was directed to his arrows everytime he let them loose or the terrain around him.

Enough to certainly break bones if he was hit directly but the few attacks that managed to connect grew weaker because of his armor as Shirou kept advancing while zigzagging around and barely managing to dodge anything crippling.

'Aiming for the legs and arms, not a single attack aimed to the head or chest. Any hit there is accidental at best.' The Mage of Swords rolled to the side again and unleashed a stronger arrow that managed to break through a couple spells but was shot down by a bow-like sacred gear. 'Good news, they definitely aren't trying to kill me,' he kept rolling before running again, that time away from his target, 'bad news, they are only focusing on me. Better news, nobody else is being bombarded... Huh?'

He barely finished that train of thought when the bombardment stopped and the warriors previously steadily advancing arrived at his position. That change of tactics confused Shirou momentarily as he didn't understand why take that risk when the previous strategy was working.

But there was one even if he couldn't see it, his most immediate concern being the spear users that charged in his direction. The majority of them were using a shield and pike combo, the long spears easily twice as tall as any of them. But there were a few using shorter spears and one who held the weapon by itself.

What caught Shirou's attention about that guy was that he was the only one who actually looked comfortable holding his weapon. His black hair was tied in a bun and dark shades obscured most of his face, he lacked any armor, despite wearing a school uniform like every member of the Hero Faction.

Of all the attackers he was the one who looked more out of place because of the aloofness in his posture and because instead of advancing with the rest he stood back with a smile before pointing to the redhead's right side.

The warning was unnecessary as even as he studied the stranger, Shirou never lost awareness of the other Hero Faction's members. He parried the first spear that came with his bow before changing and punching the man square on the nose as another one tried to shield bash his head.

Shirou bent his back to dodge before doing a half flip and kicked two people back while

completing it, notching two arrows after doing so. Taking aim he shot the shields of another two pikemen, those Muramasas exploded straight with the impact. They resulted in a blast that defeated his eight attackers at once while giving him some space.

He was already on his feet and shooting another arrow in Georg's direction but a dark shadow jumped from the ground and swallowed his arrow. "What?" Shirou couldn't hold back his surprise and he paid close attention to the shadow which originated from black haired spear user. "So you want to fight too?"

"Hehe. Kinda obvious, don't ya think? Well, first I wanted to see if the newbies could do something against you." The man commented as changed his stance with his right leg forward, his spear vertically inclined down, one hand close to the tip while the other was on the weapon's center. "Idiots think a spear 's good just because of its size. Yeah, it's better than swords but not with an amateur."

Knowing his time was short, Shirou didn't bother indulging the man any further and tried to move past him to get a clear sight of his target. However the moment his feet shifted the spearman was on him with a fast stab to his neck. That could have been lethal but the move was too telegraphed and the magus ducked beneath it.

Only for the black haired man to grin and hold the weapon with hand to spin it, initially missing because of Shirou's original dodge but that left him vulnerable for the second hit that came faster than he expected.

'The initial blow was to make me move. He never had any intention of hitting my neck.' Acknowledged the magus while raising his bow and using it as a staff to stop a sequence of one handed quick stabs. But they were another feint as the man jumped using the spear as a pole and kicked the Mage's chest. 'This guy isn't like the others.' The spear was new but Shirou could recognize skill when he saw it even without magic. 'He is a real fighter.'

Shirou cleared his mind as he immersed himself in the fight, blocking another blow apparently for his neck before taking a step back to avoid a stab from the spear that shifted in the ground to be used as a pole once more.

But that time the Mage saw it coming and quickly Traced a Muramasa to try to stab his opponent only for the shadow of the man's leg to make the sword vanish before hitting his body despite still being on Shirou's grip.

It hadn't just vanished for when the motion was concluded the redhead still had his weapon intact but something was definitely wrong and he grew wary of that. Once again the spear wielder didn't waste a motion and while repositioning to counter attack he unleashed several stabs to poke the redhead's defenses.

"Taking me seriously now, Mage of Swords?" The black haired man asked while keeping up his attack. "I confess that once I heard ya defeated Vali, I was a little nervous of fighting ya," he jumped to leverage gravity to his benefit but Shirou's bow deflected the attack and he countered with a shoulder tackle that lost its strength because of the spear's pole, "but I must say, ya ain't that much."

"I don't have time to deal with you." Shirou threw a headbutt that the man dodged to the side before throwing another stab with his spear. The thing looked like a hunk of metal shaped into one but the smith that worked on it did a good job in several aspects.

Because despite his body being Reinforced, protected by Ki and his shroud, a glancing blow managed to cut his arm. "Then make time!" That was also a credit to the man's skill as there was mana enveloping the tip. Just the tip as he seemed to focus everything else around his body. "Come on! Come on! Come on! Is my spear play too strong or are you weak?"

Using his bow as a shield, Shirou studied his opponent for a few seconds as he blocked or dodged several strikes. His eyes were jumping around between the spear, the man and the magicians behind him getting ready while the other spearmen surrounded the two. Every time Shirou took a step in any direction they did the same, keeping the fight contained.

Gritting his teeth the Mage knew he had to react so with a last block he began to Alter his sword. "I am tired of this." A swing flew towards the other man's shades but a shadow jumped from his feet once more making the attack pass along harmlessly. He was about to make a snarky comment but saw the redhead's smile. "Gotcha!"

Because the sword had turned into an arrow and his bow was in the proper position to fire the Broken Phantasm towards Georg, flying right by the shadow user's head. "Shit! Defense everyone! Defense!" The black haired man warned as he tried to stab Shirou in the back.

The magus took the hit as the arrow broke through several magic spells and barriers that tried to stop it. Fixing his glasses, Georg quickly raised a shield of his own that absorbed the blow better than anyone else's magic. However, that was a Wyvern Muramasa and its explosion still had a considerable blast radius.

Fortunately for the Hero Faction's members, their commander was part of the top echelon of magicians, a magus and master spellcaster fused into one. "It has been a while, Emiya Shirou." As the smoke vanished revealing his unarmed form, Georg's voice easily crossed the several meters of distance between him and his fellow magus.

Who turned around and kicked the spear user on the face to get some space. "Faust, how have you been?"

"My name is Georg!" The bespectacled man retorted with anger which grew as he heard some of his subordinates snicker.

"Your name doesn't make sense. Didn't we already have this talk? I swear we already had this talk." Seeing the increasing anger on the other man's face only made the Mage poke some more. "Yeah, we did! I remember even saying something like, 'Georg sounds too much like Georgios' and 'Faust is how everyone remembers your ancestor' or something. And isn't that your group whole's schtick?" As playful as the reply was, Shirou was also taunting the man to get an opening. Which failed because while Georg glared at the redhead, his shield remained firm. "Not man enough to fight me yourself?"

“Childish insults won’t work... Also,” his smile grew smug, “your sister is waiting. Gentlemen.”

With a word all spearmen charged forward and began to stab Shirou from every side yet the redhead did little but protect his vitals while glaring at his fellow magician. “You were right.” He spoke to the black haired man who had taken a step back when the group charged. “They really are amateurs.”

“Shut up.” Complained one random member of the Hero Faction as his right hand began to glow. “We are better-”

“-using our sacred gears.” Another one finished the line as a spike made of something akin to diamond revealed itself on his shoulder.

Several other weapons and instruments made with Divine Metal took shape around the magus aiming for his arms, shoulders and legs. In the end the pikes weren’t their main weapons but just a way to keep the redhead swords at bay. Several of them also had sacred gears on their shoulders and one in particular had a helmet with a gem covering his eyes.

All of them attacked at once and they all regretted it when Shirou leaped out of the way leaving them to deal with several stabs, blasts and whatever else they tried to use on him. A second later there was a huge explosion as the one eye sacred gear was stabbed on the leg by a stray spear, looked down and unleashed a bright beam of energy.

Shirou managed to roll and recover as the advanced force fell to their own folly. “There is a reason why professional armies march in formation.” He pointed out while raising his bow to block a familiar spear. “They really didn’t know what they were doing, did they?”

The black haired man chuckled as Georg massaged the bridge of his nose. “Nah man, most of our assignments don’t involve fighting in a group like this. At least not theirs.” One of his eyes began to glow purple behind his shades as shadows danced on his feet. “But this is more of a private operation so lord Cao Cao couldn’t stop everything and send everyone. He still sent me though.” Both disengaged before the spear user placed a palm on the back of his weapon and unleashed a barrage of attacks. “And I’m more than enough!!”

Sword and bow deflected many attacks as Shirou noticed he was slowly being back. On a particularly nasty stab aimed for his leg he tried to push the weapon down but it hit his shadow. The blade emerged below his right arm, stabbing his bicep even as his Ki weakened the attack.

The spear user grinned as he quickly pulled his weapon back for a powerful strike. “Gotcha!!” It connected in the center of Shirou’s chest, right on his Gift, and the redhead’s back met the floor with a strong impact. “Heheh. I told lord Cao Cao that it would be easy. Spears are always better than swords.”

Georg shook his head. “He isn’t beaten yet.”

The black haired man laughed. “Haha. You’re kidding right, Georg? That strike probably

broke his ribs. Armor or no armor.” In the next second he watched Shirou jump back on his feet with ease. “What the-”

“That was a sacred gear, right? Shadow manipulation or something.” The Mage pointed out while Tracing another arrow. “You can make attacks disappear and appear somewhere else by using other shadows in your range. A little different from the shadow sacred gear I knew but I can adapt.”

“Pft, whoa. Ya really are something. That last blow should have knocked the air out of your lungs.” He leaned forward to observe the black armor Shirou was using, still intact. “Or is that beauty that good? You made it, right? Can I get one?”

“Promise to make you one if you leave the Hero Faction.”

“Nah, no can do.” The spear user assumed his posture once again. “Cao Cao and Gilgamesh are going to build a beautiful world and I’ll do my part.” Mana surrounded the man and the shadow on his feet began to react. “Hehe, but you’re right. My sacred gear, Night Reflection, is all about shadows.”

“Connla...” Georg hissed with a tone of warning that only the spear user could hear.

“Haha, relax Georg. I got this under control. This ‘Mage’ ain’t that hot.” Connla declared confidently. “Get ready, Mage of Swords! It’s the great Connla that is going to catch ya!”

“Connla?” It wasn’t a name Shirou recognized.

Which didn’t surprise the other man. “Not my ancestor name but my own. Although... It was also the name of his first son.” He chuckled a little. “Ever heard of Cú Chulainn?”

“The Hound of Chulainn.” While not the Legend he was most familiar with, Shirou knew bits and pieces. “If I remember right he had a spear that never missed and... Wasn’t he the guy who fought a whole army for years by himself?”

“That is the one! Think you can keep up with me now, ‘Mage’?” His smile was confident as the shadows danced, his tone more serious. “Hehe. Let’s level up this fight a bit,” several spears made of shadows manifested around Connla, “and see what you are made of!”

Gritting his teeth, Shirou looked to the side and saw that the magicians who were attacking him before were focusing on the other side of the battlefield. His eyes moved to Georg who remained behind his shield, guarded by another group which was growing as the sacred gear users who blew themselves up retreated to his position.

Those were in no condition to fight for the moment but as things stood, they would get caught in the crossfire. ‘I don’t have time for this.’ His friends were in danger and Shirou wasn’t going to hesitate. “Last chance for you to drop your weapons and walk away!”

“Hah! You think I’m gonna stop now that I have a good fight?!” Connla replied. “My sacred gear is inching to get a bite out of-”



"I don't want to kill anyone, Georg!" Yet Shirou ignored his opponent, hoping Dimension Lost allowed its owner to hear his message. "Drop this barrier and I promise you mercy. If you don't... I can't promise your men are leaving here alive..."

Connla glared at the swordsman but after clicking his tongue he said, "So, Georg? What's going to be? We stopping?" While the man wanted to keep going, his mission was a personal favor more than anything else. "Not that I care about miss Illya's brother but lord Cao Cao said this could be important so-"

"Be quiet and focus on the fight, Connla." Georg's reply carried annoyance but also resolve. It also proved the man was aware of everything being said. "Either case, your sister's work is too important for it to be delayed over anything and she promised to do better once you were around. Apparently, she is sure you can forge a Holy Grail." Skepticism filled the black haired magus tone.

While Connla looked a little miffed about being dismissed like that, Shirou was focused more on the details. "She wants a Holy Grail, hmm." Mana gathered in his left hand with greater intensity as the Mage abandoned all mercy. "Yeah, you guys are too dangerous to be left alive."

"Hmph. Like you are one to talk." Seeing the gathered mana, Georg prepared two extra magic circles to reinforce his barrier. "Connla, take an arm or a leg. So long he is alive, Illya can't complain."

Still annoyed by how the magicians were speaking with him, the spear wielder directed his hostility towards the redhead. "Just because lord Cao Cao said I should listen to your orders..." Shadows began to grow solid around the man and he shouted. "**Night Reflection!**"

"Lodge a complaint later if you want." Georg replied as he watched several spears made of shadows jumped towards Shirou faster than Connla could attack with his arms.

From the looks of things the redhead would be skewed alive instead of just maimed but that was just the shadow user covering his bases as he knew Shirou was stronger than he looked since his spear just made small cuts despite the tip being empowered with magic.

Nevertheless Connla was confident his sacred gear could still neutralize the Mage. "Now, **Night Reflection!**" The shadow in Shirou's feet grew darker before jumping to try and wrapped around the redhead who suddenly bolted towards his opponent. "What?"

Escaping the shadow behind him was easy and Shirou could have done it in his sleep, keeping the arrow he was Tracing in a malleable form in his right hand was considerably harder as the mana he was using began to pulse.

It was warm and unstable but the Mage of Swords wasn't planning to use it immediately regardless. No, when the spears made of shadows came to him it was his bow they met as the magus used it like a bat to keep the shadows at bay. His own shadow also was his

enemy but it was worth noting that every time he moved, Connla needed to actualize his sacred gear's power.

With that in mind he actively made things harder for the hero's descendant by making more shadows by using his mana's light. The teal energy moved with every step he took and so the shadows changed, forcing the man to either work with them on the fly or ignore the new ones.

Gritting his teeth, Connla chose the latter. "**Night Reflection!**" Pouring mana on his own shadow he created more spears that jumped around to surround the redhead. "And also," stabbing the ground, his spear's shadow also grew before threw an attack with it, "THAT!!!"

His weapon's shadow emerged from the ground like a pike flying in the redhead's direction who quickly found himself surrounded by darkness that threatened to stab him from every angle.

"**Trace on!**" His response was calling forth a huge number of swords to parry every blow before jumping over the giant shadow which made Connla smile as it expanded to completely block the ground.

"Land you bastard!" Demanded the black haired man with a grin as he waited for gravity to take hold and the redhead to land on the shadow. It quickly vanished when mana flowed from the magus' feet to form a sword he used for an extra jump. "What the hell?!"

That maneuver surprised the man more than the previous ones but Shirou had seen his attacks disappear and his opponent's travel throughout his sacred gear to connect from unexpected directions.

Not knowing exactly how that sacred gear's mechanic worked meant the best way to counter it was just not touching shadows at all.

With that in mind Shirou extended his leap by Tracing swords constantly, adding more and more distance to it. It had always been his best trick to reposition himself with the lack of flight and one he could use easily with how many swords he had forged. None of them were Noble Phantasms and all were his work which he knew like the back of his hand.

When Connla realized that he instantly stopped focusing on the bigger shadow and directed more power towards his many spears. Every single one of them accelerated with the goal of ripping Shirou apart.

They failed to even halt the redhead's momentum as he bashed all aiming for his head with his bow, trusting on his armor and Ki to take care of all the rest as they were less of a threat knowing that Connla's main spear was the one enhanced by his magic.

Something none of the others were despite them being created by a sacred gear's power. Because of that the Mage's was able to ignore most of the attacks as he crossed the remaining distance.

Connla wasn't going to let that happen so easily though and used shadows to surround them both in darkness while preparing for a counter attack. 'If he is planning to use the magic in his hand, I just need to keep track of that.'

Behind his shades the spearman's eyes were fixed on the half formed sword. It was still made of energy, which contradicted what he learned from Shirou's abilities, and was brighter than any lantern. With that beacon in his sights the black haired man manipulated his dome to throw dozens of spears in that location.

He felt as every single one of them broke on impact and gritted his teeth understanding that his sacred gear was useless attacking directly. Eyes still clued on the bright light, he advanced confidently that Shirou couldn't see him.

"Take this!" Connla's posture and stab were perfect to strike where Shirou's shoulder should be if he had any intention of using the half formed sword. With a strong core and superb technique which was developed for years once he joined Cao Cao and the Hero Faction he struck masterfully. "Ah!"

Which was absolutely useless against the real attack as Shirou wasn't using his barely Traced sword for the strike, there was no need to do it when he had a good enough bow made of his own patented metal to bash his enemy's face with.

Connla's sunglasses broke and his head began to bleed thanks to the impact that was hard enough to send him flying several meters. The dome of shadows broke to reveal Shirou who glared at a confident Georg. "**I am the bone of my sword.**"

Without distractions he finished concentrating on the Noble Phantasms he was painstakingly preparing over the last few seconds. Its spiral pattern revealed itself but grew smaller and thinner as he prepared his strongest arrow.

Every magician in the area felt the power spike that had changed from a slightly but inoffensive build up to a mass ready to blow up. Still in a way that the Mage of Swords could control the explosion as the sword finished its transformation by growing more solid and far more dangerous.

Still all that caught them pretty much off guard as Shirou had intended by taking his time preparing the weapon. Sure he also took advantage of it to counter Connla's sacred gear and use it as a feint but he wanted his target to be unprepared for what was to come next.

**"Steel is my body, fire is my blood! Caladbolg!!!"** For that was his most destructive arrow unleashed at full strength towards a mostly unguarded target because there wasn't a world where Caladbolg didn't turn the Hero Faction's barriers into mincemeat.

Something they all recognized and tried to correct but it was too late, the Spiral Arrow tore through every defense in the blink of an eye.

Unfortunately for Shirou, a blink of an eye was all Georg needed. “**Dimension Lost!**” Bright purple mist around the area suddenly condensed in front of the Noble Phantasm and the blast was contained much to the redhead shock.

Or at least close to contained as Caladbolg could be since it was capable of twist space when unleashed and the sacred gear had to fight against or fall apart. However Dimension Lost was without a doubt one of the few which could face that particular Noble Phantasm, not in a competition of might but of abilities.

Caladbolg twisted the space but that space was the Dimension Lost itself.

Not part of it as the sacred gear was everything, from the air that filled people's lungs to the dust raised with every explosion. The creation of its own world was what gave Dimension Lost the title of Longinus. Its Fog of Extinction, also another name which was called, was technically capable of blocking anything and shrugging off the vacuum of space.

So when the Noble Phantasm tried to destroy, the sacred gear worked to keep its space stable as Georg focused the mist into keeping the blast contained with considerable effort.

Which was successful and King Fergus' sword fell apart without claiming any victims when Shirou had expected it to take down Georg and a big contingent of the Hero Faction. As that wasn't the case, the redhead changed tactics and Traced Muramasa while racing towards Georg who was shaking from fighting Caladbolg.

But his men were on guard the moment their leader protected them, turning towards the redhead and unleashing all manners of projectiles once again. Most were avoided and those that hit weren't enough to break the Mage's stride even as a silver bow which was in fact a sacred gear shot a blast in his direction taller than a truck.

Grasping Muramasa with both hands Shirou sliced the blast in several pieces before turning the blade in his right hand and throwing it straight towards Georg's face. The man saw death coming but was tackled to the side by a subordinate who was hit on the shoulder and almost lost his arm.

Making all the others mad as they kept attacking Shirou who just kept going while Tracing more blades and throwing them towards the opposition. Unlike with Georg none of those were aiming for anything vital, the worst damage he caused was cutting off a woman's hand because of her scepter-like sacred gear.

However those distractions gave Georg time to recuperate. “All focus here! The Mage of Swords is attacking!”

All remaining magicians on the Dimension Lost turned and aimed their spells at Shirou who dropped to a knee, raising an arm to the sky. “**Rho Aias!**”

The shield manifested for just three seconds, its pink petals absorbing all the damage without budging. The only reason it lasted so little was because of how much mana it was

consuming. Mana he needed because Georg was already standing with a spell aimed to his face.

Having no time for anything else, Shirou crossed his arms and took the blast full force while Tracing another Muramasa. "He is unbalanced! Focus on the others!" Georg ordered while throwing another spell.

"Took down twenty of your men and you think I am unbalanced? Talk about bad strategy!" Upon hearing his friends were in danger, Shirou tried to provoke the other man to commit more forces against him.

It didn't work again despite him cutting apart another spell, dodging at second and a third before rushing towards Dimension Lost's owner. Returning to the original plan, the Mage of Swords gritted his teeth and closed the distance between two, Muramasa descending towards the other man's neck.

Only for Connla to emerge from the purple fog, his spear intercepting the Noble Phantasm. Shirou's eyes could see the metal barely holding together but it held long enough to keep him in place for a moment. Enough for Cú Chulainn's descendant to hit his side with the back of the spear before throwing a kick to push the magus back.

He let that happen while warming his circuits, "**Trace on!**" to unleash a rain of swords above Georg's head which was blocked by Fog of Extinction that danced around the magician's fingers. Before he could do anything else several spears of shadow needed to be cut down or he would become swiss cheese. "Tch."

"Hey chief, this guy is tougher than we thought. Way too tough." Connla commented while cleaning the blood on his forehead with a sleeve. His spear kept pointing towards the redhead who calmly slid his finger on Muramasa's blade. "No idea what to do here. Any ideas?"

"You two could surrender." Shirou suggested as Muramasa glowed until it was changed into its fire variant. Once it was lit the magus' shadow danced and Connla gritted his teeth to focus on his own shadow. "This doesn't need to continue unless you want to."

Georg calmly fixed his glasses. "All of you focus on neutralizing the Red Dragon Emperor and the members of the Church! Connla and I will entertain our VIP." Purple mist surrounded the Hero Faction's top magician who began to fly. A slash of flames tried to take him down but shadows blocked its path, directing the fire in another direction. "You may not have realized it yet, Mage of Swords, but we have the advantage. So long as Gilgamesh is on the battlefield, our victory is inevitable."

"So we're just going to play with you a little." Connla dove into his reserves as he used the bright mist of his ally's sacred gear to control more shadows. It was their battlefield and they had several cards yet to be played. "Sit down, grab a drink. Your sister wants you back in one-"

Fire Muramasa cut the man's cheek before burning it up as the flames danced before the

blade descended to try and take his life. The hit connected on the shoulder before the spear pushed it back and almost broke apart a second time. A follow up came with several stabs that hit the shadow user's torso and fell short of piercing his heart.

Only for Georg's spells to blast Shirou back as the mist surrounded Cú Chulainn's descendant, the man needed a moment to recover from the most grave burns and his commander was willing to grant it.

He only managed to get a few seconds as Shirou shot another five arrows that pushed more of the Fog of Extinction to defend him. It was one of the reasons why he took flight, to use as much of it as he could because much of the mist was spread around as clouds. Yet another Caladbolg came and almost took the magician down.

**"I have created over a thousand blades!"** A second Caladbolg followed the first and the flying magus found himself too slow against that.

Shadows moved to intercept and managed to swallow the Noble Phantasm for a second before Connla felt a huge pain in his chest and was forced to send it away via the most distant shadow he could.

Unfortunately he only managed to send it a few meters far but that also ended up benefiting him as Shirou was caught off guard, almost losing his footing. Almost but not quite so the redhead managed to block the spear that came for the counter attack as the shadows danced around them.

Either way both sides realized the fight wasn't going to end anytime soon and that the Mage had plenty of cards to play as well.

...

Kirei realized in the moment Shirou dashed towards Dimension Lost's owner that it was a mistake. Not the part of attacking and taking out the black haired bespectacled man in the distance for he was clearly the redhead's target, but who should be doing it.

Sure enough the former Executor knew time was precious and that his good counterpart had realized the same but the Mage being the one fighting in that particular front presented several issues for the priest.

"Hyoudou Issei should be the one hunting down Dimension Lost's owner."

"This is not the time, Father!" Caren complained as both began to run around dodging several magic spells flying in their direction. The woman had her shroud around the neck as she did her best to keep up with the priest.

Who besides flawlessly dodging an explosion of energy right in front of him, pulled off a standard mass produced light sword from the Church and threw it just in time to intercept a beam of mana that threatened to take the nun's head.

Fortunately most of the magicians attacking them weren't of the strong variety. "Thank you." She managed to say as the man grabbed her by the shroud which quickly wrapped around his arm. "Are we going-"

"To reinforce Hyoudou Issei, yes." The priest began to carry her bridal style as they raced towards where the Red Dragon Emperor clashed against Heracles' descendant.

For their part the two had started fighting the second Shirou ran in the other direction. Ise didn't know what the redhead was planning or if he found Dimension Lost's holder. What he knew was his part on Rias' peerage which was to 'find the biggest person on the other team and beat them up'.

Since Xenovia basically got dibs on Gilgamesh, the Red Dragon Emperor took flight straight towards the tallest person around who charged at him with the same sort of enthusiasm, his orange aura pulsing much like the devil's red on.

The first few seconds of the fight consisted of Ise throwing two Dragon Shots in the giant's direction only for him to dodge and deliver the first blow of the match even if Ise blocked it. However, despite his fast defense, the Pawn felt himself being pushed by an explosion that came from nowhere and stunned him.

At least initially since after a couple of clashes the brown haired man began to understand his adversary was the one making those. It was far too controllable to be anyone else and the few blasts that brushed against Scale Mail failed to bother the gray haired man at all.

For the next few seconds the two sides threw several glancing blows without really committing to any decisive moves. A kick to the side had the giant flinching thanks to a Boost but soon Heracles grinned and took a step forward with a roar, renewing his offensive.

An aura-covered punch made contact with the red scales for the fourth time since the fight began and Ise found himself being blasted back a few feet from a sudden explosion. His wings quickly snapped him back up as the grinning Heracles threw another punch full with an aura he barely recognized.

But enough to say for certain, 'That is a sacred gear!' Before the giant's fist collided with his arm and almost made him lose his balance-

**[Boost!]**

-only for his defenses to hold and his own punch to connect with his opponent's chin as his speed increased-

**[Boost!]**

-and increased again for a left hook follow up and kept going as a knee exploded in Heracles groin of all places.

Literally exploded as the gray haired man's sacred gear pushed back against the Red Dragon Emperor just as he was about to deliver the 'final blow'. "That is cheap, devil!"

**[Boost! Boost! Boost!]**

"Don't care, you bastard!" Both men threw punches at each other, their fists colliding and exploding with every hit as the Red Dragon Emperor grew stronger. "You guys drag us here after I just poured my chest out and tried to kidnap my friend! I'm going to break you in half!"

"Haha! That is the spirit!" The man's aura grew stronger as he managed to deliver an uppercut on Ise's chest. The explosion was extra strong too as Heracles pumped more energy into it which made Ise cough blood. "Oi, oi. What is wrong? Getting-"

**[Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost!]**

Another punch was delivered with the Red Dragon Emperor's might and both sides found themselves stepping back from the ensuing explosion. However that time the sacred gear Heracles was using hadn't been enough to soften the blow and his mouth began to bleed, the man spitting out a tooth.

[Those explosions aren't protecting him completely. Keep hitting!] Ddraig commented as the Pawn tackled their adversary who refused to fall and delivered a double hammer blow on his Partner's back. Yet Ise didn't feel it, his scales growing strong enough to shrug the majority of the blast off. [He really is a descendant of Heracles...]

'Can't you give me any better advice?!' Ise asked quickly as he tried to focus on the fight and deliver a fast sequence of punches on the other man's abs. However his position was bad and the explosions weakened most of his blows. 'Any idea of how to break his sacred gear?!'

Pensive, Ddraig moved the Scale Mail's wings to block another blow from the giant which managed to crack them. [Don't think that is one of those you can break.] That they were damaged, actually impressed the dragon. With a thought, the wings were perfect again. [Try to get some distance. His range appears to be limited to his fists!]

'Got it!' Jumping towards Heracles head, Ise managed to connect his helmet against the giant's chin which stunned the man more than the subsequent explosion did the devil. 'Since you want to explode every time,' who floated in place for a second to deliver a double kick that sent both parties flying, "GET BENT!!!!!"

The explosion didn't send him too far but it was enough for the increasingly more powerful Red Dragon Emperor to prepare mana on his left arm safely. Heracles saw it and quickly focused mana on his aura, making it grow more intense before condensing.

"Let 's go, dragon! **Balance Breaker!!**" The aura solidified into armored spikes on his shoulders, arms and calves, the surface black with the spikes themselves a lime green, while two huge missile-like spikes manifested around his hands. Each was half the man's



size and as big as motorcycles. **“Detonation Might Comet! Take this! ORAAAA!!!”**

The spikes on the man’s hands flew freely, revealing themselves to be real missiles. ‘Shit!’ **“Dragon Shoot!!!”** The red beam of mana clashed with a missile which created a chain reaction making both blow up and throwing the Pawn around in the air. ‘Ah! He also has a Balance Breaker? How the fuck?!’

[Not even going to tell you what is the problem with that statement.]

As the blast subsided the Red Dragon Emperor recovered his balance in the air but soon enough he found himself bombarded not by magic spells like before but by several missiles that came from above.

Didn’t take Ise long to notice that Heracles was shooting the spikes from his back as the booming laugh in the area could only be born from triumph. “Hahaha! That’s all the Red Dragon Emperor can do?! Wimp!!” The orange aura in his hands quickly formed two more missiles. “Blow up and die! Weakling!!!”

**[Boost!Boost!Boost!Boost!Boost!Boost!]**

**“Scarlet Mail!”**

Unleashing as many Boosts as his body could take, Ise became a red streak leaving a trail of fire in the sky, dodging all projectiles in a mad charge that ended with him landing in front of Heracles who was shocked by the sudden change.

[Who are you calling weakling?] Clearly furious, Ddraig asked out loud just before Ise unleashed his strongest punch on Heracles’ stomach.

Heracles’ feet left the ground as the dragon flame and the impact pushed through the explosion, aura and armor protecting the giant who found himself sailing through the air at several kilometers of speed, blood in his throat and burns in the torso.

With Ise right behind for a moment before the next where he flew above the gray haired man to deliver a mighty punch on his face that exploded due to both his flames and the opposition’s sacred gear.

But it wasn’t enough to push the Red Dragon Emperor back; his power was still growing stronger. “Like I said,” he channeled his fire in his left hand which turned into a sphere around it, pulsing and ready to destroy everything. “GET-”

Another explosion was unleashed before the attack could connect as the missiles had returned to their master and exploded on his adversary’s back. Feeling the damage, Ise readjusted his left foot to stay standing but Heracles was already back up and throwing a punch to his face.

A punch that quickly transformed into another giant missile that blew up right on the devil’s

face with enough force to shake a mountain. It was answered by the fist covered in flames that hit the giant's chest again, that one with the power to actually take down a mountain.

Heracles sunk in the ground as his eyes lost focus, his armor falling apart. 'Not so weak after all...' Some part of him managed to think as a weaker, but still devastating, flame covered punch hit him in the face. "Damn-"

The curse was silenced by another punch which busted the man's lip and came close to breaking his jaw. Which should have broken his jaw. 'What is this bastard made of?' Ise asked between punches.

Never expecting an answer the Red Dragon Emperor kept hammering in the taller man's head on the ground before another giant rocket emerged from his arm and blew up point blank on the Pawn's chest.

Ise was sent flying but quickly recovered only to see a screaming and bleeding Heracles unleashing another two giant missiles. Despite the many burns on his chest and face, the man kept roaring and calling forth his sacred gear's power to send more and more projectiles towards his opponent.

Who didn't risk trying to block anymore and instead took a deep breath before unleashing a blast of fire from his mouth that was complemented by the flames surrounding him sailing forth and connecting with the missiles.

The slightest contact made them all blow up and Heracles cursed with gritted teeth after losing the sight of his target. Still he prepared himself to continue the fight as the explosion should have at least stunned Ise. Should but didn't as the devil expected those ones and strengthened his Scarlet Armor to charge through the blasts straight towards the giant.

Orange aura quickly reformed but instead of creating a missile its owner used it to deliver a punch which connected with Ise's face just as the Red Dragon Emperor hit his chest with a kick. Both armors cracked by the hits, the last remnants of Heracles' chest plate falling apart as he gazed on Ise's brown eye.

**"Variant Detonation!!!"** Heracles roared his sacred gear's True Name, empowering it before slamming his arm down on the Red Dragon Emperor to unleash the strongest explosion he could.

While the blast didn't harm him, Heracles felt his Balance Breaker wane. He may be the descendant of Heracles but Bastard of Zeus he was not. Distant grandson son in truth and that gave him plenty of boons but his power wasn't of a true demigod.

Nor could it fully compare fully with a dragon's might and while Ise wasn't equal to Ddraig, his Scale Mail was the dragon's own armor. It resisted the blast enough that the devil managed to uppercut the gray haired man's chin even if he was slightly dizzy due to how many blows they had traded.

His opponent wasn't much better as the last blast did indeed manage to extinguish the

Scarlet Mail but despite the damage Ise took, evident by the blood dripping from his armor, the dragon refused to fall, advancing towards the giant with a red aura of power.

Yet Heracles wasn't falling either as the man offered a bloody stained grin to his struggling opponent and punched back with Variant Detonation's power which the Red Dragon Emperor blocked before throwing a punch of his own through the blast.

"Hail Mary, full of Grace, The Lord is with thee." Suddenly Ise found himself frozen and letting out a scream of pure anguish before trying to close his ears. Such an event irritated Heracles who knew exactly why it was happening.

He turned to the culprit for interrupting his fight with a glare. "Oi Jeanne-" He barely had time to reply as the woman was advancing in his direction with her rapier poised for a thrust aiming to his side. Warned of the danger he raised a hand to block a light sword that almost cut him into pieces. "Shit!"

Kirei had almost taken the giant's arm if not for the sacred gear which blew up and repelled the attack before it could go deep enough. Or reach his real target, the giant's neck. "Caren!"

The nun had been dropped just in the right position between both fighters to send her shroud towards the giant's leg while approaching the still suffering Ise who was completely paralyzed due to pain.

If asked to describe how much pain he was in, the devil would say it was like someone had shoved dozens of blackboards inside his brain before throwing in hundreds of cats with the sharpest claws in the universe and having them scratch the boards with the pace of a slug crossing Japan.

There were other effects too besides pain as Ise's demonic energy dropped by several levels like if he had suddenly lost all his Boosts. He didn't and the draconic energy was still going strong but was pretty much unusable as his focus broke.

His Balance Breaker also was starting to fall apart despite Ddraig best efforts to keep it stable. [This is worse than any Dragon Slayer weapon.]

Thankfully for them the pain diminished plenty by the time Caren got closer. "Keep your ears closed!" The nun ordered as the rest of her shroud wrapped around Ise's body, mostly his head.

It wasn't enough. "Blessed art thou among women." For Jeanne was on the prowl and tried to pierce the silver haired woman's heart. "And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Ise roared in pain but it wasn't enough to distract Caren who dodged the first thrust but the second managed to hit her arm. "Holy Mother, Mother of God, pay for us all sinners now-"

In that moment Kirei had returned to the fray and drew another light sword from his robe before throwing a swing at the blonde woman. She parried the blow but gritted her teeth which stopped the prayer. She also tried to counter but the priest's superior strength had him pushing her sword aside and stabbing her face.

Only Heracles throwing a punch on the ground and unleashing another explosion to keep the former Executor at bay. "Crap, can't move my leg." He complained as most of Caren's shroud had wrapped itself around it. "Oi, Jeanne! Stay back! I will deal with them!" Powering up his aura, Heracles unleashed another powerful explosion around himself that threw everyone away. Yet the shroud remained intact as Caren held the other tip and pulled, making the man fall. "What-"

"Heracles!" All prayers were forgotten by Jeanne as she advanced to help her ally. "**Blade Blacksmith!**" Calling her sacred gear, another rapier took shape, that one with a cross guard which quickly proved its utility by stopping a blow from Kirei. "Now and in the time of our death! Amem!"

Ise found himself screaming much louder than before which caught both Kirei and Caren's attention, something the blonde tried to use to reposition and rescue her ally. That effort failed miserably as, without looking, the priest delivered a devastating kick towards Jeanne's exposed midsection to push her back.

Meanwhile his opponent suffered and his ally was repelled, Heracles tried to tore the shroud apart only for the silk to suddenly grow tighter around his leg. "What is this? Some sort of spell?"

"Saying that a nun would use a spell..." Caren didn't sound insulted even as she glared at the long haired man. She looked towards Ise who was still holding his head and released him from her shroud, realizing it could only do more harm than good. "Keep your ears closed at any cost, Ise-san. It would be really bad if you died just after one session. The church could use the funds."

With that said the silver haired woman moved her hands to direct more of the shroud towards Heracles while keeping a gentle hold of it with her left hand. Suddenly the part tied around his leg grew slack but only for the thing to begin to wrap around the rest of his body faster than he could react.

In an instant the tallest member of the Hero Faction found himself with several ribbons of red silk wrapped around his torso but failing to tie him up completely. "Don't underestimate me!! **Variant Detonation!!!**"

His aura began to unleash several consecutive explosions to tear the shroud apart but once more the effort was in vain. "And you don't underestimate the blessings of our Church."

"Herc, get down!" Jeanne warned but not fast enough and the giant failed to avoid a stab on his back courtesy of Kirei. Not his fault since fighting the shroud distracted him long enough for the light sword to pierce his chest from the back. "Heracles!!!"

"Hmm. An interesting amount of resistance." Kirei observed calmly despite being behind the giant with his right arm extended to pierce through the other man's lung and heart. "Is that armor the problem? It is mostly broken but some of it remains," with his left hand he deflected a blow from Jeanne before letting go of the sword on his right in favor of retreating,

“or perhaps your skin and bones are hard enough to make cutting you difficult.”

“Bastard...” Heracles said weakly with more blood pouring from his mouth as he tried to move, Jeanne pushing the priest back until he was forced to draw another sword.

Realizing the older fighter was the superior one, Jeanne stopped beside her ally to tend to his wounds and free him from the cloth still around which was trying to reach his neck.

She didn't need to bother as Caren retrieved her shroud just as Kirei landed on her side. “Couldn't finish him off?”

“I am surprised he is not dead. Then again, his skin is tougher than I thought and standard blades aren't the best to harm him. Just reaching his heart was... a challenge.” The priest replied as Ise recovered besides the two. A good thing because he was suddenly behind the younger man, holding him by his shoulders. “Considering everything, if you take this I will give you a discount on our next session.”

“What?” Still confused and with the world spinning around him, Ise had no idea what was happening and so the several spells that hit his face came as an absolute surprise even as his armor took all the blows. “The hell-”

“Use your wings to protect us. Unlike you, we don't have much in the way of defense.” Half ordered, half requested the priest but Ddraig was already ahead of him.

Scale Mail's wings covered the two members of the church while Ddraig directed his Partner to move around to cover his front which was still severely exposed thanks to Heracles' attacks and Jeanne's prayer.

Which also prompted him to demand an explanation, [We heard several prayers before but that was the first time my Partner was so... neutralized because of them. Why?]

“Because that is a Saint.” Kirei informed easily and loudly, doing his best to ignore the bombardment around them. “More importantly, we need to get out of here and kill the two quickly.”

“Didn't you stab the guy in the chest?” Ise asked.

A slow blink of his eyes preceded Kirei's retort. “You think Heracles' descendants die with just a stab in the chest?” Then he blinked again before asking. “No, really, do you? Because I don't know. Never killed one before.”

“Better to err on the side of caution. We cut his head and ask questions later.” Caren pointed out and Kirei nodded in agreement.

But Ddraig wasn't happy with how the discussion changed. [Asia's Faith is the real deal but her prayers are a mild annoyance for my Partner at best! Even when she was human!] The dragon remembered that first meeting and knew the girl truly had tried to bless a devil.

Certainly it wasn't as painful as Jeanne's prayers had been even if the blonde had been more specific. [So explain what a Saint can do so we can fight-]

"You can't." Caren informed simply, silencing the dragon. Yet she felt his and Ise's anger, forcing her to explain. "She is the Inheritor of Joan of Arc, a woman recognized by the Church and the World as a Saint. Do you understand what that means?" It was the devil who shook his head but she knew the dragon was also confused. "It means that she carries the Spirit of someone recognized by God, blessed by Him. Any prayers she offers are stronger than even the Pope's."

"Usually even strong prayers wouldn't shake a devil of your caliber." Kirei affirmed easily as he adjusted one of the wings against the bombardment which made Ddraig growl. "But against a Saint that is another matter entirely."

"But isn't she-"

Caren grabbed the man's head and focused on his visible eye. "Get this through your head; She Inherited the Maid of Orleans' spirit. Fighting against her is like fighting against Joan of Arc herself. At least when it comes to the blessings the Lord gave her." The nun was frenetic and the Pawn could see how nervous she was. "You need to get out of here, to take care of the rest and let us deal with her."

A sounding strategy for all intents and purposes, one that Ddraig could agree with despite not liking it. [Partner, we are going to buy them some space-]

Then the words came back. "Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil," they alone lacked power or anything that would make them special, "but those who promote peace have joy!" Yet they hammered Ise harder than anything else he faced in his life.

For the power was on who was saying the words and even if they weren't seeing her, they heard Jeanne start another verse of the Bible. "Close your ears!" Caren ordered.

"See the enemy is puffed up-"

"I can still hear her!" Ise was already crying and his body was starting to fall.

Both Caren and Kirei had no other choice but slipped off by an opening in the wings towards Heracles and Jeanne, the former having discarded his armor to reveal his muscular and, more importantly, fully healed chest as the latter just gave them one look before returning to pray.

"-but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness." She raised her rapier but didn't advance, her eyes focused on the struggling devil even as the bombardment resumed on his position.

For a few seconds it grew more intense, enough to bury Ise under the lights and explosions born from dozens of warriors attacking with everything they had. And they would keep

attacking for everyone knew the Scale Mail was strong. However it wasn't invincible and it was a matter of time before the Pawn truly fell.

Once that happened, the Hero Faction's focus would turn to them and so Kirei said, "If we don't take down the new Maid of Orleans, we are doomed." Still he smiled. "Isn't that a funny thought."

"I confess to never having understood your humor, father." Caren spoke softly as she sent her shroud towards Heracles.

Who jumped back to avoid it and allow Jeanne to cut the thing into pieces. With a mental command Caren retrieved the shroud but not without losing a bit of its length. Regardless Jeanne was in the front and open so Kirei threw his two blades towards her chest and neck.

It was Heracles' turn to save his ally so he guarded her with his body, explosions unleashed outward to protect the blonde. "Damn it, that guy is always going for kill shots." Jeanne didn't reply verbally as she moved to another Bible's quote but raised her swords to show where her mind was. "Hehe. First them and you let me fight the Red Dragon Emperor! If he is still alive! **Balance Breaker!**" Once again huge missile-like gloves occupied his hands even as no more of the armor manifested. "Here's a big one!!!"

He fired with gusto but found himself annoyed when Kirei smiled and easily drew two more light swords, throwing them on the missiles' path with ease just as they were shot. The explosion wouldn't harm Jeanne, not while Heracles was covering her, but the frustration he felt was enough for him to drop his Balance Breaker.

Just as Kirei planned. 'Mental damage is as useful as physical damage.' Yet the man knew Heracles had recovered way too fast and far too completely. 'Did he heal by himself or did his ally restore him somehow?'

His thoughts were shared by Caren. 'Joan of Arc was known for her leadership and inspiration, not for being a master of the healing arts.' She began falling back, wrapping her shroud around her shoulders and allowing Kirei to reach their opponents first.

In truth he always would since he was far more dedicated to the art of combat than her. Already six light swords dropped from his sleeves on his fingers so when he activated them it was like he suddenly had six claws made of light. It was a sight that caught Jeanne off guard but Heracles didn't care and charged to meet his opponent, aura shining brightly.

But from Kirei's shadow came Caren's shroud clearly aiming for the man's legs again. That time Heracles wasted no time and stomped the ground to keep it at bay. It had the fortuitous effect of also ruining the priest's footing but he recovered with a jump, aiming for the younger man's neck.

Jeanne wouldn't let that happen and blocked with her two blades, stopping her hymns for a moment to shout. "**Blade Blacksmith!**" The swords in her hands transformed into different ones, similar in shape but holding different auras.

Both were rapiers and the one in her left hand pulsed, pushing Kirei back, while the one in her right sent out a fireball his way.

Which was intercepted by the swords on his other hand but for naught as the energy from the sacred gear was several times stronger than the mass produced weapons and hit him on the shoulder.

The man rolled, managing to recover into a crouch before glancing at his left where his clothes were damaged and red spreading on his skin. 'Burned. Fortunately not much.' He rolled again, of his own volition that time, as Jeanne dropped from the air in an attempt to stab his head. "Not very Saint-like of you."

"In love and in war everything is fair!" She replied before crossing her blades and starting her hymns again. Ise's scream of agony could be heard despite the explosions surrounding his location.

'At least he isn't dying.' Kirei thought before advancing once again to try and silence the new Maid of Orleans.

Yet she had more tricks in her sleeve and mana circulated around her as she shouted loudly. "**Balance Breaker!!!**" Light exploded from her body but traveled underground before a figure emerged behind the blonde.

For the first time in a long time Kirei froze in place without knowing what to do when the mass of power began to form in the area. It was without a doubt the power of a Balance Breaker, much bigger and obvious than Heracles' had been just by the giant size it eventually formed.

Swords emerged in a formation that made them look like a cocoon but the priest shook that impression off in a moment and instead compared it to an egg or a rough diamond with several sharp edges inside a nest also made of swords.

All of them were Holy Swords in a way or another and nobody would blame him for fearing that Jeanne was about to throw every single one of them at him.

However her Balance Breaker wasn't so simple and soon the egg hatched into a being made of swords that certainly shouldn't be alive but it surely was. "Such is the power of a sacred gear..." Kirei couldn't help but comment as he collected three more swords from his clothes. "... I am not sure I can kill that."

The creature, if it could be called such, was at least as tall as a five store building when standing. And it was standing, of that Kirei was grateful for because it allowed him to see the length of its wings, neck and claws. Claws that were definitively swords.

Broadswords, huge ones that even a man like him would have trouble lifting. All its body was swords down to the smallest scale except for its eyes. Those shone with a dull yellow color before they grew brighter until they were the same color as Jeanne's hair.



**“Stake Victim Dragon!!!”** Jeanne Balance Breaker was announced to the world after a brief pause that couldn't last long. There was another dragon to be contained and a priest after her head.

Still her dragon roared loudly like a beast marking its territory and announcing his presence to their prey. It took five seconds for it to fully form and Kirei was advancing by the third to kill Jeanne as soon as possible.

He was already aware that wasn't an opponent he could beat. 'Killing the summoner will also free the Red Dragon Emperor.'

Jeanne obviously saw him coming, sending a blast of fire to take him down, one that Kirei dodged by inclining forward to allow it to pass by over his head harmlessly. The distance between them wasn't really considerable so he managed to reach her to throw a slash with the swords on his right hand.

She deflected the blow and the sword on her grip unleashed a shockwave to repel him but that time the priest was ready. Digging down his feet he managed to avoid being blasted back and moved to stab the woman with his left hand.

However her dragon was on the move and he was bashed to the side unceremoniously, crashing a few meters away. 'This pain...' Kirei bled from his forehead and noted his left arm was broken while his back had a huge cut that covered most of it. "Fufufufu. You could have made it stab me. Probably would be a painless death." Jeanne didn't reply because only hymns left her lips. But she pointed her sword towards the priest and the dragon attacked. "Problematic..."

Sure enough Kirei proved his skill and speed by evading her creation but Jeanne was unconcerned since everything was mostly going as planned. Mostly because she didn't expect to unleash her Balance Breaker nor that her allies would be having as much trouble but in all cases they were winning.

An ugly sort of win but a win nonetheless even as Jeanne could see Georg beginning to fly at a distance to evade Emiya while Hercules needed to keep blowing up the area to avoid a shroud which refused to be destroyed or its owner who was doing everything to tie him up while avoiding the man attempts to blow her up.

During a moment where Jeanne stopped her hymns to drink tea from a water bottle, she thought. 'Didn't I cut that?' She had a job more important than muse about it.

So long the Red Dragon Emperor could fight she needed to keep praying, singing or quoting whatever verses from the Bible she could recall. She needed to be loud too to get across from the explosions and blasts still slamming the devil. Even if all he was hearing were whispers, so long her voice reached him, Jeanne knew Ise could do nothing.

For so long she carried the mantle of the Maid of Orleans her words were as potent, if not more potent, than any holy water or cross. Joan of Arc's spirit, reincarnated or inherited, was

that powerful against those considered enemies of God and a peace treaty wasn't enough to change that.

As that was part of their strategy Jeanne returned to shout words that would keep Ise down despite the attacks hitting him growing fewer and fewer. True enough, several members of their squadron were starting to grow tired or were defeated by Emiya throughout the battle.

Things really weren't going as planned as she looked back and saw Gilgamesh locked in intense combat against Xenovia Quarta. He was their heaviest hitter and the one who should already have contained Shirou but the former Exorcist was successfully holding him back. Jeanne couldn't even tell who was winning that fight which was a problem in itself.

Regardless, the blonde trusted Gilgamesh to defeat anyone and focused on what else she could do. Her focus quickly shifted to Heracles trying to reach Caren only to suddenly stop when the red shroud almost wrapped itself around his arm. The giant was both cautious and nervous, an unusual combination for him.

That in mind, Jeanne decided that helping the gray haired man would be for the best; Georg was too far and already had reinforcements while Gilgamesh would eventually defeat whoever was on his way.

Another sip of tea later, she thought. 'It can't be helped.' Just before Jeanne restarted her hymns, instincts that weren't her own warned her of danger and she immediately dashed backwards.

Only then did she see the light blade sail through the air until it landed a few meters away from her and turned to see Kotomine Kirei with his right hand in a throwing motion that shifted on a handstand to help him keep up his momentum and dodge Stake Victim Dragoon.

Feeling a sting in her neck, Jeanne touched the area and found a small scratch, barely big enough to have been created by a fingernail. It had been a close call, really close because the wound was located just above the carotid artery. A few centimeters more, a few millimeters even, and she would be either dead or unable to talk.

Despite the distance she could see Kirei's eyes as he avoided the dragon and they told the tale; he was going to kill her.

It was almost like a mission or the man's life's work despite him only meeting her that day.

He was going to kill her, extinguish her life and end the person called Jeanne.

There was an unbelievable amount of focus in those black orbs that managed to intimidate the girl far more than she was comfortable with.

Yet she was still Jeanne Arc, a woman trained by the Church, however briefly, recruited by the Hero Faction and a veteran of several battles. An elite member of her organization, one of the strongest, and not someone who would be cowed easily.

Her Balance Breaker's eyes shone brighter and the dragon roared again as its creator increased her focus to improve its movements. Suddenly it jumped towards Kirei with its whole body to crush him.

Luckily for the priest he was already running and that supplied him enough leverage to avoid the dragon's body but rocks and steel flew in his direction. His cassock and vestments were the only thing stopping him to be cut into ribbons but some did hit the wound on his back. A grunt of pain was all he gave, deeming any other reaction a waste of energy.

By the time Jeanne's dragon had recovered from the minor damage, Kirei was on his feet again and the blonde could properly see his wounds; his left arm was useless, both broken and carrying several cuts, blood poured from his forehead and undoubtedly from other parts of his body even if the black clothes hid it well.

Despite all that the man's face remained impassive, calm, freakishly calm in Jeanne's opinion because she doubted even the most hardcore members of the Khaos Brigade could ignore that amount of damage and show no emotion.

Had it not been from the arm almost dangling on his side, the blonde would say Kirei was actually fighting at peak efficiency still.

'Dangerous.' Jeanne Arc stopped her hymns to think before brushing a hand on the small wound on her neck.

Prompted by her apprehension the steel dragon renewed its attack with greater intensity which forced Kotomine to retreat further and further away from his target. A huge claw tore the ground apart and almost got his leg if not from a preemptive jump and because of that the priest gave the Balance Breaker dragon his full attention.

'I can't kill this.' He admitted to himself once again before fishing for something around his neck. It was his golden cross and once it was also something he didn't know if he found solace out of habit or real faith.

However Kirei found his answer later in life, eventually he understood himself enough to hold it without worries or doubt. That was why he kissed it before placing it back safely beneath his robes. The bulletproof material should protect it unless he took a stab directly on it.

Or was swallowed by the dragon, something it actively tried to make happen by jumping at him with its huge jaws open. With the size of its head it could swallow him in one bite easily. Fortunately the man won't have to figure out if the Stake Victim Dragoon somehow had a stomach.

But his main goal was still to take Jeanne's life and he got ready to do so by drawing his last light sword. Something the young woman noticed by the way she raised her two blades defensively, her eyes focusing as her voice grew louder.

Kirei could still hear it despite her dragon's roar, the creature's claw aiming to crush it or rip him apart.

Whatever came first, the priest would take issue without a doubt.

...

When springing the trap, Gilgamesh expected a fight. In fact he would be mildly disappointed if there wasn't one. Pleasantly surprised sure, because no plan ever went perfectly and he knew Shirou shouldn't go with them quietly, but disappointed nonetheless.

He was expecting to fight Shirou again and was even looking forward to it and seeing the power that managed to defeat Vali personally. Perhaps not seeing it in its full form as he knew the redhead didn't have enough mana to sustain that armor by himself, but he expected his friend to fight his hardest regardless.

So he was understandably surprised when instead of Shirou attacking him it was the former Exorcist, who moved first, going ahead and charging a few instants after he dealt with her barrier.

Despite the surprise he was ready for it thanks to Enki. With a well practiced and relaxed movement he split his bow into two to help absorb the blow. The impact still managed to catch him off guard and for a moment he felt his arms were about to give in when the bluehead's two swords clashed with his.

If not his arms then his legs because the energy transfer was enough to break the ground beneath him. Xenovia refused to give him a break by turning on the thrusters in her boots and spinning in her position; she slammed a second blow almost as strong as the first.

'That armor...' Gilgamesh knew nothing about it but having lived his whole life amongst his family's treasures he knew quality when he saw it. He also knew it was something entirely new. "That isn't a Noble Phantasm-"

With a shift of her body, Xenovia repositioned herself lower to slash his side which was blocked by Enki's left blade. Durandal followed after with a stab to the man's chest but the blond parried with the other before finding himself hit by a headbutt to his chest courtesy of Peerless Armor's thrusters.

Bones weren't broken because Gilgamesh began to lean back just before contact but that split second of weakness gave the knight time to bring Durandina back before throwing a stab on his leg which connected even if just partially since he was already moving back.

Retreating wasn't easy as Xenovia pushed forward against him with both her blades pointing forward but the golden treasure blocked the swords of blue and bronze. Sparks flew as both weapons tried to cut each other as the fighters forced the outcome as neither allowed themselves to be pushed back.

Against all other manner of weaponry, even inferior Noble Phantasms, any of the four blades could cut through with barely any effort but in that match the opponent was neither average nor weak.

Enki was a treasure of Legend, the Original Gilgamesh's first weapons before he traveled around to fill his vault with all manner of treasures. They were ancient as ancient could be, a gift from the gods to the one who should be the connection between them and Humanity.

Durandal also was a Legendary weapon made by a god and although a different one. God didn't have a Pantheon to share his power so he could imbue all sorts of Miracles in its weapon which eventually created something virtually indestructible.

When the two collided it was made clear very quickly that it wouldn't be the quality of the equipment that would define the result of the fight but the skills of those who held such Legendary weapons in their hands.

It was Xenovia who broke away first, using her left leg to keep her balance and bring Durandina in a spinning swing to try and get the man's side again. It was deflected by one half of Enki as the other kept Durandal at bay but the bluehead followed up with a stab. The follow up failed thanks to another block which ended in another clash.

Gilgamesh began to retreat quickly, looking for more space to reform his bow and shot down the adversary before him. Obviously the former Exorcist wouldn't allow that to happen and when he tried to dash back, she flew his way with a roar and swords held high.

Counterattacking wasn't an option because even if his swords could kill the bluehead, Gilgamesh wouldn't survive her strike either thanks to her Noble Gear's speed and Durandal's power.

So he raised Enki once more and truly the impact had been greater as Xenovia could use her mana as explosively as she wished since her allies weren't around. If the previous one came close to breaking Gilgamesh's arms then the second almost really broke his legs along with opening a crater beneath him.

'That armor is at least Balance Breaker level.' He judged in an instant, realizing his friend's bodyguard was going for the kill. 'Apologies, my friend, but I will have to rough her up a little.'

Gold portals manifested above his shoulders and Xenovia remembered every warning she heard, and even the demonstration of the man's power a few minutes beforehand, about the Gate of Babylon, the one Noble Phantasm worthy of being called King's Vault.

There was no way to know what would emerge from it and her left shoulder was vulnerable because of Enki's arrow.

Finesse wasn't her strong suit except with swords and Quarta proved it by perfectly keeping her blades on her opponent's while also dropping on a knee to force him back with the added support.

Not that Gilgamesh minded as he was always planning to retreat first but then his leg was grazed by Durandal's blade as the bluehead kept her motion going, pretty much doing a cartwheel in the air as her blades danced like a vertical buzzsaw while pursuing the man.

Until he shouted, "**Gate of Babylon!!**"

None of the treasures unleashed showed signs of age but of power and enough of it to blow up in Xenovia's face as her maneuver failed to finish the fight. Instead of victory she found herself slammed on the ground before another four portals opened behind the blond and unleashed four weapons that upon hitting her blew up.

Or at least unleashed enough energy to generate an explosion as none of them were damaged. Nevertheless, Peerless Armor held firm with even her exposed shoulder staying intact. Sure the armor itself was a defense but the final line would always be its aura which could be called anything but weak.

The cloud of dust that formed also gave Xenovia a decent cover. 'I can't let him combine that bow again.' Countering the Gate was impossible for her but so long his random Noble Phantasms didn't break through her Noble Gear, she was safe. Enki, on the other hand, already proved capable of destroying the Peerless Armor. "**DURANDAL!!!!!!**"

A blade of energy flew straight from the cloud and Gilgamesh wasn't prepared for it. But a mental nod and the Gate of Babylon protected its owner by calling back a bronze shield with the gold dragon from wherever it had been buried. There was a process to it where the Noble Phantasm first returned to the Gate before emerging again but that was irrelevant.

The shield of El Cid was one of the most useful defensive Noble Phantasms in Gilgamesh's arsenal, ones he had access to at least. Recovered by his great grandfather several centuries after El Cid's death, its shining dragon had the ability to hunt for every blow that threatened its owner.

As a shield it would work wonders with magic alone but as a Noble Phantasm it was the sort that worked better when directly used by the owner. Gilgamesh preferred to keep his hands free and so the shield's real power was reduced in favor of a fast defense, trusted to handle everything by itself.

Perhaps because of that El Cid's shield failed him for the first time when Xenovia's attack forced it to slam on the blond, sending him several steps back. 'That was unexpected.' He acknowledged while his opponent bursted from the smoke, flying his way again. 'That, on the other hand...'

More portals from the Gate of Babylon were opened and with a mental trigger, several of his more dangerous Noble Phantasms were unleashed in the woman's direction. Those weren't just weapons used by soldiers and small heroes but by kings and proper Legends.

There were the swords of Alexander, Grettir and Goliath, all three huge weapons too tall for the average man. Other swords and a lot of spears followed in their wake, twenty seven

weapons in total, each capable of bringing down a tall building. Caladbolg was amongst those, together with other weapons of renown that he definitely didn't want Shirou to see.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Xenovia roared a loud and proud battle cry as the first blade came close, Durandal bashing it to the side with the full might of her arm. Durandina blocked the next one as its true form came for the backswing against the third.

Xenovia's swords danced in a rhythm only known to her as she blocked the random attacks from the Gate of Babylon with some difficulty as the blows kept coming almost too fast for her to perceive.

But just not fast enough and that was plenty for her to react as she blocked several more blades with her swords separately before Caladbolg came too close and she forced it away with the combined power of Durandal and Durandina.

“**Twin Slash!**” White and bronze auras meshed together and she unleashed enough power that banished the weaker Noble Phantasms to the sides so she was home free until more treasures poured from the Gate.

She kept advancing, roaring all the way as the Noble Phantasms demolished the area around her. After a step it seemed the knight would lose her footing but her armor quickly helped her do an mighty leap which also evaded another six weapons.

Gilgamesh glared as he quickly combined Enki and made sure his treasures returned to his main Noble Phantasms. When the next second finished ticking he already had another arrow of energy loose, aiming for Xenovia's leg.

However the bluehead had learned her lesson and with a blast of mana from Durandina, she maneuvered around the arrow before descending with a sonic boom, her two swords adding to the armor's thrusters.

Leaving herself exposed for the blond's next play as the portals all turned in her direction and added to Enki's fire rate with their own projectiles. An inverse waterfall of gold began to cut through the sky aimed towards the former Exorcist who fought against her own speed to put her swords in front of her head.

That time she took several hits, only the thinner arrows of Enki missing because Xenovia managed to identify them just in time. Despite Peerless Armor's prowess the woman was feeling pain with every hit, her cape already torn apart because of the Noble Phantasms' power. But she didn't change course and eventually slammed on Gilgamesh's position.

Missing her target as the man who calmly took three steps to the right, avoiding her and staying in ranger to throw a swing with Enki, once again divided. Durandina intercepted the overhead blow leaving Durandal free to separate the blond's torso from his waist. Which was why he had split his weapon once again, the other gold sword blocking the second hit.

Still the blue blade managed to nick the side of his abdomen and a brief struggle occurred where Xenovia tried to push it forward to finish the fight then and there. Feeling cornered

Gilgamesh opened the Gate above their heads, a random sword hitting the former Exorcist right in the middle of her forehead.

Causing little to no damage as the helmet saved her life but still pushing her neck back because of the immense strength of the shot. Her armor dissipated most of the energy and it just ruined her balance for a moment but that was enough time for Enki to be turned around to stab her shoulder.

It was Xenovia's turn to retreat as she kicked the ground to fall back, knowing such an attack was coming, and once she gave Gilgamesh enough space the Gate of Babylon was opened once again.

Her chest and arms took many of the hits but her Noble Gear allowed her to shrug them all off as she empowered both her swords. "**Durandal!!**"

Both weapons unleashed blades of Light that Enki was forced to parry, locking the two in a stalemate for a couple of seconds as even the King of Heroes' descendant tried to locate any treasure in his Noble Phantasm that could give him victory.

Yet he was failing since he wasn't the True Gilgamesh and lacked the conditions to use the Gate of Babylon's full power. Some of its strongest treasures were just locked beyond his reach, much to the blond's constant frustration.

However, that wasn't a reason to quit. "OOOOOOHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!" So he roared, pushing with all his strength, golden mana pulsing around Enki until it had enough to destroy the energy swords. "This is for your sake too, you know? You both will be safer with us!"

Pausing the fight for a moment to stand up and assume a new posture, Durandina on the front held low while Durandal was pulled back pointing to her opponent, Xenovia retorted. "Says the kidnapper!"

"Oh please! Are you telling me my friend would have come willingly?" Gilgamesh retrieved his weapons and closed the Gate to focus on the knight's next attack. Both sides of Enki were held on a cross guard without touching. "It is Shirou we are talking about!"

It was hard to disagree but the bluehead didn't care. "You are just complaining because, unlike you, we aren't running away from the world's troubles. We are in the thick of it!"

"Wasting time, that is what you are." He tried to remain calm but it was hard to do so when unable to see any damage in his opponent while his body had several wounds. Minor, true, but several scratches and cuts when he usually walked out most fights intact. "Our solution is going to work and it is going to be permanent. Can you say the same?"

"Ours won't kill anyone undeserving." Xenovia pointed out confidently.

And in that moment she saw anyance and acceptance on the blond's face. "All of them are deserving. The human race can only evolve once the mud is thoroughly removed from our



path.” Her eyes grew wide behind her visor before fury roared in her veins. Especially when the man kept talking. “It is the only way! They need to be banished from our realm!”

“Sounds more like an excuse to me!” Xenovia declared and they both charged with fury. Their swords collided several times in a lethal dance. “Heh!” She chuckled as their swords locked with each other once again. “You remind me of a dumb Exorcist who followed everything the Church said without thinking.” They separated and the Gate of Babylon opened to throw a giant club in her direction. “She also was stubborn as a mule!”

Roared the woman while ducking under the weapon and using Durandal to parry it away from her back while charging towards Gilgamesh with Durandina extended for a stab on his heart.

The Enki on his left hand deflected the blow as he moved his other sword for a stab of his own which was anticipated if Xenovia dashing for his left was any indication. It made the hit impossible even as he tried to fix his posture. Her evasion also gave the bluehead time to bring Durandal back for a slash.

She had planned to cut off his arm but Gilgamesh proved himself fast enough to step back and bring both halves of Enki to the defense. “You are just forcing the Hero Faction’s ideals on everyone else!” She brought Durandina for a second blow and the impact broke the fight for a second. “Most devils I know are better than that!”

Gritting his teeth, the blond replied. “Those are my own ideas!” Because he knew exactly who she was talking about. “It is the most logical solution! The best way to secure our future!”

“You are talking about killing millions! It is inhumane!” Divine weapons met the Holy Sword and the ground exploded with the impact even as both sides refused to retreat. “They may be different but-”

“Those differences are what led us to war! What is killing us!” Gilgamesh roared as he forced the blue haired woman back. It was only for a second and Durandina was quick to strike his right, their blades locking again. “Tsk. Don’t you see they are dangerous?!”

“Anyone can be dangerous if you try hard enough. I’m dangerous!” Xenovia pulled Durandal with its blade of Light positioned to cut off the blond’s shoulder but he managed to turn his side fast enough to dodge. Still it left him vulnerable and soon both his swords were struck again. “All you are giving me are excuses to kill people who did nothing!”

Then Angelo’s expression grew soft and he couldn’t help but chuckle. “Heh. Maybe you were made for him, after all. Same sort of ideas.”

Xenovia quickly shook her head before revealing, “I honestly don’t care one way or another.” She confessed, much to his surprise. He couldn’t see how determined the eyes behind the visor became. “But he cares, and his ideals are beautiful. Can’t say there is nothing wrong about a world where everyone can get along despite their differences.”

“That is just a fantasy.” Resolve filled his eyes as he kicked the knight away only for her to not go far, her armor keeping her steady. It still freed his swords and he tried to slash her neck and arms only for her to avoid the hits by quickly flying up before stabbing his shoulder with Durandal. “You can’t say that world is possible!” Gilgamesh said through gritted teeth while retreating.

Using Enki he managed to dislodge the Peerless Sword without losing the arm but the wound was deep and he needed time. Xenovia was fast in her pursuit but the Gate of Babylon opened again and a little more than a hundred shields dropped on her path, burying her with their mass.

That bought him a couple of seconds which he used to retrieve a golden thread from the Gate of Babylon with a grimace that vanished into a nod of acceptance about the situation and the need to use that particular treasure.

It was small, the size of the man’s finger, and it shone with a light of its own that could be easily confused with a torch or a lantern even if that iteration of Dimension Lost was bright enough to hide it.

With a touch of his finger the Artifact that was a treasure from a God of Spiders moved and closed the wound in an instant while inflicting a spider bite-like pain. It would also stop the wound from aggravating and prevent infection but it wasn’t a complete healing. As far as healing Artifacts went, that was one of his worst ones.

Except that Gilgamesh was pressed for time and needed a quick patch up, one that spread around his body with the same speed it did his shoulder, stretching in a manner befitting a god’s Artifact.

Its length just wasn’t finger sized anymore and instead it existed to close all of its owner’s wounds.

Again, as far as Miracles went, that one was more suited for an emergency since Gilgamesh would call it a parlor trick more than anything. Even if all the cuts he took were closed, he could feel all of them itching and would do so until they were properly healed and the thread removed.

But truly the man was pressed for time as the second he needed for the thread to work its magic was the time Xenovia blew away all of his shields while taking a huge swing with Durandal’s Light blade.

Dismissing most of the shields he summoned, Gilgamesh kept three around including a Noble Phantasm from a Hawaiian king he didn’t know the name but was made of a sacred wood, was taller than he was and had a painting that reminded him of a tattooed face, rose above his head and took the hit.

He quickly placed a hand behind the shield’s grip and felt the Holy Sword’s blade pushing it down with pure power alone. Xenovia obviously planned to either cut him in half or crush him under her might.

But Gilgamesh was strong enough to hold on, not only that but his main Noble Phantasm was enough to get him out of that situation. **“Gate of Babylon!!”** Several portals opened behind not to shoot weapons but revealed his collection of magical staves.

Those shot several beams of mana hit the woman deadcenter while others blew up the area around a dozen times. Her Peerless Armor nullified most of the damage but some of the heat still managed to go through the Noble Gear while pure brute force ruined her focus. The energy blade was gone a second after those hits but Xenovia kept pushing.

**“Twin Slash!”** Unleashing two blasts of Holy Energy towards her opponent, she wasn't surprised that a second shield dropped in her path to buy the blond a few more instants. However those would be just instants as she was already racing around it to get a better angle before throwing Durandina with all her might.

Gilgamesh saw it coming but his focus was on Xenovia who was right behind the blade. In a split second decision he tried to bash it away from below to get rid of one of her swords. Only for it to fail as the second Enki made contact with Durandina, the knight accelerating to take hold of her sword once more.

There was some attrition in that moment as Xenovia did her best to push Durandina forward but obviously the blond didn't let that happen. Which was fine with the bluehead as Durandal came from below to stab Gilgamesh's stomach. His other sword was in a slashing motion in her direction but the woman planned to cut off that arm before it could ever reach its target.

Victory still escaped Xenovia's grasp when the shield of El Cid placed itself between them, Gilgamesh's smile revealing it all had been part of the plan as he left himself open on purpose while hiding that particular shield out of sight.

Enki was about to reach its goal and cut the former Exorcist from shoulder to waist-

**“DURANDAL!!!!!!”**

-if not for the blade of energy that suddenly pushed the blond back despite his best efforts to stop that outcome.

However his smile didn't diminish as he had predicted something like that happening.

He understood the difference between them, about how he was a man who brimmed with talent and average sword training while Xenovia, while plenty talented herself, also had received proper training from the Church.

She also developed herself further thanks to Shirou's instruction from Durandal's memories but even if the blond didn't know that part he understood clearly her dedication to swordsmanship was born from passion.

Yes, during their fight Gilgamesh had already realized the woman was the superior fighter when it came to swordplay since the blond had always been a more versatile warrior who didn't focus on a single weapon.

An 'Ultimate Jack of All Trades' as the Gate of Babylon afforded him to be.

The same could be said about Enki as the sword contesting Durandina began to pull itself back as if a mechanism was activated. While the main weapon changed, El Cid's Noble Phantasm moved to allow its owner to retain his position which Gilgamesh improved by bringing his left Enki to Xenovia's side.

That sort of movement was unexpected but despite being caught flat footed, Durandal's solid blade managed to parry that attack. Except it wasn't done as the real counter came when Enki on the blond's right hand shifted fully to defend his arm while leaving his fingers exposed.

For the Divine sword had transformed into a tonfa and the guard of his weapon was big enough that in such a position it was like the man was holding a small baton which not only was keeping Durandina's edge from his arm but also traveled unimpeded to Xenovia's face.

The hit was clean, the Peerless Armor's helmet broke and the knight fell on the ground with a loud impact. However her opponent wasn't done, Gilgamesh quickly kicked her side to get her up again before moving to stab her midriff. Xenovia's arms moved almost unconsciously as her blades crossed in a defensive posture but it was weak.

Weak not because of her weapons or armor but because the woman was stunned from the direct blow to the head and barely could guard when the golden sword pushed her weapons apart opening space for a devastating punch.

Even when not using Enki directly its power coated Gilgamesh's fist when in the form of a tonfa so the former Exorcist truly felt as if her Noble Gear failed to protect her from it. She was sent flying backwards several meters before slamming on the ground hard enough to raise a cloud of dust.

That done, Gilgamesh stood there waiting to see if Xenovia would somehow get up. "It was just a glancing blow." He said with a confident smirk as he scratched his temple and the Noble Phantasm shone with power. "Enki's glancing blow... I hope she didn't die."

Turning towards where Shirou was still struggling against Georg and Connla, the blond prepared to race there to settle everything only to stop when he felt a huge pressure behind him pulsing with an impressive strength.

"Oh~ I knew you wouldn't fall so easily. He would never choose someone weak." Gilgamesh made sure to sound confident but in reality he was impressed and a little concerned. 'I was pretty sure I hit the side of her head! Even if she is alive, she should be out cold!'

Yet Light pulsed around Xenovia as both her sword's aura and her Ki meshed together as she slowly stood up. "Choose me? You really don't know him at all." Half of her helmet had

been destroyed so when she rose fully the blond could see one of her brown eyes surrounded by a white light. "He accepted me, like how I accepted him. The good and the bad."

Her arms were shaking because of the damage she took and the right side of her forehead had a cut that reached her hairline which didn't stop bleeding. Had it been anything but a glancing blow then Enki would have ripped off part of her head. Certainly her abdomen felt like it had been shot and that had been from a single punch.

Even the small stab she took before didn't compare to the rest of the hits. It had been superficial while the fist had carried all of the Blade of the End's power. Bones were certainly cracked if not broken and she had spit off some blood to the side.

Despite all that Xenovia stood once more and glared at her opponent before pointing Durandal towards him. "I won't let you take Shirou! That I swear!"

"Feh! You shouldn't make promises you can't keep." Changing Enki into swords once again, Gilgamesh prepared to combine them when a blast of Holy Energy flew his way faster than he could react.

Fortunately for him El Cid's shield was still present and blocked the attack automatically while unleashing a shockwave that took him off his feet. When the energy dissipated he saw that Durandal itself had been thrown in his direction.

'That doesn't make sense-' His thoughts were cut off when the image of Xenovia took his sight, Durandina coming down on his shoulder even as he used Enki to block the blow.

It connected because unlike him, the bluehead was using both arms, the strength of the impact only midgated because he was already retreating again.

Fine for Xenovia who took advantage of his retreat to collect Durandal before raising it above her head and shouting. "**Peerless Armor!**"

In a second her armor had been restored like if the fight had just started with even her cape dancing in the wind, good as new. Her glowing eyes still visible behind her visor and despite being rather short, Gilgamesh could admit the woman presented a threatening figure to stare at.

At least for most people but he just laughed. "Hahaha! What is that? A desperate attempt at intimidation?! A cornered kitten showing her claws?! Arching her back?!" He pointed one of her blades towards her, chuckling at noticing her state despite the power sustaining the woman. "Your arms are shaking." Just as he finished saying it, they stopped but the message was clear.

Restored armor or not, the former Exorcist was wounded and even if her Noble Gear could empower her, exhaustion wasn't something shrugged off that easily. Fact was Durandal's Owner had been throwing everything she had against Gilgamesh since their fight started and even if she was better with a sword, he was stronger.

That was the reason why he could open the Gate of Babylon whenever he wanted and use his Noble Phantasms, including the shield that saved his life, on a whim. The power of his bloodline was overwhelming and something that could compete even with pureblood devils.

Yet something was clear for Xenovia. "You're getting tired too." She pointed out which made him frown as she pointed to his head. "Made you sweat."

Indeed it was true and the blond couldn't deny that fighting against the former Exorcist was something beyond a light exercise. She was strong and he couldn't just overwhelm her with his main Noble Phantasm like he could most people. Had it not been for his upbringing and training, she would have already had him.

'The Original would have already finished this.' Gilgamesh couldn't help but think as he allowed mana to flow around his body. "Just so you know, I was trying to not kill you."

"And just so you know," Durandal's edge rested over Durandina in the shape of a cross as she pointed her main Holy Sword towards her opponent, "I don't care." White and bronze aura danced around the blade and stabbed towards the man as she roared. "**Roland Passion!**"

A huge blade of light manifested on Durandal's tip before flying towards Gilgamesh. It was far bigger than any of the other energy weapons Xenovia made in the past and the culmination of hours upon hours of training. Roland Passion was the name of a technique she developed because of her inability to use Durandal's full power.

It was true that the horse was far more tame thanks to the Noble Gear and its attention split between its actual form and Durandina but once it went full throttle there was little its Owner could do to stop it.

In that case Xenovia sought several methods to channel Durandal's full power even if for a full seconds and once again her Noble Gear was the solution. Durandina was the manifestation of Durandal's defensive capabilities, it would always be part of the Peerless Sword even when existing outside of it.

Its powers were Durandal's so combining them both individually to unleash an attack with the Holy Sword's full power was possible. The result was a huge blade of Holy Light as tall as a house and powerful enough to take down several city blocks which flew faster than any bullet train.

Gilgamesh saw Roland Passion coming and felt fear. "**GATE OF BABYLON!!!**" His call was almost desperate but the Noble Phantasm answered it nevertheless.

What he needed was a strong defense and King's Treasure provided several shields, several of them Noble Phantasms capable of resisting attacks that could take down buildings, including El Cid's shield which became the center of the wall.

All treasures his family collected, none which could be claimed to have failed him before and ones that he reinforced with his own magic.

Unexpectedly, at least for Gilgamesh, the wall of shields did actually fail him. Durandal broke through with a power that surpassed their combined defense and kept going, destroying several of the shields. That was the might of the Peerless Sword, a Noble Phantasm born of several Miracles and Legends.

Durandal was so strong that when going all out it was even capable of destroying inferior Noble Phantasms.

In a desperate attempt to save his own life, the descendant of Gilgamesh focused as much mana as he could on Enki before meeting Roland Passion head on. Gold surrounded him and the Sword of the End as the Legendary powers collided.

That particular dispute had the winner clear for both sides from the very beginning and Enki successfully managed to cut Durandal's blast in four parts that harmlessly passed around or beside the victor before fizzling without hitting anything.

The man quickly raised his swords defensively, expecting a follow up while trying to locate the surviving shields. He could tell some managed to withstand the Peerless Sword's power but others were damaged beyond repair, something that baffled him. It would be one thing if his normal shields were the only ones destroyed but that wasn't the case.

Noble Phantasms were Crystalized Legends and shouldn't be destroyed even by other Noble Phantasms save in some specific circumstances. Very specific circumstances that either involved their owners or their own Legends.

Yet Durandal managed to destroy several of them anyway, reminding him that enough Power could break even the rules of the World.

Another reason that he hated the gods.

Regardless, Gilgamesh had no time to ponder as the expected attack came. Xenovia had crossed the distance between them a little slower than he expected but Durandal hit one of Enki's blades as predicted. Instantly he could tell the blow lacked the strength of previous ones.

"I was right-" He swallowed his words when Durandina almost took his neck. "The hell!"

"Don't underestimate a Mage of Swords' knight!" Xenovia renewed her assault, her swords striking as fast as her arms could allow, forcing the blond fully in the defensive.

Then she added a new element by trying to swipe his legs with her own which actually worked only for him to shift Enki into a tonfa again and block the swing from over Xenovia's shoulder that would have won her the fight.

Following that by using one of his hands for support into a kick, Gilgamesh could see what the bluehead's struggle really was. "You are starting to get desperate. That last trick took a lot from you, didn't it?"

A double strike from her left forced Gilgamesh to block with both halves of Enki, his feet dragging the dirt as he was pushed back. "You won't be saying that after I take your head!" Was the only thing Xenovia could say before pressing her offensive again.

One clean strike was all she needed to settle everything.

But the same could be said about him.

...

To say Shirou didn't like how the situation was developing was an understatement.

Not only were things going badly in other points of Dimension Lost, he found himself unable to help anyone else. Not without dealing with Connla first, who managed to hide in his shadow when the redhead was about to stab his left lung with the wakizashi version of Muramasa.

However he couldn't let that detain him and the main katana quickly was covered with lightning which the Mage flung directed towards the still flying Georg who already had his sacred gear's Fog of Extinction raised together with several barriers.

The redhead gritted his teeth before his instincts warned him it was time for Connla to attack. "Where do you think you are looking at?!" Asked the black haired man with dark eyes as he thrust his spear several times in a couple of seconds.

Each and every attack was easily dodged or blocked until Shirou saw an opening and batted the weapon down before throwing a slash for the other man's neck. That one was too fast for him to react but his ally was ready. The Dimension Lost's user had a magic circle that shifted the terrain where the Mage was standing to get in his way, buying time for Connla's escape.

It had been going like that for a while and the Mage of Swords could freely admit he was starting to grow frustrated with the present state of affairs. The only good thing he had going for him was that he already understood Connla's fighting style. While advanced, it lacked polish, indicating he only picked up the spear for a short few years.

And that was it.

Everything else was bad news wherever Shirou looked and he hated how powerless he felt because of the danger his friends and Kirei were in while he had to deal with two opponents that were apparently tailor made to be the most annoying possible.

At least when facing him because once the Mage demonstrated how overwhelming he could



be, Connla became far more cautious while Georg refused to engage directly in any way whatsoever.

And their strategy was working since he couldn't just leave and let them to their own devices. There was also the fact that defeating Georg would be the best thing to do but the man was doing everything and then some to protect himself. Neither Caladbolg nor Hrunting were strong enough to pierce the Fog of Extinction which was absolutely frustrating.

Then, whenever Shirou tried to focus on finding a solution, Connla pounced from his shadow. It was both to disturb the Mage while also the man's pride that demanded him to be the one to defeat the redhead.

A thing the magus doubted would happen as Shirou turned around in time to intercept the blow and push it back before going for a slash towards the man's torso with another Muramasa which was evaded but gave him leverage to stab the shadow user with the shorter sword.

He had even already accounted for the shadows from Night Reflection as the sparks of his Lightning Muramasa made them uneven and hard to use when he empowered it. Yet the hit never reached as Georg used several spells to pull his ally away while building a wall made of mana.

A wall which was cut to ribbons easily by Muramasa but when Shirou tried to pursue his first opponent, Georg interfered again by sending a curse his way. Fog of Extinction became the catalyst for a dark spell that tried to get inside his lungs but the passive effect of Avalon kept him healthy.

Still much of the fog had descended on him so he quickly changed the wakizashi into a huge dart that he threw towards his fellow magus. It was worthless as there was plenty of fog to protect its owner as he fixed his glasses and studied the redhead, trying to figure out how the redhead was countering his spell.

"Hmph, so curses really don't work on you. Even when mixed with my sacred gear." The Hero Faction's top mage rubbed his chin as Shirou glared in his direction. "As expected of a Mage; not only do you have protections against curses but also have already adapted it against Dimension Lost."

'No, I just got lucky that the only thing that could save me from a fire was the most busted defensive Noble Phantasm in existence.' Obviously Shirou wasn't going to say that out loud. Tracing his bow again, the redhead began to change Muramasa to try another shot before ducking and dodging a shadow spear that went for his arms. "Damn!"

"Forgot about someone?!" Connla was starting to sound more confident as he targeted the redhead's leg. "You won't escape-"

For the second time in the fight he took a bow to the face. "You are the ones running around." Blinking in surprise, Shirou didn't expect the hit to connect so easily.

“Connla, stop taking unnecessary risks.” Georg warned from above making it clear there was no attempt to help his ally that time. It spoke of his awareness as he both knew Shirou’s hit wasn’t strong enough to defeat the other man even if Cu Chulainn’s descendant began to bleed once more. “We just need to keep buying time. Stay back and only move when he aims for me.”

‘Shit.’ Shirou knew the Georg was correct and every time the man reminded him of it he couldn’t help it but steal a few glances to his allies. If things were bad for him then they were worse for everyone else.

Ise was unable to fight, having the Maid of Orleans on the battlefield was proving to be a huge problem for the devil in a level he couldn’t conceive. Considering her words’ effects were hundreds, perhaps thousands, times stronger than standing in a church it was clear the Red Dragon Emperor couldn’t deal with that.

And he was just a Reincarnated devil, Shirou didn’t even want to think how bad things could be if Rias was in his place. Even if she had more mana, Ise had already surpassed her in power so having such thoughts made him shiver with fear and concert.

Especially because he should be barely hearing Jeanne, being buried on a bombardment worthy of a warzone, and yet her words were still being effective enough that his friend was basically out of the fight when they most needed him.

Despite his situation being bad, everyone else had it worse. At least Ddraig could keep his Partner safe with draconic energy and their Balance Breaker.

The same couldn’t be said about Kirei who was basically fighting a metal dragon that Shirou’s eyes managed to identify as a being made of swords. When he first saw it the redhead couldn’t help but think, ‘Can I do something like that?’

It was an interesting proposition as, while Unlimited Blade Works registered Stake Victim Dragoon as a mass of swords built like a jigsaw, he actually got the individual swords that made the dragon inside the Reality Marble, just not the dragon itself.

The only thing he really failed to Grasp from it was its Core that was made of the Divine essence which the redhead could deduce came from Blade Blacksmith. Despite that he was interested in that dragon the same way he was about Kiba’s own Balance Breaker, Blade Brotherhood.

Something in his soul responded to that dragon’s existence more than his friend’s knights and his curiosity brimmed with the thought of trying something equal or similar.

Then his thoughts turned to horror as the reality of the situation reminded him of how bad things were going.

Kirei couldn’t defeat that. It wasn’t a matter of skill but power and the priest lacked anything strong enough to even damage that Balance Breaker. His best hopes of dealing with a

normal dragon would be calling for reinforcements. Fighting against a dragon-like Balance Breaker implied the same thing at the very least unless.

Unless he took its owner down which was easier said than done

Jumping around, as he shot several arrows towards Georg and avoided Connla, Shirou could see Jeanne never taking her eyes off Kirei while always keeping her Stake Victim Dragoon between them, shouting whatever hymns she could remember loud enough even he could hear without trying.

The thought of shooting her crossed his mind but it wasn't hard to imagine one of his opponents blocking whatever arrow he sent that way or stopping him from firing altogether. Kirei would have to either deal with the dragon on his own or somehow get past it and get Jeanne.

However he wasn't the only one facing a giant enemy and even if Caren's was smaller and humanoid the redhead would say that Heracles was more problematic. He still had no clue what her Artifact did exactly, it wasn't a sword so he would need to touch it to go deep in its History, but the gray haired man was avoiding it like a plague.

Fortunately, thanks to her red shroud, Heracles was extremely hesitant to get close but that didn't stop him from trying through his explosions. Sure enough much of the landscape around him was demolished due to his attempts to counter the nun's mystic code whilst trying to hit her.

Contrary to him, Caren moved like a swan; almost eager to get close but only as long as her shroud was ahead of her. The Mage could see Heracles unleashing a huge explosion to hide himself and the silver haired woman immediately retrieve her shroud, holding it close while expecting an attack.

However that was enough to dissuade the giant and so they kept the chase going on the only other fight that could be said to be stuck in a stalemate besides his own even if Caren was in a safer predicament considering her opponent was actively avoiding contact.

But while he was concerned for the nun, whatever attention not in his fight was reserved for his lover whose situation was perhaps the most precarious one of everyone in their group.

Despite being worried about everyone who got dragged with him into Dimension Lost, Xenovia was definitely the person who worried him the most for several reasons. Especially when he watched his wounded lover call for her Noble Gear whilst it was already active.

'She shouldn't have reactivated Peerless Armor.' Shirou's expression grew grim as he threw several Muramasas towards his opponents to buy himself time to run towards her. 'Forcing a repair like that isn't safe. Noble Gears aren't sacred gears, they need time for the Cores to fix them! How many times did I warn you, Xenovia?! Something like that can only hurt you!!'

Unfortunately he never managed to get too far as shadow spears emerged from the ground to stab his legs. Bleeding a little, Shirou immediately Traced another Muramasa to break a

few of the constructs. However Connla was already on him with his main weapon aimed to his face.

“Don’t get cocky now ya bastard!” The man’s eyes were mad with bloodlust as he went for the kill.

The redhead rolled to the side, forcing him to miss, before using his free hand as a support to kick the black haired man’s knee followed by another on his chest once he was forced to bend down because of the previous strike.

Once Connla was sent falling back, shadows moved beneath him and the man vanished, giving way to several spells from above. “You aren’t interrupting Gilgamesh’s fight!” Georg declared as his spells exploded on Shirou’s location. “Once he is done with your little knight, he will see to you.” Yet his thoughts were on that very same fight. ‘Holding back Gilgamesh for this long is a feat in and of itself. She is proving to be a nuisance and if the Mage of Swords manage to support her then the situation may have changed in their favor.’

Logically he believed in those deductions but deep down Georg doubted the Gate of Babylon could ever be truly defeated unless his opponent was a god or something of the like.

Additionally, through his sacred gear and several vigilance spells, he had kept an eye on every fight and knew that Xenovia was starting to run out of steam. Her sword may be all powerful Noble Phantasms and her armor could keep up with the Gate but the bluehead had a limit and was inching ever closer to it.

An emerging Shirou who managed to block all blasts by Tracing swords in a half made wall actually would have agreed with him if they knew each other’s thoughts. ‘Forcing her armor to recover like that will only buy Xenovia some time. Sure her defense and speed increase with it but there is just so much her body can take from Durandal’s power.’

It always came back to that particular aspect of the Peerless Sword; it was just so powerful that unless Xenovia mastered it on her own there was always going to have a caveat of some sort. Peerless Armor made sure to tame it considerably, guaranteeing that his lover could use it much more safely, but the sword was still too powerful for her.

Durandal was and always would be Peerless Armor’s power source but Xenovia’s body still conducted and directed her sword’s power and forcing it to accelerate the regenerating of her armor was pushing more than she should.

If the damage was smaller, Shirou wouldn’t be as concerned but his lover had to fix most of her armor in a single go which had to take a toll. ‘I need to get to her. I need to get to them.’

He glared at Georg before his gaze fell on the struggling Connla who definitely looked almost ready to fold. A few more hits and the black haired man would be either out cold or dead. Problem was that Georg’s fog had grown thicker and he had several magic circles aimed at the redhead.

'Playtime is over, huh?' Shirou didn't need to ask as the two waited for him to make the first move. 'They are all on the defensive now to make things more complicated for me, to not give me a chance to take either of them down without the other intervening... I am cornered... We are all cornered.'

Except that wasn't necessarily true and the Mage of Swords knew it. While his friends were all with their backs against the wall, the same couldn't be said about him. After all, the Hero Faction was there for him.

'I have two, no, realistically speaking, three cards that I can play.' Taking a deep breath, Shirou dropped Muramasa and had it vanish, surprising both his opponents. Which was fine as his mind dived inside his Reality Marble where he found himself a place to think. "Option one; surrender."

Definitely the one he most hated and not acceptable on any level unless he suddenly found the means to extract Illya and Sella from wherever the Hero Faction dragged him. A vain hope as he was sure they would bound his magic the second he was in their hands. It would surprise no one if Gilgamesh had a treasure or Georg had a spell for that.

"Option two; Unlimited Blade Works." His world answered to his thoughts, ready and waiting but he refused to take comfort on that feeling. Time was ticking down outside his soul and he only had time to ponder and discard his options fast. "With Unlimited Blade Works, I can take over the battlefield but..."

How it would work against Dimension Lost was something the Mage couldn't even phantom to guess. Like a Reality Marble, the sacred gear created a World Egg, however in a more discrete and simpler fashion. Which would imply that unleashing Unlimited Blade Works would be creating an egg inside an egg which could be catastrophic.

Still it was a risk he was willing to take were it not for the high mana cost to maintain Unlimited Blade Works for long enough for it to make a difference. Isolated in another dimension he had no means to contact Rias, barely could feel their connection, and so didn't have enough mana to actually make a difference.

Experience told him that without his first lover, he could only hold Unlimited Blade Works for a few seconds, perhaps a minute if he pushed himself. Which wasn't enough against the Gate of Babylon even if the Mage of Swords was sure his Reality Marble was faster than the Noble Phantasm.

Shirou's gaze focused on his potentially last resource, the blade standing proudly in front of him. "Third option; Bakuya."

Bellerophon's song of hope filled his world and Shirou didn't need to look back to know his pegasus was there, waiting to join the fight. With his ability to sever Divine connections, he was the perfect counter to any sacred gear user and perhaps capable of cutting Georg despite the Fog of Extinction.

What made him hold on from calling that particular Noble Phantasm was how much it narrowed down his options. While Bakuya was in his hands, he would be unable to use any other weapon. He also couldn't turn it into an arrow so to hit Georg he will have to do so directly.

Bellerophon moved into his line of sight, his bright eyes shining as the pegasus eagerness poured from him in waves. He knew there was a fight and he wanted to fight but the same problem with Unlimited Blade Works applied when using his full power.

'My mana capacity is definitively my greatest weakness.' Blinking slowly, Shirou's conscience returned to the battle as his real self had seen Connla approaching cautiously, his shadows ready to jump. "Would you really attack a disarmed man?"

The spear user actually stopped in shock before chuckling. "You are always armed."

From above Georg asked, "Are we to take this as a surrender, Emiya Shirou?"

"... If I surrendered, would you let everyone else leave?"

"Of course." Came the immediate answer.

One that had Shirou smiling sadly. "That is a lie." Despite the lack of reaction from the flying magus, both knew the redhead was right. "Well then, **Trace on!**" Bakuya came to his hands and the Mage of Swords could feel his pegasus ready as his eyes focused on Connla. "Sorry if I kill you but I can't spare any more time."

Before any reply, Shirou was already in his personal space with the white blade aimed to cut his head in half. Only Georg summoning four different barriers and two magic circles in the way saved the black haired man and despite all that it only bought him an extra second to dodge.

Which wasn't enough to escape as the Mage of Swords shoulder tackled him down and brought Bakuya up to stab his chest. Fortunately for Connla, he managed to dodge by sinking into his own shadow.

Staying inside the space his sacred gear, Night Reflection, created was impossible for anything and anyone. All it really did was connect spaces through shadows and the most its owner could extend keeping an inanimate object inside was two minutes at best. Anything living couldn't stay even half that.

That was why Connla emerged from a shadow a few meters from Shirou an instant later, sweat and blood falling from his forehead as he fought to breathe. 'He almost-'

"CONNLA!!!!!" Someone called him, one of his allies who was staying far away from the fight. Suffice to say the warning was a good one; it helped the man to just barely dodge a slash that would have cut his chest in half.

It was still a deep cut and Connla felt how blood poured from his chest just at the smallest contact with the white blade. Shirou quickly repositioned his feet and turned his blade around to stab the black haired man in the heart.

**“Night Reflection!”** Connla roared with all his remaining strength, leaving behind his previous location for another one while several spears emerged to pierce Shirou’s body.

All of them failed to reach the redhead who began to cover himself with his pegasus’ aura. ‘This will cut my time but-’ From the corner of his eyes he saw Xenovia struggling and instantly made up his mind. **“Bellerophon!”**

Medusa’s child answered the call and the shadows were banished by his Divine aura that surrounded Shirou. But he held most of it back, neither calling for his armor nor taking all the Legendary Mount’s power all at once.

He needed it to last as long as possible but at the same time for it to be enough to sever a sacred gear’s connection and he took advantage of his position to turn the stab downwards towards the other man’s shadow hoping it would do something with the secondary goal of damaging Georg’s territory.

Nothing happened but Shirou wasn’t surprised. ‘While we are inside Dimension Lost, stabbing a needle in the mud won’t change a thing.’ He could hear Bellerophon’s irritation at the comparison but shrugged it off. ‘You know I am right...’ Turning his head, he found his previous targets but focused on the main one. ‘Besides, this will be enough.’

Focusing much of Bellerophon’s power around Bakuya, Shirou threw it straight towards Georg’s torso. The motion had been so quick that for the Hero Faction’s magus it was akin to a blur from a bad photograph.

And so he legitimately had not seen the attack coming until it was too late but fortunately for him Bakuya was slightly off course and only managed to barely touch his side. Didn’t stop Georg’s uniform and robe from completely losing their left side as blood exploded from just above his waist.

The bespectacled man was stunned by how easily Fog of Extinction was cut through together with several of his best shields and that his enchanted clothes, woven by Illya to be better than hazmat suits when it came to magic, failed to do anything at all.

But the most surprised person present was Shirou himself who watched the Noble Phantasm still flying away. “I missed?” Even Bellerophon was surprised by that outcome, he could feel it. ‘The angle was bad but I made sure to compensate. It was almost like Bakuya had slightly veered to the side mid flight...’

“Open fire! Protect lord Georg at all cost!!!” Any musing was interrupted when Shirou heard the magicians turn their aim towards him once their leader was wounded.

Several spells began to fly his way with less intensity and smaller numbers than before but many of them were still powerful enough he didn’t want to risk being hit. Erasing the Bakuya

that was flying to the horizon, he felt Bellerophon's power course through his veins once again as a new one fell in his grip.

Just in time for him to accelerate and escape the magicians blast radius as his eyes remained locked on Georg who was tending his wound meanwhile flying higher and taking care to order the other magicians to keep focus on Ise.

'I underestimated him!' Dimension Lost's owner concluded as the wound closed slowly and his wannabe killer prepared for another throw. "Get your ass moving, Connla!!" Ordered the magus with fear for his life.

His subordinate was glad to answer as despite his many still bleeding wounds he was very determined to see the redhead paying for every scratch with his life.

A battle cry later, Connla stabbed his spear on the ground once more. "**Night Reflection!!!**" A new pillar of shadow made its way towards Shirou but not to imprison or throw him around as several spikes emerged while it grew tall enough to become a wave. "**Dark Maw!!!**"

Because of how much energy was poured into it he felt the attack before seeing it and looking at the huge shadow the Mage could easily see that the 'maw' looked like a shark's head with a mouth full of 'teeth' and an abyss hidden in its throat.

All that didn't phase Shirou who became a blur that first moved away from the shadow's grasp before going around it, aiming to deal Connla in a permanent fashion. The spear wielder saw how the redhead completely avoided his attack with clenched teeth before focusing all energy from the Dark Maw around his weapon.

The spear wasn't really affected as much as it was woven in a layer of shadows that made it slightly bigger and Connla twirled it by his right before dashing towards the redhead to meet him head on.

Or that was what the black haired man wanted the Mage to think until they were just a few feet from each other. "**Night Reflection!**" From the tip of Connla's spear emerged a bramble made of shadows that spread everywhere to surround and harm the redhead. "Try to dodge-"

Shirou did dodge some of the thorns of darkness that tried to take him but most of them were cut and destroyed by Bellerophon's power, the pegasus in his aura cutting through the shadows and illuminating Dimension Lost like a flare.

Distracting as it was for most people, both Georg and Connla did their best to catch sight of Shirou but when they did it was too late as the Mage was already mid-motion to slash the spear wielder into pieces.

Still the shadow user managed to spot the attack coming and raise his weapon to block it. While his sacred gear ability was worthless in that position, his spear was well made and could trade blows with Noble Phantasms.



Lesser Noble Phantasms, those which didn't have a pegasus empowering them.

By the time Connla realized that fact his torso had already been cut in such a way that a huge portion of it separated from the rest together with his left arm.

Not that he registered it with how fast the attack was but Georg saw the danger his ally was in and opened several magic circles to send him back to their base. 'Wasn't he supposed to be the nice one?' The Hero Faction's magus thought while his mouth screamed. "You killed Connla!!"

"You teleported him out... A preemptive spell, prior preparation or... is it because this place is built like a Rating Game arena..." Despite the apparent curiosity from the redhead his eyes were cold as he glared at the flying magus. "A very useful sacred gear that you have there... very useful."

The pegasus shaped aura turned to glare at Georg as well and the black haired magus started to really grow afraid. 'Illya assured us her brother didn't kill. Vali being alive proves as much-' A memory replayed in his mind, just a few hours before arriving in Fuyuki to prepare Dimension Lost.

*"Don't underestimate my friend." Gilgamesh warned as he, Hercules, Jeanne and Georg sat on a table with a list of who could participate in the operation to capture the Mage of Swords. Several of their top operatives were busy with more important tasks and it was already a small miracle the four of them would participate in it. "He doesn't like killing but if cornered he is more dangerous than any animal."*

*"So what? We can't ruff him up or something?" Heracles had asked with a frown. "Illya said he could kill but it will always be his last resort even if his life is in danger."*

*"That is essentially correct. However, just the killing part isn't worrying." The blond looked amused more than anything. "It is how casually he can flip between protector and killer," he snapped his fingers, "in the turn of a dime."*

*"Split personality? Cool." Jeanne couldn't help but say but their leader shook his head.*

*"No, he is himself. It is just... when he decides to go all out he tries to be as brutal and merciful as possible."*

*Georg remembered fixing his glasses before replying with little concern. "Those statements are contradictory and basically worthless." He waved his leader away while getting up because of how much work he had ahead of him. "Not that it matters; once inside my Dimension Lost either he will submit or break."*

*"Sure, sure." Gilgamesh wasn't exactly disagreeing as he was the last one to stand up. "It is just a friendly warning because I want you all to understand something; if my friend starts going for the kill he will try to do it as quickly as possible. As painless as possible. You probably won't see it coming."*

Those warnings replayed in Georg's head several times over in the blink of an eye and when he blinked, he had lost Shirou from sight. "Shit!!" Flying as fast as he could, he got lucky and Bakuya missed his body by a hair. Yet his back had been cut and he failed to hold back a scream of pain. "Shit, shit, shit!!"

"Protect lord Georg!!!" Once again his subordinates tried to interfere.

"Don't do it you morons!!!" His warning went out too late as Shirou had already reached the group of fifteen, ten who were attacking him with magic and sacred gears while five just had pikes to hold him back.

The Mage of Swords moved around them faster than anyone could react, cutting them down with clean swift strikes in the torso that were more likely fatal unless something was done.

And something Georg did as his circuits flared to multiple the number of magic circles he could create while keeping Dimension Lost active. 'Is he being more lethal because he deduced our safety measures or-' Gilgamesh's warning replayed on his head one more time. "Just because your sister won't let us die doesn't mean you should be trying to kill us!!"

Once every member of his personal squad had been defeated did Georg see Shirou slow down, his eyes cold and distant in contrast to the warm aura around him. "Whenever someone steps into a battlefield willingly, it means they are ready to die." He began to position himself for another throw and as things stood the flying magician wasn't sure he could dodge anymore. "Blame me, if you want, but it was you who-"

Georg didn't know what happened; one second he was face to face with death, ready to meet the Judge of the Damned, the next his executor was missing from his sight. Not that the magus believed it for a whole minute as he focused on feeling Shirou's presence and preparing more shields.

'Not that those will do any good.' On that matter Georg was absolutely sure since only a stroke of luck kept him alive. 'Gilgamesh is the only one who can face him. Even now I can feel that power, Divinity, taking over my dimension. It stopped growing but... it is growing again?!

A few minutes later the top magician of the Khaos Brigade realized he really wasn't the strongest magus inside his sacred gear.

Not by a long shot.

...

Also happening a few minutes before Bellerophon was partially unleashed was a huge explosion during one of the fights. Unfortunately for the one who caused it, the blast utterly failed to get his target as the nun who he was fighting against proved to be quite apt at dodging.

“Damn, you’re slippery.” Heracles couldn’t help but comment with a glare as his orange aura pulsed aggressively.

Soon enough the dust settled and he saw Caren on a knee with her shroud around her shoulders, observing him cautiously. “I will take that as a complement.” She retorted while rolling to the side dodging a giant boulder.

“SUIT YOURSELF!!!!!!” Roared the gray haired man as he punched the ground and picked another huge piece of rock bigger than his adversary. ‘This is getting us nowhere.’

In the fight between the giant and the maiden it was difficult to tell who was winning even for the fighters themselves. Their conundrum was that both fighters wanted to approach to finish the other off but neither was willing to advance first because that was exactly what the other wanted.

And both of them knew a single mistake would lead to defeat and possible death so they were trying to limit such a possibility. However only one of them had any real range options as Caren learned quickly because Heracles kept using his sacred gear to change the landscape in his favor.

‘Walls’ came up everytime the silver haired woman saw an opening, huge pieces of earth flew in her direction whenever the giant gained too much distance and even if they failed to hit the nun they were excellent pace breakers.

One thing most people often forget about the Original Heracles was that the man was a Champion of Athena and a quite cunning Hero by any merit. Most could only remember the giant tower of muscles and forget that he was quite clever. Sure sometimes that cleverness was used against him, originally there were Ten Labors, not Twelve, but clever nonetheless.

His descendant inherited some of the Strongest Greek cunning which was why he was always trying to keep at least eight to ten meters of distance from Caren.

‘That shroud... I can’t rip it apart... or blow it up.’ Heracles thought while lifting another bolder above his head but not throwing it immediately. It was too obvious his target was ready to sprint into a dodge in his direction. ‘Variant Detonation also doesn’t work on it.’ Anger swelled in his chest as Caren tried to approach from the side and he threw the rock in that direction which she avoided. ‘What sort of weapon does the Church have that can survive explosions? Why does a random nun have one?’

Unfortunately for Heracles, he couldn’t claim to be the most knowledgeable about what resources the Church had and not only because as an organization it preferred to keep its trump cards close to its chest.

No, in truth he never had interest in the treasures of Saints because they usually weren’t considered dangerous. Those that were just became Noble Phantasms or were part of a sacred gear and those the man knew pretty well. Especially when it came to sacred gear knowledge, nobody in the Hero Faction was allowed to fall behind.

Those were the main weapons of most of their allies after all.

Regardless, that meant Heracles found himself in a very uncomfortable situation. 'Unless I figure out that shroud's trick, it can kill me before I kill her.' He thought while staring at a calm Caren who looked ready to sprint again at any time. Cautiously he punched a rock wall to his side and collected two stones the size of bowling balls. 'But it isn't really useful for defense either so if I hit her once...'

First he threw the rock on his right hand which was pitched faster than any professional baseball player could do so with a better ball. As he expected Caren dodged again but he threw the other one even faster towards where he anticipated her path.

Unexpectedly the woman leaned back and did a triple flip, the rock sailing safely beneath her, before she landed on her feet to dash towards the giant who was clearly growing more and more stressed with that song and dance.

Still his strategy didn't change and just as the red shroud was about to capture him, a hard stomp empowered by Variant Detonation kept it at bay. Actually that wasn't necessarily true as Heracles could observe the mystic code wasn't damaged by anything he did.

However Caren was and some of the rocks managed to scratch her legs making her grimace even if she didn't lose a step while retreating. 'This would be going much better if I was in uniform... that is a lie.' She admitted to herself quickly as the giant stared at her from his full height. 'It wouldn't change anything. My only means of survival is the Shroud of Magdalene. As long as I have it, I have a chance.'

Jumping a few more steps back the nun took advantage of her position to look for Kirei and Jeanne. Finding the woman was easy, she had been in the same spot for several minutes with her two swords ready to stab anyone who got too close. The blonde also threw her a glance from time to time but she was paying more attention to Kotomine.

Who was harder to find with a dragon on his way and blocking the silver haired woman's sight but so long as it was attacking it meant the man was still standing. There was little she could do to help his case so her gaze soon returned to Heracles as his aura grew even stronger.

It was just posturing, the giant wasn't going to attack, his emotions told Caren as such. "This is getting us nowhere fast."

"I agree."

"Would you mind taking your companions and leaving us alone? I really don't want any deaths tonight." 'The night had started so nice too.' Thought Caren as she focused on feeling Heracles emotions. Her grip on the Shroud of Magdalene grew tighter as she felt that, while resigned, the man was determined.

Contrary to what she felt, his aura diminished in power even as his eyes grew more focused. "You all had your chance and Illya's brother won't just give up."

"Referring to him just as someone's brother is quite demeaning." Caren pointed out. "Or do you care about this Illya so much he can only seem like that. Is it jealousy, I wonder?" To her surprise, she only got amusement.

"Bwahaha! Me, like Illya like that? Oh no thank you, I like waking up with my balls attached." Heracles snickered amusedly. "Nah, she's only a friend... a good friend who asked me the favor of dragging her stupid brother where she can keep him safe." His tone was honest and respectful with a touch of joy.

"I would consider the sentiment admirable if I wasn't about to be crushed under your boot."

"Yeah, you're getting crushed alright. I think I am starting to get how you tick." Heracles' emotions told Caren it wasn't a bluff. He was too assured of himself for that. "Tell you what, drop that piece of cloth and wait for us to get Illya's brother and I will let you live." She instantly knew he was still being honest. "Don't really want to kill a pretty thing like you."

Again the man's emotions told the nun he fully believed what he was saying, especially the touch of resignation that grew during his offer. "Why is someone like you in the Khaos Brigade then? You are going to kill plenty of pretty things."

"Because devils, angels and everything in between are just holding Humanity back." Once more his answer carried a confidence and certainty that couldn't be missed. "They are a plague and we are the heroes who will get rid of it. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes, unfortunately." Caren felt apprehension in her own being knowing that fear was taking hold of her. "More reason for me to stop you!" The Shroud of Magdalene danced around her left arm as she held it with both hands. "So you don't make a foolish mistake!"

"Huhu, is that what compassion from a nun feels like?" Heracles asked gently as his aura grew thin. So thin it almost didn't appear present but instead gave the impression he was just glowing.

"More like piety." The silver haired woman responded gently as her body started leaning to her left. "Because letting you destroy everything would just be wrong!" She dashed in his direction at full speed, abandoning all hesitation.

Heracles was impressed but not surprised. The fight had to end somehow, they both knew it. "Pity for you," he charged as well, his dash covering the full distance before hers could reach half of it, "I am already a destroyer!!"

Despite their collision happening faster than she intended, Caren was nevertheless prepared to react and threw the Shroud of Magdalene towards Heracles while preparing to retreat, expecting an explosion.

Which never came and instead Variant Detonation's aura vanished as the giant threw a

punch towards the silver haired woman. Her reaction was expected and with a nudge the shroud moved to intercept the hit. In the blink of an eye the Shroud of Magdalene wrapped itself around the right fist.

Only when she felt satisfaction from Heracles did the nun realize it was a trap as he pulled his arm back and her with it as most of the shroud was still wrapped around her body. Still that was a Holy Shroud whose duty was to protect women so it quickly leaped from the nun's shoulder to wrap itself around the giant's head.

It wasn't fast enough and its movement was anticipated. "So this is an Artifact of the Church? Mystic code, right? Or something like that?" Heracles asked as he threw his right hand in front of his face far enough that all the Shroud of Magdalene could capture as his left hand was free to grab Caren's neck. He slammed her down on the ground, her head's back hitting the floor, pretty much incapacitating her. "Don't worry. It'll be over-

He didn't get to finish as Shirou came from the side with Bakuya shining brightly. Heracles had plenty of warning thanks to the mass of power and the bright light that was the redhead's aura.

Upon noticing the Mage of Swords' sudden approach he didn't hesitate to let go of Caren and retreat while reactivating Variant Detonation. He was just a few millimeters away from the silver haired woman, who hadn't even recovered her breath, and his aura was already back at full force.

It was worthless against Bellerophon and the man lost a hand because of it, the hand that had been trying to suffocate Caren. To his credit Heracles didn't scream nor cried, he roared a mighty battlecry and threw the strongest hook he could to Shirou who was just beside him.

The redhead had stopped for Caren's sake since he couldn't just grab her at the speed he was going before. Instead he crouched by her side to get a hold of her by the waist while the giant focused on the counter attack.

Already understanding the dangers of Heracles' sacred gear, Shirou didn't risk any more contact because the silver haired woman's life was on the line. Instead he focused everything on speed and Bellerophon obeyed, focusing their aura to get Caren away from the enemy's range.

"Oh for he is the Lord~ The one above~ And he guiiiiiiiiiiides uuuuus aaaaaaaaallllll~"

He heard his next attacker approaching but she wasn't bothering to hide, her throat going all out on a song about how God was great. The Mage found it tasteless especially when she tried to stab Caren with a sword while the other went for his neck.

Since the attack was nothing special he focused on protecting his precious charge with Bakuya as his aura and Ki protected his vitals. And Jeanne had really aimed for his vitals without a shadow of a doubt, his eyes seeing murderous intent even as the words from her mouth praised otherwise.

Bakuya moved like a white streak to bash one of her rapiers away and he tried to cut her down but she surprised him by retreating while stabbing her other rapier on the ground. It suddenly began to glow and Shirou turned around to protect Caren from a wave of fire that the sword unleashed in their direction.

While his back took the blow, he barely noticed it. 'So she also-' His thoughts were cut off when he heard Stake Victim Dragoon making its appearance with a loud roar and a huge claw going straight to his face. With glowing eyes he met the blow with Bakuya, stopping the steel dragon in its tracks. "Size is not a document."

Was all he said when unleashing several slashes towards the Balance Breaker's neck and cutting it apart to reveal the Core he knew was there. Dozens of blows connected in the space of a few seconds while the metal creature tried to retreat but was too slow to escape his strikes.

Thanks to his Structural Analysis he knew exactly the point where to find the thing his Reality Marble couldn't identify, the junction between the neck and chest from Blade Blacksmith's furious avatar.

And it was furious as it tried to swallow him but with a step to the side Shirou avoided the last ditch effort and reached his target, a glowing orb that pulsed with Holy Element. Turning Bakuya around, his aura transformed into a pegasus as his stab grew stronger thanks to the Legendary Mount's Divinity.

A stab was all it took and the Balance Breaker's eyes stopped shining as it let out a sound between like seesaws suddenly halting, a growl and a wince before falling apart, its body crumbling into dust.

Jeanne felt Stake Victim Dragoon's destruction in her heart and almost fell unconscious by the sudden shock.

She certainly lost her voice for a moment but by that point she was already by Heracles' side who used his remaining hand to steady her. "You alright?" He asked while tightening his fingers around the Shroud of Magdalene which was trying to get his neck.

The only reason it was failing was because of how big the man was and how, despite missing a hand, he was using that arm to hold the shroud down. Funnily enough that made the red cloth actually wrap itself around the wound, starving off the bleeding.

Unfortunately it would only get in the way as Jeanne presented his cut off hand. "I will be for the Lord is my savior~" Her voice was a little strained because of her Balance Breaker's destruction but she worked quickly to get the giant back in the fight.

From a pocket of her uniform she drew a bottle with a red liquid while pulling the shroud off from the gray haired man's arm all too easily. "How are you doing that?" Considering he was much stronger and how many times he failed in destroying the shroud, Heracles had the right of feeling confused.

“For He will answer those who ask~ In due tiiiiiiime~” She was improvising the lyrics but the message was received. ‘I will explain later.’

“Sure, thanks for giving me a hand.” Heracles chuckled at the deadpan stare Jeanne gave him. ‘At least the shock of having her Balance Breaker destroyed didn’t affect her that much. But I can tell it drained a lot of her energy.’ His eyes shifted to the shroud as the blonde pulled out a knife and began to cut it apart after a while. ‘Seriously, how did this survive an explosion just to get cut into ribbons?’

Meanwhile the new Maid of Orleans helped her ally, Shirou did the same thing with an eye on them just in case they tried another surprise attack. ‘At least Faust is out of the picture for now.’ The other magus could be seen having his body treated but soon he would be returning to the fight, the redhead knew. ‘Xenovia also needs help but she can hold on some more and...’

A cough to his side caught his attention and soon he saw Caren trying to stand up while massaging her neck. “Thanks for the rescue \*cough\* Shirou-san \*cough\* but I don’t believe I will \*cough cough\* be of much assistance any longer.”

“... Drop the ‘san’. With how much we have fought, you don’t need to be formal.” Helping her down as the woman clearly needed to sit, he replied, “Also, don’t worry about that.” while examining her neck. The bruises there were already becoming purple. ‘One more second. If I have wasted one more second.’ Glancing to the side he saw the limp form of Kirei approaching slowly. “Are you alright?”

“Relatively.” Was the priest’s half sarcastic response.

And hearing his weak tone filled Caren with concern and when she looked at him, she couldn’t hide her horror. “Father!”

In an instant she was on her feet helping him sit down since his wounds were far worse than hers. Despite the several explosions from her fight, Caren’s worst bruise was the one on her neck which she could easily ignore. Everything else were small cuts from debris and the lack of protection for her legs.

Kirei, on the other hand, was bleeding from several places, left arm was broken and twisted unnaturally, some of his skin was missing and despite wearing black the other two could see the wet patches where he was bleeding.

Not that was necessary for the claw marks on his chest and back or the cut on his right leg.

‘That dragon pretty much treated him like a ragdoll.’ Shirou couldn’t help but think of seeing the unveiled state the older man was in. Despite that he still managed to reach them, even if he couldn’t hide the limp. “And that was without the dragon catching you?”

“If he had caught me either I would have lost a limb or worse.” Kirei replied as Caren tore apart one of his sleeves to tie up a wound. “Caren, there is too much for you to patch me up.



Don't waste time."

"It gives you an extra minute or so, the opposite of wasting time." Biting her lip, she cursed herself under her breath. "If I still had the Shroud of Magdalene..." A scalpel dropped on her hand and she could feel the mana which it was made from.

"If any of you can use mana, EM will take care of any wound." Unfortunately even Tracing the thing cost him a lot because Bakuya was on his hand. But he couldn't let it go without losing Bellerophon's aura and considering the situation, he knew it was needed. "That shroud was your only means of fighting?"

It was Kirei who replied. "While quite skilled, Caren is neither an Exorcist nor an Executor, despite having received the proper training." He grabbed the scalpel and stabbed his own leg without hesitation. "This is far better than I expected, almost a Miracle on itself." He motioned to their adversaries with his head. "Not compared with that, of course. I am pretty sure Heracles must have used something similar to save himself after I stabbed his heart."

Shirou nodded in agreement, his sharp eyes recognizing the red substance from afar. "Phoenix Tears... It's always that Clan, isn't it?"

"Isn't the sale of that extremely controlled?" Caren asked before jumping a little when the priest stabbed her arm. "Father! You could have warned me!" Her eyes still showed clear concern.

Within reason as anyone could see that despite having stopped the bleeding, Kirei still had several broken bones. "Where is the fun in that? Don't worry about me, not like any of us will be of any use anymore." From his coat he pulled out a familiar handle. "This is my last light sword and you have no means of fighting now that the shroud was rendered useless." Of course he was referring to the tattered remains around Jeanne after she freed Heracles. Once Caren was fully healed he pulled the scalpel back and stabbed his own arm, making Shirou's eyebrows jump. "Without it, she can't attack and just dodging isn't going to help. Certainly not if the Maid of Orleans summons another dragon... and that is an ironic statement."

"Care to share?" Shirou asked as his eyes focused on the blonde again who had just finished healing Heracles hand and was focusing on him.

"It has to do with why Joan of Arc was burned at the stake... Which either makes her Balance Breaker's name extremely appropriate or a joke from Fate..." Personally the man hopped for the latter. He would love it if Fate had a sense of humor. "I will tell you later. For now, you have bigger troubles to worry about." Kirei grunted as his bones were fixed. It was faster than the average EM user could do, usually common on those with a decent medical knowledge. "Without us to serve as a distraction, you will need to contest against the two of them. Three once Gilgamesh finishes off your girlfriend," an inevitability as they all could see Xenovia struggling, "four if the magus Dimension Lost user returns. Perhaps suggesting surrender is not offensive in those circumstances?"

"They will kill Ise." And both of them knew that was enough to keep Shirou in the fight. If

there was some assurance everyone else would make out alive, he would give up begrudgingly since the situation was dreadful at best but surrender meant his friend's death. "Besides, I may or may not have killed some of them already... don't know for sure how good their precautions are." The Mage of Swords knew Illya and Gilgamesh would speak on his behalf nonetheless but he also didn't want to quit so that was just an excuse. 'Either way, if I have to face them by myself...'

Seeing the redhead's grip on his sword made Caren bite her lip. "I am sorry that I can't be of any more help." Unlike Kirei, who was pale because of blood loss and exhaustion, she could still keep fighting if she had the means. "If I just hadn't fallen into that trap..."

After a bitter chuckle, Shirou replied. "... You can say that about this whole situation." He grinned at her with honesty and confidence. "Don't worry! I ain't a Mage for nothing." Bellerophon voiced his accent even if only he could hear. "So just sit down and rest a bit. I will take care of everything and maybe get whatever is left of your shroud back."

Her eyes grew wide and she smiled with gratitude despite saying, "That isn't advised, Shirou. The Shroud of Magdalene is one of the Church's best mystic codes to trap men... emphasis on 'men'." Pointing in Heracles direction, they all saw how he moved his right hand continuously to make sure it was functional. "Even he couldn't break free and he is bigger than you."

"Was that an indirect?" The redhead asked playfully.

"Maybe..." The silver haired woman's expression never stopped being serious. "Either way, a man can't cut the shroud nor tear it apart. Only a woman's touch," they watched as Jeanne pocket a part of the shroud, much to the nun's ire, "can set them free. So don't touch it."

"Will it work like that?" At Caren's deadpan expression, Shirou let out a sigh. "Right, magic..." She began to glare and he rolled his eyes. "Or God's Miracle. This is legitimately not the time for this discussion." He began to advance again. "Just stay back and rest. I will try to... silence a Saint."

Distractions aside, it was the best strategy since, if successful, then Ise would be able to get back in the fight. He still could hear his friend's screams of anguish and while that made Shirou upset, he already had plenty of reasons to be angry since the ambush began.

Xenovia was hurt, Caren got wounded, Kirei was only awake and alive because of his background and Ise was being tortured even if the enemy stopped blasting him constantly. That meant little since with just a few words the devil found himself unable to do a thing thanks to the Saint's power.

So long Jeanne kept singing or praying, any devil was powerless and neutralized which was giving the Hero Faction's magicians time to recover before trying to kill Ise again. For Shirou that implied many things but one of them was deeply crucial for his being. A truth that he was unable to deny.

Had that ambush happened at a more unfortunate time then several of his loved ones could be dead.

And that pissed him off.

'I need to finish this quickly.' Bellerophon nodded in agreement with excitement that made the Mage pause. 'You have been acting strangely today.' The reply surprised him; an image of the pegasus dancing around his Noble Phantasm. 'Bakuya is... excited? Is that what you are saying?'

The sword also was acting weirdly to the point it made him miss a sure-kill throw that would have already saved everyone. Shirou didn't even know how to react because nothing similar had happened to him before.

'But it happened to someone else...' Shirou remembered when the Knight of Phenex, Karlamine, tried to use Bakuya with another weapon. 'Except I wasn't using anything else and yet... it moved on its own.'

There was also Bellerophon's excitement to consider, all signs that something was happening that he couldn't understand. Yet it wasn't like he could just drop Bakuya and pull another weapon since only the white sword had the pegasus' protection.

Only it was strong enough to compete against the adversaries he had left since with it he almost defeated Georg when even Caladbolg failed to finish the man because of Dimension Lost.

"Are you done with your prayers?" Shirou asked sarcastically as he approached Jeanne and Heracles, the woman still singing as loudly as she could. "Say, is she using a spell so her voice is this loud or the dimension is helping her?"

"Pft. You really think we're telling you?" Heracles sounded cautious and guarded as he stepped in front of the Saint with his fists held high and Variant Detonation active. "Not going to get the nun and the priest to help you out? Or she could only fight with a piece of cloth?"

"As far as I have seen, that cloth was giving you a world of troubles." At the sight of a frown on the giant's face, Shirou grinned and assumed a proper stance. 'That is right, get mad. I will finish you off and then the fake Maid of Orleans...' Obviously if he got a free shot, he would take it.

However the woman proved she had other plans by stopping her singing for a second to shout once more, "**Balance Breaker!!**" Again an egg made of steel was manifested and an instant later it cracked revealing a very familiar creature. "**Stake Victim Dragon!!!**"

Its roar was loud but lasted little as Jeanne's song began to take over the area again, much to Shirou's chagrin as he was close enough to hear Ise's screams thanks to the end of the bombardment.

The sad truth was that he couldn't think about his friend's plight at the moment. "So she can use her Balance Breaker several times even after it was destroyed despite it being a giant dragon..." By how Jeanne was holding her sword, Shirou knew she had no intentions of fighting either. "Aren't you after a one on one match?"

Playing with Heracles' ego didn't work as he hopped. "Illya will rip my ear off if I let you escape because I wanted some fun." His eyes quickly grew serious as he prepared to charge. "She's probably already gonna do it anyway because we're about to break a few bones."

"For the guardians of God are steadfast~" Once more Jeanne ad libbed the song, voicing her agreement with her dragon roaring once more and looking ready to pounce.

'In these circumstances I don't have a choice.' Shirou acknowledged quickly, realizing that using Bellerophon's power superficially wouldn't be enough to defeat the two warriors in front of him nor the others that will join later.

Divine aura exploded from his body as the Mage of Swords raised Bakuya until he was pointing his blade towards Heracles. The pegasus' image grew more bright and powerful behind him as he prepared to use Ascension regardless of how much energy it would cost.

"I just need a minute, no, thirty seconds!" Shirou declared loudly to himself and even if his two opponents saw it as a challenge, it was more of a preparation for what was to come. "Let's go!!"

Mana exploded from his body, both Heracles and Jeanne remembering the record of Shirou and Vali's fight. "Stop him!" Shouted the maiden, her giant companion was already dashing to do just that.

Then something happened and a gold light crossed the battlefield flying towards the Mage of Swords coming directly from the Gate of Babylon. Neither of the three knew when it was fired but the telltale power from a Noble Phantasm was proof that it was a treasure worthy of the King's Vault.

For an instant the trio thought Gilgamesh had moved to interrupt Shirou from unleashing his trump card but that moment moved faster for the redhead than anyone else as Bellerophon sang with joy and Bakuya, both in his hand and in his Reality Marble, joined in the symphony.

A grin came to his face as he raised his left hand to catch the projectile. "Look at that!" He shouted loudly as Bellerophon's power grew and spread to the new sword. "It is the power of love!"

It was a perfect match to Bakuya; same edge, same weight, down to the smallest details. Sure enough, it was different from the one in his hand since that was basically a copy but to anyone else's eyes, the only difference between the two would be in the surface like their color.

Black as the night sky with a red pattern that made it look like a turtle shell, it was nevertheless a weapon made without imperfections. The sword was made without a goal, without vanity, but upon the death of its owner gained a single directive.

To find its other half.

Through History the two were always together, the Married Twins Who Are Yin and Yang.

Only with each other they were complete.

Inside Shirou's Reality Marble the two halves were already side by side. His world resonated by their reunion and in his heart he made a promise to reunite the black blade with the original white one. He owned them that much because with them a despairing situation became a little brighter.

For just having it in his hands, Shirou felt hope.

"Welcome home, Kanshou, Gan Jiang." He said softly as the pegasus behind him shone brighter as black mixed with white and all in the dimension could finally hear their song. "Don't worry, your wife is waiting. We just need to... clean the trash first."

He felt the sword, the real one in his grip, vibrate, almost like it was truly alive and acknowledging that the Mage was telling the truth and that with him it was only a matter of time before he met his other half.

Finally Kanshou and Bakuya would be together again, two halves of a whole.

Proof of that was that the once pure white pegasus had changed both inside and outside Unlimited Blade Works; his connection with the Noble Phantasms changing his mane and half his legs starting from above the hooves into black.

Each wing took a color and the aura's were so large they were able to hug mountains.

It soared to the sky and Shirou never felt so strong in his life, his heart beating faster as the History of the sword flowed into his mind and Bellerophon's power expanded upon connecting with a complete Noble Phantasm.

*After being forged, the sword was used to kill its own maker.*

*All he wanted was something to remind himself of his lovely wife but even that was denied.*

*Instead the king of Wu, who was angry upon learning two swords were born because of his order, had the man killed out of spite.*

*"Both belong to me," he had declared before snuffing the smith's life in recompense, making sure his last sight would be of the blade and his blood.*

*But their love survived and once the blades were together they wished to remain such.*

*For Gan Jiang loved Mo Ye and Mo Ye loved Gan Jiang.*

*Both would have given their lives for each other and in a sense they did; the wife for the swords and the husband for her memory.*

*And that love gave the blades an unbelievable capability to attract each other.*

*That was what, more than reaching the Realm of the Gods, made Kanshou and Bakuya special.*

*They weren't two Noble Phantasms but two swords that formed a single entity which always looked for its other half.*

*Only together could they shine true.*

*But greed broke them apart once more.*

*Wars and violence of all sorts had different people fighting over the swords.*

*However they would always find each other, eventually.*

*Even when the King of Heroes' descendants managed to grab one half and lock it into their Vault, it always looked for a way out.*

*To find its missing piece.*

*For the love it was shared between the smith and his wife was what allowed them entrance in the Realm of the Gods.*

*When the presence of its other half was felt, despite only being a facsimile of it, despite not being the absolute real deal, the black blade took its chance.*

*The Vault opened several times to send many of its treasures outside for reasons it couldn't discern but the important thing was that Bakuya was close and also looking for Kanshou.*

*That whatever power had touched the white sword since they were split also called for the black one.*

*And once it was close enough, Kanshou hijacked one of the portals and broke free.*

*Completely missing its target in favor of finding its other half.*

*Because more than anything, they belonged together.*

The happiness Shirou felt from his blades was real, part of their Legend, even if the swords weren't really alive to feel it. Gan Jiang and Mo Ye were together again despite their bodies

long since becoming dust. Their union, even though incomplete because the original Mo Ye wasn't present, was as beautiful as a huge forest landscape after the rain with a rainbow crossing the woods.

'The Married Blades... couldn't think of a better name even if I tried.' Crossing the Original Kanshou with Bakuya's copy, he understood that they knew soon enough the blades would be together again. He only needed to make it happen and for that Gan Jiang would support him with all it had. **"Fly beyond the Heavens! Bellerophon!!!"**

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