

Fate/Bonds Beyond Humanity

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81- He Who Reached The Stars II: True Ascension

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“Fly beyond the Heavens! Bellerophon!!!”

All watched as a pillar of black and white shot to the skies marking the arrival of something great.

It was the only way that could be described as the power began to take over Dimension Lost as the gray skies and purple clouds gave way to a dance between polar forces that managed to co-exist.

Yin and Yang. Mo Ye and Gan Jiang. Bakuya and Kanshou.

Upon looking at the sky and seeing the dance between black and white all could feel their presence while Shirou shouted a name with all the strength of his lungs; Bellerophon.

Didn't take long for the light to converge in a single form above the pillar, the new aura of the pegasus irradiating a might that was absent before but grew ever brighter to the point it was blinding.

All that only lasted for a second as in the next moment all could only see the pillar of light and the figure that emerged from it in all the glory belonging to Legends of Old and certainly more than enough power to match them.

Shirou never felt so strong before in his life, so free before in his life. 'It was like... there were chains on my feet and shoulders that I never knew were there... but now they are gone.' Realized the magus with a grin that was unseen by all as his new armor's helmet perfectly hid his head. 'Is this how you always feel, Bellerophon? You really feel? Was all I felt before an illusion or a prelude?'

Nobody knew what the redhead asked or how he did it but they all heard what they knew was a reply as the pillar grew smaller and smaller until its power fully joined with its owner leaving everyone to watch his new form.

The armor which had been incomplete before wasn't gone as much as it had changed as the metal of Bakuya seamlessly was woven with Kanshou's dark one. Despite his original armor, even the Traced version, being a fusion of several types of steel, Shirou knew the black on it no longer was his own.

It belonged to Bellerophon and Kanshou as much as the white was Bakuya's.

Two halves meeting in the middle with perfect symmetry, black and white, took over his armor, shroud and pants. The colors were truly perfectly split in the middle with white on his right and black on his left.

When the pillar of light solidified on the rest of the armor it shared the rest color scheme, from the more developed boots that reached his tights to the wings on his helmet covering his ears.

The belt was bulkier than before with the diamond shaped appendages covering more of his waist and legs leaving no openings. The gauntlets were fingerless but also larger, reaching tall enough to cover the elbows and stopping only at the biceps which were covered by the shoulder pads.

Most of the chest armor, and Shirou's usual armor, was covered by another armor which made him look bigger. That part of the armor started above his abdomen and despite having a small opening for Medusa's Gift, the rest of his upper body was protected.

There were engravings that looked like a pegasus head with the Gift on the center of his forehead. His shoulders now had two sets of armor that stacked on each other, one going down to protect his biceps while the other could stab someone in a pitch. They also had a bulky and tall collar that left exactly enough room to move his neck easily.

Said collar also had a 'v' shaped opening that one could in theory use to stab Shirou's Adam's apple if the hypothetical attack was strong enough to break through the aura that surrounded his body.

And supposing they could actually get a hit in.

One of the parts that changed the least was the helmet that, despite the new color scheme and new smoother wings on the sides that were still smaller than his head, retained the modern look with a visor completely covering his eyes.

Shining eyes that pulsed black and white, left and right even as their brightness diminished as the transformation settled in the world.

Eyes that were shared with the pegasus' head on Shirou's forehead that watched everything and everyone with excitement.

It obviously wasn't the real pegasus but just looking at the crow engraved in the helmet everyone knew Bellerophon felt elation. Pure and innocent elation that marked the arrival of his owner's true Ascension.

However the armor had a new addition that shone as brightly as the pillar as it diminished but they stayed, captivating everyone, friend and foe alike; wings. Not those malformed made of energy the redhead and pegasus had to deal with before but physical wings as real as the rest of the armor.

A pair of huge wings as tall as the newly armored Mage of Swords. Still on the color scheme, one black and one white. But anyone that had seen the wings of an angel would know that, while similar, those couldn't be wings created by God. Despite their beauty, their majesty, no angel or sacred gear user could claim to wave wings made of swords.

Every single feather, and there were many of them, was a version of Kanshou and Bakuya that moved in unison keeping Shirou up in the air no matter how impossible it should be for steel to move like that.

Yet it waved much like a pegasus wings should, unbound by the laws of physics and ready to take its rider anywhere. For the armor was the pegasus and with it, rider and mount were one.

Completing the armor was of course the gem gifted to him by Medusa and the most singular piece of the armor for a simple reason; like the armor it was divided in two halves but right was black and left was white.

While not necessarily part of his armor, the blades that made it possible, Kanshou and Bakuya patiently waited for their time to strike. And they would strike, everyone was sure of that because the power surrounding Shirou didn't diminish even if the aura wasn't as visible.

Then again it wasn't like he had the time to strike as his Ascension was just completed and the redhead himself was carefully examining his own body and soul. "This is the Realm of the Gods."

Never in his life Shirou expected to be where he was, in a position above everyone else present both literally and figuratively.

Bellerophon's blessing, Medusa's Gift, his Reality Marble, Kanshou and Bakuya allowed him to reach a level the younger him, even the him of a few minutes ago, couldn't imagine possible.

Every breath was new and filled with his lungs with air that belonged nowhere, every move felt like it could take either a millisecond or a millennium to be executed and everyone else would still be stuck in a previous moment.

A moment that eventually had to end as time waited for nobody even if many of the present were still either shocked or mesmerized by Shirou's Ascension and his new armor which carried a power too great for some to believe.

Georg believed in it, knew it was as real as himself, and realized that fear began to take over his being completely. "That is impossible." In the blink of an eye his senses were swallowed by the pegasus might and he saw the huge creature, as big as a country, staring down at him. "Ahhh..."

The Hero Faction's top magician saw the depths of Bellerophon's power fully unleashed, no longer needing to direct a huge amount of it to protect his owner or compensating for Kanshou's abstinence.

What Georg's magical senses allowed him to see was the full might of Medusa's child, a goddess' child, and he felt fear. True, unhinged and unadulterated fear, fear so primordial and old that his fight or flight response immediately turned to 'flight' before he could even think about it.

For it was the fear man inherited from their ancestors, fear of the gods and the unknown. Sure Georg knew the pegasus was Divine but for the first time in his life he felt fear born from provoking a superior entity. One he couldn't fully comprehend, understand or negotiate with, whose designs were too far above himself.

Then Georg blinked and the moment was gone and he fell to his knees even as his subordinates called for him. Their pleas and concerns fell on deaf ears and quite literally so because Faust's descendant couldn't hear them as his mind turned fully to a single directive; run away, escape, survive.

With fury in his heart and the ideals of the Hero Faction in his spirit, he pushed over it. "KILL HIM!!!!!!!" He ordered with a wave of his hands, his voice running across his dimension making sure all could hear.

And they were not just words, Georg also sprung into action as the mana in his dimension grew thicker and dozens of magic circles were formed by his power. Every single attack inside Dimension Lost filled the area with more mana that its owner could use as an extra reserve and elevate them to new heights.

Soon a few dozen magic circles turned into hundreds with dozens of different types of spells being cast together. Those magic circles carried words of angels or devils, spells of old and new, alchemic compositions and the most vile curses ever imagined, runes and prayers to gods.

"That is impossible." Caren said upon saying so many magic circles, enough to fill the gray sky and some more.

"That should be impossible." Kirei sounded legitimately impressed as he grabbed the silver haired woman and began to run. "We better get some distance before the fireworks start. Compared to that, the bombardment that hit Hyoudou Issei is going to look like a bunch of faulty grenades."

The Pawn himself had just recovered from several minutes of torture and felt extremely confuse and weak weak despite draconic power still circulate his being, courtesy of Ddraig. 'What the fuck? ... I have the worst headache ever.'

[You really could do nothing against a Saint.] The dragon pointed out with fury barely contained. He didn't blame his Partner but the devil could feel the wrath Ddraig was holding back. [We have been incapacitated and attacked for the last ten or so minutes without even throwing a single punch back. I swear the first chance I get heads are rolling!!]

From somewhere in his mind, Ise realized that besides hearing a tune akin to a red hot poker on his brain, he also had been hearing several explosions. 'How are we still alive?'

Grumbling a little more, the Original Red Dragon Emperor controlled himself fully to reply. [Thank me for that later. For now, I think we have nothing else to worry about. Look over there.]

With Ddraig guiding his neck, the Pawn of Gremory quickly located the flying black and white warrior. 'Who is the guy?'

[That is Emiya Shirou...] The dragon paused to let the information sink in as hundreds of magic circles appeared in the sky. [And looks like the Khaos Brigade decided that kidnapping him is no longer an option.]

"What the hell is happening?!" Ise managed to ask as all of Georg's magic and several of his subordinates' attacks flew towards the Mage.

There were too many elements and types of energy meshed together for all to be properly accounted for but that was the type of attack one reserved to sink islands. Not only that but several of those had additional effects born of many sorts of magic both from Georg and his subordinates because of the order given.

Despite how dangerous the Mage of Swords had proven himself to be, it was safe to say many in the Hero Faction had tried to attack him with kid's gloves and that the attacks thrown at the Red Dragon Emperor had been far more powerful.

It was even safer to say that nothing sort of an Ultimate Class devil or beings in similar category could have survived the bombardment that befell Ise and he only did such because of Ddraig's efforts.

However an even bigger attack was making his way towards Shirou who casually stared at the several lasers, beams, blasts and everything in between with a mixture of mirth and confusion.

'Shouldn't he have thrown all that at Ise from the get go or was I that much of a good distraction?' Because Georg was the source of most of these attacks and what the redhead failed to identify was how desperate his fellow magus had grown with his true Ascension.

Gripping his swords tightly, Shirou moved with Bellerophon's guidance, the wings on his back beating a single time to push him out of the way leaving all those attacks to collide with each other.

The fireball generated by that many explosions was big, capable of swallowing a whole building and it was growing fast, making the Mage of Swords react. "**Last Stardust!!**"

He settled for what was familiar and felt his body move at the absurd speed that made it seem like time had stopped, the Bakuya in his hand joining its brethrening on his wings. The

reason for that was because the fireball threatened to get Kirei and Caren. While the priest's escape had been quick, it wasn't quick enough but neither he nor the nun needed to worry.

A second they were about to be burned alive but in the next they were beside Ise who looked at them with surprise. "Whoa that was fast." He had barely managed to keep up with Shirou, his eyes only catching glimpses of a blur.

It was better than most got as nobody else had seen how the Mage had gently dropped the two members of the Church before accelerating towards his lover whose posture screamed of concern.

That emotion vanished as she saw his new form arrive by her side. "Miss me?" She punched his shoulder as the fireball exploded behind him. "Auch!"

"Never do that again!" She wanted to hug him but that wasn't the time.

"What? Escape a huge attack like that at the last minute?!" They had to scream as the flash and explosion made Dimension Lost tremble.

"I believe you have something that belongs to me!" Gilgamesh announced as the flash died down and the rest of the Hero Faction looked to see the result of their attack.

Besides a huge empty crater, they knew it was a failure because Shirou's presence still dominated the place, pure and simple. Even if his power wasn't exploding around and his aura wasn't as pronounced as before it was still heavy even if gentle.

While that was happening, their leader had his eyes locked on his friend who felt like a completely different person. "I am not against giving Kanshou to you but only if you join the Hero Faction. Until then-" Gilgamesh's eyes grew wide and he had the distinct impression Shirou was smiling behind his helmet. "How?"

The reason for his shock was simple; the Gate of Babylon was unable to retrieve Kanshou which was once part of its treasury.

Raising the black blade towards his friend, Shirou replied. "Kanshou disagrees." The sword shone with Bellerophon's black aura as his other arm covered in white grabbed Xenovia. "I will deal with you soon enough."

Gilgamesh watched with wide eyes how fast the Mage was actually moving. 'Divinity... that is the power of a god...' His ears caught Georg shouting more orders and he gritted his teeth. "Stop it you fools!! We need to reorganize!!"

Despite not having as much authority inside Dimension Lost as its owner, the blond's voice reached each and everyone of his allies, Georg sweating cold as a new fear threatened to crush his sense of self.

After gulping it down, the black haired man replied. "Gilgamesh, we can't risk leaving him alive-"

“And you think your attacks are having any effect?! He is just going to dodge them! Or worse, ignore you all!!” Their leader’s retort silenced any dissent and Gilgamesh slowly returned to Jeanne and Heracles while fishing a specific potion from the Gate. “However, this is also an opportunity.”

“An opportunity?” Heracles asked calmly as the hairs of his body kept standing no matter how much he tried to calm himself down.

By his side, Jeanne was shaking in fear and unable to sing anymore hymns as every instinct told her the Red Dragon Emperor no longer was a threat. Or better yet, there was a much bigger one they had to deal with or die.

Which helped her focus on what her leader was saying. “You want to test our extra measures?”

The gray haired giant grunted. “Those don’t work. That is why we are going with Illya’s plan.”

“And our opponent here isn’t a god but he is certainly god-like.” All members of the Hero Faction could hear the respect in the blond’s tone as he gulped the magic potion with gusto. Cleaning his mouth, he threw the bottle on the ground and they all watched as red and gold mana flowed around his body. “If nothing else, this will tell us if the Hero Faction before Illya had a chance against the gods. Get ready! All of you!! Let us show this Champion of the gods that Humanity isn’t to be trifled with!!!”

By his words they all could understand that their commander had discarded all feelings for his friend and was willing to see him as an enemy. Relief began to pour on the souls of the Hero Faction’s members as a balm which mixed with the belief in Gilgamesh’s power.

“We can do this!”

“Yeah, let’s show that dog of the gods what we can do!”

“For lord Gilgamesh! For lord Cao Cao!”

“For Humanity!”

““For Humanity!!””

With that the group began to react, every magician moving to a position behind their leader as the purely sacred gear holders got ready to guard them. Heracles gave a nod to Jeanne and stood in front of the two blondes defensively as the woman held her sword close and began to focus on her dragon.

‘This isn’t a god...’ Georg kept reminding himself as he used the Fog of Extinction to move behind Gilgamesh and place a hand on his shoulder. “We can beat him. We will beat him!”

“Well said.” The leader gave the magus a nod and everyone watched with relief as Gilgamesh looked far from beaten. “First him, then the gods!!”

Everyone followed his cry with roars of their own.

Yet the fear wasn't going away.

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Xenovia was gently placed back on her feet but the woman wasted no time kneeling. “I am sorry, Master. I failed and-” To her surprise she was silenced by a hug from the taller armored form who also began to pat her head.

While her Noble Gear should protect her from his touch, the bluehead could still feel Shirou's kindness and relief by the action alone. “I'm just glad you are safe.” He held her by the side as she turned to the others, Kirei was fully healed but Caren was helping Ise stand up but even then it was clear he was struggling and Ddraig was helping. “You guys as well. Sorry for dragging you into this mess...”

“We are still inside the enemy's trap.” Kirei pointed out without hesitation even as he stopped to study Shirou's new form with an expression of interest. “Perhaps that isn't a problem for you but-”

“I will handle it.” Emiya cut him off firmly, leaving no room for discussion. “You guys don't need to worry anymore. I can handle this.”

“Shiro, there is no way I am leaving you to fight by yourself!” Xenovia declared with Ise stomping the ground, his red aura about to explode.

“That 's right! I owe those bastards a good beating after all that I went through!!” His head was still hurting and he felt sick but also angry. Very angry. “You can't let us out after all that.”

Placing a hand on his friend's shoulder, being careful to not damage it with Kanshou, Shirou stares intensely in Ise's eyes despite their helmets being on the way. Yet it was easier to find the Pawn's because of how Scale Mail was designed and the devil could tell the magus was focusing fully on him.

“I get that you want some pay back,” his hug on Xenovia grew tighter, “and that you want to fight by my side but you two have already done enough.” Letting go of his lover, he still held her head gently. “They are here for me anyway and it would be rude if I didn't settle this myself.”

[Screw fighting by your side! That Saint is a problem we can do without!] Ddraig's voice caught the Mage off guard for a moment.

Less than a moment even. “And you think Ise can do anything about her? Or need I remind you that you have been fixing your Balance Breaker constantly for the last few minutes?” The retort silenced the dragon but mostly because he was tired. Without a body of his own,

the effort of keeping his Partner alive had been costly. "Leave it to me, alright. I will finish this."

"Are you going to kill her? Are you going to kill them all?" Kirei asked exactly what Ddraig wanted to know. "There are at least fifty of them and you know some. No, not only that but you know their ideals and can agree with them to an extent. That Humanity should be able to fight back." Personally the priest didn't care but he loved to see the tension on his counterpart's shoulders. "This isn't a situation where everything can be solved with a chat. If you don't want a war, you probably need to kill all of them."

A heavy silence descended on the area, one that felt louder with how on the other side of the battlefield there was a legion of warriors ready to take their heads. Still nobody broke it as they waited for Shirou's verdict.

In the end the redhead chuckled. "No all, just some." Looking at Xenovia, he knew she felt his sadness. "Cut the head and the body dies..." He turned to Kirei. "You and him deal too much with absolutes." He touched his lover's back gently. "Please, heal her too."

Realizing nothing that he could say would change anything, he raised the EM in his hand. "I suppose she will need to lower her defenses a little."

Then the Mage of Swords took a step back and stared at the Kanshou on his hand. He could feel that one the same way he felt the ones that were part of his wings and armor. Especially the wings given how those were still swords of a sort even with no handles and just blades.

And each of them, including the Original Noble Phantasm, was being influenced by Bellerophon making them all stronger. At that point it was safe to say only he would be able to tell which swords were original and which ones were projections.

All but the swords themselves and Kanshou waited patiently to be reunited with its other half. "It would feel wrong to take you to this battlefield." Shirou said out loud. "Also, I really don't know what I can do in this form so I want to test it."

Xenovia grabbed his arm with alarm. "Shiro, that Ascension... it feels too strong. Stronger than my Noble Gear even if I have Durandal- And you don't know anything about it?"

"Heh, you know I just got this today. Everybody watched it." Opening and closing his free hand several times over, the Mage felt his new power circulate. "I never felt this energized in my life. This is Bellerophon's real power... my real power." Then he focused on his lover before shouting. "Xenovia Quarta, I need you to protect our allies while I deal with our enemies!" His tone was akin to a lord or a king and the knight could help but drop on a knee. "Can I trust you with this task?"

"Yes, my lord." She didn't like it but there was something in Shirou's new aura that offered a reassurance of victory that wasn't there before. It made him seem bigger, perhaps even larger than life.

Despite his aura having such an effect, it clearly wasn't working on Ise. "Hold on a minute. At least let me-"

"The second Jeanne focuses on you again, you are going to be down for the count, Ise!" Again Shirou's tone left no room for discussion and when his eyes began to glow beneath his visor, the new Red Dragon Emperor was cowed. "I can't watch over you and deal with them so let me handle this."

Ddraig didn't like what he was feeling but kept his thoughts to just his Partner. [This feeling and presence... It reminds me too much of a god and I crushed plenty of them during my time.]

Tilting his head, Shirou surprisingly replied. "Well, it isn't your time, but Ise's time and he isn't ready for this fight." Some looked at him with confusion but both Red Dragon Emperors were shocked. "Huh... so I did hear you... Wonder how that works." Deciding that the matter was settled, he turned to Kirei. "I can hear them grouping up so I don't have much time. Heal Xenovia so she can protect you all just in case they try anything."

"There is still the matter of Gilgamesh." Kotomine argued for the sake of it. "I doubt your knight can stop him."

"She won't need to." Emiya then turned to Caren. "Something wrong? You have been quite silent for a while."

Blinking twice to shrug off her surprise, the silver haired woman eventually replied. "Oh, I just felt I have nothing to contribute." She shrugged nonchalantly or at least she tried to. "Thank you for leaving Xenovia to protect us. And Issei too. I suppose giving thanks is all I am good for right now." Things were worse for the nun because, 'I can't read his emotions anymore.'

It was nothing new as she met several people capable of blocking their emotions but less than an hour ago she could feel Shirou's clearly. Almost like a pure crystalline lake fearlessly displaying all the wonders inside. Some were treasures, others were ugly creatures but all was free for her to bear witness.

That was the case no longer and the shift was so sudden she would call it jarring.

However everyone else could feel the redhead's new power, the power of Bellerophon, a Divine Beast, fully unleashed. It wasn't hard for her or anyone to understand the Mage of Swords had gained the power of a god.

'Not a major god,' of that Caren was sure, 'but the power of a god nonetheless. And everyone back home would probably be calling me an heretic right about now.' While she never cared, that would be the occasion the nun would scream at them. 'They never met Medusa... and this power...'

[The goddess is reduced but her child certainly is not.] Ddraig thought in the privacy of his soul with an eye out to see if Shirou could hear him. Fortunately the answer was no. [And now her Champion can somehow invade sacred gears or something... Partner, we are

stepping up your training after this is done.]

“You bet we are.” The last part the dragon had said out loud.

“Huh, fancy that.” Shirou chuckled again before offering Kanshou’s handle to Caren. “Can you hold that for me?” She blinked but took the sword and with a thought there was a Bakuya in his empty hand. “This one as well, please.”

“Alright, what am I doing with these?” The swords felt heavy in her grip and she certainly couldn’t use them.

Which was fine by Shirou. “Just keeping Kanshou out of the fight. Like I said, it feels wrong to use it without Bakuya. The real Bakuya.” His wings spread, revealing their magnificence. “Not that I don’t have plenty to work with.”

“Shouldn’t you give that to Father?” The silver haired woman really didn’t know what to do with swords and even holding them was more than a little odd.

Chuckling with good humor, Shirou turned around and began to walk away. “Don’t trust Kirei that much, Xenovia’s hands are busy and Ddraig will probably convince Ise to do something stupid. So you guys sit tight. This will be over soon enough.” White danced with black as his body began to glow. “This won’t take long.”

“Shiro!” Xenovia called for him even if she didn’t move from her place. She needed to wait for Kirei to heal her, after all. “Don’t you dare to lose.”

Giving her a thumbs up, he marched forward with a resolved expression nobody could see. ‘Did I already kill people today or I am just about to kill the first?’ Shirou asked nobody as Bellerophon cared not about his plight. The Legendary Mount was loyal to a fault and would do as he bid, whatever that was. ‘And am I really about to kill a friend?’

That got a reaction and he felt concern pour from the pegasus. A mental head pat calmed the Phantasmal Beast down and soothed his thoughts as he marched to war. At least what he felt should be a war yet he felt no nervousness or concern. There he was about to face half a hundred men and his mind was crystal clear.

His only doubt was how to end things because Angelo was his friend and Shirou honestly didn’t like killing. He truly wanted to believe there was something he could say to stop the violence before it escalated.

‘It already escalated, didn’t it?’ Looking at his armored hand, the redhead took a deep breath as his new power kept moving freely around his body from the depth of his soul. ‘The full might of the Divine from a Phantasmal Beast and a Noble Phantasm... at the tip of my fingers.’ With a thought he could have another set of Kanshou and Bakuya ready but decided against it. ‘I will defeat them first and decide everything else later. Besides,’ an involuntary smile grew in his lips, ‘I need to learn to use this new Ascension. Everything I knew before won’t cut it.’ For starters the mana cost was gone.

Or not really gone but instead Bellerophon was paying for it, the pegasus' mana pool mixing with his own and acting as the fuel to keep their powers combined. Not just that but there were no 'leaks', the armor was complete and once Traced, once Shirou Ascended, all its power was at his disposal.

With new resolve he stared at the Hero Faction at a distance and noticed their new formation; they had basically formed a column with a diamondhead in the front where their main fighters watched him carefully.

Heracles took point with Variant Detonation pulsing around him, Stake Victim Dragon remained beside Jeanne who looked too nervous to talk but was taking solace from her dragon's presence and Gilgamesh had Georg behind him.

Everyone else formed several lines with magic circles and sacred gears prepared while the close quarter fighters protected the flanks, at least ten meters away from the leadership who was poised in general to block the Mage's path.

A funny thought crossed Shirou's mind. 'Wish I could Project a giant bowling ball...' With some humor, he began. "Ready or not," the Mage shouted across the battlefield, "here I come!!!"

Contrary to the eagerness in his words Shirou started with a light jog to get the bearings of his new Ascension. At least a light jog for him but for everyone watching it was like he had broken in a sprint faster than most cars. It certainly should be too fast for most people to react.

So of course someone did. "**Gate of Babylon!!**" Three steps from the armored warrior and dozens of Gates had already been opened. After another three steps they started firing. "Take this!!!" And kept firing as Gilgamesh pointed Enki towards his friend.

Noble Phantasms of several types flew in Shirou's direction, plenty of them swords which made him chuckle. "Not holding back anymore?!" He asked loudly while ducking the first weapon and side stepping the second.

Despite how fast the Gate of Babylon's projectiles could be, none of them was able to get a hit, either clean or otherwise. The Mage of Swords dodged everything Gilgamesh was throwing at him which frustrated the blond but he wouldn't allow anger to cloud his judgment.

'That is the power of Divinity, after all.' Yet he couldn't deny that his strategy failing completely irritated him greatly. 'I am even shooting swords to try and flood his mind with information and yet...'

"Gilgamesh!" Georg called his name as he noticed the black and white warrior began to advance while dodging the weapons and explosions. "Should we-"

"You will stay quiet!" Having his family's treasures failing like that rubbed Gilgamesh the wrong way. With a mental command eight of his portals stopped firing and scepters

brimming with power. **“Eight Gates of Perdition! The Raising of the Storm! My name is Gilgamesh and I Command your Power! Turn the One before me into Ashes!!”**

Eight blasts colored dark brown exploded towards Shirou in such a way that if he moved the people behind him would suffer. Quickly Xenovia began to raise Durandina as everyone expected the redhead to dodge once they were safe.

She didn't need to bother. “Testing defense now!” The Mage of Swords announced loudly as he moved the right wing forward to take the hit.

The white wing, made with feathers of Bakuya, didn't budge or even grow hot by the impact as the spell tried to rip him apart. In fact the armored warrior wasn't feeling any strain even as the landscape beneath his feet began to crack and break.

When enough of it was destroyed he just floated there without worries as Gilgamesh kept pushing mana on the spell. But obviously that wasn't the only thing he was doing and with some hesitation he combined the two halves of Enki into a bow.

Didn't take more than a second to aim, pull out the arrow of light and shoot it dead center on the white wing. It hid inside the previous attack which was unable to disturb Enki's projectile flight path until it hit its target. When that happened the armored magus was finally pushed back for the first time since his Ascension.

Enki's arrow alone packed a punch many times stronger than Gilgamesh's spell and its impact unleashed a shockwave big enough to undo the first attack while also punishing Shirou's resistance.

Or at least attempting too as the redhead's black wing was enough to keep him afloat and strong enough to fight against Enki's power. Both held grand power and were Noble Phantasms with a considerable History. But only one truly was made by gods and so Enki should and was superior to Kanshou and Bakuya in pretty much every sense.

However that was only true so long as the Married Blades were by themselves and with Bellerophon by their side it was like Heaven and Earth were touching each other once again as they became blades that could do more than touch the Realm of the Gods.

For the pegasus allowed them to challenge it freely, giving them the Divine essence to reach Enki's level.

So, with some effort, Shirou managed to block the arrow of light fully even if the blades which made his wings cracked under the pressure. But the damage was small even if everyone could see it when Gilgamesh's spell ended and the man began to pant for air, disbelief in his eyes.

Cracked as Bakuya feathers were, the damage was minimal, only three of dozens were really affected and Shirou himself was unharmed. It was something that nobody in the Hero Faction could believe happened and even Xenovia watched the Mage's defense with renewed admiration.

“That is stronger than the Peerless Armor!” The blue head announced out loud.

[Those wings are, at least.] Ddraig observed the fight carefully, studying Shirou’s threat level.

Which was considerably high when the armored head tilted to the side, examining his damaged feathers before brushing his fingers on the back of the wing gently. The blades shone softly before the cracks vanished like they hadn’t just stopped the attack of one of the most powerful Noble Phantasms known to mankind.

“Huhu.” A soft chuckle escaped Shirou’s throat as he opened his wings fully to show how undamaged they were before adding, “Thank you sir, may I have another?”

Since usually he was the one making taunts like that, Gilgamesh felt slightly offended. “Aren’t you getting too cocky?” Another arrow was aimed at Shirou who didn’t bother to react. “Feeling all arrogant because your goddess finally answered your prayers?”

Everyone could see the tension on Shirou’s shoulder but more than anything they saw how they dropped. “Angelo... you forgot that I don’t pray?” The red eyes of his friend went wide and the magus nodded in confirmation. “Are you really facing me... or are you facing someone else?”

Memories of their first fight on Kuoh’s rooftop raced through the blond’s mind. “Damn it!!” He fired another shot but the black and white warrior didn’t hesitate to advance towards it and use Bakuya’s wing to destroy it mid-air and continue to advance. “**Gate of-**”

Black and white wings beated once and suddenly the magus was inside the group’s circle. “Too slow!” The Mage of Swords declared while dodging to the right from a punch courtesy of Heracles. ‘Hmph. He is faster...’

And wasn’t the only one as Jeanne jumped back and her dragon charged with its claws aimed at Shirou’s red. Again the magus evaded the attack before noticing another one, several magic blasts from Georg, trying to hit his left. Those ones he dodged by sliding backwards with his wings acting like sails as Gilgamesh unleashed another shot from Enki.

That arrow Shirou had no trouble dodging as he no longer had anyone behind him, allowing the arrow to go unopposed as his wings moved down with his shoulders as he circulated the projectile to fly towards the dragon made of swords.

Jeanne saw the danger coming as she was close to her creation and raised her rapier above her head to channel fire on the tip of the blade while shouting. “Devour him!” The dragon charged with its jaws open and Shirou kicked its snout to get some high. He ended up open in the air and on the Saint’s crosshairs. “**Glory Fire!!**”

A huge fireball had formed on the tip of her rapier which the blonde unleashed with a slash straight towards the redhead. Seeing it coming, anyone could see that the Mage had enough time to avoid or block it, especially because that attack was slower than any of Enki’s arrows.

Yet the hit connected much to everyone's surprise except Gilgamesh who was chuckling madly. "Huhuh, like a kid playing with a new toy." He commented much to Georg's horror who realized what that implied.

'He's holding back. All this power and the Mage of Swords is holding back!'

Fortunately he was the only one who heard the commander so nobody else was shaken and reacted to the blond's next order. "Spread around! Give him more targets!"

Then the flames vanished when Shirou opened his wings and stared at the Hero Faction from above. He threw a glance to the magicians a few meters away, wondered why they weren't shooting, and noticed the magic circles weren't really aiming at him.

They were aimed at their best fighters and his nose could detect mana moving from it. "So they are just support?" He asked out loud before glancing towards Gilgamesh. "Not that I am disagreeing. Having so many people giving you power is a valid tactic."

"Heh, can you even complain when you have the power of a god?" Gilgamesh asked back and Shirou just shrugged.

"Georg, get prepared to teleport everyone away if he changes targets." Jeanne suggested as her dragon began to take flight.

Only for their leader to shake his head. "Don't bother." He ordered as they watched Stake Victim Dragoon try to rip the Mage apart with its claws. "He is coming for us first and foremost. We are... I am the one he can't allow to escape."

Shirou avoided another slash from the dragon's claws before dropping a hard kick where its core was hiding behind a ton of steel. Enough steel that the strike failed to reach but Stake Victim Dragoon began to break apart anyway. Taking advantage of that Emiya started to run down the dragon's length as it began to fall backwards.

Jumping from the dragon's tail he aimed a kick towards Jeanne that he expected the woman or her allies to react. Unfortunately for the new Saint, despite gaining extra mana and having her body reinforced by her group's magicians, her dragon's destruction still made her drop to one knee.

Since she needed time, Heracles was happy to provide it.

The giant's speed far exceeded his normal pace and he was suddenly between the new Maid of Orleans and the Mage of Swords with an uppercut fully covered by Variant Detonation's aura.

The impact was strong which made the explosion from the sacred gear even stronger. Yet Heracles was the one on the back foot as Shirou fully ignored the explosion and landed in front of the taller man. The giant's torso was exposed so the redhead punched it several times before finishing with a spinning kick.

'Strong!' Heracles was sent flying above Jeanne's head and hitting the ground shoulders first behind her. 'Too strong! Is that the power of real Divinity!'

Before Shirou had the chance to either pursue the giant or finish off the Maiden, Gilgamesh charged back on the scene with a slash from the left. Sparks flew as Kanshou's wing blocked the blow but the blond didn't let that deter him. He stepped forward to throw a stab with his left hand from above the wing.

He only missed because Emiya shifted his footing into a twist that ended with him throwing a kick at the blond's midsection. Angelo gritted his teeth and glared at his friend shouting, **"GATE OF BABYLON!!!!"**

Several portals opened at once, some bombarded the redhead while a few dropped a couple of pillows to soften up Gilgamesh's fall. But the attack did little and Shirou advanced through the golden light to grab his friend only for Stake Victim Dragoon to come back with a vengeance.

Jeanne had her eyes closed and all her focus on her dragon which managed to grab the redhead between its claws. "Cru-" She couldn't even finish the order when Kanshou and Bakuya's wings cut through the claws like they were made of tissue paper.

The Balance Breaker roared while throwing itself towards the Mage with every intent of crushing him. However the being of metal was too slow and in an instant Shirou was above it delivering a hard backheel kick that destroyed its head and ended that incarnation of Stake Victim Dragoon.

But there was no time for him to comment as several magic circles with a dozen different spells fired on his position. Georg had less time to prepare that attack compared to the previous one but with an emphasis on quality instead of quantity, it was quite strong.

However not a single blast or beam managed to hit Shirou who flew higher and higher while avoiding every hit. 'Looks like I can't just punch through sacred gears.' The redhead took advantage of his fellow magus' attack to think over his capabilities. 'But the extra strength is nice. Is it yours?' He asked Bellerophon and received a negative. 'Mah, I suppose it is the advantage of having Divinity running through my body. Hell, makes me wonder how strong Medusa is going to get once she is at full power. Certainly stronger than the Gorgon.'

After that thought the pegasus made his owner accelerate several times over which surprised everyone quite a bit, including Shirou himself. Yet he understood what the Phantasmal Beast was telling him; we can go further and higher.

'Fufufu. Don't be like that. She is your mom.' A feeling of satisfaction and ego told him that wasn't the issue. "Ah, you don't care if she is stronger than you, you just want to... finish this? Is that it?' Because both of them knew they were holding back their full power due to the magus insistence. 'Well, I just want to... hold that thought.'

Both turned their focus outward as Gilgamesh and Heracles joined Georg's attack, Enki's arrows cutting through the sky faster than anything else save the redhead while the Strongest Greek's descendant charged his aura once again.

“Detonation Might Comet!!!” His armor gained new spikes that soon turned to missiles before he unleashed the main ones in his fists.

And unlike all other projectiles, those began to pursue Shirou much more actively making the redhead pay more attention where he was going.

Then he questioned himself, “Why am I running?” before extending his wings and encasing himself with them as the attacks kept hitting his armor.

Several of the attacks connected, including one shot of Enki, dozens of Heracles missiles and hundreds of Georg's blasts. Only the arrow damaged the wings, the rest just pushed Shirou away from the area until he fell on the ground. Skipping the ground a few times, eventually his body paused and the Mage jumped to the air, wings wide open.

“That was a trip!” Shirou joked before shaking his head and looking up to see several of Detonation Might Comet's missiles flying in his direction. “Alright, I think I am getting the hang of this. Ready, Bellerophon?”

The pegasus sang, black and white aura exploded and they began to beat their wings.

Again Shirou took flight but not to dodge, instead making a straight line towards Heracles who created and shot two giant missiles from his hands again. However the Mage of Swords had an idea and so Traced two more Married Swords which he threw in the Balance Breaker's direction.

It was no contest and the swords shredded the missiles with ease making them disappear into motes of light. Their power had been broken by Bellerophon's aura and so there was no explosion nor nothing that could stop the Noble Phantasms from doing the same to the giant.

Who, in the space of three seconds, shot his Balance Breaker several times towards the swords only for them to either blow up harmlessly around them or be completely nullified by the white and black auras that each carried.

He wasn't fast enough to dodge them either but before Kanshou and Bakuya could claim his flesh, Gilgamesh jumped in front of him brandishing Enki to parry both to the side. “Don't stay in one place, idiot!!!” Roared the King of Heroes' descendant while golden portals appeared over his shoulders. **“Gate of Babylon!!!”**

Shirou was a streak of black and white that couldn't be stopped, completely ignoring the Legendary weapons trying to bar his way; a shield was bashed to the side, several swords bounced from his armor, spears broke against the might of his wings.

Soon he had covered the whole distance between him and his friend, Kanshou and Bakuya,

back on his hands as he brought both swords down at the same time in a mighty strike which Enki blocked.

A loud 'gong' ran through the area forcing people to cover their ears while Gilgamesh felt his bleed. At least he managed to stay standing even as he felt his bones break but with a flash of gold a bottle of Phoenix Tears dropped on his head.

Staring at it for a moment, Shirou couldn't help but groan. "Seriously?! This again!"

"It was easy to buy a lot of those." His friend retorted half sarcastically before pushing the redhead back.

With his wings the magus recovered quickly and threw a slash from his right towards the blond's chest. But the Gate was still open and several swords were shot on his arm in an attempt to deflect the blow.

Despite not getting hurt the attacks slowed Shirou down and pushed him back enough that Gilgamesh had time to evade. "Damn it." He cursed, anger in his red eyes. "Damn it. Damn it! Damn it!!"

More Noble Phantasms shot in Shirou's direction but he blocked them all with Kanshou and Bakuya before flying to throw a stab at his opponent's chest. Enki blocked the blow as Gilgamesh found himself retreating more in his second fight than he did in the first.

At least on that time he had reinforcements and once he managed to parry the Married Blades for an extra second, Heracles dove in the armored magus' personal space to deliver a punch to his face with his Balance Breaker's missile attached to his fist.

While the blast was huge in scope, easily big enough to make the area shake, the redhead barely bulged with the explosion and instead moved to counter attack with a double stab from below.

Only to have his arms seized by Heracles who was grinning. "Got you!"

"Hey, hey. You better be careful-" Shirou began to warn, only to be interrupted by an explosive headbutt to his head. "If a punch didn't work, what made you think this would?"

Sure enough Heracles had realized that the Mage of Swords wasn't effectively stronger because his weapon, just faster. Much, much, much faster than his usual speed and to the point the giant could only keep up because most magicians powering him up were focused on speed and perception.

However the black and white armor's defense was another thing entirely and his explosions weren't able to even scratch the thing. That wasn't even due to Bellerophon's ability since Variant Detonation didn't establish any connection before unleashing its power in that fashion.

Either way, Heracles wasn't strong enough to harm Shirou in that form, not by a long shot, and he had other problems he wasn't aware of yet. "Behind you!!!" Jeanne called in warning as the giant heard the Gate of Babylon trying to shoot something on his back.

Next thing he knew there was a buzzing sound and his back was pretty much ripped open by something that was still moving around. Not that Heracles could think much about it, his body failing and hands losing strength letting the Mage go.

As the giant fell to his knees, Georg watched with a strange fascination that took over his fear for a second as he noticed the black and white blur dancing around each other. They were the blades Gilgamesh had parried before which had returned to strike his ally and the magician hadn't the faintest idea how they came back.

"Georg! Get Heracles out of here!!" His leader ordered with an angry shout as he tried to stab Shirou's side with his left sword. A block from the right redirected the blade as the Magus tried to strike with the left only for a shield from the Gate to intercept the blow.

The impact was loud, his friend was falling and Georg woke up to reality. "Right!" Magic circles appeared in his hand and behind the giant to teleport him away.

Just to be promptly destroyed by Kanshou and Bakuya as Shirou kept Gilgamesh at bay with just his wings. "If you want to save his life, go ahead." The Mage's tone was cold and distant as he pushed his adversary away by fully opening his wings and flying back. Two more Married Blades appeared in his hands as he floated a few feet above the ground. "But you aren't escaping. None of you are."

"Tch." The Gate of Babylon dropped a mantle over Heracles' back and its owner ordered, "Five of you, keep Heracles alive! Georg, Jeanne, we have a Champion to kill!" before launching himself forward to clash with Shirou again.

Georg was stunned as he watched what happened while five of their magicians did exactly as ordered and began to pump mana into the mantle or using magic to heal the giant's wound. It was already a small miracle that spoke of the gray haired man's strength and vitality that he was still alive but Heracles was definitely out of the fight.

Which also meant that everyone else had a ghost of a chance to face Emiya Shirou, much less surviving a single slash from his blades. 'Illya is right. We aren't ready to face a god.'

"Georg!!" Jeanne called for him as she charged for a thrust with a rapier covered with fire. Her step was slow and it took too long to reach the armored redhead who easily avoided the hit while pushing Gilgamesh back. "Help us!!"

"Focus on the fight!!" Her leader ordered while Enki changed into tonfas and he threw several punches in their opponent's direction. Kanshou's wing blocked the hits but began to crack under the pressure of so many attacks.

That stopped suddenly as Gilgamesh saw two pairs of Married Blades flying back into the fight. He used his right Enki to protect his legs while he ducked a Bakuya that almost took

his neck. Not out of danger yet the blond then hopped in place and did a spin, allowing a Kanshou and Bakuya going in opposite directions to miss his back and knees.

Only to be front kicked in his torso by Shirou who pushed Jeanne's rapier down and stared the Saint right in the eyes. "I really don't like killing," Bakuya almost took her arm off as her armor was destroyed by what should be a superficial cut, "but since you don't mind torture, I won't mind giving you a little pain."

Kicking the ground to recover his balance, Gilgamesh combined Enki into a bow and began to shoot Shirou just placed his wings in front of himself to take the arrows. Still he noticed the projectiles were stronger than before but so was his armor and especially his wings as even if he was slightly pushed back, Kanshou and Bakuya weren't damaged.

Both phenomenons got his curiosity and thanks to his fast perception he realized why one of them was happening. 'Most of the magicians are focusing on Gilgamesh since Heracles is out. The rest are trying to heal him and now Jeanne.'

Emiya noticed how an anchor-like sacred gear had rescued the new Maid of Orleans but did nothing to stop them. He would really prefer it if nobody died and his attack had caused far more damage than expected. Had he not avoided the blonde's vitals by targeting her shoulder, she would be definitively dead.

Quickly his thoughts returned to the fight and how Enki was keeping up with him. 'So now he has the power of over fifty people backing him up.' Without much warning Shirou opened his wings while throwing his newly Traced Kanshou and Bakuya towards his friend while paying close attention to the ones still flying around. 'Now, what is going to be?'

Just as he suspected the blades began to resonate between each other and move around to follow the new pair. All of them were Kanshou and Bakuya and so every single one of them were attracted towards the other, changing course. Only the new pair reacted less and mostly because they couldn't escape his throw.

The fact Kanshou and Bakuya were flying together also benefited their flight path as they weren't really looking for other versions of themselves which meant Gilgamesh had to react to at least the ones Shirou threw.

And react he did by shooting the swords down, first the ones in his direction but in the blink of an eye Enki's arrows were flying around. Structural Analysis told the Mage of Swords his wings were growing weak with each destroyed sword so he Traced another pair and charged.

After destroying the last sword, Gilgamesh turned towards the redhead and gritted his teeth before blocking the Married Blades with his bow. Compared to previous attacks that had been as strong and the blond had grown more powerful thanks to a legion of magicians powering him up but the damage was still felt.

Something broke on his feet, a bone or two, but all the Hero Faction's leader did was roar in anger and push back before trying to cut the armored magus with Enki. Since it was in the

form of a bow the Noble Phantasm's blades weren't positioned optimally but the attack still scratched the black side of the armor.

However by that point Shirou was already turning on the air and hitting Gilgamesh's chest with Bakuya's wing deep enough to pierce his heart. Time slowed down to both fighters as the blond threw up blood and the magus began to fall back with a grimace.

'Looks like it is over.' Shirou thought while preparing to Trace EM and save the other man's life only to see a shift on Enki dodge to the left to avoid the returning weapon. "You are really going to fight with a damaged heart?"

"Hahaha! This is nothing to the King of Heroes!!!" Gilgamesh's descendant announced proudly as mana poured from his body. "**Gate of Babylon!!** You should have finished me off!!!"

Dozens of weapons flew in Shirou's direction and he quickly began to deflect with his blades before throwing the pair in his hands towards Gilgamesh when he saw what the man was using to heal himself.

It was an EM and that ticked him the wrong way. "Where did you get that?!"

Fortunately for the red eyed warrior, despite being a bow at the moment, Enki could deflect Kanschou and Bakuya by itself. "Hahaha!! Haven't you ever heard that the greatest treasure is friendship?!" He summoned more portals, each with one magic staff. "Couldn't help but add one of your creations to my collection!!"

Lightning bolts flew towards Shirou who easily dodged them all. "I am going to punch you. I am going to punch you so hard..."

"Is that the way to talk to a friend who values your skill this much?!" While he could banter, Gilgamesh would admit he wasn't really confident in winning that fight. 'Fixing my heart didn't solve all my problems and even with almost fifty people giving me mana, that doesn't mean my energy is limitless...' He watched as Shirou flew above a wave of fire before using his magic to create a wall of stone. That done, he finished fixing all his wounds and returning the thread and EM back to the King's Vault. "Things will be easier if you move your ass, Georg!!!"

His ally heard the words and stood with his back straighter despite the fear eating him up. "Ri-right!" About to summon several magic circles, Georg barely managed to hold himself back to question with sweat dripping from his forehead, "But what can I do?"

Noble Phantasms were being constantly deflected by the dancing black and white blades. Nothing the magician could conjure came even close from Gilgamesh's weapons and those were failing to break the Mage's defense.

'If weapons of Legend can't surpass the pegasus' Divinity, what chance does my magic have?' Georg asked himself, trying to swallow anything with his dry throat. 'I have nothing capable of breaking that armor! Nothing!!'

And that was a fact Georg wanted to deny no matter how true, yet it was impossible upon seeing so many powerful weapons, weapons the Hero Faction helped Gilgamesh to collect, failing to even reach the black and white metal.

Dozens of them were being shot at every second as the Hero Faction's leader opened the Gate of Babylon to his limits. Some magic potions had already dropped to the man's hands to be swallowed faster than the blink of an eye to empower his body and refill his reserves.

However that wasn't all the blond was doing as several pieces of armor fell by his side which he began to equip. 'I can't take many more hits.' Gilgamesh thought while tying a red square samurai shoulder guard with a knight's gauntlet on his left arm. 'But I can't pull the strongest armor from the Gate of Babylon so...' A janissary bracer found itself becoming a companion to a crusader breastplate. 'I have to improvise.'

More mana was pushed in his body as Heracles' life was out of peril and pretty much all magicians on their squad worked to make sure the blond was as strong as he could be short of becoming the Original Gilgamesh himself.

With their support the Gate of Babylon opened to the greatest extent Angelo and most of his ancestors had ever reached with dozens of portals open at the same time. Each fired an offensive Noble Phantasm of any sort, be them swords, spears or giant columns of stone that once were parts of temples.

Such an overwhelming attack could bury a big army under treasures more valuable than the income of most countries. Plenty of the weapons were considerably powerful too, the weakest easily capable of killing a man while the strongest could open a hole on the two sides of a mountain.

Kanshou and Bakuya were moved with perfect mastery as the redhead cut through every with inhuman grace. Bellerophon and the Married Blades followed his movements perfectly without wasting a second. And those were his moves, the weapons lacked the memory of anyone who had ever reached the speeds he had or the skill.

'Opening this many portals is a waste, Angelo.' Shirou thought calmly as he moved a little to the side and bashed a sword into an ax, getting the two out of the way. For the most part he still held his position, finding himself in no rush to attack. 'At this rate, your Noble Phantasms are more likely to get in the way of each other than hitting me.' With a calm that even impressed himself, he kept defensing the actual forty or so weapons that came close to doing any damage before floating a few centimeters back. 'Getting an armor, attacking like that... you are finally starting to take this seriously... no, you always were...' A double swing unleashed waves of white and black that forced Gilgamesh to roll right and reopen the gates on his new location. 'But now you are getting desperate. You realized that in a stamina competition, I will win.'

All thanks to Bellerophon and his Ascension; the former was finally free to give Shirou all his power thanks to the latter. Power that carried Divinity which made sure that every scrap of

mana the redhead was using was 100% efficient while giving him enough for a hundred people.

Bellerophon was, after all, a Divine Beast born of Medusa and Poseidon whose power could even challenge the Realm of the Gods themselves. He had more mana than Shirou knew what to do with it and since his Ascension none of it was being wasted. Even Tracing extra copies of Kanshou and Bakuya were just a drop in the metaphorical bucket.

It couldn't even be called a bucket at that point. He had as much mana as Altria had in their fight; enough to power up the whole of Fuyuki by himself. At least thrice over or more what Gilgamesh had naturally.

That wasn't a bucket, that was a dam holding a huge river.

For the first time in his life Emiya Shirou had more energy than anyone else around, so much so that if he wanted to counter Gilgamesh's Noble Phantasms by Noble Phantasms he could.

But that would be just a waste and possibly kill his friend. Not that mana exhaustion couldn't do the same but the redhead could knock him out before it got that far. He just needed the Hero Faction to slow down. For their bucket to go empty which would certainly happen way before his.

The Mage didn't need to rush anymore, didn't need to force a fight.

He needed for his wannabe kidnappers to grow exhausted and he could knock them all out faster than any of them could say 'We are out of mana.'

Didn't take long for Georg to realize exactly what was happening since even when Gilgamesh finished dressing up in his improvised armor, a mishmash of armor pieces of several cultures that lacked a helmet of any kind, it didn't inspire him with any sort of confidence.

'I need to do something!' Despite screaming to himself, Georg didn't move. 'But what? They are monsters!'

Explosions that shook everything, blasts capable of consuming whole swaths of land, weapons capable of cutting buildings with ease, armors able to resist bombs the size of cars and mana capacity strong enough to empower buildings on their own at the very least.

Both had Divine weapons; Enki for Gilgamesh and the Married Blades for Emiya even if those only held Divinity thanks to the pegasus in his soul, something the Hero Faction knew little about.

In a sense, Georg felt like the magicians behind him who were working tirelessly to empower their leader even if he knew it was worthless. They even had abandoned him once they realized their top magus had lost his will to fight. To them all Gilgamesh was their last hope with bespectacled agreeing with it whole heartily.

And so long the King of Heroes' descendant stood they had a chance, no matter how small, and whoever was still able to help was doing everything they could.

Georg felt inadequate in comparison.

He also found himself incapable of blaming them, feeling impotent before the powerhouses fighting inside his dimension. 'It isn't like I can do anything anyway.' His hand grasped some dirt and he frowned before throwing it away and fixing his glasses. 'No, I am Alec Georg Faust, descendant of Johann Georg Faust and the greatest magician in the Hero Faction! When it comes to magic, even the likes of Illya admit my superiority.' He watched the fight with new eyes, reminding himself of one of the most important rules about magic. 'Power is important but the Mystery is more so and I also have a Mystery with the power of a god.'

Standing up despite feeling desperate, Georg opened the sleeves of his robe fully and focused on the one thing that he had that nobody else could have, the legacy left by God.

His sacred gear, his Longinus which was said to be capable of destroying the world.
"Dimension Lost! Fog of Extinction!! I will teach you who is the best magician, Emiya Shirou!"

Sure enough the redhead didn't hear those words, too focused on engaging with Gilgamesh who didn't stop firing Noble Phantasms for the last several minutes. 'How many of those that Vault has?'

One particular sword that he knew more than most, Caladbolg, made its way to his head. The blond hadn't unleashed its True Name so it was weaker than it would be otherwise. So weak in fact that Sihrou had an idea.

A stupid idea but Bellerophon was goading him to do it and he knew to hear the pegasus about his Ascension's capabilities. **"Last Stardust!!"** Incalculable speed made time almost freeze for himself, the Mage knowing he was several times faster than before. Yet even when he moved a little he noticed his friend's eyes following him even if slowly. 'Damn, was the Original Gilgamesh that strong too?'

Deciding that pondering those things was a waste of time, no matter how much he had thanks to Last Stardust, he decided to just listen to the Divine Beast and do his best to try Medusa's Child idea.

'Get Caladbolg.'

There were no words but that was what Shirou felt Bellerophon wanted him to do. It was also a risky proposition since, even without its True Name, that sword was extremely dangerous. One wrong move and his body could be torn apart. Even if his Partner told him that wouldn't happen, the redhead preferred to play safe.

So once he was in hyper speed the magus threw Kanshou towards the Spiral Sword to

disrupt its flight path. Gravity was slow for them and even the impact of his weapon needed a few instants, from his point of view, to have an effect.

Eventually it did and Caladbolg's tip was pointing up instead of forward, its handle moving downwards where he planned to catch it. A thought he would never entertain a few hours prior, not with just Bakuya in his possession.

But Bakuya found its other half and that made him question, 'Can I use other swords with them now?'

When his fingers wrapped themselves around Caladbolg's familiar handle the answer became clear as no bout of weakness assailed him and Bellerophon's aura felt as powerful as usual.

A grin grew in his face as the Noble Phantasms around the area began to accelerate, or better yet, he began to slow down to manageable speeds. His body may not feel the effects of hyper speed anymore but a single break in his concentration took him out of that advanced state.

That break came from exhilaration and was welcomed since he didn't want to kill his friend by accident. But he really wanted to throw the Spiral Sword back to Gilgamesh's face just to prove a point.

With his wings' support the redhead jumped with Caladbolg in his hand, Noble Phantasms barely missing him. Once he landed the magus had the Spiral Sword behind him, his left hand bringing it back to a throw. Certainly not as fast as when the sword was shot from the Gate of Babylon but still incredibly fast.

Enough to make Gilgamesh's eyes grow wide in surprise, either because of the throw itself or that his weapon was being turned against him. In either case that expression didn't last for long before it was replaced with a frown before the sword disappeared centimeters before reaching his target.

For a moment the Gate of Babylon stopped shooting its weapons for the actual owner to shout indignantly. "Did you just dare to throw one of my treasures at me?!!"

"To be fair." Kanshou returned to his hand and the blond knew the magus was smirking. "Wouldn't be my first time."

"Damn you, Faker." Clearly Gilgamesh was growing increasingly angry.

And Shirou couldn't help but throw fuel into the fire. "'Faker'? Shouldn't you be calling me a thief instead?" He twirled the black blade just to be coy. "Sure this is a projection but Original decided to join my side. Then again, Kanshou was only looking for Bakuya and chose to take the wife's side."

"Yes, I realized that much." If anything, the fact that the sword actively left the King's Vault gave him little reason to complain. "Damn it, Shirou! Don't make me do something I will

regret!!”

Sobering up at his friend's honest, if angry, request, Shirou replied calmly. “I should be the one saying that.” Assuming a posture where his chest was left open as his hands casually held his swords, he added, “You can't win, Angelo. Give up. There is still time to turn around.”

“I won't turn my back on what is right!” The Hero Faction's leader announced loudly as he aimed Enki bow towards his friend again.

“Well, neither will I.” Both were certain of their convictions and any extra conversation was useless. “But I will try to not kill you.” The image of his wing almost ripping his friend's heart crossed his mind reminding him he wasn't used to all his power yet.

“I can't promise the same.” Was the closest thing to an admission that Shirou was stronger than him that Gilgamesh's pride allowed him to give. “Illya is going to be mad but-”

“Gilgamesh!!!” Georg's voice ended their talk as they turned towards the black haired magician who was surrounded by fog. “My preparations are complete!! Let us show this godling the real power of Humankind!!!”

Looking around the area, the blond grinned before letting out a full blow laugh.

“Hahahahahahahaha!!! Nice work!!!”

Mana exploded from Gilgamesh as Shirou raised his swords defensively and waited for whatever they were going to try. “You guys know I am not a god, right?”

“You have the power of one and we shall crush it!!!” Was Gilgamesh's reply as the golden portals opened once again.

However, that time something was different. ‘They are spread around?’ Shirou didn't exactly understand what was happening but from his understanding of the Gate of Babylon, it wasn't aimed at him at all. It also wasn't aimed at his friends but that wasn't the only problem. “Is the fog growing thicker?”

“You haven't seen everything the Fog of Extinction can do yet?!” Looking around the armored magus couldn't find the bespectacled one anywhere. The fog hid him perfectly even with several gold lights inside giving vision of the area. “With that armor, I seem to not be able to affect you,” and Georg had tried to force the redhead to move more than once, “yet I can affect everything else around you!!”

“Hahahaha!!! Indeed!!! Very nicely done, Georg!!!” Shirou turned around and failed to locate Gilgamesh where he was previously.

His nose also failed to find anyone, the Fog's mana confused his senses. “So we are playing hide and seek now?” He watched carefully for the tell tale of Enki's arrows but all he saw were the King's Vault's many portals shining everywhere. “Never pegged you for a ‘thief hiding in the night’. Was that how you described it?”

“Sometimes even a ‘King’ must take the role of ‘Assassin’ when it suits him!” Gilgamesh’s voice had recovered all its confidence, not a good sign for the redhead. “Time for you to see what the power of a King and his subjects can really do!!”

“Seriously, do you need to talk in the third person?!” Shirou asked while rushing in the direction where he heard his voice in the blink of an eye. All he found was a floating Gate which he cut with Bakuya just to be safe. “That can’t be healthy.”

“Hahahahahahaha!!!” The blond’s voice came from his right but on turning, the redhead saw no one there.

A sigh came from his left and he was still hearing the voice even when there was nothing around. “Gilgamesh, we really should finish this before the Mage of Swords pulls something else off.” Georg half suggested, half chastised his commander. “Give up, Emiya, no matter where you look, you won’t ever catch up to us.”

“Because of the Fog of Extinction?” Shirou was starting to understand what was going on.

“Because I am finally using Dimension Lost to its full potential!” A confident reply came from all sides. “You are in my dimension, my world.” The magus sounded calmer even if some excitement was hidden beneath. “Doesn’t matter if you have the power of a god. Here, I am god!”

“... I have many things to say, starting with, thank you for not saying I am a god again.” The black and white armor began to move around at high speeds, jumping from golden portal to golden portal and destroying all of them before landing in a random position. “The second is this; you guys are underestimating me quite a bit. The only reason this fight is still going is because I am trying to not kill anyone-”

“Anymore, right? You certainly didn’t care about Conna.” Georg pointed out coldly.

“Well, I was in a rush.” Shirou’s reply was callous and the silence that followed told him the other men were surprised. “Don’t tell me you expected me to bail my eyes out because of all this. You guys are trying to kidnap me.”

“For your own good.”

“Doesn’t change anything, Angelo. We are bleeding out here all the same. Worse, you guys would have gotten away with this if it wasn’t for Bellerophon, my Partner.” His aura began to grow stronger as he held Kanshou and Bakuya tightly. He could feel the pegasus joy at his use of the term Ise and Ddraig shared. “And want to know what my Partner is telling me? ‘We are winning this’. And guess what? I agree.” His posture was guarded as he focused on his eyes and senses, looking for any member of the Hero Faction he could fight. “So either you stand down or at best you are waking up in a hospital, at worst...”

Things grew quiet for a few minutes until another sigh escaped the fog. “Very well. It seems you are the one underestimating us.” Gilgamesh brushed all aside and Shirou felt a spike of

power in the area. The problem was that it happened everywhere at the same time and several portals opened again, much to his shock. "Let me rectify this by showing you the Hero Faction's might! **Gate of Babylon!!**"

Blinking lights telegraphed an attack from behind his head and Shirou was quick to throw an intercepting strike. So he was legitimately surprised when Bellerophon moved Bakuya's wing to block an attack from his right while he struck just air.

Then another portal from the back unleashed a projectile and he turned around to guard whatever was coming only to be hit from behind. 'Illusion? No. Space distortion?' Kanshou and Bakuya, wings and weapons moved in quick succession to strike down four weapons from four directions. But the attack wasn't done, he could see more gates unleashing their treasures. 'Dimension Lost plus Gate of Babylon... an interdimensional combo.'

Crossing his swords he destroyed a sword with wide eyes, noticing it wasn't a Noble Phantasm yet his arms could tell the attack had been a dangerous one. In an instant his wings destroyed a spear and a mace, both weapons of normal make yet both flying at speeds they shouldn't.

'Good weapons, worthy of the King's Vault but...' Shirou danced around, blocking twelve attacks in a second before the thirteenth one hit his side. Surprisingly he felt the impact through the armor even if a glance told him the knife wasn't a Noble Phantasm either. 'Not Legends.' More portals blinked but he ignored those, focusing on his ears and Bellerophon's senses. 'Even if the Gate releases the weapon, while traveling through the Fog their position changes.'

Another twenty attacks were unleashed in the span of a second and not a single one of those struck from where the light was coming from. One spear almost got his face but it was deflected, hitting a Noble Phantasm lance and breaking apart as Shirou blocked the latter.

However that wasn't the only attack and his ears caught the change in the winds from every direction. Quickly the redhead began to move in a circle while swinging his blades around his body, deflecting, blocking and destroying several weapons that came from everywhere.

Not all of them were Noble Phantasms, in fact there were few of those any more. 'Does it make a difference of what leaves the Gate first-' Suddenly something came extremely fast from the front, as fast as he would be with Last Stardust, and were not for his Ascension he wouldn't have seen it.

Crossing his swords once more he blocked the direct hit but Caladbolg had been shot faster than whenever he fired its Projection like an arrow. Speed beyond compare, the same physics that gave him extra power when working with Bellerophon, made the Spiral Blade several times more dangerous.

Not only that but even without its True Name, the Spiral Sword was trying to distort space and with a drill moving so fast the human eye couldn't perceive, that thing was trying to rip Shirou apart without effort.

However that was still a sword the redhead knew like the back of his hand and so he knew that despite its great speed, he was still safe so long Kanschou and Bakuya were between him and it.

“Ora!!” Eventually Shirou pushed it down which released a tall cloud of dust and banished some of the Fog that quickly refilled the area around him. “Distorting space like that is dangerous, you know? Or are you finally deciding to go for the kill?” More of the Gate of Babylon fired weapons but none of them made their way to him. “What the-”

“Didn’t you listen? Here, I am god!” Georg repeated with a great amount of pride in his voice. “Dimension Lost is a Longinus, sometimes called the Third Strongest only because it lacks the means to destroy the world directly!! That changes when I have an ally to do the damage for me!!!”

“Besides, you won’t die that easily, not while wearing Divine armor.” Gilgamesh sounded just as proud but calmer which made him far more dangerous. “So this is us showing you what we really can do. Georg, if you would be so kind...”

Again the attack came from the front, just as fast as the previous one but that wasn’t a Noble Phantasm so when Bakuya cut through it, the weapon shattered easily. Yet the impact born from an absurd amount of speed was felt by his arm. And that was with his armor protecting him from the pressure.

Which spoke highly of the amount of speed that weapon had accumulated. “Meddling with space like that can’t be easy.” Shirou spoke to buy time while also trying to figure out how his opponents did it. Fortunately both were proud men so the right comment could get him a legitimate answer. “You are shooting the weapons down or something to accumulate speed? I certainly can’t see anything with this fog.”

“Obviously you can’t. Yet the Fog of Extinction is the answer to your inquiry. It can’t be anything else.” Georg replied as expected. “Inside Dimension Lost, I can send almost anything anywhere. Including sending the weapons to a distant place where they can accumulate speed safely, several meters in the air!”

Shirou’s eyes grew wide and he looked up only to see a view he never expected outside Unlimited Blade Works. “Well... damn.”

Above his head, several kilometers above it to be fair, pockets of Fog were practically shooting weapons at each other vertically to allow a huge quantity of weapons to accumulate speed at a very fast rate.

There were hundreds of weapons raining into a cloud only to pour outside another that would rain into another cloud and the whole process at least repeated twice more. With his fast perception and Structural Analysis, Shirou managed to count over a thousand weapons of different kinds, three hundred fifty of those swords.

However he also realized another thing. “Not many Noble Phantasms there, Georg.” The Mage looked down to Caladbolg who only disappeared in that instant when his attention

changed to it. "Is that why you need clouds worth of fog? Because most of them fall apart with a Crystallised Legend?"

"You should worry more about yourself, Faker." Gilgamesh took over and more portals were opened. Looking up he could see that indeed several Noble Phantasms joined the other weapons. "You are about to face the whole arsenal that my family has gathered for over thousands of years! Even a god can't stand against it."

Despite the obvious intent behind that declaration, there was no offer of surrendering. "Hehe. Isn't that impressive." Just as Shirou expected. Those were worthless at that point to either side. "What are you waiting for?" Raising Kanshou and Bakuya, he prepared for the worst rain of his life. "Come on, King of Heroes!! Let's see if you have enough weapons!!!"

From outside the Fog of Extinction, close to his troops where he knew Shirou wouldn't attack, the blond smiled. "Fufufu. Defiant until the end."

"Sir?" One of his subordinates tried to get his attention only for Georg to let out a sigh and fix his glasses before speaking.

"We really should finish this fast." The top magus of their organization, essentially the one cornering their quarry, said with some resignation mixed with anger. "The sooner we do this-

"Do as you wish. I provided you with more than enough weapons." His bow prepared an arrow and pointed towards the west when he saw both Xenovia and Ise getting ready to intervene. At the sight of the arrow, the former Exorcist held the devil back with a grimace. "Soon we will have a dragon to kill."

Georg looked at the blond with disbelief before scoffing. "Then you should do it now."

"And start a fight on two fronts? For now threats and hope keep them at bay but if we start, things can get complicated." The blond calmly informed his subordinate even as he empowered the arrow further. In reality he didn't plan to use it on Ise, not at that moment at least. "First we settle things with the Faker, then we focus on the dragon." Understanding Gilgamesh's logic, Georg's eyes began to shine brightly.

And the Fog of Extinction began to shine as well before moving around Shirou. 'Can't see anything anymore.' Despite that the Mage of Swords didn't panic and began to concentrate. 'Now, how do I get out of this?'

Sure enough the armored redhead had a couple of ideas but refrained from trying any of them because they were too obvious. At least he knew that Gilgamesh could guess one or two of them even if Georg wasn't much in his eyes.

The fact it had taken that much time for his fellow magus to use Dimension Lost's space to manipulate weaponry like that spoke much of the black haired man and nothing good. Doubly so because he could only use something like that when someone with actual fire power was by his side.

'Speaking from experience, I think my control over Unlimited Blade Works is better than his over Dimensional Lost even if his sacred gear is more versatile.' Concluded Shirou with a pensive frown before dropping to a knee and blocking a sword to his head. 'Not that makes this situation any safer. Won't use my Reality Marble here and risk everything getting worse.'

Also he could feel that Tracing other weapons still cost more than it should in his Ascension even if Kanshou and Bakuya were less averse to work with other weapons when together. Either way, Bellerophon's mana could empower Unlimited Blade Works which tempted him to try and use the Reality Marble.

Again only the fact he didn't know how Dimension Lost would react to another World Egg held Unlimited Blade Works back.

Neither he needed it as he was fast enough to react to any attacks going his way with a certain ease that left him feeling confident. He proved as much by destroying two swords and a giant arrow made of green metal and a serrated tip. Then a few dozen other projectiles tried to hit only to be decimated just as easily.

However the attacks were getting faster and soon weapons were coming everywhere from the Fog of Extinction, some not even aiming for Emiya. That was on purpose because too many of them were already aiming for his position and there was barely any room for them to move.

Still none of them hit each other until Shirou hit a Noble Phantasm with Kanshou sending it towards other weapons. That wasn't enough and his wings began to bat many weapons away together with his arms but the armored magus could no longer remain immobile.

Those weapons were too fast and even if the impact wouldn't pierce his armor he didn't feel like taking unnecessary risks. With that in mind he jumped and began to spin, all his blades protecting his body perfectly so no hit got in.

However, by moving he placed himself in more danger as well since the weapons which would have missed him once suddenly found their 'target' in their supposedly random line of fire.

It wasn't random, Georg wasn't a fool and knew that either Shirou would block everything and a change of strategy would be required or the redhead would be forced to move so he made sure to spread around as many shots as he could.

After all he wasn't lacking weapons, Gilgamesh's descendants worked diligently to fill the King's Vault with worthless weapons in the real king's eyes but to them every single one of them was of excellent make.

Just not exceptional and so, in reality, the Gate of Babylon possessed more non-Noble Phantasms than the Crystalized Legends themselves. And for that strategy their last descendant didn't hesitate to dump every weapon he could assess and wouldn't reject Dimension Lost into the fray.

Hundreds of thousands of weapons of all types collected over thousands of years, more or less five thousand considering his oldest son started the work little after the King of Uruk had passed away.

Because of that even amongst the weapons that weren't Noble Phantasms there were those which carried powerful magic or other manner of enchantments. Shirou's eyes caught sight of swords capable of lighting up a room, starting a forest or cutting rocks in perfect block shapes.

Some of it sounded useless except the first one tried to blind him, Bellerophon blocking it and the ax that went for his neck, the second grew a tree around him that he had to cut himself free only for the third to stab the ground at high speed sending several bricks his way.

Those he could ignore but the dust was a problem. A problem amplified by how much mana was around, confusing his senses. Adding to it was a spear that started releasing a very high pinching noise that almost made the redhead's ears bleed. It would have succeeded if not for Bellerophon.

Since the Legendary Mount had control over the Divine aura around him, far more so than Shirou could understand, the pegasus managed to use it to isolate the noise completely. Any noise in fact, the Mage of Swords almost froze once he found himself deaf but was too deep in the fight to actually stop moving.

His movements just slowed down for a few instants but that was enough to count as a mistake and so a morningstar managed to get through his wings and hit the center of his back.

From there things went downhill and before Shirou realized his defenses were began to fail and he took some hits; one behind the knee that made him fall, another on the left biceps as he tried to stand, below the heart when he couldn't move while his arms were busy trying to protect his head and one on the shoulder that made his back hit the floor.

But only for a few instants as Bellerophon empowered their aura a little more and he accelerated further. 'You are saying it is time to escape?' Shirou asked while slicing a huge mace into two.

Not really in a position to disagree, the armored magus used his left hand as leverage to pull himself seeking some space as his wings opened fully. Once he saw an opening the redhead took it and began to fly up while blocking as many weapons as he could.

Some still hit several parts of his body but the pain wasn't enough to stop him nor slow down Bellerophon's rise. However a rain of swords suddenly came from above and that forced Kanshou and Bakuya's wings to cover the Mage's head they all hit just as fast as the swords striking from the sides.

'A trap?' Shirou asked himself as his blades blocked several other weapons only to fail to strike away a familiar Noble Phantasm. Caladbolg was slightly slower than before but the hit on the chest felt like it was trying to rip it apart. 'How is he shooting that sword? It should be ripping the Fog of Extinction apart!'

He asked himself between the pain as his aura and Ki fought to preserve his health. The spiral born from King Fergus' weapon failed to damage the black and white armor but the area itself was affected. His skin only wasn't ripped off because it was akin to steel yet that was distracting.

Enough so that the rain of treasures eventually threw him back down and Shirou met the ground just as fast as any of those weapons. And they weren't stopping even if Noble Phantasms were no longer part of the assault.

Still there were many heavy weapons that hit him constantly before disappearing in motes of gold or inside the fog before returning to the cycle which would see them hitting the redhead again in the torrent wouldn't stop so long Georg and Gilgamesh had mana.

Fighting against it was the Mage of Swords who let go of his swords to pull himself up but felt like the weight of the world was pelting his shoulders at every moment. Considering technically he was facing an infinity number of weapons that wasn't far off and all he managed to do was get to his knees.

Mercy and excessive curiosity had placed Shirou in that situation but he wasn't willing to quit nor lament. 'Calm down. Calm down. Remember everything you learned. If you lose your calm, you can consider yourself dead.' It was difficult with so many things hitting his back but the pain wasn't the issue regardless. The effort in trying to get up was the real issue. 'I need to get out of here. I need to break free and then finish this... one way or another.'

As his opponents had fully stopped holding back, Shirou realized he needed to do the same and abandon any kindness left in his heart.

Before biting his lip and retracting those thoughts. 'You started getting desperate just because you are in danger, Emiya Shirou? Since when have you been so weak? You can take this! You have had worse!!' A foot slammed on the ground as he pushed himself up, Kanshou and Bakuya returning to his hands for defense once again. 'Sure Rias and the others will get worried but you are beyond this. Steel is my body and Fire is my blood! Steel doesn't bend easily and fire doesn't go out for just anyone!'

Going beyond the pain, Shirou actually began to slow down his defenses and closed his eyes to increase his focus. His armor could take almost every hit so his swords and wings only moved to block the stray Noble Phantasm between the ocean of weapons threatening him at every moment.

However he couldn't see them, couldn't hear them, couldn't feel them, only when they were close enough to cause damage did his aura react, warning him of the danger. Fortunately Bellerophon was faster than any damage they could inflict and by just focusing on that, they managed to defend perfectly.

'Now...' Shirou opened his eyes, the right one glowing white while the left shone black, '... let's fly.' "**Last Stardust!!**"

Once again Shirou went into hyperspeed but just as he expected not all weapons were 'frozen' in time. There were several moving at speeds that could still keep up with him and every single one of them was aimed at something vital.

However none were Noble Phantasms. 'Hehe, not everything accepts to be hurled around at absurd speeds, do they?' He had a distinct impression the pegasus was laughing as well.

While blocking a spear capable of stunning anyone it stabbed, two identical huge axes, a broadsword that could cut a block of concrete with ease and a very thin rapier that was surrounded by its own wind, Shirou began to move up faster than any other weapon could keep up.

To anyone else it was like a flash of black and white had suddenly pierced through the fog and launched itself towards the sky faster than most could keep up.

But someone did manage to keep up. "**Sword of the End! Bow of the King! Inspire all with your Light that shines even in the Ether!!!**" It wasn't his most powerful shot but it was something reserved for gods and demon kings nonetheless. Before the shot was fired, wings of gold manifested in front of the bow as circles written in a lost language became the epicenter of the shot "**Enki!!!**"

The arrow carried so much mana and power that it transcended from immaterial to material. It had become something physical, made of crystalized energy and packing enough power to be something entirely different.

What that arrow was, that physical arrow that looked to be made of pure gold but was actually something beyond it, Shirou didn't know but he felt it coming and instantly understood that what his friend was unleashed was something beyond the Realm of Man.

But all that still fell short for a simple reason; speed.

Despite the speed those circles and Enki gave to the arrow, Gilgamesh's reaction was a few seconds too slow. A few seconds against Bellerophon's speed was an eternity and by the time the arrow was unleashed both Mage and Legendary Mount had enough time to perceive the attack.

Thanks to Last Stardust, Shirou had enough time to freak out about the arrow, calm himself down and move out of the way before it was let loose. The projectile itself was fast enough to catch him if it had been more precise. It was Gilgamesh's fault despite him managing to keep up with the redhead better than anyone else could at that moment.

He was just still in the Realm of Man while Shirou had been taken to the Realm of the Gods.

Of those present only Ddraig could truly comprehend what happened. [Too slow. If he had aimed a little higher or shot the arrow one second earlier... no, it would need to be faster than that.]

And so Shirou escaped an arrow designed to kill beings beyond human comprehension in spectacular fashion, flying higher and higher until he reached a barrier that separated Dimension Lost from the World.

Looking down at his adversaries, he realized how far the two had moved, basically hiding beside their allies where he wouldn't have dared to attack or risk the wounded and those only present for support since the real fight began.

Away from the Fog of Extinction, they were all in the open. "Time to finish this."

A thought Georg shared. "You aren't escaping!!" It wasn't about Illya or Gilgamesh's sake anymore. His own pride had been wounded and so several magic circles were opened as the weapons his leader lent him disappeared in the purple fog. "**Dimension Lost!!**"

Gilgamesh didn't even bother to chastise his ally as he prepared another shot, the arrow of light becoming a physical entity once more. "**Enki!!!**"

"**Fog of Extinction!!!**" The two attacked in sync, one with a projectile so strong that could easily open a new crater into the moon while the other redirected his sacred gear downward.

They were still in Georg's world and he made that very clear by having the thousand remaining weapons Gilgamesh lent him rise from the floor with a vengeance. They emerged as a tower of pure metal going at full speed towards their target as the gold arrow led their charge.

However it was too slow and if Shirou wanted to escape, he could. "**Trace on.**" Instead he chose to face the enemy's full force head on, his black and white wings opening into a majestic halo that illuminated the purple world in their colors. "**Gathering of Stars.**"

Circuits, Ki and Divine aura flared together forming a huge pegasus behind the Mage of Swords before all began to change. From the wings, their feathers began to jump off before being replaced by new blades that did the same. Several Kanshou and Bakuya took to the sky in a heartbeat, floating beside their owner where the pegasus also waited.

Every single one of them pointed down and shone with a light that made them look like real stars, especially in the empty sky.

In total the redhead had made a pack of one hundred and twenty and eight stars unconsciously. He didn't bother to count how many swords he Traced and that number wouldn't stay there for long. By the time he was done a total of two hundred and fifty six anyway and he didn't count those either..

As their opposition flew above to meet them, not a single copy of Kanshou or Bakuya moved

an inch. Gravity wasn't their master, only he who could call himself Mage of Swords, the Greatest of Fools, could claim such titles.

And he felt no strain or effort at keeping those swords up as his wings fully reformed after having spent every single feather to help the Mage to fill the sky with their stars. His expression behind the helmet was calm even as the pillar of weapons moved in his direction and his hand moved up slowly.

Before he brought his right limb down in a slashing motion. **“Overload! Meteor Rain!!”** Then Shirou threw his wings forward unleashing every single sword into the attack. A cascade of feathers flew ahead, the Kanshou and Bakuya formerly on the tip of his wings leading its breathing.

The aura around them all grew even brighter both from Shirou's magic, Bellerophon's power and, more than anything, for the presence of their other selves. The Married Blades resonated with each other, every pair making another grow stronger. With over two hundred swords, one hundred and twenty eight pairs, that was a lot of extra power.

Hundreds met thousands in the air, the golden arrow meeting the white sword before opening the war that was surely about to come.

Except it never really started as Enki's creation failed and broke before the power of two hundred fifty six Married Blades resonating with each other in a song as they fell upon the pillar of steel with a storm of light, the image of a white and black pegasus crossing the heavens.

Didn't take long for the conflict to end even if it could be called such. Pure speed and treasures accumulated over several lifetimes meet the Married Blades and the pegasus. Noble Phantasms met their kin aggressively and those whose Legends were small or basically unknown found themselves destroyed.

Caladbolg lasted longer than most in its trajectory before being shot off the fight without ceremony. The same fate befell other great weapons as the pegasus following the swords grew smaller.

And as it diminished, so did the Divine power around the weapons and even as they defeated thousands of enemies, there were thousands more to still surpass. Some of the pairs began to break, when one sword failed, the other wasn't far behind, but they still kept pushing.

However the representation of Bellerophon's power wasn't done, letting out a shout it fell apart combining itself with the remaining swords to push forward with a greater intensity. Some of them even suffered a sort of mutation, growing bigger and unstable before exploding which took several treasures down with them.

Either way the winner of that confrontation was decided from the very beginning. By the time the pegasus needed to split itself apart there was no weapon around that could challenge

the remaining Kanshou and Bakuya. The Married Blades of Yin and Yang broke through the collection king Gilgamesh's family amassed for thousands of years.

Once that was done, and before his friend's weapons met the ground, the last of the king's descendants couldn't help but curse. 'Fuck.'

Explosions began to fall around the Hero Faction's legion with care. The way Shirou had positioned the swords, they shouldn't hit anyone directly. So long they didn't try to run around in a panic at least, which plenty of them eventually did. That action broke any sort of coherence and the formation was soon to follow.

Not that would help as every time one of the Married Blades hit the ground the impact would be explosive and of considerable power. Men fell around, women crashed down, the wounded who remained immobile weren't harmed but that was it.

Behind all that Shirou's eyes focused on each weapon and his will moved them as best as he could despite the distance. The Mage was in control, Bellerophon gave him the reins and he was doing what he could to stop the fools from killing themselves. It was hard work but he chose to do it.

Of course some tried to fight back as well, for those a white blade to the side or a black blade to the legs would force them to kneel or die. Regardless, they fell, at least most of them did.

Gilgamesh stood definitely and tried to fight back, Enki faithfully in his hands and unleashing arrows of light towards the meteors tearing the dimension apart. His struggle lasted until several of the blades crashed in his location and his body was consumed by an explosion.

Contrary to his leader, Georg found himself falling in despair again. 'We needed Cao Cao to fight against that- No, even if he was here...' Explosions consumed the area for a few more seconds as he dropped to his knees and resigned himself to his fate. 'We never had a chance. The Mage of Swords... The Magus Killer... Illya as well... What sort of family of monsters is that?!'

Eventually the rain stopped, the remaining swords resting around the area almost like they had taken over the place. Besides them the bodies, or perhaps corpses for the black haired magus wasn't sure, rested or were thrown around with dirt and blood over them. His eyes failed to find anyone else willing to fight, or even awake for that matter.

But what really dominated Dimension Lost wasn't its Fog of Extinction, even that had been cutted down by the power which reached the Realm of the Gods. No, all left standing were swords, Kanshou or Bakuya always together as far as the eye could see. Each pulsing and singing together in jubilee.

The view inspired hate in Georg because something was telling him that wasn't his world anymore. That someone else had conquered the dimension he created with his sacred gear and left their own mark.

A mark of ownership and triumph.

Said conqueror descended from the sky to claim his victory much like an angel would descend from Heaven. Or perhaps a warrior god of some sort because despite having unleashed a rain of weapons that surpassed thousands of treasures the armored redhead still looked ready for a fight.

“We done?” Shirou’s question was unexpected and Georg would have been caught flat footed if he wasn’t already on his knees. “Are we done?” Asked the armored magus once more, a bit louder and clearer.

Yet his fellow magus looked stuck between a mix of surprise and confusion. “Why are... you asking?” He looked around with a face of absolute despair that his opponent hated. Not that he would know, the helmet did a good job hiding the redhead’s emotions. “You just... decimated everyone. Why are you asking if this is over? To rub salt in the wound?!”

Before Shirou could offer a reply, a proud and loud voice cut off their talk. “Because he would prefer if you kept Dimension Lost standing for a few more minutes. Isn’t that right, Faker?” Shirou couldn’t help but sigh as he and Georg turned towards the man.

Emerging from a pile of dust and rock, Gilgamesh had seen better days and his condition made that pretty clear. He had so many wounds around his body that it was surprising he hadn’t passed out from blood loss or from a concussion. Most of the damage were bruises and small wounds but there was a huge cut on the front of his chest from shoulder to waist.

It was the only sword blow that hit him directly, everything else came from either an explosion or the consequences of one. Those that hit the blond weren’t few nor weak and the armor he was wearing before had been almost fully destroyed or melted.

Some of it was stuck above his waist as the rest fell apart or the remains of his shoulder guard bit his flesh as the thing was basically shoved into his body from an exploding Bakuya just above it.

Despite all that the man was proving himself to be worthy of his blood and name as the wounds hadn’t been enough to fully put him down. Instead he stood, his posture firm even as his arms shook to keep his bow prepped, with a gaze belonging to someone far from quitting the fight.

“Keep my sacred gear standing?” Georg’s confusion just grew as Shirou let out another sigh. “Why-”

“Lower your weapon, Angelo. The fight is over.” Considering the situation even if Gilgamesh held a solid arrow between his fingers, both of them knew the blond had no chance of hitting Shirou despite the short distance between them.

The problem was that the Mage of Swords wasn’t the one on his sights and the circles in front of the bow promised a hit regardless. “I don’t think I will.” His sight was locked on the other side of the battlefield where Xenovia and Ise stood in front of the Church’s

representatives. It didn't matter, to Enki all of them were easy targets. "Not unless you want me to open a hole in your precious knight."

"I will kill you if you do that." Shirou promised solemnly even as his feet and wings leaned in such a way he was ready to intercept any shot. "I will kill you and everyone else here and then-"

"Including Illya?" That silenced the magus instantly, making Gilgamesh chuckle. "Thought so... You are still too nice, Shirou."

"Too nice? He massacred us!" Red eyes silenced the black haired magus but they only gazed at the other man for an instant.

Soon they were back to the black and white warrior who had taken that time to move closer to the blond. "Don't try." He pulled the arrow back some more. "Pay attention, Georg. While we have several wounded, most if not all of us are alive. Hard to believe as it is, Shirou really doesn't want to kill anyone." A grin grew in his face. "Such is the privilege of the strong and my friend is strong."

"Stand down, Gilgamesh, before you do something you are going to regret."

"Giving up will be my greatest regret!" Was the only response the blond was willing to give. "If not Xenovia Quarta, what about the nun? Or maybe the Red Dragon Emperor? Killing him will spare us a headache later. Or perhaps I should kill Kotomine?"

"Yeah, go ahead. Go for him, I will shed lots of tears after ripping off your arms."

"Even with a helmet, I can tell you are lying... you won't shed a single tear."

"... I will say sorry."

"Fufufu, and here I thought you two were good friends."

'What the hell is going on now? Are these two insane?' Georg wouldn't dare to question that out loud, not both men could erase him from the map with just a thought.

Yet, despite Shirou being undoubtedly the stronger one, the situation was under Gilgamesh's control. "Thank you, my friend, for showing me the error of my ways." By the way his shoulders tensed, that caught the Mage of Swords off guard. "You proved to me that I was wrong, arrogant." His smile was honest if a bit feral. "Really, you are not even a god and yet you kicked us around with just a fraction of their power. Truly Humanity can't compete. At least not by itself..."

"That wasn't-"

"Which is why I was correct in going along with Illya's plan. Good thing we fought someone as merciful as you." Seeing Shirou's fist close the blond wondered, 'Is that from anger or frustration? Maybe both.' He chuckled before adding. "Don't worry, my friend. We still have

tricks on our sleeves and the Hero Faction will triumph!”

Shirou’s foot shifted but remained in place once he saw Gilgamesh was about to shoot for real. “What is Illya’s plan?” He asked either looking for a distraction or information.

“A miracle worthy of Mankind.” Came the reply with confidence and certainty. “For the last couple of years the Hero Faction has been gathering resources for war. For a while we had believed Noble Phantasms, Artifacts and sacred gears would win us the day. That was until Illya approached us.”

The fact his sister was the one looking for the Hero Faction didn’t paint a good picture but Shirou couldn’t say he was surprised. Their father had hidden them rather well and even if they feared being revealed because of his enemies or some other uncontrollable fashion, his sister making the first move made sense.

Which was why he deduced that, “She went to you with the plan first. A plan to make ‘humanity’ stronger.”

“To make us strong enough to get rid of any undesirables. Didn’t even take much for her to agree that would imply anything from the moonlit world, anything inhuman.” Gilgamesh added carefully and slowly. Trusting the Mage to remain calm after everything wasn’t a desirable bet. “Also it didn’t take long for her to show her value and after some matter of debate, we were convinced to divert some of our resources to enact her plans.” Quite a bit of those after she officially joined but Shirou didn’t need to know the details. “It will take us some time to clean up the planet. Well, unless we really decide to go for... the ‘nuclear’ option.”

“The fact you have one of those implies you are not that confident everything is going to work.” Shirou pointed out confidently.

Only lose it upon hearing the blond’s reply. “On the contrary, my friend; I am certain the first plan will work because it will be the means Humanity gains the power to surpass the gods... but our last resort? That one will work absolutely!” He sure sounded confident about that. “It will only take even more preparation and a few caveats and perhaps we will do it anyway just to be thorough.”

“Sounds like something insane. Something that neither you or anyone should play with.” Shirou could read between the lines enough to realize that and he knew a part of Angelo agreed with him. “How can you even be sure that this madness won’t blow up in your face?”

“You can thank the works of the Kaleidoscope for that.”

“What multiversal theory has to do with anything?”

“Knowledge, my friend, knowledge.” Gilgamesh replied with a somber chuckle. “However, I digress. Georg, did you understand why he is negotiating with you?” The sudden shift caught the magi off guard but Shirou recovered first. The only reason for him to not act was because of the arrow which threatened to kill someone he loved. “It is because the second

we leave Dimension Lost, we will be back in Fuyuki more often than not. Do you get what I mean?"

When the bespectacled man's eyes grew wide, they knew he understood. "Don't you dare!" Shirou was stuck between a rock and a hard place but finally decided to act. Tracing a Bakuya it would take less than a second for him to stab the blond, fatally or not.

Only to redirect his attention towards Enki's arrow which was released before the Mage of Swords had even uttered his warning. At that point the projectile was already traveling at speeds beyond a man's eye and he needed to act fast or someone was going to die.

Just an instant, two seconds at most, that was all he needed to beat the arrow away before it got any closer to Xenovia who was in the front of their group with Durandina ready. Defensive sword or not, that wasn't going to save her life if Enki's physical arrow reached her.

Unfortunately two seconds were all both members of the Hero Faction needed.

Gilgamesh prepared another arrow as the words poured from his lips faster than most people could comprehend. "**Behold! The inferno of Destruction fills the Heavens!**" Once again the arrow formed but its tip was a little larger and the circle around it had different words written on it.

Georg turned off his circuits and relaxed his spirit, closing the gates of Dimension Lost as he channeled the mana around it to be used soon after his world disappeared. The man had a suspicion of what his ally's plan really was and so he would need to act fast before the Mage of Swords decided to kill them.

Unfortunately for the Hero Faction, they only had three seconds on the dot. Shirou had already destroyed the first arrow and turned against them at his top speed. The extra second was for him to notice what was happening and he charged at Gilgamesh before it was too late.

Fortunately for the Hero Faction, the moment that their dimension disappeared they found themselves back in Fuyuki in an empty terrain surrounded by buildings. By using his magic, Georg had repositioned everyone during the traversal in such a way that Gilgamesh was far from Shirou and had an extra second to work.

It was enough. "**The Surge of Utnapishtim!!!**" Surprisingly he shot the arrow on the floor, right on the corner of the empty terrain, just as Shirou grabbed him by the neck. "Too late, my friend."

"What did you do?" The Mage of Swords demanded to know in desperation as the mana Gilgamesh had accumulated in that instant had suddenly vanished. Not only that but the arrow was apparently resting on the ground harmlessly and Shirou wasn't buying that. "What did you do?!!"

"You better act quickly." Gilgamesh replied calmly, with a smile worthy of someone fully in

control. Then he looked up, prompting Shirou to do the same. "Can you see it? Enki's true form and power?"

For a few moments that Shirou looked up he couldn't see anything but by focusing his Divine mana on his eyes he managed to see farther. So much farther in fact that it would have been disoriented if not for the mass of gold mana gathering in the sky.

"The Surge of Utnapishtim. I suppose you could call it the Great Flood from Noah's Legend, if you want." Gilgamesh explained with a grin as he felt his friend glaring at his face. "Takes seven days to gather enough water to do it but my family has been holding Enki for a loooooong time so I can pretty much do it... once or twice per month? Even my reserves need a-"

His head hit the wall and he knew Shirou was mad. "Stop it!!!"

Xenovia and Ise approached but none said anything upon hearing the blond's chuckle. "I can't. Once Enki gets started, a Great Flood needs to be unleashed." He and everyone else looked up as the magic power grew in the sky and they all began to feel its vastness. "First it will form a Star of Destruction, the sort of thing capable of annihilating the whole Fuyuki and opening a crater in Japan." He said almost too casually. "Except it won't come to that. The target is locked and once the Star is close enough-"

"The Flood will come and sink the whole country." Xenovia realized with fear as the representatives of the Church also approached with wide eyes. "You are going to kill-"

"Hundreds of millions, the whole Japanese population." Still too casual, his eyes fell on Shirou. "Now, I can't stop it, but I have faith my friend can."

Ise couldn't believe what he just heard. "You are risking all our lives-"

"Don't compare us to you, Red Dragon Emperor, you probably can survive it." Gilgamesh chuckled again before pointing up. "You have a few more seconds before the Star of Destruction reaches the point of no return so if you don't move-"

Shirou was already moving, flying to the skies as fast as he could, so fast that several windows and a sonic boom were unleashed on his starting motion before his form cut through the night sky.

"Georg!!!" At that point Gilgamesh sobered up and got his magician moving.

"They are escaping." Kirei pointed out bluntly as the black haired magus created dozens of magic circles to get his allies away.

"No, they aren't!!!" Ise and Xenovia announced at the same time as they attacked Georg.

They had been watching the fight from the beginning so they knew Gilgamesh was extremely wounded and Dimension Lost's owner held the means for every other member of the Hero Faction escaping.

However, that was still underestimating the man who claimed the King of Heroes' name and once presented with their backs, he used Enki as a double blade to cut them. [Look out!]

"Bastard!" Cursed Xenovia as she fell on the ground with a cut back despite her cloak and armor.

Unlike her, Ise mostly evaded the blow which had been more aimed for his lungs where hers had been superficial regardless. "Thanks, Ddraig!" His Partner had turned on their thrusters just in time to avoid a fatal hit.

There was still a small cut on his back which was quickly fixed. [Don't present your backs like that, idiots!] The dragon chastised as Gilgamesh pulled Enki's light string and shot several arrows in their direction.

Still it was true the man was wounded and his arrows weren't even half as fast nor as strong as they had been just a few minutes prior. It was slow enough that the Red Dragon Emperor's wings managed to block most of them while Scale Mail took care of the rest.

Despite how weak they were, those were still Enki's arrows so both devil and dragon were careful in their defense, needing an instant to recover and counter.

Giving Kirei the chance to pretty much make a move of his own and attack Gilgamesh's neck with a knife strike which barely connected. "Woah! Georg, get us out of here!!" The blond struggling ordered as the priest advanced for a double fist attack to his chest.

It was the sort of blow that would break ribs and rip his heart from inside out and truth be told Gilgamesh wasn't in any condition to dodge it so he was somewhat relieved when a magic circle appeared between the priest and the blond, saving the latter's life.

Good for him then that his group's magus was on the prowl. "We are leaving!!"

The night glowed with white as Xenovia jumped to cut Georg's head.

...

"LAST STARDUST!!!!!" Shirou put everything he had to speed up towards the Star of Destruction before it got to the point of no return. Since he didn't know when that was, his flight was desperate. 'How am I going to stop that thing?'

Six beams of gold mana appeared from the void and began to merge to create a huge arrow of pure energy that couldn't be calculated. In fact the Mage of Swords was sure it was the sort of thing that could compete with Caliburn at its best and surpass the Holy Sword.

And he had to stop that huge arrow before it got close enough to Fuyuki to cause any damage or unleash a flood of biblical proportions. The only way to stop that outcome was stopping it from reaching whatever range would activate the secondary effect. The primary one was still the Star of Destruction and that needed to be stopped even sooner.

That much energy couldn't be allowed close to Fuyuki, forgetting about the secrecy of the moonlit world for a moment and how hiding it would be pretty much impossible, it was packing enough mana that at a certain range the city would be in danger even if Enki's attack didn't reach it.

All that was accounted for during the few instants that Shirou had before leaving the atmosphere in his attempt to stop the blast as far from Fuyuki as possible. He didn't even notice that for all intents and purposes he had left the planet, his eyes and focus were all on stopping the Star of Destruction.

Fortunately Bellerophon was there to account for high temperatures of exiting the Earth and also the vacuum of space.

Not that it mattered since he had bigger problems; 'a giant arrow made of energy' sized problem to be more precise.

'How do I stop that thing?' Options were accounted for and discarded in nanoseconds as his body approached the mass of mana. Divine in Origin and surely more powerful than himself, Shirou never knew that magnificent light truly could lead the death of millions. 'Forget about the flood, that thing can destroy the planet!'

Maybe he was exaggerating, maybe not. What he knew was that even Bellerophon's power paled against the Star of Destruction.

At least by itself.

"I am the bone of my sword. Steel is my body, fire is my blood!" Mana exploded around the Mage and soon several Projections of Kanshou and Bakuya took shape around him before he stopped outside the atmosphere. **"I have created over a thousand blades!!"**

There weren't that many swords but Shirou still pushed himself and Bellerophon to their limits. In less than the blink of an eye hundreds of Married Blades stood in front of the Star of Destruction but he knew it wasn't enough.

Realizing that Shirou stopped outside the atmosphere while focusing on his wings, ordering them to fully separate from his armor as he kept creating more and more swords. Two hundred swords turned into three hundred and twenty two and the redhead knew he had to act fast because individually the Noble Phantasms wouldn't be enough.

He needed them all in sync, dancing under a single tune to form a barrier through their connection and Bellerophon's power. Sure he sucked at making shields but Emiya had hopes in that one because it was made of hundreds of swords with Divinity to make sure it didn't fall apart.

And Shirou knew exactly what shield he wanted the Married Blades to imitate. **"Reach Beyond the Heavens!! Pegasus Rho Aias Formation!!!"**

Those gods and beings above who lived on the moon or around the stars watched with intrigue as a blade of black and white began to shine in the universe before taking the form of a huge pegasus.

Its light was being mostly obfuscated by the Star of Destruction but still shone brightly in defiance. The blades danced with each other, Gan Jiang and Mo Ye's connection keeping the weapons close to each other as Bellerophon held them just right.

Shirou concluded the formation with seven flower petals made of swords that connected with each other like jigsaws. Each petal was made of forty six blades that together looked more like giant swords made of dozens of them, each carrying the exact right number of black and white swords.

The aura in front of such weapons formed the barrier that Shirou wished for and only one question remained; would it hold?

Time accelerated as Last Stardust ended, all its power on the barrier as the mass of golden mana descended towards an unsuspecting world. Now outside of hyperspeed the Mage bore witness to the huge arrow going in his direction too fast for him to get out of the way.

Enki's Star of Destruction descended and Shirou didn't flinch, knowing millions of lives depended on his shield and so he would stand behind it to keep it going until the end.

When the powers clashed many on the planet felt it.

Certainly those from the moonlit world who were more sensible to such things.

It was the struggle between two Divine and opposite forces, one whose purpose could only be destruction against a warming protector who only wanted to keep everyone safe.

One of the petals broke apart and disappeared, weakening the whole. The Star of Destruction wasn't supposed to be stopped, its goal was to cause a Great Flood. Having an obstacle actually only made it grow in power.

And with every Kanshou and Bakuya that vanished the others grew weaker. A second petal disappeared and Shirou started to hyperventilate. Both his arms were held above his head as he felt what appeared to be the weight of the world on his shoulders once again.

But it was also different, more real, more constant and far heavier than treasures of infinity weapons. Comparing his previous struggle that was a challenge as great if not greater than stabilizing a ley line while reforging Caliburn.

Still he kept pushing more power, his eyes shining and his circuits flaring through the armor.

A third petal fell and what was hidden inside his world tried to interfere, to save themselves.

But they failed. They were too far from their seat of power and Bellerophon's Ascension kept them buried and weak as much as Avalon did in a normal day.

No interference was allowed even as the fourth petal gave way and the redhead felt himself bleed, his veins bulging erratically from exertion. Divinity moved to try and mend his body but he directed it all towards the last of the shields, Pegasus Rho Aias flaring with new life born of his determination.

As the fifth petal fell the Star of Destruction began to grow smaller as the power which allowed it to push through the barrier finally waned after what felt like hundreds of hours despite only being a couple of seconds.

The light's impact diminished in the same proportion, a second sun much close to Earth shining brightly before disappearing like a candle in the wind and to be mistaken as fireworks by the masses.

And so the Star of Destruction finally vanished without much more fanfare. Just a bright light too high for most people to see and what people saw were just the remains of it.

Not too bright, not too dangerous, just fireworks.

Obviously Shirou had no way of knowing that, all he knew was that his defense was successful even if only two of his petals survived the struggle. "Uff..." He let out a sigh of relief and tried to clean his forehead before his hand struck the helmet. "Haha... Hahaha! Oh man! That was... a bit too much..."

Exhaustion began to hammer his body as the surviving Kanshou and Bakuya separated, making way until they started to become his wings again. There were too many swords and so they broke apart into mana that refilled his reserves but even then the redhead felt his circuits ache.

'Close call. Way too close call.' The Mage thought to himself as it slowly became easier to breathe. "God dammit, Angelo... no, Gilgamesh." A fist shook with fury as he looked down and was stunned. "Whoa..."

For Earth was beautiful.

Shirou was so high he could see its perfect circumference and several continents, the sun pecking from the other side of the planet almost shyly.

Clouds moved about, the oceans all connected in a blue mantle and the land looked like all of it belonged together. There was a harmony on the sight he couldn't describe but he understood.

'If I made my World Egg big enough, would Unlimited Blade Works look like that? No, wait, that isn't how it works...' Shirou never thought about looking at his world from above but for the first time he grew curious about it. "This is beautiful. I can see why..." He looked up with a smile on his lips and an ocean of stars greeting him back. "... I can understand why people

dream with this.”

The time of reverie didn't last long, it couldn't, not with the people he cared about still in danger.

By the time Shirou had sobered up his wings had already adjusted themselves to a more stable form, still as tall as he was but without too much bulk to get in the way of his flight.

Sure Divinity could compensate but Bellerophon wasn't going to waste energy on being inefficient. He was a Legendary Mount after all, flying and giving his rider comfort were the pegasus' main skills besides challenging the Realm of the Gods.

Besides, they needed to get back to Earth quickly. There were eyes on them on the moon and on the globe. Suffice to say their actions hadn't gone unnoticed and that was dangerous in several metrics.

That was for the future, in the present Shirou began to fly back to Fuyuki and was dealing with several forces on reentrance. Despite Bellerophon's protection the Mage grew a new admiration for the first successful space rocket and everyone that followed. Similar to those, he had to deal with almost everything that entering Earth's atmosphere entailed.

Gravity, surprisingly, wasn't one of them. The pegasus was really a master of flight and could control their descent perfectly. He still felt the heat, even if slightly, because of how much energy they spent defending the Surge of Utnapishtim. Not enough to break his Ascension but enough for him to notice.

Quickly the stars in space began to disappear as Fuyuki's buildings came back into view. His town was there pretty much as he had left it. Didn't take more than a few seconds to arrive back to the empty terrain where Dimension Lost had dropped everyone.

Except it was much more empty than before with only people he knew present; Xenovia was standing with Durandal down like she tried to stab something, Ise looked around with an air of frustration, Caren was obviously exhausted, resting beside a wall while Kirei fixed what was left of his clothes with cold indifference.

They all felt him approaching, his lover reacting first. “Shiro, I am sorry. They escaped.”

“It is fine.” He could tell by the way shoulders dropped, she knew he was lying. “Is everyone alright?” His eyes pointedly landed on Kirei with some concern.

“Thanks to you, we will live.” The older man was being quite literal and his demeanor showed it. “It seems that the Hero Faction still managed to pull off successfully despite Xenovia Quarta's efforts.”

There was respect in his tone but was quickly dismissed when the blue haired woman raised Durandal to show blood in the tip. “I almost stopped them, Shiro. Just a centimeter further-”

[A centimeter further and Gilgamesh could have killed you.]

“Ddraig!” Ise shouted upon seeing Shirou wince and Xenovia lower her weapon as her armor vanished. She looked dead in her feet and the redhead was quick to hold her while checking her back. “She 's fine. He was trying to kill me.”

[Got close to that too.] And the Original Red Dragon Emperor didn't sound pleased at all. His Partner knew later there would be hell to pay in the form of harsher training.

“Let us just be happy we are all alive.” Caren commented as she looked up. “We also may have some stuff to explain.”

They all looked up to see the Watchers of Fuyuki, squads of devils and fallen angels, pouring in the area with weapons ready.

Considering the time that passed between the fall of Georg's dimension and the sudden manifestation of his, Gilgamesh, Ise and Xenovia's energies, Shirou would claim they arrived quite quickly.

Azazel was right behind looking like he had to dress up in a hurry and with a pair of fallen angels flying beside him. He threw a look at Shirou with caution before noticing Xenovia and realization dawned on him a moment after

Not surprisingly they weren't the only ones as both Rias and Sona's peerages also arrived in force, pretty much complete if anyone accounted that Ise was already there. Leading the charge were both noble ladies but only because Akeno held back with her Noble Gear already prompted for a fight with Irina by her side, Light spear in hand.

‘Liz must have stayed behind to watch over Medusa.’ It was the only reason why Shirou could see the goddess' priestess present. ‘And everyone in Japan probably felt Enki's true power. Hurray, that won't be hard to explain at all.’

Already worried about several things, Shirou didn't even want to think about the implications of what the Hero Faction tried to do and actually did. Things were going to become even more hectic with that particular faction in the Khaos Brigade because even if he weakened Gilgamesh he was still loose.

Still loose and with Enki by his side, holding a power capable of sinking countries and he can control it.

Lost in such thoughts, Shirou's attention only returned when Rias, Azazel and Sona landed close to them. As they were effectively the leaders of everyone present, it wasn't surprising they would move first.

“Shiro, is that you?” Rias sounded certain and relaxed even if curious.

“Some things happened...”

"You can say that again." Sona retorted sarcastically. "Care to explain? Any of you?" The Student Council's president asked while glancing around the area.

"Chill out, So-tan-"

"Azazel, call me again and the Grigori will be afraid of a war after I am done with you!!"

"Okay, okay. Calm down. I was just going to say they probably need some time after... whatever happened here." The Cadre looked around curiously, noticing Ise was releasing his Balance Breaker and Kirei's clothes. "Looks like they were in a fight but the place is mostly intact... What a conundrum."

"You can thank Dimension Lost for that." Xenovia pointed out, much to the Governor General interest. Her training as an Exorcist saw her delivering a quick report to get everyone in the loop as quickly as possible "The Hero Faction has it and they ambushed us-"

"Georg of the Hero Faction, a magus descendent of Faust, the Man Who Sold his Soul." Kirei interrupted to add and understood who exactly was the Faust he was referring to. Yet the priest wasn't done. "They came to attempt to kidnap Emiya Shirou who managed to usurp... Would that be the right word?"

"Kanshou came to us from its own 'volition'." Shirou informed while pointing towards the sword still in Caren's hands who was holding it tightly close to its twin. Rias' eyes grew wide but remained focused on him. "Angelo... no, I suppose he is just Gilgamesh now. He was with them, we fought and..." The armored magus waved and made the Bakuya in the nun's hand disappear. "I suppose I have Medusa to thank for this. Her and Bellerophon."

"I am sure my goddess will be happy to hear." Akeno said out loud as she noticed many devils and fallen angels interested in the development. Approaching Shioru she stood side by side with him, almost like exhibiting the gifts her goddess could bestow to others. "Look at that, we almost match."

"You are mostly purple and he is in black and white." Luvia said at a distance knowing the Queen couldn't retort easily without losing her composure.

However, most eyes landed on Rias when she asked, "Shiro, are you alright?"

The Mage of Swords let out a deep sigh before letting go of Xenovia and moving his hand closer to his helmet. He didn't need to bother removing it, the thing retracted itself with just a thought once his intentions were clear to Bellerophon.

What everyone saw was the tired and sweaty face of Emiya Shirou but it was different as his eyes no longer resembled gold or the dawn and instead his left one was black while his right one was white.

It surprised those that arrived after the fight but not those who were dragged inside Georg's dimension or watched him stand against Gilgamesh. What surprised everybody was the color of his hair which was an unexpected white, almost gray.

But it wasn't white like the armor or Bakuya which held their own luster and couldn't even be compared. The white on his eyes and his armor shone with reflections more fitting for a lake under the sun while that hair appeared more similar to snow.

At least the gray part, the red on part of the top and back side of his head was his natural hair color, clinging to life like dying embers.

The lack of luster on the gray hair was a clear indication of several things; first, Rias' spell had disappeared, banished by the mana output the male redhead used constantly during the fight.

Second, said output had been far more than most people could take and the Mage of Swords' hair was just evidence of the overheating of his circuits.

However what struck Rias the hardest was the face Shirou was making. He didn't look tired but rather sad. Extremely sad for someone like him that always avoided worrying everyone else.

"I failed." Emiya said suddenly, catching everyone's eye. "I had Gilgamesh right here and I couldn't stop him from escaping."

"Master-" A glance from his heterochromatic eyes stopped Xenovia from talking.

"No, that was on me. I tried to not kill someone I thought of as a friend and he escaped." Shirou's eyes moved around, looking at everyone apologetically. "That is on me and whatever he does in the future is also on me."

People grew silent as most of them didn't even understand what was going on. Sona was the first to react. "Spread around the area! The Khaos Brigade somehow managed to infiltrate Fuyuki... again! Check everything! I don't want a single stone unturned!!"

Clearly she was upset about several things but whatever anger she felt towards Rias about Caliburn went to the back burner. Her peerage was quick to catch on that and help coordinate the devils while the fallen angels waited for their leader for orders.

"You are overreacting, don't you think?" Azazel asked carefully as he waved around and pointed towards Sona, pretty much ordering the fallen angels to follow her lead. "I mean, from what I can see this is a new development." He said, waving towards the complete Ascension. "Nobody saw that coming, how could you know to stop him when you didn't even know you were going to win in the first place?"

"I always saw myself winning, no matter what plans Gilgamesh threw my way." Sure Dimension Lost screwed several of those, Unlimited Blade Works was the main one, but not even for a moment Shirou lost confidence he could win.

Not after hundreds of hours of training, practice, the development of weapons and reviewing his fight against Angelo on Kuoh's rooftop millions of times. In a fight against the King of

Heroes' descendant, Shirou was confident he could win. It wouldn't be easy, it shouldn't be easy, but so long he had an opening, mana and it was one on one, he believed in victory.

"He never gave me a fair fight and when Bellerophon, Kanshou and Bakuya opened a new possibility I wasted it." Emiya closed his fist in fury not towards anyone else but to himself. "And this isn't over. He will be back, not to try and take me or convince me to join his little club but to do something irredeemable."

That was his last chance of truly saving his friend and his sister, Shirou knew it.

At least from his perspective. "Then we stop whatever they are going to try to do." Rias said easily, not even caring whatever the Hero Faction wanted. Shirou needed it stopped so she would do everything to see it done. "Just need to find them and lock them up for a while."

"It wasn't like they didn't give us any leads." Caren reminded them as she offered Kanshou to Shirou. "Plenty of intel was traded around that fight, including that they believe the next attack of the Old Satan Faction is going to be a decisive one."

Sona heard it, turning to them with interest. "That is great news and once we cripple them, the Khaos Brigade will lose one of its legs."

"Gonna make things easier to rescue Illya-san too." Akeno pointed out respectfully as Azazel looked for something in his pockets.

Snapping his fingers, he began to call one of his subordinates. "Someone get me a phone! I need to get Michael and Serafall on the line pronto!"

Things were already exploding in motion as the rest of Rias Peerage approached the group. "So you defeated the 'King of Heroes'?" Luvia asked with curiosity seeping in her tone. "Supposedly the man has 'One thousand and One' Noble Phantasms."

Gaspar, now that most of the attention wasn't on them, couldn't help exclaim excitedly. "Cool! Wait, doesn't that mean Senpai is the strongest human?"

"He wasn't the real deal." Ise pointed out swiftly.

Which made Akeno chuckle and poke his cheek. "Looks like someone is jelly~"

"I ain't jelly!"

"Sounds like you are." Kiba observed with a chuckle.

As Koneko tapped Shirou's side. "Don't worry. Next time we'll be there."

The Mage chuckled and patted her head while wondering. "Does that mean my security detail will increase?"

"Definitely." Was Rias' reply, making her love groan and everyone else laugh.

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“Quick! We need extra potions here!”

“The fluids of this capsule need to be replaced STAT!”

“More blood bags!”

“We should use Phoenix Tears!”

“Pipe down, you idiot! Those are precious resources! We can’t waste them!”

“This guy is about to die!!”

“Get out of my lab!!” Illya finally lost her patience, every voice growing silent at her sudden command.

“But my lady-”

“Get out, your incompetent hussy!! You think they are going to die?! What sort of magician are you who doesn’t have a modicum of confidence in your research?!! My research?!! MY brother’s research?!!!” Everything was silent as the white haired woman whose hair was tied into a bun with the rest framing her face, a surgeon’s attire hastily put on and wearing gloves which reached her elbows. “OUT!!!!!!”

The other woman began to cry but left before bailing her eyes out and everyone else got back to work much more quietly. Nobody was going to criticize Illya’s attitude because not only that was really her workshop and they were just her assistants but she actually was working on the hardest case.

Connla laid flat on a steel table with several tubes connected to his body pulping up several potions, anesthetics and blood. The black haired man needed every bit of it since even as he lay unconscious his body would twitch while Einzebern worked on his missing side. As in, he was missing a lot of his left side.

‘Seriously Shirou?! Did you really do this?!’ The older Emiya sibling had much to say to the younger. ‘I remembered you were worried about not feeling anything about killing... Since when did it become easy? Then again, maybe I am getting ahead of myself...’ A soft touch on her forehead cleaned up the sweat. “Thank you, Sella.”

“It is my duty, milady.” The maid turned lab assistant was wearing a similar coat dirty with their patient’s blood and gloves but in her hands she had a towel while a water basin floated beside her. She threw the towel there while a new assistant gave her another. “Will sir Connla survive, lady Illyasviel?”

Knowing her most faithful confidant wasn’t doubting her abilities but just cautious considering

how much flesh the man lost, Illya had no problem in answering. "Oh he will. He is just going to go missing... something important."

"The arm."

"Yep..."

There in the middle of her lab, because the place was magically free of any bacterias so they didn't need a prepared room from surgery leaving everyone watching with dark fascination as Illya kept working with magic and flesh to make sure Connla would live to see another day.

As the man was missing a lot of his upper body's left side, it took her a couple of minutes to stabilize him and since the wound was considerable, just throwing him inside one of their healing pods wasn't going to be enough.

Parts of his body and organs were missing so they had to be replaced while stop gap measures needed to be taken to keep him alive. Both endeavors usually would take a team of five at least or very specific Noble Phantasms or sacred gears of considerable power to be successful.

Illya decided to instruct everyone else to work on the other wounded, of which there were several dozen, while she personally made sure Night Reflection's user didn't die and would make a full recovery.

Except for the missing limb, that she couldn't replace easily. "I knew I should have invested some of the pods into cloning body parts but nooooooo. 'Let's make your workshop into a hospital', they said. 'You are the greatest healer of the Khaos Brigade and we can get tons of information'." She heard a laugh and turned to glare towards the man who made exactly that last suggestion albeit with different words. "Something you find funny, 'Gilgamesh'?"

"Just how frustrated you sound." One of the lab assistants used one of his remaining Noble Phantasms on the man as his EM was used to help another of Shirou's victims. "Especially considering this was all my friend's work."

Another of the lab assistants, an homunculus with features similar to Illya but clearly male and with a shorter hair, cleared his throat. "Milady." He waited for a signal for him to talk, which was a bloody hand waving for him to move on before returning to take care of Connla's wound. "We have stabilized the Heracles as you ordered. At the moment he is asleep to assist in his full recovery."

Pushing something inside Connla's body that would have the man screaming if he was awake, and made some in the room vomit, Illya responded. "Great news. What about Jeane?"

"Besides her vocal cords being a little sore, she is already awake but we did as you ordered and locked her in her room."

“Hahahaha! Any reason why I didn’t get my own personal room?” Gilgamesh asked excitedly, already knowing the answer.

Which came as expected, “So you can explain to me, in detail, how did Shirou beat you all?” Illya contradictorily sounded both pleased and frustrated by the fact. That was because she was; on one hand her brother managed to beat some of the Hero Faction strongest while on the other he wasn’t there by her side. “Didn’t you lock him inside Dimension Lost, Georg? I thought that skank Gremory couldn’t give him any mana!”

Georg looked utterly exhausted and had two people working on his wounds; one kept a towel with magic over the side of his throat to stop it from bleeding while the other worked on closing it.

Xenovia’s parting gift, a stab from Durandal full of Holy Energy. When a sword like that wanted to kill, it usually succeeded so they were first getting rid of the Holy before treating him properly. Yet Durandal’s energy fought back, making the process hard.

Hard but doable which allowed him to stay conscious despite the pain. “Because nobody expected him from suddenly pulling off the power of a god!”

“‘Pegasus’ and he didn’t have that when he fought Vali?”

“That is because you left that sword in your Vault, Gilgamesh!!” Criticized the magus which only made the blond laugh again. “Why are you so amused?! All your family’s work has gone into the drain!!”

“Because-”

He stopped answering when his instincts flared warning him someone powerful was approaching. Powerful and familiar, not even trying to be threatening but doing so anyway in virtue of the power he was trying to hide which the blond and just a few in the building could feel.

At least until he got close enough, then everyone could feel it but a glare from Illya kept everyone in their posts as she kept working overtime to heal Connla to the best of her ability.

None of that stopped Sella from quickly assuming a defensive posture close to Emiya who just rolled her eyes and kept working while Georg resigned himself to treatment as even if there was a confrontation, which had surprisingly little odds of happening, he wasn’t in any condition for a fight.

Not that Vali would demand one in that particular moment anyway as he strode inside the workshop with just two members of his group at his back. “Morning!” The Vanishing Dragon greeted loudly and politely as the guards from the Hero Faction who should have stopped his entrance looked to be shaking in fear.

“Vali, they just came from Japan.” Arthur politely informed as the cube above his chest chuckled maniacally. “It would be night for them.”

“Good evening, then.” The silver haired man amended as most of the wounded and those who should be protecting them looked absolutely terrified by the White Dragon Emperor’s presence. That made him chuckle openly. “Don’t worry, I don’t pick on weaklings.”

“Ouch. Do you really need to say that to my men?” Gilgamesh asked half mockingly.

“I was talking with you as well- ow!”

“Behave.” Altria warned after hitting his side with Clarent’s handle. “They are warriors who just returned from a mission, as dishonorable as said mission was.”

Vali glared at his friend just before raising an eyebrow. “I didn’t see you protesting when they suggested kidnapping Shirou.”

The swordswoman was about to hit him again but her brother stood between them. “Altria, stop. You don’t have any right to criticize any of them.”

“Kakakaka! If you want to talk about underhanded actions why not include the time you tricked your brother to go play with a Mage.” Add, the cube which held the most power of lances, laughed loudly which made the platinum blonde woman pout.

Arthur let out a sigh as Gilgamesh laughed at their antics. “Hahahaha!! Being an older sibling sure is tough.” He turned to Illya who was still working. “You get to worry about your younger sibling all the time, especially when they are doing something stupid, and not even a thank you as a reward.”

“And fix their messes.” The Emiya Heir began to sweat again and Sella quickly returned to her previous position. “Seriously, I never thought Shirou had all this in him... I am impressed.”

Altria looked around, to the several wounded and close to dying members of the Hero Faction. “Shirou? He isn’t the type!” Her focus turned to Connla, noticing his missing body parts. “Really not the type.”

“He really did all this?!” Vali on the other hand sounded excited.

Which made Illya let out a sigh and dump a whole bottle of potion on the last of Connla’s wounds, closing his flesh safely. “And now the Chuunibyou guy is getting excited...”

“I don’t have ‘eighth grade syndrome’!”

[Answering like that isn’t helping your case.] Albion told his Partner in the privacy of their soul. A second later Divine Dividing manifested and he spoke out loud. [Yet the Mage of Swords managed to defeat several of our former teammates rather easily. Including the supposed leader of the Hero Faction.] Gilgamesh glared at the wings but held his tongue. [Or did you hold back?]

“Yeah, did you?” Illya took off her gloves and turned as some of her assistants moved to take Connla inside a healing pod to fix whatever internal damage remained. Looking around, it was the first time she noticed Vali only had Altria and Arthur with him. “Where is the squirt? Usually you Pendragon siblings are glued to each other.”

It was Altria who replied. “She is with Kuroka and Bikou since neither of them is welcome here.” Just saying the name of their nonhuman allies had several members of the Hero Faction flinching and glaring. She held her sword tightly and made sure to glare at them all, daring them to start anything. ‘Come on, give me a reason to soak my blade with your blood-’

“Arthur, Altria is getting pissed again. Kakakaka!” Add informed his holder who was already moving to grab his sister’s shoulder.

“You aren’t allowed to spar for a week still.”

“But-”

“No buts. You are letting out so much bloodlust I can almost taste it.” Her presence was suffocating anyone too weak and considering how many of the Hero Faction were wounded that number was bigger than usual. “You don’t get to fight so stand down.”

“Listen to your brother, Altria.” Vali added offhandedly and despite the obvious irritation on the woman’s face she nodded in agreement and took her hand off Clarent. Deciding to move things along, the Vanishing Dragon retreated his wings and grabbed a random chair to sit down the other way around to rest his arms. “Sorry about her. She has been anxious to get a crack at Shirou again.” Only Sella noticed Illya twitch.

“Get in line!” Georg surprised many by saying that. “Between me, Heracles and Jeanne, the Mage of Swords made plenty of enemies. Damn it, I just want to teach that punk a lesson!” Another twitch despite how much Illya was controlling herself.

“Hmph, you get in line. I saw him first!” Was Altria’s confident response that made a murderous look cross Illya’s face which quickly vanished as she removed her surgeon’s coat and one homunculus holding a lab coat for her to wear.

“Technically I saw him first.” Gilgamesh decided to get into the joke as he noticed the volcano that was Emiya Illyasviel Einzbern getting ready to blow.

Vali, who noticed that too, couldn’t help but chuckle. “From where I am looking you just got your shot and were kicked down the curb.” Mana began to flow from the white haired woman and several people began to retreat while the White Dragon Emperor only found amusement. “Oh, relax, Illyasviel. We are just playing with your brother a little.”

The white haired magus glared in return as Sella voiced her mistress’ concerns. “Why are you here, Vali Lucifer?”

“To see if Shirou was going to join your little club or not.” Was the casual response as Altria’s expression of anger grew more intense while Arthur silently kept an eye on his sister. Add just laughed over everything. “From what I can see... that hasn’t happened. So, what went wrong? I was pretty sure your plan involved cutting any reinforcements and keeping the Gremory’s support out of his reach.”

“Gilgamesh fucked up.” Everyone turned to Georg with expressions of pure surprise at the language from the usually polite man. His face grew red with shame, especially with so many witnesses, and he fixed his glasses while clearing his throat in an attempt to deflect his mistake. “What I mean is... he stole Gilgamesh’s Kanshou and used it to complete his Ascension.”

“Georg’s glasses must have recorded it.” Illya quickly reminded everyone of the spell in the man’s lenses, making the blond laugh and the black haired man wince.

Pretty much everybody was surprised by Gilgamesh’s good humor so Arthur asked, “I never saw someone like you so... happy with defeat.” He glanced at Altria who pointedly ignored the gesture.

“What can I say? My friend truly surprised me. You all will see it, especially you, Vali.” The Hybrid’s eyebrows arched up in interest. “He was at least five- no, ten times stronger when you two fought.” Excitement hung on Gilgamesh’s every word, something the White Dragon Emperor reciprocated with a joyful expression. “And he was so fast! He managed to reach the Surge of Utnapishtim before it was fully formed! That was less than five seconds from Fuyuki to space!! And he blocked it..” Then his face grew sober before the blond clicked his tongue. “Oh, if he only didn’t need his pegasus’ power to do all that...”

“Hah! Just you can care about something so stupid.” Vali really wanted to fight Shirou again, to test his full might against the man who defeated him once, going all out in their rematch. “The pegasus is his, isn’t it? Then the matter is settled. Bet he could even use that against Medusa if he wished.” That seemed to interest the Hero Faction members but not Illya who looked to be thinking about another thing entirely.

Then Altria began to leave. “Something wrong, Little Lion?” Add, the first to notice, asked which got the other’s attention.

After a short stretch of silence, the platinum blonde turned around to say. “Since Shirou isn’t coming, there is no point in staying.” She was gone after that with a long stride and hand back in her sword.

“Sorry about that.” Arthur bowed apologetically. “My sister has been frustrated after her confrontation with the Mage of Swords.”

Sella noticed something rather quickly. “Contrary to her you sound rather pleased by the event.”

“Kekeke. Of course we’re.” Add replied for his holder who let out a sigh. “I don’t want her even close to Caliburn. Let that thing rust.”

"I better keep an eye on her. She is still grounded, after all." Arthur bowed politely before also leaving the area.

"As usual, that thing has rather strong opinions for a mystic code." Illya ended up saying after calming down and undoing the bun on her hair. To Vali, she asked. "About that attack-"

The Hybrid shrugged his shoulders. "I already told you everything the Old Satan Faction was willing to give me... Apparently they have orders from above to let me out."

Illya shook her head in disbelief. "I thought Rizevim didn't care about you knowing his plans."

"He doesn't."

"Who else is leading them?"

"That we don't know." Vali admitted without much thought. "Orders are still coming from Zolken's state even after Ria and Fay told us Zolgen died."

"As if."

"Oh~ Questioning your brother's accomplishments, Illya?"

She glared at the Hybrid for a second before scoffing. "Just something telling me that a bastard like that wouldn't die so easily." It was an instinct that had been present her whole life. The same thing that warned 'Extinction' was on the way. "But can you-"

Raising a hand, the great grandson of Lucifer interrupted her. "Stop right there. Knowing more about the plan won't change things. Shirou isn't coming." He pointed a thumb towards Gilgamesh before moving on. "And you can't drag him by force either since that guy was defeated. Unless you are planning to throw Cao Cao at him as well?"

That was an idea that interested Georg and he would have stood up in excitement if his neck wasn't still undergoing treatment. "With how much Divinity he had, the True Longinus could-"

A sober but still smirking Gilgamesh interrupted. "If I had my family's treasures, maybe. That would involve all of us working together." Despite everything he wasn't angry or at least he didn't appear to be angry. "But at this moment I lost most of my offensive treasures. In total I only have eight Noble Phantasms capable of harming my friend in a fight and none of them could hit him without... a lot of distractions." His red eyes landed on Georg who just wanted to vanish at that moment. "Cao Cao can't survive the trick we used with my treasures so he never is going to hit my friend. Ever."

"Then the True Longinus is just a big piece of powerful metal? Is it like that against any other god too? What is the point of it then?"

An exasperated Sella glared at Georg. "Why are you inferring that the young lord is a god?"

“Because of the Divinity we felt. Everyone here can attest to that.” Was the black haired man’s response and all of his subordinates, those conscious, nodded in agreement.

Illya nodded, understanding things quickly. “Then our best bet is sabotage-”

“My friend will survive whatever the Old Satan Faction can throw at him, Illya.” Gilgamesh was starting to get upset. “Let him deal with the trash for us. It isn’t like we aren’t in position to enact visible action against the Old Satan Faction.”

“We should still do something.”

Waving around to show the many wounded, Gilgamesh declared. “We can’t. Not now.” Realizing nothing she could say would change anything the woman acquiesced.

A grunt escaped Vali as he realized several things. “Then this is the end of our little alliance. I better get going.” He stood up from his chair and made sure to place it exactly where he found it.

“Wait a moment.” Gilgamesh stopped the Hybrid before he made it to the door. “I remember the condition for the information was a match between you and I.”

Vali waved his hand dismissively. “Call me whenever you manage to refill your Vault. For now... I believe Shirou is definitively the better prey.” Draconic energy poured from around his body with every magician quickly noticing it was denser than usual.

‘Looks like Vali also got stronger.’ The blond thought before adding. “Won’t Altria stop you from picking a fight? Something about ‘honor’, was it?” The light blue aura vanished like the flick of a switch as a silver one began to pour from Illya. Gilgamesh chuckled. “That is, if she also doesn’t want a piece of him first.”

The silver haired man ended up clicking his tongue. “Get me that video later. I need to study my rival’s new capabilities.”

“Wasn’t the Red Dragon Emperor your rival?” Illya asked in challenge.

“A man can have multiple rivals.” With that he was gone.

“Damn that, Chuunibyou.”

“Milady! It isn’t proper to insult someone over their condition.”

“Pft! Hahahaha!! Sella is on point today.” Gilgamesh laughed a little more as Illya turned to her maid who had a proud look on her face.

Most of the Hero Faction didn’t dare to do the same, not even Georg. They knew how powerful Vali was and weren’t willing to risk his wrath.

Fixing her hair one more time, Illya stopped in front of Gilgamesh. "Ready to tell me what really happened?"

"It will be better for you to watch it. Words won't do it justice." Was the blond's half exasperated reply. "If anything, that experience proved your point." Both pairs of red eyes met each other, one calm but curious while the other was determined. "You were right, we need more before challenging the gods. Much more."

"You already knew that... but now you sound way more certain." It made the woman want to watch her brother's 'tape' even more. "Anyway, we are just about done. Just a few more preparations and nobody will be able to stop us."

"Why can't that ritual be in Fuyuki again?"

"How many times do I have to say it? That town is too... suffocated with mana. With whatever ritual was already done there..." There was just too much for Illya to control easily. "We would need way more time. And better ways to secure that time. Better leave it just in case we go for our last resort."

The mood around the workshop grew somber and doubtful, albeit with a pinch of curiosity in some corners. Those who knew what that resort was refused to voice it while others believed there was no way for it to work. Everyone else, the majority of the group which included several of Illya's assistants, had no idea what that was.

But they knew the main plan and were sure that once it was done the Hero Faction would be the most powerful force on the planet.

Georg cleared his throat, partially to change the subject. "Someone will need to tell Cao Cao that Connla lost his arm." For that Illya actively winced.

Gilgamesh, however, nodded in understanding. "I was the leader of that operation. I will inform Cao Cao his 'student' fought well but is unfortunately crippled."

"No, he isn't." Illya surprised everyone with that thought. "At least, not forever."

"What are you thinking? The growth of extra bodies for organs again?" Because Georg found that quite distasteful.

"... Let Connla wake up, I want to trade an idea with him. From there... who knows? Either way, once the Heaven's Touch ritual is done, I think we can give him an extra arm anyway." Such news surprised everyone but those who knew the intricacies of it saw she was potentially right. "Either way, Cao Cao and Sigfried were procuring the last catalysis. Now we just need to prepare for a quick take over." Her eyes focused on Georg. "I hope you are ready to do your part, Georg-kun~"

After fixing his glasses one more time, the man offered her an eager smile. "I will help you to the best of my abilities."

“Then it is settled. The time of Humanity’s ascension is close.” Gilgamesh announced and later in the day the news would have spread like fire inside the Hero Faction. “We must distract our obstacles as we use the last one, the one most connected to their ley lines, to make our ambitions come true.”

Excitement began to replace dread as the defeated began to dream of a world where their power could match the gods. Where they could challenge the Mage of Swords and not be overwhelmed as they were.

“Our target is Kyoto. Ladies and gentlemen, get ready. Soon the World will be a very different place.” Their commander concluded.

And his men roared as Illya smiled. ‘A goddess isn’t the only one who can give power.’

She and Sella moved to the inner sanctum of her workshop. They had preparations to finish but all that was left was to wait for an opportunity.

An opportunity that the Hero Faction was going to create.

Fate was already in motion.

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