

Fate/Grand Order x Under the Moonlight Exclusive Crossover Event!

Fleeing Lunar Phantasia

Part One

I was flying.

Aloft above the clouds, I soared like an eagle, the wind in my hair, the salty tang of the bay in my nose, and the full moon hanging above me like a ripe peach, ready to be plucked. Even in temperate Brockton, this high up, I should have been chilled to the bone, but I didn't feel the cold at all.

A hand reached out for mine, intertwining my fingers with another, and when I looked over, there was Lisa as I knew her best: young, smiling, face free of the scars a mad psycho had carved into her cheeks. She laughed as the wind carried us away, and we danced in the moonlit sky, carefree and happy, content in our friendship. The city stretched below us, whole, undamaged, the lights glittering like diamonds on a tapestry of quiet homes and bold towers.

I said something over the silent wind, and she laughed. She replied with a witty remark, and laughter bubbled up out of my throat, fit to bursting with my happiness.

And then a siren sounded, and the buoyant air beneath us dropped away, leaving us to fall and plummet towards the ground. My stomach lurched in my gut, and I flailed against the howling wind as the siren continued to blare. Lisa shouted something at me, flailing herself, and her hand that had been ripped from mine reached out. I reached out, too.

The city below us grew larger and larger, the buildings expanding as we got closer to the ground, and I scrambled for Lisa's outstretched hand as the inevitable loomed beneath us. Our fingers came within inches of each other every time we swung our arms, never quite touching, never quite connecting. The siren trumpeted over everything else, all-consuming, ever-present.

At last, at last, as the street below came ever closer, so close I could start to see the yellow traffic lines, my fingers hooked on hers and she pulled my hand into hers.

"I'll see you again," she promised.

I opened my mouth as the ground surged up to greet us — and lurched upright in my bed, panting, sweat on my brow, as the emergency siren continued to scream at me.

A dream, I realized. It was all a dream.

I fumbled for my glasses with one hand, nearly smacked them to the floor in my blind reaching, and slipped them on as I grabbed my communicator with the other.

“Romani,” I said grumpily, “what’s going on?”

“Taylor,” he greeted me solemnly, “there’s an emergency situation.”

“It must be, if you’re waking me up at...” I glanced over at my clock. “Four-thirty in the morning.”

“We’ve found another Singularity,” he told me gravely.

I sat up straight, suddenly wide awake as a jolt of adrenaline surged through my gut. “Another one? Not one of the ones from before?”

He grimaced. “Well, not exactly, but kind of... Look, it’s a bit difficult to explain, so get suited up and I’ll go over what we know once you and the twins have made it over here.”

He disconnected without another word of explanation, and with a grunt and an exhausted sigh, I levered myself up and out of bed. We didn’t have a normal day-night cycle here in Antarctica, not this close to the South Pole, and I was deep indoors besides, far from any windows, but I was tempted to look outside to see if the sun had even started to rise yet.

Not my first night of interrupted sleep, though, so I stumbled my way through getting dressed and strapped my dagger to my thigh in its holster.

As ready as I was going to be, I left my room and made my way to the Command Room, where Romani apparently had something I needed desperately to see.

Another Singularity, he’d said, although not quite. What was that supposed to mean? There were seven, weren’t there? Six, now, since we’d managed to fix the Orléans one. What, were more just going to pop up every time we beat one, making a never ending line of Singularities for us to deal with? That sounded ridiculous, even by my standards. There had to be a limit even for someone like King Solomon. There was no way he could just keep making the things ad infinitum, right?

And was it even a Singularity anyway? What was that supposed to mean, “not exactly?” Was it a Singularity or not? I would hope that all of these finely honed and tuned sensors designed just for the purposes of detecting that sort of thing would be able to tell the difference between a Singularity and something else entirely.

So if this wasn’t another Singularity, then what was it?

I sighed and rubbed tiredly at one eye. I was just going to wind up thinking myself in circles like this, so I tried to put it out of my mind and wait until I could get a full briefing from Romani.

It was way too early for this, anyway.

Our skeleton crew of technicians was whittled even further down by the time I got to the Command Room, leaving just half a dozen people manning the stations, and Romani himself had bugs under his eyes as he nursed what smelled like a cup of coffee. Just further proof that this was really something that should have been handled later on. Preferably about eight hours from now. Eleven in the morning was more than reasonable, wasn’t it?

“Taylor,” Romani greeted me. “Just waiting on the twins, then.”

A haggard sigh left my lips, and Romani offered me a sympathetic smile.

“Sorry about this,” he told me. “I got pulled out of bed about half an hour ago, too.”

“That much of an emergency?”

He shook his head. “I wish I could offer you more than a maybe, but we just don’t know for sure, yet.”

“Great.”

Just what I wanted to hear.

We stood in silence together as we waited for the twins and Mash to show up, and I leaned against the console, holding my arms around myself to ward away the chill that Chaldea just couldn’t seem to entirely banish. Somewhere along the line, my head started to droop and my eyes slid closed as my thoughts went blissfully warm and fuzzy, and I wasn’t sure that I didn’t doze off anywhere in there.

It really was too early for this. I had just gotten used to sleeping a full night uninterrupted in a proper bed again, and I was not prepared to be woken up in the middle of it. My body wanted to be back on my mattress, curled up under the comfy blankets, atop my fluffy pillow, perfectly molded to support my head and neck. My eyes burned with the need.

Finally, the door whooshed open again, startling me back to alertness, and the twins and Mash shuffled in, wearing pajamas and bathrobes instead of dressed for action. They looked as exhausted as I felt.

“Where’s the fire?” Rika mumbled tiredly. She was rubbing her eye with the palm of one hand as she loosed a jaw-cracking yawn, and in the other hand, curled in the crook of her arm and held gently against her chest, was Fou.

Did she... Was she cuddling with that thing in her sleep?

“What’s the emergency, Doctor Roman?” Ritsuka asked, blinking sluggishly.

“I was having such a good dream,” Rika lamented.

“Fooooou,” the little beastie yawned.

“I’m afraid that emergency is all too appropriate a term,” Da Vinci announced grimly as she walked in behind the twins. “I’m sorry for getting everyone up at such an early hour, but this is something we’re going to have to tackle as quickly as possible, so there was nothing to be done about it.”

Romani gestured at her, midway through a long, slurping draw of his coffee. I squashed my jealousy as best as I could. “As you can probably tell, Da Vinci was the one who discovered the anomaly. I’m going to let her explain what’s going on.”

“How kind of you, Romani,” said Da Vinci sardonically. She heaved a sigh. “Well, it is what it is, so I suppose I might as well get to it.” Her face drew into a serious frown. “Roughly two hours ago, Chaldea’s sensors detected an anomalous reading in France. At first, I thought it might be an echo of the Singularity in Orléans resolving itself, because it was so faint, but it has rapidly been gaining strength and structure.”

A spike of adrenaline shot through my gut, banishing any remnants of drowsiness. That didn’t sound good. That didn’t sound good at all.

“Another Singularity is forming?” I asked sharply.

Instantly, the twins and Mash were wide awake.

“It’s not at the stage where it can be called a proper Singularity, yet,” Da Vinci explained. She walked around the console and typed something in, and as our group huddled around to look, a blip appeared on the map of France, way, way to the west of where Orléans had been. In fact, it was closer to the coastline than the center of the country. “It might more appropriately be referred to as a Sub-Singularity. If left unchecked, it will gain enough strength to become one on its own, but for now, it hasn’t developed to that point. Hence the emergency.”

“The sooner we intervene, the easier it should be to resolve,” Romani added, and then grimaced into his mug. “Theoretically.”

Theoretically. For what it was worth, that idea made perfect sense to me.

“The reason I’m certain this is a thing of its own is this,” Da Vinci said. She tapped one key, and several lines of text appeared on the screen next to the blip.

Rennes, France
October, 1898 A.D.
Human Order Foundation Value: E

My eyebrows rose. “That’s…”

“Four-hundred-and-fifty-seven years after the previous Singularity?” Mash muttered.

“Yes,” Da Vinci confirmed. “Although it seems like this would naturally be an offshoot of the larger French Singularity centered around Orléans, in truth, it looks like it might not be connected at all. For that matter, there is nothing of particular import happening in France in 1898, unlike the previous Singularity, where the important event being overturned was the resurgence of a French government in King Charles VII and the loosening of England’s grip on the country. The only thing of any real importance to occur in France *this* year is the signing of the Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-American War, but this Singularity isn’t large or strong enough to have even reached all that far beyond the city’s limits. Yet.”

“But if we leave it alone, it might get that big,” I concluded, picking up on what she was implying.

Hence the emergency. If it continued to grow, it could turn into a major issue, but if we handled it quickly, we might be able to snuff it out before it got out of control.

“How long would it take to get that big?” Ritsuka asked worriedly.

“At its current rate of growth? A week.” Some of the tension eased out of the room, so Da Vinci grimaced and sternly said, “But this nascent Singularity is much closer to the modern day than Orléans was, and the degree of deviation from proper history isn’t anywhere near as significant, so the time differential between us in Chaldea and the denizens inside the Singularity is much less extreme than it was in Orléans. If you were to take one day of preparation before Rayshifting inside, you would have approximately ten days in the Singularity itself to prevent it from reaching its full maturation.”

“What happens if it *does* fully mature?” Ritsuka asked.

Da Vinci gave us an awkward smile and shrugged.

“Depending on what is causing the Singularity to form in the first place? Any number of things. The worst case scenario is that the events of the Singularity spill out into the entirety of France and cause the collapse of Europe. Considering how close it is to the First World War, that could mean a longer, more drawn out conflict that results in massively higher casualties, or even early atomic warfare. Or it could just be another Fuyuki, and a relatively minor city is wiped out.”

So it seemed even she didn’t know for sure. For that matter, I doubted anyone had any idea what the difference in danger would be between a fully matured Singularity and one of these baby Singularities. Fewer Servants, maybe? If it was a matter of how far the Grail’s influence had spread, it was entirely possible that there would just be less enemies to fight.

“Then why are we so worried about dealing with it right away?” Rika demanded irritably. “What’s the emergency about a new Singularity that we can just deal with later?”

Romani sighed, but I was the one who answered for him: “Because we really can’t afford to run around for a month when that’s going to *be* a lot more like a month out here, too. The quicker we nip this thing in the bud, the less effort we should have to go through to deal with it and the sooner we can put it behind us and focus on the other Singularities.”

“Basically, all of that,” Romani said, waving a hand in my direction. “Orléans was a big enough deal. If this thing gets big enough to cover all of France, too, then you guys might wind up spending another month running around the countryside trying to solve whatever the problem is. Right now? Only the city of Rennes is affected. That’s much less ground to cover, which means you can find the Grail that’s causing this mess quicker and easier.”

“That means no walking for weeks straight from town to town,” Ritsuka mumbled, and Rika groaned.

“Fine,” she said, drawing the word out.

“Fooou,” the little gremlin echoed her.

“I know you guys just got back,” Romani said apologetically, “and I’m sorry to throw you into the fray again so soon, but this really is something that we should handle as quickly as we can.”

“I already said fine,” Rika mumbled petulantly. “Let’s just get it over with as soon as we can. The less time I have to spend away from Emiya’s cooking and my comfy bed, the better.”

Romani chuckled a little into his mug of coffee. Another stab of jealousy soured in my gut, and I wished that he had been thoughtful enough to get some for the rest of us if we all had to be up for this, but I squashed that feeling with the vindictive thought that at least *I* could drop back into my bed and get back to sleep after this. *He* was going to be up as long as that caffeine lasted.

“What else do we know about this thing?” I asked. “Do we have any more information about what’s going on inside it?”

Da Vinci gave a shrug and a helpless shake of her head.

“We don’t have any point of reference to aim the sensors at,” she explained. “Without one, we really can’t take any closer a look at the circumstances inside that Singularity. Even when Romani was providing you readouts in Orléans, he wasn’t actually observing the situation directly, he was looking at readings overlaid atop a map that I constructed based upon historical records retrieved via LAPLACE.”

“Isn’t that basically how GPS works?” Ritsuka asked.

“It’s a similar principle, yes,” said Da Vinci. “The point is, the map exists independent of the sensor readings. I can give you a map of Rennes, France from 1898 down to the day and hour, but that’s just a historical record, not a reading of the circumstances inside the Singularity, which, as I’ll remind you, exists in an altered state of space-time.”

I sighed. “Because we’re not there for you to ‘observe,’ so there isn’t a point for you to use as reference.”

Da Vinci nodded.

Yeah. It would have been convenient if we could peek in and see who was doing what where, but if Romani couldn’t do it while we were in Orléans, then we couldn’t do it now, either. The only way for us to find out what the circumstances were like inside the Singularity was for us to go in there ourselves and check it out.

In other words, the hard way. The way it had always been for me, so this was really just familiar territory.

On the bright side, that one mile radius was going to get a lot more mileage inside a city than it did across the French countryside. We should be able to count on a more concrete image of the enemy’s movements than we had against Jeanne Alter.

“Is there anything you *can* tell us?” Mash asked.

“It’s a proper city,” Da Vinci said with a wink. My lips twisted into a grimace. “Unlike some of the towns you visited in the previous Singularity, Rennes is positively sprawling by comparison. As of 1898, it should have a population of about seventy-thousand people, which means there should be no shortage of locals to lend you a hand and help you puzzle out what strange and unusual happenings have been going on since the Grail was dropped into the mix.”

“Which will make it much easier to figure out where the Grail even *is*,” Romani added. He let out a sigh of relief. “That should make things much less difficult.”

I shook my head. “We already knew Jeanne Alter had the Grail in Orléans, we just didn’t know that she was built around the thing. Just being able to get a better grasp of the situation faster won’t mean we can take the Grail without any fuss.”

Romani groaned.

“I know,” he said, “I was just trying to be positive. Maybe if we wish for it hard enough, it’ll come true?”

“I don’t think it works like that, Romani,” Da Vinci teased.

“I guess we’ll find out soon enough anyway.”

“So when are we doing this thing?” Rika asked grumpily. “Because Mama needs to get back to her beauty sleep if she’s not going to be cranky tomorrow.”

“Foouooooooooou!” the beast in her arms squeaked its agreement.

Romani and Da Vinci shared a look between them.

“Well, we’re on a time crunch, so we can’t wait too long,” he reasoned. “I don’t want to send you guys in the morning, since I woke you up in the middle of the night for this...”

“We can afford to give them one extra day,” Da Vinci told him. “It’ll give us enough time to brief the Servants on the situation, as well.”

Romani grunted. “Right. Gotta take care of that, too.”

“In that case, we can give you the rest of today off,” said Da Vinci. She smiled at us. “You guys can go back to bed and enjoy your last two nights in Chaldea before the sendoff. Come tomorrow at noon, we’ll begin preparations and Rayshift you into Rennes. From there, you should have ten full days to find the Grail, retrieve it, and resolve the Singularity before it fully matures.”

“Well, as long as they know who and what they’re up against in that time frame, that should really be more of a guideline,” Romani reasoned. “Either way, guys, I think you can head back to bed, now. Sorry to wake you up for this.”

Rika grumbled something I couldn’t make out, then turned on her heel and marched out of the room. Ritsuka watched her go and heaved out a sigh.

“Sorry about that,” he said to Romani and Da Vinci, sounding tired. “Rika’s always been grouchy when she doesn’t get enough sleep. She’ll be fine in time for the Rayshift, I promise.”

They waved it off.

“It’s fine,” said Romani. “I get it. I’ll see you guys again in the morning.”

Mash chose that moment to let loose a jaw-cracking yawn.

“Good night, Doctor Roman,” she mumbled. Ritsuka echoed her, and then the two of them took off, as well.

“How bad is it really?” I asked with them gone.

Romani and Da Vinci grimaced.

“What readings we *have* managed to get have been strange,” Romani admitted. “Whatever’s going on in there is different from the previous Singularity surrounding Orléans, but I’m not quite sure how yet.”

“I’m afraid I don’t have much concrete information for you either,” said Da Vinci with a shake of her head. “I have a suspicion about one of the irregularities, but I don’t want to say anything until we can take a measurement directly inside the Singularity itself. If it bears out, it could be troublesome, but even if it does, it shouldn’t be an insurmountable challenge.”

My lips pursed, but the adrenaline had started to fade and I was feeling the sleep I was currently missing to stay up and have this conversation, so I decided to let it go, for now.

“If you manage to find out anything new, let me know, so we can be prepared going in.”

“After Romani, you’ll be the first to know,” Da Vinci promised.

I let it go at that.

“See you in the morning.”

“Good night, Taylor,” bade Da Vinci. Romani mumbled something into his coffee that might have been a similar sentiment, but I didn’t hear it clearly.

With all of that done and out of the way, I made my way back to my room, walking the silent halls and corridors of the facility. The lights, as they always were, remained on, and I had no doubt that if the urge struck me to find a window, the nigh constant blizzard and the perpetual sun of the six-month day-night cycle would be the same.

My room, however, was dark when I entered, and I stripped out of my day wear so I could climb back into my pajamas. My glasses and communicator went back on the nightstand next to my bed, next to the alarm clock with its glowing, digital letters.

A sigh hissed out of my mouth as I slipped back between the covers, and I was back to sleep almost as soon as my head hit the pillow.

I had no more dreams that night, featuring Lisa or otherwise.