

## Chapter XV: Long Odds

It only took a few seconds for the implications of what Jeanne was saying to sink in.

My eyes went wide. “The wyvern...”

Jeanne nodded. “It was likely one of this other Jeanne’s...this *Jeanne Alter’s* army.”

“Jalter?” Rika mumbled.

“That makes some sense,” Romani said thoughtfully. “There’s no way wyverns are a native existence to fifteenth century France. By that time, mankind’s advance had already pushed them out into the previous texture. Even most of the stragglers were long dead.”

“I can’t say I understand all of that, but you’re right that no such thing existed while I was alive,” Jeanne said. “Moreover... I just don’t understand how she’d do such a thing as command them, either. I certainly didn’t have any skill for controlling magical beasts.”

That *was* a good point, wasn’t it? There was a reason dragons of all types tended to sit at the top of tier lists when magi talked about Phantasmals. Admittedly, I didn’t know as much about them as I’d have liked to, and I didn’t know if I was overcorrecting for how much my head had swelled over killing that wyvern, but if even things like ordinary lions and tigers were hard to tame, then something as powerful as a dragon would be even more so.

For that matter, we had enough trouble just managing to summon Servants. We had a whole system dedicated to it, a cutting edge mechanism that still only had four recorded successes to date. Would summoning a magical creature be easier, or harder?

And even if it was easier, to summon a whole army of them...

“Summoning them is already going to be an incredible feat, right?” I asked Romani.

“It’s much like summoning Servants,” Romani answered. “Strictly speaking, for modern magecraft, it’s impossible. Even for the fifteenth century, it would be a difficult, high level spell, the sort of thing you need a Grand Ritual for.”

“Or a Holy Grail?”

...you’d need something with a whole lot of power backing you up.

Mash’s brow furrowed. “Miss Taylor...do you think...?”

I looked at her, face solemn.

The pieces were starting to come together in my head. Jeanne d’Arc had been summoned back into the world using the Holy Grail and then corrupted by it, and after that, she turned on France, used the Grail to summon her own army of powerful magical beasts, and destroyed everything her living

self had helped to build. Out of what? Spite? Revenge, for the French letting her be executed instead of mounting a rescue? The reasoning didn't matter so much as the acts themselves.

And perhaps this Jeanne Alter's presence had triggered a sort of autoimmune response that automatically manifested the original. I was a bit murkier on that, but I thought I understood the gist of how that sort of thing was supposed to work.

There were a few holes, a few things that I didn't have an answer for, like who or what had summoned that twisted version of Jeanne in the first place, but it was entirely possible Lev or someone had done it just for the purposes of unpinning this point in history.

"I wasn't expecting to find the answer this quickly," Romani admitted, "but I think you're probably right. Occam's Razor and everything. If there's a Servant going around, by all accounts as corrupted as the Fuyuki Servants were, performing feats of magecraft that would otherwise be nearly impossible..."

I nodded. "It only makes sense that Servant would be the one with the Holy Grail. And if she killed King Charles VII and all of Orléans, too —"

"Then she'd also be the source of the historical deviation," Ritsuka concluded.

Romani's hologram nodded. "Presumably, yes."

"And so the only way to correct the deviation from proper history and set this all to right is to defeat my alternate self and reclaim the Holy Grail?" Jeanne asked.

"Presumably," Romani hedged. "I don't want everyone to get the wrong idea, here. This is all just speculation. Educated guesses. It's just that this is the best we can do with the evidence we currently have. The only way to find out for sure might be to confront her yourself, and, well..."

I grimaced. "Army of wyverns, right."

That would probably wind up being the biggest obstacle. One at a time, we might be able to take them down much the same as we had the first one, but I doubted Jeanne Alter or the rest of her army would be so kind as to come at us in an orderly line and wait their turn instead of just mowing us all down all at once.

Romani let out a heavy sigh.

"Yeah. If it's just one or two, Mash and Jeanne might be able to handle them just fine, but if it's an actual *army*, I don't want you guys going anywhere near that."

Absentmindedly, my hand rose and glided over the hilt of my knife.

With what we had right then, neither did I.

"I don't taste good extra crispy," Rika mumbled.

What we needed right then was someone to even the odds, someone who looked at an army of dragons and *smiled*. The trouble was, while quite a few Heroic Spirits had the anecdote of slaying a dragon in their myths, vanishingly few had it as a central focus of their legends. Most of the Knights of the Round Table, for instance, had slain at least one dragon throughout their adventures, but the killing of the dragon itself was just the removal of an obstacle, not the goal of the adventure itself.

If I narrowed the field down... Saint George was a big one. But if I was going for an iconic dragonslayer, a Heroic Spirit whose name was practically synonymous with the deed, someone whose legend still reverberated through the modern day? A big name, a powerful name, a respected hero with a storied history?

I could only think of two.

I turned back to Romani. "You said you wanted me to try summoning again once we found a ley line, right?"

Romani blinked at me, and then his eyes widened. "Wait, you're not thinking what I think you're thinking, are you? Listen, one Servant isn't going to make much difference against an army of wyverns!"

"Depends on the Servant," I replied. "I wouldn't say no to Saint George, but I was thinking...if we could get Sigurd or Siegfried..."

"We might be able to play on the conceptual advantage," Romani muttered. "But still, that's... Even with one of them, Taylor, that's an uphill battle. Plus, think of how much magical energy a fight like that would burn through! I'm not sure our generators can handle it!"

"Did you get the Grail from Fuyuki hooked up properly?"

"I-I'm not sure that means what you think it does!" Romani sputtered. "Just because we got the Grail jacked into our power grid doesn't mean you can just use as much energy as you want!"

"You said getting the Grail set up would let us support another three or so Servants, didn't you?" I asked pointedly. "We don't need another three Servants, we just need one who can do the job of three. One top tier dragonslayer who can handle the wyverns for us."

"But that's not a guarantee!" Romani protested. "Sure, it would be great if you could manage to summon a Servant as powerful as Sigurd or Siegfried, but the spell doesn't work on pretty please and wishful thinking! You'd need a catalyst with a connection to one of them, and even then —"

I lifted my right arm, sleeve still coated in wet, red blood. "A catalyst, like the blood of a dragon, for instance?"

Jeanne gasped, and Romani's mouth flapped soundlessly as he stared at the proof of my victory. It was too bad I hadn't managed to grab a scale or fang or something, because that probably would have been a much less time sensitive catalyst, but when it came to the ideal catalyst for someone like Siegfried or Sigurd... Well, the heart and blood were definitely top tier. They were just a lot more prone to degrading quickly.

“How...” he began, and his voice cracked halfway through. “How did you get dragon’s blood on your arm, Taylor?”

“I killed a dragon,” I replied simply.

“I-it was very reckless!” Mash burst in. “Even if it worked, Miss Taylor could very easily have been killed, Doctor Roman!”

“She carved out its eye,” Rika said, giggling a little under her breath.

“What?” Romani asked, voice strangled.

I cut the story down to its bare bones. “Mash brought it down, and while she was holding it in place, I stabbed it in the eye with my knife and kept going until I reached its brain.”

“I *really* didn’t need to picture that part,” Ritsuka muttered.

“Your knife?”

“Oh!” Romani was pushed aside with an indignant squawk, and Da Vinci’s smiling face filled the hologram’s screen. “You got to give it a test drive! Tell me, how did it perform? Was it up to spec? Was it better or worse than it was when you first got it? On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate my repair job?”

I blinked. “Uh... Ten?”

Checking to make sure the nanothorn knife had been exactly as it had when Defiant gave it to me hadn’t been very high on my priority list while I was busy shoving it into the skull of a powerfully magical beast. It was very close to the bottom, in fact.

Da Vinci danced away, whooping triumphantly about how even alien blackboxes couldn’t trump sheer genius, and Romani slowly pulled himself back up into his seat. He took a deep breath.

“Okay,” he said, and he sounded much calmer, now. “Putting aside just how reckless and incredibly dangerous it was to get anywhere *near* a dragon of any kind with nothing more than a knife... I’m still not sold on this idea. Before you say anything,” he added as I opened my mouth, “I’m not disagreeing with the merits. And yeah, I *did* ask you to attempt a summoning when you found a ley line. I’m just a little nervous about the impact this is going to have on our power consumption, because if it’s not enough from us *here*, Taylor, *you’ll* be the one having to pick up the slack, and that could be very, very dangerous.”

“We don’t have much choice,” I answered. “Maybe we could bring Emiya in, but it would be better to have someone who specializes in taking out dragons instead of a Swiss army knife.”

“A what?” Mash asked bewilderedly.

“It’s a metaphor for a jack of all trades,” Romani told her absently.

Technically, *that* was a metaphor as well.

I spread my arms. “If you’ve got a better idea, Romani, I’m listening.”

Romani’s brow furrowed, but he didn’t immediately offer any suggestions.

“Let’s do it,” Ritsuka said quietly.

Romani’s head swiveled in his direction. “Ritsuka?”

“We’re up against an army of wyverns, Doctor Roman,” said Ritsuka. “We need all the help we can get.”

The silence stretched for a moment, and at length, Romani finally sighed and gave up.

“Okay,” he said. “I guess making an attempt for a specific Servant will double as an extra test for the system. I’ll monitor everything from this end and try to see what the readings will tell us, and that should make things smoother in the future. I hope you know what you’re doing, Taylor.”

So did I.

Romani’s image blinked out. Immediately, I turned to Mash.

“Get the summoning circle set up,” I ordered. “With your shield, like in Fuyuki.”

She hesitated and glanced at Ritsuka and Rika, and then set about doing as I’d said. While she was getting that ready, I reached for the clasps and zippers on my top and started undoing them.

Jeanne and Rika both squeaked.

“W-what are you doing?” Jeanne demanded in a high-pitched voice.

“S-Senpai, a maiden only reveals herself to the love of her life!” Rika agreed. She gasped and threw her hands over Ritsuka’s eyes. “*Onii-chan*, don’t you dare look!”

One of my eyebrows rose.

“I can’t exactly throw myself onto the summoning circle, can I?”

It took a little doing with just one hand, since my other was covered in blood, but eventually, I managed to get everything unfastened and shrug one arm out of my clean sleeve. There was no real way to avoid smearing more blood everywhere, though, although the blood on my hand had mostly dried. Some of it still got inside my top.

Rika gasped. “S-Senpai took her shirt off!”

I rolled my eyes.

“Chaldea *does* have its own workout gym, you know,” I told them. “You’re not seeing anything now you wouldn’t see if you spent time there.”

It wasn't like I was wearing sexy lingerie, either, or some sheer, lacy thing you might see on a femme fatale in a James Bond movie. A sports bra only made sense when you were going into a combat zone, and it wasn't like I had a pair of melons attached to my chest that anyone would be getting a peek at. I had enough problems without adding chronic back pain on top of them.

When Mash was ready, I stepped over to the shield she'd placed on the ground, took an awkward hold of my top, and tried to wringe the blood out of my sleeve (*sorry to wrinkle your hard work, Da Vinci*). Several thick drops squeezed out of the fabric and fell onto the surface of the rounded centerpiece, but too much of it had dried.

This was going to be a pain in the ass to get clean, wasn't it?

With a sigh, I shook out my hands and carefully draped my top over Mash's shield, taking great caution not to get the blood I'd just squeezed out back in the cloth. Then, I stepped back and turned to her.

"Are we good to go?"

Mash nodded. "Whenever you're ready, Miss Taylor."

I took a deep breath and forced my doubts down and away, and when I let it out, I thrust my hand towards the shield. The others stepped back a few feet to give me some more space, leaving me to stand there by myself.

No thinking about the results. No worrying about who might or might not show up. My catalyst should work, but even if it didn't, we wouldn't be worse off to have more allies on our side. Whichever Heroic Spirit answered my summons, he or she would be useful in at least some way for the upcoming battles.

So it was time to stop dawdling and fucking *do it*, already.

"Thy Essence is of Silver and Steel," I announced confidently. "Thy Foundation is built of gemstone and the Archduke of Contracts."

I wouldn't deny I was hoping for a dragon-slaying hero, though. Not when it would be oh so very convenient for the army of motherfucking wyverns we were going to have to deal with. Sigurd or Siegfried, would it be too much to hope one of them would be the Servant who came to me, now?

"Let the alighted wind be as a wall. Let the four cardinal gates be shut. Rise above the Crown, and let the three-forked road to the Kingdom revolve."

Above Mash's shield, a magic circle rose and glowed a bright, pale blue. A faint pillar of light jutted into the air, brightest where it met the circle and all but invisible at my eye level.

Not for the first time, I felt there must have been some deeper meaning to the incantation, that it couldn't be pure nonsense. The Crown, the Kingdom, I recognized them as having some relation to Kabbalism, but I knew next to nothing about that as a system of magecraft, so I couldn't have said how they were relevant here.

“Let it be filled. Again. Again. Again. Again. Let there be five-fold perfections upon each repetition. In my stead, let the filled sigils be annihilated.”

A wind swept out from the pillar, low and gentle like a summer breeze, and my hair fluttered as it was pushed back away from my face. It was like the breath of some great entity turning my way.

The connection with the Throne was forming. Just as it had in Fuyuki, just as it had in the summoning chamber where Rika had called Emiya. This time, *this time*, I was definitely going to summon a Servant of my own. No fuckups, no uncertainties. This time, for sure.

“Thy body shall rest under my dominion, and my fate shall rest in thy sword. Let this be my oath. I shall attain all the virtues of Heaven. I shall punish all the evils of Hell.”

The wind reached a fevered pitch. My hair whipped about, yanked back away from my head. The winding, grinding echo of the magical energy churning vibrated through me and through my magic circuits, racing up along my nerves like electricity up a copper wire. The back of my right hand, my prosthetic, burned like someone had jabbed it with a cattle prod.

I had to grit my teeth and force the rest of the incantation out. One last line. Just one. That was it.

“Thou the Seven Heavens, clad in the Three Great Words, arrive from the Ring of Deterrence, O Keeper of the Balance!”

The pillar of light flashed. The vague burning on the back of my hand sharpened, condensed down, and I had to squint through the blinding light to see a familiar pattern etch itself across my skin —

The wind vanished, sweeping out in one final burst. The light went with it, disappearing just as suddenly, and slowly, as I blinked the spots from my vision, my eyes readjusted to the shaded alcove of our little clearing. My heart thundered in my chest anxiously.

“You summoned me, so here I am,” a man’s voice said calmly, and the bugs on the edges of the clearing started jerking about erratically as triumph filled my chest like an expanding balloon.

His confident grin was the first thing I saw, and then the turquoise chestplate and shoulder plates, the red gauntlets and greaves. Short, dark hair, dark eyes that glittered, olive skin, and — the triumph in my chest wilted and died — a wicked-looking crimson bow.

“Archer class Servant, Arash Kamangir,” the man said. “Pleasure to meet you, Master.”

I looked down at the marks etched into the back of my hand, identical to the ones the Fuyuki Grail had handed to me when I contracted Cúchulainn back in Fuyuki. Before, I hadn’t had any idea how to describe them, what they could be said to resemble. Now... Now, I saw them for what they were. Tentacles, branching tentacles made of eyes, or perhaps eyes made of tentacles. An eldritch monstrosity with a thousand eyes and an ever expanding reach.

My passenger.

“Yes,” I said with affected neutrality, “I guess it is.”

The bugs in the distance buzzed with agitation.

The summoning had worked, but I hadn't managed to call either of the two I was trying for. Was it just a matter of my catalyst not being strong enough, or was it me? Was this my karma or something? Destiny? Was there some cosmic rule that said I wasn't allowed to get what I asked for and had to make do with whatever the dice rolled for me? Because I was tired of getting snake eyes.

Arash's grin fell and his brow furrowed. "Is something wrong, Master?"

I pointed to his feet. "You're standing on my shirt."

"Oh!"

He jumped away and reached down, picking it up and flapping it as though that would clean it of the blood and grime already on it. When he apparently thought he'd got it as well as he was going to get it, he stepped towards me and held it out with an apologetic smile.

"Sorry about that," he said genially.

I took my proffered shirt and started putting it back on.

"It's fine."

The others, perhaps sensing that things hadn't gone catastrophically wrong, stepped back closer to get a better look at our new addition. They all regarded him thoughtfully, like he was a puzzle that needed solving. Rika came the closest, leaning in to inspect him.

"Something the matter?" he asked her politely.

"You're not Sigurd," she told him bluntly. "Or Siegfried."

He blinked, like he wasn't sure what that was supposed to mean. "I'm not. Were you expecting one of those two?"

Rika pointed at me. More accurately, at my sleeve, which was still red with drying dragon blood.

"Senpai was using dragon's blood as a catalyst."

He turned back to me, bewildered. "And you got *me* instead?"

"Do you have dragon-slaying in your myth?" I asked pointedly.

"Afraid not," he told me with a self-deprecating grin. "I'm just an ordinary archer. Nothing special."

"Then yes. I got you, instead of one of the two I was actually trying to get."

"Yeah," he laughed. "Compared to those two, I guess I am something of a let down, huh?"

*Beep-beep!*



“Successful summoning completed!” Romani announced brightly. “It all looks good, magical energy flow from the reactor is nominal, we’re completely in the green! I guess I was really worried over nothing, huh? So, this is...”

He trailed off as he caught sight of Arash, stared for a long moment, and then he looked down and started to furiously type at his keyboard.

“An Archer?” he muttered. “But neither Sigurd or Siegfried should qualify for that class at all... Plus, that appearance, that armor, that’s all wrong for Scandinavia. Wait...” He squinted down at his screen and blanched. “Arash Kamangir?”

“In the flesh!” Arash said with a jaunty wave, and then he winced. “Well, kind of. Servant and all.”

Romani sighed and deflated.

“Well, this didn’t go anything like how it was supposed to.”

Arash took it in stride. “Sorry to disappoint.”

That. That was kind of frustrating on its own. We’d spent the last minute or two trashing him and talking about how we’d wanted a completely different Heroic Spirit, and he wasn’t even getting angry about it. In his place, I wouldn’t have been anywhere near as forgiving or level-headed about it.

In the absence of a catalyst — or if the catalyst just didn’t work, I guessed — I was supposed to summon a Heroic Spirit who matched me as a person, someone who fit well with me. But this guy... I just wasn’t seeing it.

“I’m sorry. It’s just we were pinning our hopes for resolving this Singularity on managing to summon a dragon-slaying hero.”

“You really needed them that badly, huh?” Arash asked.

Romani’s lips quirked, mirthless. Not a smile or a grin, but not quite a scowl or a grimace.

“What do you know about the situation?”

“Almost nothing.”

Romani sighed again and ran a hand through his hair.

“Yeah, we’re still working on getting all of the systems restored, so the information packet provided to summoned Servants is still really sparse. It should have at least contained the information about our Grand Order...”

Arash nodded. “I got that bit, yeah. I’m not sure what’s going on here, though. Can you fill me in?”

Romani turned to me expectantly, and with an internal sigh of my own, I took that as my cue. *Don’t think I don’t see what you’re trying to do, Romani.*

“Alright,” I said, “this is the situation as it stands so far, at least as we know it...”

I gave him the important bits, including the highlights of our adventure through Fuyuki and what little information we'd managed to scrounge up about the Singularity we were currently inside of. I left out the part about how we could have gone to Rome instead, out of respect for Romani's wish to keep the twins as innocent as we could for a little bit longer.

I got the feeling Arash saw right through that. Not that he gave any particular sign that I could point to, but rather a kind of instinct I'd honed after spending so much time with Lisa.

"As of right now, our only confirmed enemy combatants are this Jeanne Alter and her army of wyverns," I finished. "There's no indication of other Servants on her side or ours, so far."

Arash hummed. "It could be that the reason you didn't get Sigurd or Siegfried is because one or both of them are already here," he said shrewdly.

Romani blinked. "What?"

"Well, call it a hunch," Arash hedged with a shrug. "But it makes sense, doesn't it? If stray Servants were summoned to counter Jeanne Alter and her army of wyverns, wouldn't an iconic dragonslayer be the top of the list for appropriate responses?"

I shifted a little as I regarded him in a different light. It *was* possible, wasn't it? If Jeanne herself could be summoned by the world's autoimmune response to counter her evil self, then it was definitely possible that the very same kind of response had brought Siegfried or Sigurd into this Singularity as well.

A glance at my hand showed the dark red command spells that stood out against my skin.

In which case, it was still possible to form a contract with one of them, wasn't it? As long as they were here, we could find them and team up.

"That would be wonderful, wouldn't it?" Jeanne said brightly. "If they're already here, then all we have to do is find them!"

"I...don't think it's going to be that easy," said Ritsuka, wincing.

There were just a few problems with it, though.

"We have no way of knowing where they might have been summoned to, all things considered," I agreed. "If they're even here at all, the entire French countryside is up for grabs."

"They could be anywhere, couldn't they?" Mash said. "Even if we went looking across the whole country, they might move on before we reach them."

"My poor feet," Rika mumbled miserably.

Romani sighed for a third time. "There goes that idea."

"No," said Jeanne confidently. We all looked to her.

“No?”

“If either of them was summoned, they would have appeared somewhere relevant to the situation, am I understanding that right?” she said.

“Theoretically,” Romani hedged. “But that could still be anywhere.”

“Maybe so,” Jeanne allowed. “Even if you’re right, we already have a lead, don’t we? The one place we know for sure my evil self has been, where she definitely used her army of wyverns to slaughter the populace.”

I saw where she was going with that.

“Orléans.”

Jeanne nodded.

“We should begin investigating there.”

My eyebrows rose a little. Wow. Okay. It was one thing to hear about exactly how clever Jeanne d’Arc had been and how she had routed the English army without ever even drawing her sword. It was another thing to see it for yourself.

“Whoa, wait a minute!” Romani said urgently. “That’s where we know she’s been already, right? What if she stuck around and set up her own base? You could be walking right into her headquarters! Even with an Archer like Arash, there’s no way you’re ready to face down an army of wyverns, right now!”

Ironically, that was probably my first instinct — rush in and work things out as we went. But I wasn’t too excited about our odds of making that work with what and who we currently had, and I didn’t want to bring in our reinforcements just yet. Better to save Emiya for an actual emergency.

“You both have good points,” I cut in as Jeanne opened her mouth to rebut him. “Orléans is our best bet, but going straight there could be dangerous. So what if we did some snooping in the area, first, instead of charging headfirst into the dragon’s den, as it were?”

I took a quick glance at Arash with the Master’s Clairvoyance that was supposed to come with the FATE system — and had to suppress a flinch, because *now*, that Noble Phantasm was a huge handicap. Finding other stray Servants to ally with, if there even were any around, just got bumped way up the priorities list.

“There should be a few towns around the city,” Mash added. “If there’s a Servant like Siegfried or Sigurd near Orléans, there would almost certainly be at least a few rumors circulating through them.”

Jeanne frowned. “There *are* several smaller towns within walking distance of Orléans.”

“The closest one from here?”

Jeanne’s brow drew together in thought.

“La Charite,” she answered after a moment. “It doesn’t sit directly between Orléans and Vaucouleurs, but it’s one of the closest towns from here.”

“Then we’ll head there, first,” I decided.

Jeanne nodded. “We can head out first thing in the morning.”

My brow furrowed.

“It’s not even noon,” I pointed out. “And it’s June in France. We should still have a half a day of daylight left to make it there. If we’re quick, we can be there by sunset.”

“Sounds like a good idea, Master,” Arash chimed in with a bright grin.

“Um, Taylor...”

I turned to find Romani staring at me. “Yeah?”

“La Charite is... That is, from here to there is... H-how should I put this...”

“It’s over three-hundred kilometers, Miss Taylor,” Mash informed me.

I blanched. “What?”

A noise of distress, like the air being let out of a balloon, came out of Rika’s throat. Her brother’s face was twisted in horror.

“On foot, it’ll take you about sixty hours to make it there,” Romani told us. “That’s about... five days of walking, give or take.”

“It would be faster with some horses!” Jeanne put in helpfully, except it really wasn’t all that helpful.

“That’s great,” I said. “Do you happen to have some? Or maybe know where we could get a few, without any money to pay for them?”

Jeanne flinched and her slumping shoulders answered me as surely as anything else would have. Not like I was expecting anything different.

There was a moment of frustration where I had the thought about how much easier it would be if we could just steal a couple and move on, if only I believed Jeanne would let us get away with it, but it passed and settled into resignation. Even if this was a Singularity and everything would be corrected when it was all said and done, taking whatever we needed by force wasn’t going to work in the long run.

“Romani, send us over some rations,” I ordered. “We’re going to need them, and there’s no way of knowing when we’ll find another ley line.”

“You still want to head out as soon as possible?” Jeanne asked.

“Sitting around the campfire for a day won’t change how far we have to go or how long it’ll take us to get there,” I said. “We might as well get there sooner instead of later.”

“I wish there was more I could do, but Taylor’s right,” Romani said. “I’ll make sure to pack you enough supplies to last two days.”

“Yay, more walking,” Rika muttered miserably.

“Well, it’s not like they had cars in the 1400s, Rika,” her brother hissed back at her, but he didn’t look any happier at the news.

It wasn’t like there was anything *I* could do about it, either. One way or another, we needed to put things to right and set human history back on track. Without any other way of getting around, we were just going to have to hoof it the whole way.

I let out a long, explosive sigh.

How ironic. It wasn’t the way I’d originally feared, but it looked like the only way to correct this Singularity was by killing Jeanne d’Arc.