

Steins;Gate: Corruption

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/32285881) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/32285881>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Categories:	F/M , Gen
Fandom:	Steins;Gate
Relationship:	Okabe Rintarou Hououin Kyouma / Makise Kurisu
Characters:	Okabe Rintarou Hououin Kyouma , Makise Kurisu , Shiina Mayuri , Hashida Itaru , Amane Suzuha
Additional Tags:	Adventure , Time Travel , Post-Canon , pretty heavy shit
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-30 Words: 1,690 Chapters: 1/?

Steins;Gate: Corruption

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Summary

The Steins;Gate world line, but with one key difference from canon. This is the story of that difference, and the people that try to rectify it.

Chapter 0: Episode 24σ / Segmentation Fault

2010.07.28 12:14:32

The liquid dried up?! That's right... I haven't used the Cyalume Saber in so long that the air must have gotten in and dried it out! Shit – Nakabachi's right there. What do I do? Think... think!...

"What's wrong? What did you bring that knife for?"

"W-what?"

"Scared, are you? Do my god-like powers terrify you?"

"D-Don't insult me!"

"C'mon, what's the matter? You're shaking!"

"How long are you gonna keep insulting me?!"

"In the end, you're just a small, pathetic man. No man too small to appreciate his own daughter's genius can kill me. Never... NEVER!"

The air is punctured by the slicing of steel through flesh.

"D-Don't move! Lie down, I'll call an ambulance!... Hello, emergency services?! I need you to send..."

"I told you," he grinds out as she continues, "...that I'd save you."

Electricity crackles, and she collapses in a heap on the floor. A pause, and a tender look, before the screams of a man in the throes of self-evisceration flood the halls of Radio Kaikan.

"Wait. Could you just... wait a minute, here?"

"We don't have time, uncle – you'll bleed out at this rate!"

"Please."

*A third voice, a timid interpretation of the man's own, calls out into the darkness they've fled.
"...Is someone there?"*

Suzuha's hands fly over the time machine's controls, trying to keep her fingers from tripping over themselves. From the corner of her vision, she monitors her uncle's paling face and the pool of red quickly soaking through both his shirt and lab coat.

"You went way too far! Even stupidity has its limits," she frantically scolds, and Okabe offers a weak laugh through his labored breathing.

"What are you... talking about? The... the plan succeeded." This was bad. He was losing way too much blood, even as she had him applying pressure on the wound.

"All I can do is slow the bleeding. When we get back, you need to get to a hospital." This was *really* bad. They were jumping forth to a completely unknown world line; she wouldn't be there to help him, and he was clearly in no condition to be traveling any amount of distance. "This'll be hard, but try to hang on. Here we go."

With that, she flips the final switch. Tremors violently shake the building once again as the time machine fades into a flash of white light; inside, the G-forces brought on by hurdling through spacetime make their rounds through the travelers. Suzuha engages her lower muscles to brace, while Okabe grunts in a fight against his rapidly blackening vision.

Silence follows. In the weightlessness of time travel, the two watch fragments of time itself dance through the cabin. After a moment, the interior glows with an unseen light as their world starts fading to white.

Okabe looks up to see Suzuha already being obscured by the haze. "Is this...?"

"Yeah. No one knows what'll happen in the Steins;Gate world line. But if your theory is correct, the paper will burn and the time machine arms race won't come to pass. Neither will World War III."

That's right... I did it. I actually did it. Suzuha takes a deep breath as she starts to feel the weight of the world finally slide off her shoulders. *Mom, Dad... everyone... we made it.*

"I can't stay, so I'll say it now: thank you, uncle Okarin," she smiles softly.

Okabe can barely make out her last words as his world is bathed in white.

"See you in seven years."

White, fades to black, fades to his subconscious.

When he comes to, he immediately recognizes the hallway just outside of the Future Gadget Laboratory.

2010.08.21 20:53:21

How the hell is it still this hot? The sun is down, this should be physically impossible.

Daru is sprawled in front of the Lab computer, cursing this damn heat wave for what feels like the thousandth time today. All he can do is sit there, staring blankly at the desktop's wallpaper and wishing the two fans pointed at his armpits were industrial A/C units. The entirety of Akihabara felt like they were standing behind a cargo truck's exhaust pipe.

"I swear, if Okarin forgets those Dr. Peppers I'm gonna flip my shit." Naturally, of all the days to run out of every single cold drink in their inventory, it had to be on the hottest day in recent memory. He was lying, anyway – flipping his shit would take energy, and all his energy was currently evaporating into the surrounding air of the oven they called a laboratory.

Mayuri looks up from her sewing on the couch. "I'm sure he'll remember them! You know how much he loves that stuff, I'd be worried for him if he forgot."

"Nngh, fair enough, but he seemed pretty distracted when he left. When did he say he was gonna be back?"

"Mmm, true, he did seem a bit spaced out. But he said he'd be back within the hour, right? And it's been," she checks her phone, "...twenty minutes. So he'll be back sometime in the next forty!"

At the prospect of having to wait forty minutes for a cold drink, Daru emits a guttural rumble that sounds more animal than human. *I'm being punished. I don't know what for, but I'm being punished. And how did we ever think two fans for the whole lab would be enough?*

To his relief, though, the door to the lab opens a few seconds later. "Speak of the devil," he mutters without moving an inch from his spot on the chair.

Mayuri pipes up in greeting. "Okarin! Tutu—..." She trails off, and goes silent.

Huh. He had never specifically thought about it, but in the three years that Daru had known Mayuri he had never once heard her falter in her iconic greeting. *Guess Pavlov was onto something after all.*

"...Okarin?"

Goosebumps instantly break out over his arms. Her voice, barely above a whisper, was dripping with fear; she had practically squeaked out his name. Time seems to stretch forever as he looks to the other side of the room, completely unprepared for the sight that greets him.

Mayuri's eyes are wide as saucers, her pupils pinpricks of black in a sea of green. Her mouth is quivering as though she's trying to say something, but no noise escapes her lips. Daru's gaze follows hers, lands on the pallid form of his best friend, and slowly registers the spreading pool of red that now covers more than half his torso.

For what feels like eons, the two just look on in shock at the macabre display laid out before them. The lab remains completely silent, save for the running fans and Okabe's shallow, ragged breathing.

After a few seconds, or minutes, or hours, Okabe finally manages an uneven "...Hey, guys. Sorry to keep you waiting," before his legs give out and he collapses to the floor.

"**OKARIN!**" they both yell in unison. Mayuri is off the couch and at his side, propping him up in her arms before she can register her own movements, while Daru knocks over his chair and bumps the table a foot from its spot as he trip-sprints over to her and Okabe.

"What the hell?! How did—what—you—?" Eyes wild with panic, Daru stumbles over his words as a million questions flood his mind, none of which he can successfully articulate. Finally regaining some of his senses, he kneels down and pulls up Okabe's shirt to inspect the source of the blood.

He immediately regrets it. It's all he can do not to throw up right then and there; Okabe's stomach looks as though it's been torn open and ripped apart. Shriveled, dead skin surrounds a massive open wound, through which bits of viscera have escaped and are now dangling out. The entire grisly sight is covered in a stream of blood, which continues to seep out with each beat of his heart.

Daru clasps a hand over his mouth as he involuntarily retches. He yanks the shirt back down, his thoughts now jumping to Mayuri still sitting in shock with a withering Okabe in her arms. Voice hollow, he strangles out, "don't... don't look. Dont..." Again coming to his senses, he scrambles back to the table where he left his phone and dials 119 as fast as his fingers can move. "...Emergency services?! I—oh god, my friend, he..."

While he frantically tries to get an ambulance sent over, overwhelming dread works its way through Mayuri's gut. Pure, raw horror is etched into her face as she watches the life slowly drain from the visage of her childhood friend – her captor – her savior. Her voice is barely audible as she tries in vain to say something, anything. "Wha—why—?"

Okabe looks deep into her eyes, struggling to find the right words. "Mayuri... I'm sorry to worry you. We're okay now... I did it. We made it."

"What are—Okarin—" Tears begin to pool in her eyes and fall down her cheeks, horrible waves of helplessness thrashing at her chest.

"You're safe... Kurisu is safe. That... that's all that matters. This has to be Steins;Gate."

She comes to the sickening realization that his lips, trembling as he shivers uncontrollably, are pulled back in what can only be a ghastly attempt at a smile.

"I'm... tired. I'm so tired. I... I think I'm gonna rest. Just for a bit."

The shivering comes to a stop, and Okabe Rintaro's eyes don't close.

Mayuri gazes into his lifeless orbs. Around her, the world has ceased all movement. The fans could be running, Daru could still be on the phone – but with the deafening ringing in her ears, there is no way to know. She simply remains motionless, space and time completely frozen.

A beat, and the edges of her world start to burn away and crumble as her senses creep their way back in.

At last she finds her voice, and her screams are heard for miles.

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to be continued

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