There was nothing but the ringing silence that filled his ears. His hands was on something soft and cotton-like; His nose picked the smell of fresh linen mixed together with a metallic odor that left a bitter taste on his tongue. It had to be blood and the clean environment his mental picture gave him the impression that he was in an infirmary.

“Is this guy even alive?” his ears pricked as it picked up those words. It sounded like a lady’s voice.

“Give him time, Themis. He might be conscious right now,” a man said.

“He’s healed of all the wounds already, what else does he need? Geez,” he felt a strong pull up on his collar. “Get up already! Goddammit!”

His mental image colored with the ripples of water with every unforgiving smack to the point that he forced his eyes open in a desperate attempt to end the torment. He stared right back at a small statured, sunset orange dual-horsetail haired woman, her brown-orange almond eyes locked on him. Her face reddened as she tumbled backwards, smashing her head against the wall with a thump.

“Ow,” a teardrop escaped her eyes as she rubbed her head. “Hey you! You could at least have said something!”

“How could I say something when you’re already hitting me?” the victim rubbed his cheeks.

“Finally, I can now discharge you. I’ve been waiting five days for you to wake up you know.”

“I see. You have my thanks,” his eyes focused on the thin purple linen that covered her body, the only thing keeping it together was a blue jewel adorned on her *flat* chest.

“Good day to you, mister,” a man clad in white armor said. “Please pardon the sorceress of her manners. I am Will, and you are?”

“Klavier,” they exchanged a firm handshake. “Where am I?”

“Bariura Empire.”

“Bariura huh,” he looked at the map that was pasted on the stone wall. “I did recall La Veda’s destruction after Bariura Empire in the books…”

“Hey you,” Themis stomped on Klavier’s foot. “La Veda will not be destroyed! Not under my supervision!”

“Sorry, geez. This midget stings.”

“Who are you calling midget?!” a vein popped out on her forehead.

“You of course. I’ve never seen anybody so short before. Ha. Ha.”

“Please don’t bully our princess here,” Will said. “You should be thankful that she willingly healed your wounds.”

“Wounds? How bad were they?”

“Almost fatal, I’d say. It was a miracle that you survived somehow. So what do you intend to do now since you’re alright?”

“I’m here to find someone,” Klavier replied. “His name is Vanros Klavier.”

“How do you intend to find a needle in a haystack?” Themis folded her arms. “It’s not a small world you know.”

“I have my means,” Klavier grabbed his sheathed sword and stashed it to the right of his waist. “It’ll be a long journey, so I hope you’re prepared for it.”

“Who is Vanros Klavier?” Will asked.

“One of my close relatives. As far as he is concerned, he is in grave danger.”

Themis looked at him suspiciously. “You’d better be telling the truth, boy.”

A smile cracked on his face. “Of course I am. But first. I need to find somebody who knows about his whereabouts. Her name is Zellha.”

“Zellha?” Will and Themis said in synchronization. “Who is she?”

“An acquaintance.”

“I don’t like that confidence oozing out of you,” Themis mumbled.

“I sense the task to be a noble one,” Will said. “Very well, I shall lead you to her.”

“Will!” Themis protested. “You can’t possibly trust this man so easily!”

“Do you not sense his dire need for help?”

“But…”

“It’s alright if you don’t wish to accompany me,” Klavier said as he drifted off to the main roads. “I know my way around here, so I don’t wish to waste your time if you don’t intend to give it.”

Themis puffed her cheeks, her eyebrows crossed into an angry “V” shape.

“Come on,” Will said, nudging Themis. “He will need your help sooner or later. Wait up. We’re going to help you out.”

“Much appreciated,” his teeth bared in his grin.

The environment was clean of any pollutants, the only source being in the bakeries or blacksmith workshops that hid itself well among the rows of buildings. Men and women wore elaborate renaissance-themed clothing, boasting their status and power using that alone. It made Klavier stand out since he was wearing an unzipped long sleeved black bomber jacket which revealed a thin white undershirt that covered his body. The black pants was of leather quality too; probably more expensive than the priciest set of pants in town of this age.

Just as how a knight would escort the guarded, Will led the way, scattering crowds wherever he went. There were other armored personnel like him, roaming the city in groups of four to ensure civil order in the town that were spread thinly to avoid attract the civilians’ attention of their roaming activity.

They entered the back alley near the palace of the city. Unlike the friendly vibe the town gave, this single area was more repulsive, almost as though there was an underground activity going on in it. Klavier moved faster despite the increasing caution exercised in Will’s footsteps as they entered the facility through the back door.

In it was a vast space of scientific equipment, from apparatuses to live specimen research confined in a glass container. The air was pungent, almost as though there was rotting flesh somewhere in the area, but it was so dark that they couldn’t even see it. The mere sight of animals struggling to escape in the air tight confines made his hair stand.

“What is this place?” Themis mumbled. “Who would do such cruel things to the world’s creation?”

“Him,” he pointed at a man wearing black-purple samurai armor carrying a metal staff with an orange jewel on its tip. He kept watch of two giant tubes that had human beings trapped inside them. The color on Themis and Will’s faces drained away.

“How could he?” Themis mumbled a little louder than a loud whisper.

“Keep it down,” Will whispered. “We need to gather more information if we are to accuse him for his wrongdoing.”

In front of him were two life sized capsules, carrying a woman on one and a man on another. He poured a yellow essence into the mouth of the chamber, channeling the substance into the pink solution they were soaked in.

“You’ve longed for this, do you not, Eric?” the magician said. “Today is the day. Magic will be your best friend.”

Eric’s face twisted in frustration as the manipulator let out a wicked laugh.

“This guy,” Will said. “What is he doing to that commoner?”

“Magic infusion,” Klavier replied. “It’s an illegal activity as far as this is concerned.”

“This man has to be brought to justice,” Themis said, swiping her hand across in a fit of anger when a flask tumbled down to the floor, shattering the silence that stood in the lab the whole time.

“Ah,” the magician looked at their direction. “Looks like we have some visitors. Come out, my soon-to-be-guinea-pigs.”

“You guys stay here. I’ll deal with this fella,” Klavier stood up.

“Do you even know who he is?” Themis whispered loudly.

“His name is Shida, one of the great dark magicians of his time that manipulated the power of the gods which eventually caused them to wage war with humans. Is there anything else to it?”

“What kind of nonsense are you spouting? Is he really that kind of person?”

“Who knows,” he shrugged. “I’d best entertain him as the honored guest of the house.”

“Finally,” a wicked smile dashed across Shida’s face. “None I’ve talking one who dares to emerge from the shadows. Before we begin in the experiments, may I know who you are?”

“Klavier, Vanros Klavier,” his hand dropped to the sheathed sword on his waist.

“Shida. Nice to meet you, Klavier. So,” he took a step forward. “Shall we begin with the process?”

“Your experiments are as interesting as always, my dear friend, but I’m afraid that I need to decline.”

“Oh?” Shida’s eyes narrowed. “What is your reason?”

“I’m not here to look for power.”

“Not here to look for power, huh. Aren’t you a humble one?”

“A lot of people told me that before. But the thing is - immense power is a tool that can only be controlled by strong-willed people. Those without control blinds them, making them think they can do anything when they can’t always do so in reality.”

“You make it sound like you’ve gone through a lot yourself. Don’t you want to dominate them all?”

“I would love to. But will it do any good to those around me?”

“You’re an interesting fella indeed. I’ll have you transformed into the being you so desire. Come, I’ll break a path for you.”

“No! Klavier!” his ears picked up Themis’s loud whispers as he was led away by Shida. He glanced back, a slight smile surfacing on his face. He knew that such a gesture would not reassure Themis by any means but he did it anyway since he couldn’t allow Will and her to get exposed.

“Shall we begin?” Shida pushed a few buttons at the control station that kept the two life-sized chambers in check.

“I did tell you in the first place that I wasn’t here for power,” Klavier said, pulling out the sword slightly from the scabbard. “In all honesty though,” he slashed the glass container that held Zellha inside, staring at the pink liquid as it burst through the small line that he created. “I’ve got to thank you for leading me to her.”

“Bastard,” fury whirled in Shida’s eyes. “You do know the consequences of your actions.”

“I know very well what I’m doing,” Klavier’s lips curled. “What are you going to do?”

“You asked for it,” Shida pointed his metal staff at him. “Burn in hell, intruder!”