A massive red circle of magic materialized at where Shida stood. Pillars of black flames surrounded the entire lab, distorting the environment outside the assumed arena into an otherworldly open space where the tainted purple clouds swirled in the air. Eroded figures of a formally holy ground sat at seemingly random points of the place, infested with countless piles of dead bodies.

Shida swung his staff across, sending a wave of black fire blazing towards Klavier. He bounced away from the point of contact, spinning so fast that he momentarily appeared like a spinning top as he touched down. Shida raised his staff, drowning the heavy strike effortlessly with a simple swing that sent Klavier flying. Shida swiped his hand upwards, conjuring a massive black clenched fist from the ground, smashing Klavier with one fell swoop.

“How’s that for a start?” Shida taunted. “Ready for some more?”

“You talk too much, you know that?” Klavier wiped the blood off his mouth.

Klavier focused on Shida, breaking into a sprint. But it appeared he wasn’t about to be given an easy target - Shida unleashed a flurry of animating spells, spawning forth armies of the dead in an attempt to stop the unrelenting man before him. Klavier slashed across, unloading a part of his energy in the form of a silver-blue crescent moon that disintegrated the army into unrecognizable bits.

Klavier threw a punch forward so fast that Shida didn’t even have the time to react to it, striking square on his torso that threw him off. The impact was so hard that he was smashed to wall. But it wasn’t like his reflexes were dampened at all; he swerved to the side just as Klavier’s sword slammed right down at him.

“Wrong move,” Klavier said. “Bellow, Sirkius.”

At his command, the sword flared with blue flames before exploding into a colourful mix of destruction. Klavier tumbled backwards, his face partially burnt from the relentless power of his own weapon. But Shida had it worse; His armor was corroded to the point that it was useless, bleeding from a deep cut caused by Sirkius.

Now was the time to counterattack. Shida mumbled a set of incantations under his breath, filling the environment around Klavier with black balls of matter. It would be impossible to evade it at all; it covered enough space to fit an entire house around him. At the snap of a finger, the balls planted blew up, destroying practically everything as it consumed Klavier whole. The tips of his lips lifted. Victory was finally his. The thought played and replayed in his mind to the point that he was driven mad by it.

“Such a waste,” Shida said. “It would’ve been able to use you as my experiment had it not been for your resistance. You make a good specimen, Klavier.”

“No one said that I was defeated,” Klavier’s voice trailed from behind.

The words throbbed in Shida’s head. Impossible, no one could ever survive such a devastating attack. He turned around, staring right back at him, his top completely blown up into shreds of cloth that stubbornly stuck on his body. On his left hand was the black sword glowing in a strange golden aura.

“Bellow, Sirkius,” he said, unleashing yet another powerful burst of aura that ripped through Shida’s body.

Shida staggered back, touching his ripped chest as the blood flowed uncontrollably from the wound. He wasn’t about to be defeated just yet. He pointed his staff towards Klavier when his eyes caught sight of the black blade’s edge shining right back at him.

“Move an inch and that throat is gone,” Klavier said. “Release her now.”

“Why should I? It’s not your specimen in the first place.”

“I’ll say this only once,” the blade poked on his throat. “Hand her over.”

“What will you do? Huh? Kill me? That’s not going to happen.”

“It’s alright if I do it anyway. I’ll just have to figure a way around how to get her,” a smirk surfaced on Klavier’s face. “Look. I don’t have time to mess with your little experiments. So do as I say and it’ll be a happy situation for you.”

“F-Fine,” Shida mumbled a spell under his breath. “I’ll let her go, okay?”

The environment started to distort once more, breaking into tiny bits of squares, reconstructing itself into the dark silver place that they initially stood in. They stood in their positions, maintaining fierce stares at one another as life was breathed around them. Will and Themis emerged from their hiding, horror written all over their faces.

“You had to do it again, don’t you?” Themis asked. “I just fixed you up and now you’re all bashed up!”

“Sorry about that,” Klavier said. “Once we’re done here, we can recuperate.”

Shida typed in the data into the relevant fields to release the two people inside their chambers. The tube that kept them suspended in the air came off, allowing them to collapse to the cold, hard floor. Within seconds after their release, they heard them cough as they breathed in the pungent air around them.

“I’ve done as you asked. So, let me go already,” Shida said.

“Very well,” Klavier lowered his sword.

It wasn’t about to be over like that. He chanted a spell under his breath, imploring to the two subjects that he held in his care to rise to their feet. They did as he told them to, hung up like puppets being manipulated by an amateur master. Their eyes were void of any life, staring at Klavier and his companions with an obvious desire to kill.

“You heard me right,” Shida said. “They’re all yours.”

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It wasn’t like Shida’s actions threw him off. Klavier anticipated it, knowing that Shida would find opportunities to subdue him in moments that seems to be of excellent times. He turned to Shida, swinging his sword across that let out a burst of golden aura.

“Where do you think you’re aiming?” Shida taunted as he dived away from the hit.

“Not you of course,” Klavier pointed at the blazing inferno that was ignited from his attack. All colour from Shida’s face drained. Before he could attempt to jump away, the facility behind him exploded, blowing him up into smithereens.

“One down,” Klavier said, shifting his attention to the possessed Zellha and Eric. “Two more to go.”

“Klavier!” Will stood in front of him, wielding his sword and shield. “Stand back, you’re heavily injured.”

“I’m fine,” he insisted. “Will, can I task you to deal with Eric?”

“Are you mad? Zellha’s a goddess. You can’t possibly fight her in that kind of condition!”

“Are you able to handle her then?”

“That’s…”

“You got my point. So, let’s get this done quickly so we can go home already.”

“Who are you?” Zellha flexed her claws, staring at Klavier so intensely that he felt the glare shot right through him.

“Where are my manners?” he bowed. “The name’s Klavier. Vanros Klavier.”

“You’re no ordinary human,” her eyes narrowed. “What are you?”

“I don’t see a reason to tell you just yet,” In that exact moment, he felt a jarring pain. A sinister grin surfaced on Zellha’s face as she pulled her claw out, blood spilled all over it for her to lick on. Klavier staggered back, fighting against the increasingly powerful sensation culminated on his abdomen. He knew that Zellha was not one to mess with, not when she was already furious over Shida’s actions.

“You sure talk big,” she clashed against Klavier’s sword. “Come on, I know you’re not yet done.”

She grabbed onto his blade, gripping it so hard that Klavier couldn’t yank it off her grasp even if he put in all his effort. For a moment, it felt as though he went through the same situation before. If his memory served him right, he fought off a beast that had fiery red hair whose claws were made of titanium, a kind of metal that was way stronger than steel. That monster ripped through his torso when Klavier couldn’t block it with his disabled sword.

He won’t repeat the same mistake again. He let go of the weapon, diving straight down before Zellha could land another blow that could potentially kill him. Klavier swung his left leg across, smashing against her side so hard that he heard a crack. He grabbed her on the shoulders, collapsing to the floor as fast as he could for her to bounce off the ground head first.

But Zellha remained unfazed. She stood up, clenching her fist to summon an ethereal sword. He lifted his blade with a single hand in full anticipation. Klavier seized his weapon, clashing with hers that sent a loud, metallic clang that reverberated throughout the vast space of the laboratory.

“I should have known that the true power of the gods is something to reckon with,” Klavier said as he broke away from the clash. “In that case, here’s a present for you.

He pointed at her using his right hand, holding his position steady as a small red ball of energy massed up on his finger.

“You! Where did you learn that technique from?!” she jumped towards him with her claws bared in a desperate attempt to intercept him. But she was a second too late; He released the attack, unleashing a red beam half the size of a hovel that tore through everything in its path before it slowly reduced in size and disappeared completely. Zellha fell to her knees, her body as charred as the area that was under the mercy of his magic.

“Impossible,” she muttered as the blackness of her sclera faded away. “Only the high ranking gods can afford to do such attacks…”

“I see you got the point. Yes, it’s a god’s power,” he said. “So, can we make a deal here?”

“Fine, I lost,” she said. “So what do you want from me?”

“I’m here to retrieve somebody by the name of Vanros Klavier. I need your help to track his whereabouts.”

“But,” she raised an eyebrow. “Isn’t *your* name Vanros Klavier?”

“There are a lot of people by the same name. But I’m looking for this kid who looks like me. That’s all.”

“H~mm,” her lips curled. “I will do as you ask. But you need to do as I ask first.”

“Fine. So what is it that you want?”

“Give me a gem.”

He heaved a sigh, pulling out one colourfully designed diamond from his pocket.

“Whoa. It’s the real thing!” her eyes sparkled, snatching it away from him.

“Klavier!” Themis said, carrying Eric on her shoulder. “I’m sending Eric to the infirmary. I’ll catch up with you guys later.”

“For a midget, she’s actually quite strong,” Klavier mumbled as she trotted away.

“I heard you dimwit. Once I’m done with him, I'll wreck you!”

“I’d like to see you try. Anyway,” he turned his attention to Zellha. “Are you allowed to be seen by the public?”

“Not unless I’m fighting a war,” she said.

“I see,” his lips drooped to a frown. “I guess that’s acceptable. Now, to find a change of clothing.”

“Klavier,” Will said, offering a thick white robe folded nicely on his hands. “This is all that I have. Take this, it’ll ease the pain for now.”

“Thanks,” he sniffed on some medicinal scent that numbed the pain. “Are you alright with me using it?”

“Why not?” he returned a smile. “It’s a token of appreciation for your services. This will allow you to be recognized by the knights of the Holy Order.”

“Thanks,” Klavier put on the sleeveless robe, tucking the excess parts into his pants to create a new, clean image of himself. “Let’s get out of here already.”

“Well, what do we have here?” an unfamiliar voice shattered the momentary silence in the laboratory.

“Who are you?” Klavier stared at a figure of a man emerging from the dark corners of the lab.

He had unruly brown hair, wearing the cloak of a white knight, the symbol of a red cross engraved on it. Each step he took gave away a soft clank of metal. He pulled out a thin double edged sword, its tip akin to that of a pencil tip as opposed to Agent One’s curved edge.

“Iikuto Ryuuga,” Will’s voice shook in anger. “What are you doing here?”

“Same question applies to you,” Ryuuga’s lips curled. “What are *you* doing here?”

“Be careful, Klavier,” Will said. “This man’s -”

The sound of metal ripping into flesh tore the perceived silence between them. Blood splattered on Klavier’s face, his eyes capturing the fear in Will’s as he collapsed to the floor.

“What a shame to be called an officer. You’re not fit to be one in the first place,” Ryuuga spat at Will.

“Have you no respect, spitting at him like that?” Klavier gritted his teeth.

“I do as I please.”

“Who in the world do you think you are, using that power of yours to hurt people?”

“Are you testing my authority?” his eyes narrowed.

“Am I?”

“Say one more word and I swear I’ll slit that damned throat of yours.”

“Try me,” Klavier goaded.

“In that condition? Hah!”