Klavier’s power surged so much that the earth around them trembled. Glass apparatuses came crashing down under the dominating force as KLavier burst into a sprint. Despite the phenomenal speed, Ryuuga raised his sword in full anticipation, bringing his charge to a full halt with a clash. Klavier forced his sword upwards, breaking the balance of his opponent. With his torso open for a direct hit, he lunged his blade forward. Ryuuga swerved to the side, counter-attacking with a series of frenzied strikes. Klavier evaded the first hit, his eyes focused on the deadly edge coming closer at a perceived slow speed. He raised the black blade, blocking the strike that would have otherwise sliced his chest into two. Their swords stubbornly stuck one another, shaking the air violently that destroyed the immediate area around them.

“You fight well to be this battered,” Ryuuga said.

“What do you know?” Klavier replied. “I never heard my opponents compliment me like that before.”

The flattery seemed to work; His enemy was letting down his guard. Klavier grabbed hold of his head, slamming him down to the ground with all his might. Klavier slammed his sword down. But the blade missed an inch as Ryuuga jerked away from the incoming attack. Klavier escaped his grasp, bouncing back to create a small distance between them.

Fatigue weighed down on him. He should have known better, there was no way he would have enough stamina to last three duels back-to-back like that. But that wouldn’t be a problem if could deal the finishing blow first. Klavier charged forward, channelling all the anger and bitterness lingering in his heart into that single attack.

He swung the sword with all his might yet Ryuuga countered with an effortless clash that blew away even more of the lightweight materials around them. The parry did more than just block the otherwise lethal attack; the blade snapped. A wicked smile masked Ryuuga’s formerly serious look. He thrust the sword straight towards Klavier’s heart. He wasn’t about to let himself get hurt just like that. He forced himself to the side as the blade sunk into his body that was just an inch away from the vital area.

“Damn,” Klavier grabbed the blade, pulling it out with all his might. Ryuuga twisted it before he could, overloading his body with the torment. The strength he needed dried up on him as Ryuuga pulled it out, breaking into a triumphant laugh as Klavier fell to his knees. Ryuuga raised his sword right above him, no doubt boasting the hard-earned victory over Klavier’s defeat. He pushed his sword down towards Klavier’s back only to be stopped by an unknown force just before the blade could sink in.

Right before Klavier was the orange haired dual ponytailed girl that held her jewelled staff steady with both her hands. An image throbbed in his head. It felt as though he went through the exact same moment somewhere down his lifetime though he had no instance of such interventions in his most immediate memories.

“Are you alright, Klavier?” she asked.

“Themis! How did you…?”

“Long story. I’ll tell you later once I’m done with him,” she levelled her weapon parallel to the ground. She let go of it, allowing it to levitate without the support required as she chanted a set of incantations under her breath.

Ryuuga leapt forward, thrusting his sword towards her. Klavier could hear his mind scream the order to get up but like a stubborn child, his body refused to move even in the increasingly dire situation he found her in. He wasn’t about to lose Themis the same way how he lost will, at least that was what he hoped so. But Themis was starting right back at Ryuuga, continuing her chants as though she paid no mind to his meddling. She somersaulted backwards, narrowly evading the strike as she formed a “V” shape with her fingers on the tips of her lips. She squeezed her lips with the fingers, breathing out a set of flames that roared at Ryuuga’s direction.

“Time to go,” Themis said, carrying Klavier like a sack on one hand and levitating Will off the ground with her magic. She waved her staff in a circular motion, speaking in an ancient tongue. The words were cryptic enough to keep Klavier from understanding what was running in her head. But what was certain was that Themis was not interested in fighting at all. Before long, Klavier’s vision blackened into nothingness.

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He heard nothing but a ringing buzz. His head was resting on something soft and warm, his body still somewhat paralyzed from what felt like a tranquilizer jab. He opened his eyes, staring at a white ceiling lit under the candlelight when Themis entered his line of vision.

“How long was I out?” Klavier asked as he sat up on the infirmary bed.

“Three days,” she turned her attention to the other patients in the same room. “You were lucky that I got there on time. You’d probably just as badly wounded as Will is.”

“Thanks,” a slight smile surfaced on his face. “I owe you one for saving me there.”

“Gee,” she shuffled her feet. “That’s a first.”

“Why?”

“Not really. Anyway, what happened to your sword?”

“It snapped when I fought Ryuuga off. It’s never happened before and I’ve maintained it for as many times as I can every day.”

“It can’t be helped then,” she shrugged. “I know an aristocrat around here that can assist you in replacing that blade temporarily. She’s currently selling her final stock of unwanted weapons and armours.”

“I bet it cost mountains of zel to buy one.”

“You can try to bargain with her. She’ll be willing to do so since you’re a ‘knight’, taken from the fact that you’re wearing Will’s trainee robe.”

“What’s her name?”

“Michele. She has a very complex hairstyle, is a blonde, and incredibly tall. She’s easily recognizable among the nobles so you will want to gather information first before approaching her.”

“You give me the impression that she doesn’t want to deal with people outside her circle of friends.”

“It’s rumoured to be the case.”

“But why would she be in Bariura Empire at this point of time?”

“One, to sell some stuff and two, witness a political situation in here. Well, do you want to see her?”

“I might as well since she might travel soon. In that case, do you not mind patching me up further?”

“Sure,” she hovered her hands over the barely closed wounds on his body. Her face strained with intense concentration as a green ethereal orb materialized on her palm. She pushed it into his chest. His fingers tingled with a strange sensation, his body lost all sense of pain in his movements.

“Go on. I’ll wait for Will to wake up,” she said.

“Thanks.”

He stashed his broken sword into its scabbard, making his way out from the infirmary into the city. It bustled with all sorts of activity from the merchants doing their noisy trade to the artists that painted their canvases with a lot of care and love to it. There was a clear division between the commoners and the noble; the more elegantly clothed people located at where Klavier was walking towards to, and the less well-off people on where he stood. Even though there was no barricade to clearly distinguish who was from where, he sensed a different air the moment he entered the aristocrat’s environment.

Unlike the commoner’s side, the rich man’s area was filled with luxurious things - parties, expensive fashion and music. The place was a lot cleaner and was guarded with higher ranking soldiers that patrolled the parameter to ensure their security. Klavier ignored the quick stares that caught the noble’s attention as he walked past them, scanning the area for that one person recommended by Themis. Then again, the description given by Themis wasn’t good enough to give him a solid mental picture…

“You look a bit lost,” a pleasant-sounding voice said from behind.

“I am,” Klavier looked back to see a fully armoured long haired blonde lady wearing a metal headband with a halberd hanging loosely on her back. Her strong blue eyes met his for a split second before he looked away. “I’m looking for someone by the name of Michele. Do you know where she might be?”

“What business do you have with her?”

“I’m a knight who needs to have a replacement sword,” he pulled out his broken sword. “You see, I can’t perform my duty if I don’t have a working blade.”

“I see. What’s your name?”

“Klavier. Vanros Klavier.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Amy.”

“Pleased to be your acquaintance,” he gave a brief bow. “Shall we get going? I’m kind of on a rush now.”

“You came at a good timing. Michele is leaving for La Veda tomorrow. Follow my lead.”

How embarrassing. Themis’s poor description of Michele was the one responsible for his cluelessness. It would do no good to refuse the offer given to him. Amy walked like any other soldier around the town, but there was a strong sense of pride in her strides. At the same time, there was a lady-like vibe from it, turning some heads as they went along into a courtyard that was filled with well-dressed nobles. City guards were stationed at strategic locations, their eyes peeled on a lookout for any possible assassins that might infiltrate the perimeter. They eyed on Klavier briefly, scanning him like they would to other first time visitors before letting him in without resistance.

“There she is,” Amy pointed at a blonde dual-croissant-braided haired girl wearing a red gown that had intricate designs on it.

“There’s no signs of any weapons or armour on her,” Klavier commented.

“You got a point. Okay, stay here and let me talk to her. I’ll be right back.”

Great. Klavier was now left alone in an environment he knew he couldn’t click into very well. There were a lot of things he was yet to know such as hooking up ladies, being the cool kid in town and drinking. He took a cup of cocktail wine from the buffet table blending in with the crowd as much as he could just to avoid looking out of place. After what felt like an eternity, Amy returned with Michele, who was a head taller than himself and was probably more muscular than he was.

“What business do I have with a lowly knight like you?” Michele asked.

“Um, good evening milady,” he bowed. “I’m here to request for a new blade. My acquaintance, Themis, told me that you have what I need.”

“That blabbermouth, I’m going to teach her a lesson on shutting that trap of hers. Alright. Since you’re here, there’s a lot of weapons that is on sale but you can expect a hefty price tag to it. But before that, why not you enjoy the party for a while longer?”

“I’d really love to but you see, I need to get back to duty as soon as I can. My superior will kill if I don’t return within an hour.”

“I see. Follow me,” she trailed away into a candle-lit room in a tower adjacent to the function.

In the area was just a long table filled with weapons of varying types and sizes lined up in display. Klavier glanced at each of them that bore a different, unique name to it. The one that caught his eye was a snow white blade. Its guard was decorated to appear like a lion’s mane, and its edge was curved just like his black sword Sirkius. He picked it up, ignoring the strange sensation it made when he touched it as he examined the durability of it.

“I see you’ve made your choice quite quickly,” Michele said.

“How much is this?”

“Five gems. That’s the cheapest and weakest sword in my stock. Are you sure you want that?”

He raised his eyebrows. “Is it alright if I take it with four gems instead?”

“No can do, trainee. This thing’s price tag is fixed based on the market price. Any lower and it’ll be too cheap to sell.”

“Fine,” he heaved a sigh, forking out the last few gems in his pocket.

“A fine deal,” her lips curled. “Well, let’s get back already. I’ve got to listen to some more political crap again…”