It was quiet. Too quiet. Vanros peered out of her hiding place. The sight of the slain and broken weapons scattered across the battlefield greeted her. From the distance was a man, stubbornly holding onto his black sword as two men had their rifles pointed at him. She crawled forward, focusing on the man desperately defending himself. He was panting heavily, his whole body filled with slashes and bullet holes, staining the white robe so much that it appeared to be velvet for a moment. All the color drained from her face - that man was Klavier.

Klavier swung his sword across, but had completely lost the speed and strength to the immense blood loss. His opponent blocked the poor strike effortlessly, smashing his face with the rifle butt. Klavier staggered back, rubbing his swollen cheek as he struck back with another hit, this time stabbing through the rifleman at the chest. But he was a second too slow; his enemy fired a shot, piercing through his chest. Alas, Klavier let go of his sword, collapsing to the ground without any form of resistance along with the last man that stood against him.

It was a sword stabbed through her heart. It had to be a lie. Klavier was immortal; He couldn’t have fallen so easily at the hands of the gods. The walking pace was brought to a run, stumbling only when she reached his side. The ground around him was just as red as his robe. Despite the incredible loss of blood, Klavier held on, focusing onto her as a visible smile surfaced on his otherwise pale face.

“Looks like I screwed up this time,” he said softly.

“No, no no… We need a doctor now,” she mumbled, turning around only to be stopped a tug.

“Don’t mind. The rest died already. Our only doctor with them. I know it’s a bit sudden, making you go through this crap early in your life.”

“Father,” her voice cracked, choking in her tears. “Don’t go. Please.”

“You’re just like your mother,” he said, grinning from ear to ear. “I love that you still care for me, even after not seeing you for fifteen years. I’m definitely not going anywhere, I promise. Here,” he mustered all the remaining strength to lift the black blade. “This is my parting gift to you. All my hope and dreams, they’re yours now.”

He nudged it forward, forcing her to hold onto the bloody blade just before his hand dropped.

“Go on. I’ll be resting here,” his voice was nothing no than a soft whisper now.

“You don’t mean…”

“Stay strong, Vanros. I’ll be there with you, no matter what.”

She opened her mouth, wanting to say her piece when he closed his eyes, never to open again.

“Father?” she nudged him but there was no response. “Father!”

Tears rolled down her cheeks. So that was what he meant by ‘not going anywhere’. The pain ravaged her body, piercing through even the toughest part of her. She dropped the sword, screaming her lungs out but the unpleasant feeling won’t go away. Maybe it wasn’t meant to be pushed away. She wrapped her arms around herself, holding onto to whatever sanity she had left.

Most people on their deathbed would be afraid to move on. Vanros knew that with the countless faces of regret and wishfulness among the slain. But her father was not that. She wiped the tears off, taking a closer look to his face. Even at the end, he still found a way to smile, immortalized for as long as his body remained in this state.

“Why do you look like that? Dad, do you not mind dying?” she said.

She would have imagined him scolding her for cursing him. But would he? It mattered not. The time came for her to step up the game. She picked up the black sword, stashing it on the left of her waist. She put on the blue cloak, ignoring the weight that pressed on her shoulders. It was time to follow Klavier’s footsteps. It was time to become a Summoner.