Featured song for this song:

Higurashi - Dear You  
Credits for this cover: Theisther  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-j\_UcHsgVQ

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Luck was definitely not on her side. Everyone in Michele’s group were receiving gifts on this dreaded day called “Valentine’s Day”. It was supposedly an expected outcome anyway since she was never into the drug called love. But the bite it had watching even an outcast like Lodin receive chocolate from Tiara made this year’s event more painful than it was supposed to be.

But that wasn’t the worst. Will, Aem and Themis seemed to have a good time too, setting aside their differences to celebrate this special day when the gods were not attacking at the moment. She heaved a sigh, cursing the heavy emotion for dragging her spirits down.

“Hmm,” a voice from behind jolted her up. “Looks like somebody’s a bit lonely.”

Blood shot up into her head as she turned around. A man wearing grass-green armor greeted her, his full helmet preventing her from seeing his face. On his hand was a box of chocolate but it wasn’t without some twisted twigs that already found its way on it.

“Oh, it’s you,” Michele said.

“Were you expecting Klavier?” he asked.

“N-Not at all! Zelban, you better shut your trap or…”

“Or what?” her ears pricked at the voice. She turned to Zelban’s side, staring back at Klavier that took a chocolate from a red heart-shaped box on his hand.

“N-Nothing,” she puffed her cheeks.

“You can be honest already,” Klavier said, partially revealing the half eaten brown gooey stuff in his mouth. “I know you want some.”

“Um, sir,” Zelban said. “It’s not very nice to talk with your mouth full…”

“Oh! Sorry!”

“Anyway,” Zelban gave his gift to her. “This is something for our fellow leader. We appreciate your help throughout our journey and we hope to continue working with you.”

“Thanks,” her stomach tickled with a weird sensation. “By the way, Klavier. Where did you get those chocolate from?”

“I bought it from a prominent gift shop back in Bariura Empire but it’s not been touched for the past month.”

“So you decided to eat it,” her eyebrows drooped low along with the apparent frown on her face.

“Yup. Must say it’s pretty good.”

“Do you even know what that kind of chocolate is meant to be?”

“Um yeah,” he scratched his head, glancing at Zelban who looked on uncomfortably. “Then again, it’s going to expire soon so…”

“Idiot. You could have just given that to me. I’d love to eat them even if they’re expired.”

“Want to have one then?” he offered the already empty box.

“Um, sir, aren’t you going a bit too far doing that?” Zelban asked, his body shaking so much that his armor clattered.

“Is it?” Klavier turned to look at Michele, who was already fuming inside out. “Uh oh. I think you have a point.”

Klavier wasn’t about to get away with it. She pulled him by the hair just before he could turn tail and run. She yanked him towards her, delivering a punch to the face that sent him flying in the air.

“Idiot! Idiot!” she shouted so loud that even the birds in the forest flew out of their nests. “I hope you die!”

“Leader, get a hold of yourself!” Zelban said. “I don’t think Klavier was being serious with what he said…”

“Oh yeah? How do you know?”

“Um…”

“Whatever. Leave me alone.”

“But…”

“Just do it.”

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Evening came faster than her anger could cool down. She pulled enough grass around her to have a small pile of it at her side. But even with that, the anger was still very fresh.

“Argh!” she shouted. “Why am I so angry?!”

“Perhaps the reason behind it is because you care for him, do you not?” a familiar medium-high pitch voice said.

“Tiara, what brings you here? You know I’m poisonous when I’m mad.”

“Lodin want to tell you that there’s an unrehearsed performance going on back in camp. Come on,” she grabbed Michele by the wrist. “It’s going to be fun!”

Tiara led her back to the camp, where everyone had already gathered around the campfire, exchanging jokes and booze that kept the atmosphere light. Lodin was already red from overconsumption of alcohol but he went on for his seventeenth cup of beer that aroused loud cheering from the group. But it felt as though someone was missing…

“If you’re looking for Vanros Klavier,” Tiara interrupted her thoughts. “He’s tuning Duel-GX for the performance. It’s taking longer than expected though…”

“He’d better make it a good one.”

“Aw, you don’t have to hide it. I can see you’re excited for it!” Tiara poked her cheeks.

“Do that again and I’ll smack you silly.”

“Okay! I’m sorry!”

“Sorry for the unexpected delay,” a monotonous Lilith said as she and Klavier pushed the grand piano to where they could see it comfortably. “Duel-GX broke a string so it took longer than expected. It has been replaced and is now fully functional again.”

“Thanks Lilith,” Klavier said. “I want to dedicate this to Michele. I know I’ve caused hurt that she didn’t deserve and I don’t know whether she’ll be around to see this. But I hope the music will reach out to her.”

The group roused into an applause as he took a seat, laying out what appeared to be five pages worth of scores at the front.

“Oh,” Tiara pulled out the binoculars. “The song looks really interesting.”

“Wait. You can read the notes?”

“Yup,” she recited a small part of it but stopped halfway when Klavier started on a soft tune.

The first few melodies already grabbed her attention. The emotion of genuine apology and hope sunk in as he varied the strength from second to second. Even the somewhat drunk Lodin quietened down to listen to the song, looking at Klavier sway along with the music, his fingers dancing about on the keyboard.

“Has he always been like this?” Tiara asked. “I mean, this is the first time we are hearing him perform.”

“You should see him when he properly prepares the songs. It’s said to blow the minds of complete strangers,” she said, the tips of her lips lifted slightly as the soothing tune eased the pain within.

“Heh, you’re smiling now.”

“W-What?”

“You’re so easy to read, you know that?” Tiara giggled. “It’s written all over your face.”

“C-Can you not?”

“Klavier!” Tiara shouted once the song reached its end. “She’s over here!”

“Hey!” Michele pulled Tiara away. “The heck are you doing?”

“Don’t you want to let him know you’re here?”

“It’s not that…”

He stood up from his seat, walking towards her with the crowds’ gaze following him.

“I-Idiot. Are you trying to make a scene?” Michele asked when he was already in front of her.

“Not really,” he answered.

“Then what the heck is this?!”

“Sorry about just now,” he pulled out an identical red heart-shaped box from his back. “The box of chocolate I ate earlier was actually from Lucina. I didn’t know you’d take the joke so seriously though. So here, this is mine. Don’t worry. It’s not expired.”

“I-Idiot,” she snatched it from here. “Do that one more time and I’ll a soup out of your bones.”

“I hope that won’t happen,” he laughed uncomfortably as the crowd cheered at their successful reconciliation.

She looked down at the chocolate box, staring at the note written in ink, its handwriting more beautiful than she anticipated it to be. It said “Happy Valentine’s Day”. To be given something with such value on a time when she perceived to be a waste, her stomach churned with a sensation that was anything but pain. A smile cracked on her face but no matter how hard she tried, she couldn’t press it back down.

“Um, Michele?” Klavier looked at her, concern swirling in his eyes.

“Don’t mind her,” Tiara said, pushing her away. “She’s really happy. She just can’t say it right now.”