Summoning. That was the one word that kept escaping the countless mouths of many around him. Surely it was a big deal, being the talk in everyone’s topics. It revolved around something about reclaiming the land that the Fallen Gods have taken from them and the notion that it was high time to strike back at their enemies. Summoning had kept these people alive, most notably because the Fallen Gods were not just fighting the Summoners themselves, but together with revived great heroes of the past.

But for him, this could only be achieved in his dreams. He flunked test after test in spite of his diligence and persistence. In the latest blow to his ego, even the most lenient teacher gave him a giant “F” on the written examination paper for all to see. He dragged his feet across the hallway, enduring the sneers and jeers of his fellow classmates as the exam paper dangled loosely on his right hand. Perhaps he wasn’t up for the task. Perhaps his talent was somewhere else.

“Hoi!” a medium-low pitched voice called from behind. “Wait up!”

He turned around at once, dumping the dreadful emotion whirling in his heart for a split second. “Karl?”

“Yo, Klavier,” he smiled, panting as though he just ran through a marathon. “How did it go?”

“Not good,” Klavier looked at his paper again. “At this rate, I’ll really need to drop out.”

“Life’s got to be so hard on you now, huh?” Karl rested his arm over Klavier’s shoulders. “Hey, I’ve got something to tell you. Come closer.”

“What is it?”

“I just got five gems.”

“Really? Those are crazy expensive stuff!”

“Shh! Not over here,” they looked up, returning their glares to the public. “It’s for you.”

“What? Hey, don’t talk nonsense here. I don’t deserve this.”

“Well, we did make a promise didn’t we? You said you’d do your best, and that’s what you did, right?”

“Um,” he glanced at the paper. “I guess so.”

“Come on, there’ll always be time to catch up. But first, to the Summon Gate!”

The Summon Gate. Famous for either eating into Summoner’s pocket money or providing the best fighters known in the whole land. He wasn’t particularly interested in it, partly because he lacked the cash to hire these mercenaries. At times when he did get it, the gate would almost always return him units of lower caliber. He envied the elders for having almost everything they wanted - money, power, fame and so much more. Now was the time to attempt at an impossible task of getting a revolutionary unit. His heart pounded with anxiety but at the same time, with excitement. Karl’s humble gift would go a long way this time around. This summon better not disappoint him.

“Well,” Klavier clapped his hands together as he tossed the jewels into an automated box that mixed the contents within to provide him with a worn-out yellow movie ticket. “Here goes nothing!”

The container seized the ticket the moment it went close to its mouth. Darkness shrouded his surroundings, leaving absolutely nothing left for him to see. He heard no noise, not even his beating heart or his increasingly erratic breath. A bright red light shone right before him, unleashing a powerful gust of wind that threatened to throw him off. He fought against the force, walking ever so slowly towards the massive, majestic red gate. With a gentle touch to the door, it burst open, practically blinding him with its unforgiving beam.

As the shine dimmed, his eyes made out the silhouette of another human being. It appeared to be a head taller than him and had a curvy figure. That person had to be a girl. A pleasant-looking one, and hopefully a temper just as nice.

He took a step forward, emerging out of the shroud of light for his eyes to feast on a dual-croissant-haired blonde woman wearing a bareback gladiator armor with a dark chocolate skirt fitted with white frills on its ends. On her hands were two menacing glowing red axes and a set of fiery red eyes glaring at him so intensely that it felt like she impaled him with just the stare.

“H~uh?!” she placed her hands on her hips. “What kind of joke is this?”

“Err,” he scratched his head. “Um. Hi?”

“Don’t ‘hi’ me! Who are you?”

“I’m Klavier. And you are?”

“Another geek from my dreams. How did ‘you’ summon me? Whatever! If you don’t keep me happy, I’ll just go home!”

“W-Wait!” he broke into a sprint as she stomped away.

“What?!”

“Listen to me will you?”

He was about to move towards her when a rock knocked his foot aside. As if his body knew what to do all along, he grabbed her, crashing to the ground with his face sunk into something soft and warm. He squeezed it briefly only for her to grunt. It was then that he realized he shouldn’t have done that.

“Hey idiot,” she said, her words carrying nothing but anger. “Where do you think you’re touching?”

“Waaa! I can explain! I can-”

A cracking sound shattered the silence. He touched his cheek, igniting the intense pain on it. His body was most definitely not lying to him - he just got slapped. To make it worse, it was from a pretty lady.

“Hmph! Don’t ever call me again! You hear me?!” she kicked his face, rushing back to the gate.

“W-Wait! I’m sorry,” he shouted as the gate closed on him. “I didn’t do it on...purpose…”

That was a first. Getting laid by a woman who downright hated him for his mistakes. There was no way an average lady would forgive a man like him for doing something like that. He knocked on the door, trying to reach her but there was no answer. After what felt like an hour, he decided that it was time to call it quits. He walked back from where he came from, watching the environment around him sketched itself back into life. Karl rushed over the moment their eyes met, unable to hide a silly smile.

“So how was it? Did you get a good one?”

“She rejected me, Karl.”

“Rejected? What do you mean?”

“It’s as I said. She doesn’t want me. Hey,” Klavier stared at Karl. “Am I really cut up for this?”

“Would it comfort you if I were to say you are?”

“I don’t know.”

“Man, you sure have it hard,” he patted Klavier on the back. “I guess it’s a bit sudden on her part that you are her master now. By the way, how did she look like?”

Klavier described the appearance from head to toe, watching Karl’s mouth hang open bit by bit.

“Oh god, Klavier, do you know who she is?”

“No.”

“She’s the legendary Michele, holding the title of ‘Red Axe’! Klavier,” he seized him by the shoulders. “She’s probably the most powerful we’ve ever seen.”

“Really?”

“Tomorrow is the Summoning lesson right? Elder Grah is conducting right?”

“Yeah.”

“That’s good. You should summon her. You’ll make everyone envious!”

“But I’m not here to make people envy me.”

“Oh that’s right. I forgot. Well, at least you can try to match up with the better students now. Come on,” Karl lifted his chin. “Cheer up will you? Don’t give up just because she doesn’t want to follow you. Give her time. She’ll learn to understand your intentions.”

“I suppose you’re right.”

“I’ll be there if you need help. So, don’t you ever lose to that inner demon of yours.”

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The next day came in a crash. Klavier smashed the alarm clock blaring at his ear. A little more and he would have had a temporary hearing loss. He pulled himself out of the sack, tidying his room before donning on his denim jacket on top of his white undershirt which was complemented with slim-fit jeans and a pair of military black boots. He stared at himself in the mirror. His reflection mouthed the words “Today is the day.” He was yet to understand the renewed energy flowing in him, but he was certain that something big was going to happen. Then again, would the woman he summoned the day earlier listen to him?

“Ho ho! You guys are up early,” Elder Grah said as he levitated off the ground for everyone to see. “Such energy from the youth. Now, shall we begin with a handshake?”

“But Elder Grah, there are so many of us,” one of Klavier’s classmates said. “How are we supposed to do that?”

“Ho ho, I was just joking there. Now, here is the real thing. I don’t need to tell you all what to do.”

His classmates raised both their hands to chest level, pointing to where they were facing. They mumbled a small set of incantations, coloring the room with magical circles of yellow, red and rainbow. Some unlucky people had their summon circles as greyish which made Elder Grah shake his head.

“Klavier,” Grah looked at him. “Are you not joining us?”

“I-In a second, please.”

“Very well.”

He raised both his hands, joining them together as a powerful gust surrounded him. His red-lit summon circle joined the rest of the class, but seemed to appear distorted. Grah’s eyes on him only seemed to mount the pressure. He was losing his concentration and consciousness fast to the immense power of summoning. No, he was not going to go down without bringing out his unit out.

“Ho,” Grah’s eyes narrowed. “This looks interesting.”

“...Heed my call,” a surge of power roared around Klavier. “Red Axe Michele!”

“Yeah,” her voice echoed across the room. “I heard you.”

As if materializing out of thin air, the dual-croissant-haired woman emerged from the summoning circle. She seized her axes stowed at her back, drawing it out with the most friction possible in a vainly attempt to attract attention.

“My hearing will turn bad if you shout like that,” she dug her ears, swinging the axe indiscriminately. “So, where’s the enemy? Um,” she turned around. The smile on her face disappeared at once.

“Hi,” Klavier waved.

“Ehh?!” she loosened the grip on her axes so much that it dangled loosely on her wrists.

“Yeah. It’s me again.”

“I-I was summoned by this pervert?” the remark attracted a wave of ‘oh’ and ‘uhh’.

“H-Hey,” Klavier placed his hands on his hips. “I did say that it was an accident. And I did say I was sorry.”

“Sorry my foot,” she looked away briefly when her lips curled. “Maybe I’ll forgive you.”

“Really?”

“If you lick my boots!”

*That evil woman*, his subconscious hissed. He was in the wrong after all, so if he actually did it, maybe it would fix things. He heaved a sigh, tossing his pride aside as he went down to his knees, reaching out for her boots.

“W-What are you doing?” Michele asked.

“I’m doing as you asked.”

She yanked her foot, knocking the metal onto his nose that left him rolling on the floor in pain.

“Idiot! Idiot, idiot, idiot! You’re a terrible Summoner, you know,” she said.

“I know,” Klavier stood up, wiping the blood off his nose. “I need some guidance. Will you help me?”

“Ho ho!” Elder Grah said. “This is interesting indeed! A Summoner asking for strength by his summoned? Very interesting!”

“Tch. I’ll be sure you’ll face hell if you don’t make me happy,” Michele pointed her axe at Klavier.

“I’ll do my best,” he cracked a smile as the class entered into a frenzy of murmurs. Michele looked away, her face reddening slightly.

“Very well,” Grah landed softly on the floor. “Now that we all have our summoned units, I shall begin my lesson.”

“Hey,” Michele whispered at Klavier’s ear. “I didn’t sign up for this.”

“I’m really sorry. I’m still a student.”

“No wonder you’re so shitty.”

“Thanks,” the muscles on his cheeks twitched as a wicked smile surfaced on his face.