

## -- 21XX 13th Hierarchical City of Kagutsuchi, Cathedral

High up in the air not contaminated by Seithr. The light of a beautiful moon shines upon the city of Kagutsuchi up in the mountains, on the higher planes of the city most people during this time would typically be sleeping. Keyword being most.

One of those cases is inside a cathedral, a place that contrasts the blue light of the moon. With how vibrant and well-lit it is, anyone who enters here would naturally assume it was still daytime.

Inside this cathedral a lanky figure dressed in a yellow coat strolls by, with the markings of a snake.... and the fangs of one-- this is **Yuki Terumi**.

***Crrrrrrrrrr! SLICE!***

What was he doing here, you may ask? Who knows. But what we do know is that a bloodbath has ensued. Groups of undead looking people try to jump him desperately like they're looking for a meal, attacking him as if they were controlled by a single will. But unfortunately for the group, one after another they get sliced into individual pieces by his dual knives. With a certain ferocity he delivers his cuts, spraying blood from their necks and other disembodied parts. By the time he's slain all of them the floor and walls of the cathedral are painted in red.

Terumi:

Awwww, someone forgot to put a collar on their shitty pets.

With a cheeky grin, Terumi revels at the horrifying scenery he's created. The bodies, though, would strangely disappear as if they were sand blowing on the wind.... removing a crucial part of the art he'd created. What the hell was going on?

?????:

A low-life like you shouldn't be screwing around here.

A disembodied voice speaks, clearly annoyed with his presence. No, his entire existence.

Terumi:

Hmmmm? And speak of the devil! Are you enjoying your stay in the shadows?

Terumi snaps his fingers, clearly signaling for whoever spoke just now to appear.



Terumi:

.....because the stage is clearly calling now, stop pussying out and show your worthless face already!

*Tip. Tap. Tip. Tap.* The sounds of distant footsteps can be heard in the direction of the cathedral's statue. Terumi turns to see the shadowy figure of a young man wearing a coat with bloodshot eyes staring right at him with intent to kill, closing the distance by each second. At a closer inspection, the young man's body and face is mostly covered in bandages like a mummy.... With only his white hair, mouth, nose and eyes visible.

Terumi:

What, an accident with toilet paper got in the way??? Ugh, don't get near me then. You're probably covered in filth by now.

?????:

Too bad then, you already caught my attention with the mess you made here.



Now in sight, the bandaged man is illuminated by the light..... Gripping a knife in his left hand. He stares at the corpses of many of his minions, seemingly impressed with the snake. The young man rips the bandages off and throws them behind himself. This is **SHIKI Tohno** – the half-oni who was once heir to the Tohno mansion.

SHIKI:

Don't worry. I assure you, you'll do nicely when you serve me.

Terumi:

Serve you? Hahahahaha! Oh, man, that's **RICH!** You think I'm gonna start stroking your ego just cuz you're pointing a knife my way? Well, newsflash, kid...

Terumi fishes his knives out, performing a series of quick, showy, complex flips in his hands before pointing the blades at SHIKI.

Terumi:

You're gonna need a helluva lot more than some basic kitchen knife to make me bend the knee!

SHIKI:

*(grins)*

Then let me give you a demonstration

Terumi and SHIKI rush in with their knives at the ready. SHIKI goes in for a wide, outward slash aimed at Terumi's chest, but the green-haired man raises his arm, nonchalantly parrying it with his own swing. Pushing him back, Terumi attempts to exploit his enemy's lack of balance by

rushing forward. Three swift slashes are aimed at SHIKI, but with surprisingly quick reflexes he manages to block each one. Seeing what he believes is an opening, SHIKI attempts to stab Terumi in the arm, but the attack hits thin air as Terumi tilts his body to the side. A hard, upward slash punishes SHIKI's attempt, leaving a nasty cut across his chest.

SHIKI:  
Guh!

The pain is only intensified as a kick slams into the side of his head, dazing him long enough for Terumi to land three quick slashes across his body. Each attack moves so quickly it can't be seen by the naked eye, the only sign of their existence being the long cuts adorning his body. And right as the pain is beginning to set in, Terumi sends him flying with a hard kick to the jaw!

SHIKI's body flies through the air, blood spilling out as he skids across the ground and slams into a wall back-first. Struggling to get back up, the white-haired man hears the sound of Terumi's boots clicking against the hard tile floors.

Terumi:  
*(mockingly)*

You know, it's a real shame. At least those damn bloodsuckers from before had enough bite to back up their talk. For someone who's supposed to be their master, I was expecting a bit more.

As he speaks, Terumi continues walking forward. SHIKI looks up at him, anger visibly burning in his eyes.

Terumi:  
*(continued)*

I mean, seriously, was that it? A couple knife tricks and you throw in the towel right as it's getting good? What a waste!

SHIKI's body shudders violently as he tries to get up, only to suddenly collapse.

Terumi:  
Ah, what's the matter? Is rigor mortis starting to set in? *(shrugs)* Well, if you can't fight anymore, I guess I'll need to find some other way to have my fun.

Terumi begins juggling his knife in one hand, a sadistic glint in his eyes.

Terumi:  
Ooh, I know! Maybe I'll start by cutting you to pieces while you're still awake. Or maybe I could drag you out as is and feed you to the pigs? Hehehehe HAHAHAHA!

Terumi breaks out into uncontrollable laughter, completely unaware the blood beneath him is starting to take on a different form.

## SHURK!

Terumi's laughter stops as something sharp pierces into his leg. With wide eyes and pupils shrunk in pain, the fallen god looks down to find a spear of blood tearing right through his knee.

Terumi:  
*(shocked, weakly)*  
What the-

SHIKI grins as things shift to his perspective, showing that the blood spear stabbed through one of Terumi's "lines." All of a sudden, a myriad of spears fire out from the bloodied ground, each one impaling Terumi through the "lines" on his body. By the time it's over his back, stomach, and arms have been completely run through.

SHIKI:  
*(scoffs, tauntingly)*  
How overconfident...

Picking himself back up, SHIKI looks at Terumi with a grin.

SHIKI:  
Do you really think I'd let you spill all this blood so easily?

Terumi:  
*(raspy and gurgling as blood spills out of his mouth)*  
Bastard!

SHIKI chuckles at the insult as he looks over Terumi's impaled, bloody body.

SHIKI:  
Tell me, how does it feel, knowing that your body's about to fall to pieces just from having your "lines" cut?

With a mad grin, SHIKI stabs Terumi in the stomach and twists the knife in, enjoying his opponent's pained grimace.

SHIKI:  
How quickly do you think you'll die? Will it be instant? Perhaps you'll still be alive long enough to feel each chunk slowly fall away?

As he bombards his opponent with questions, SHIKI stabs Terumi again and again, picking different spots each time. Terumi groans and grits his teeth as he struggles to pull himself free, which causes SHIKI's grin to spread.

SHIKI:  
Why don't we find out?

Aiming at a specific "point" on Terumi's stomach, SHIKI stabs it. Blood ruptures out from the wound like a fountain, and he waits eagerly to see his victim's body fall to pieces...



But it doesn't happen.

SHIKI's gleeful expression becomes one of confusion as Terumi remains standing, jaw clenched in anger as he stares down the white-haired killer.

SHIKI:  
I don't understand. How are you- URGH!

Terumi cuts him off with a seithr-infused headbutt, breaking SHIKI's nose. SHIKI staggers back, and while he's briefly distracted, Terumi wrenches his arm free from the impalement, slamming him across the face with a seithr-enhanced swing. The sound of tearing flesh rings through the cathedral as Terumi follows it with a swing from his other arm, then rips his leg free to deliver an overhead kick that slams SHIKI into the ground.

Terumi:  
(angrily)  
I dunno what all that crap was about "lines," but you've got some serious balls, kid!

A hard stomp slams into SHIKI's skull.

Terumi:

You think you can pull one over on **ME** and get away with it? You think you've won just because you got a couple lucky shots with that blood trap of yours? Just who the hell do you think you are?

Terumi continues angrily stomping on SHIKI, occasionally interspersing it with hard kicks to the torso.

Terumi:

You think you're hot shit, squatting in a church with your little undead orgy? Your coven of parasites didn't even have the decency to **die** correctly, and now you think you can spill **my** blood to satisfy your cravings?

A hard kick to the chest causes SHIKI to roll along the ground, but Terumi isn't giving him a moment of respite. He swings Ouroboros at SHIKI, the snake-like weight clamping down on his leg as he's reeled in. Grabbing hold of the Tohno clan's eldest, Terumi flashes a sadistic grin as he notices the livid expression he's receiving. There's a flash of silver, but Terumi grabs the arm and twists it, forcing SHIKI to drop the knife.



Terumi:

Now, why don't we look into that not-so-tightly screwed-on head of yours and see where the troubles **REALLY** began? Let's expose just how much of a pathetic bitch you really are!

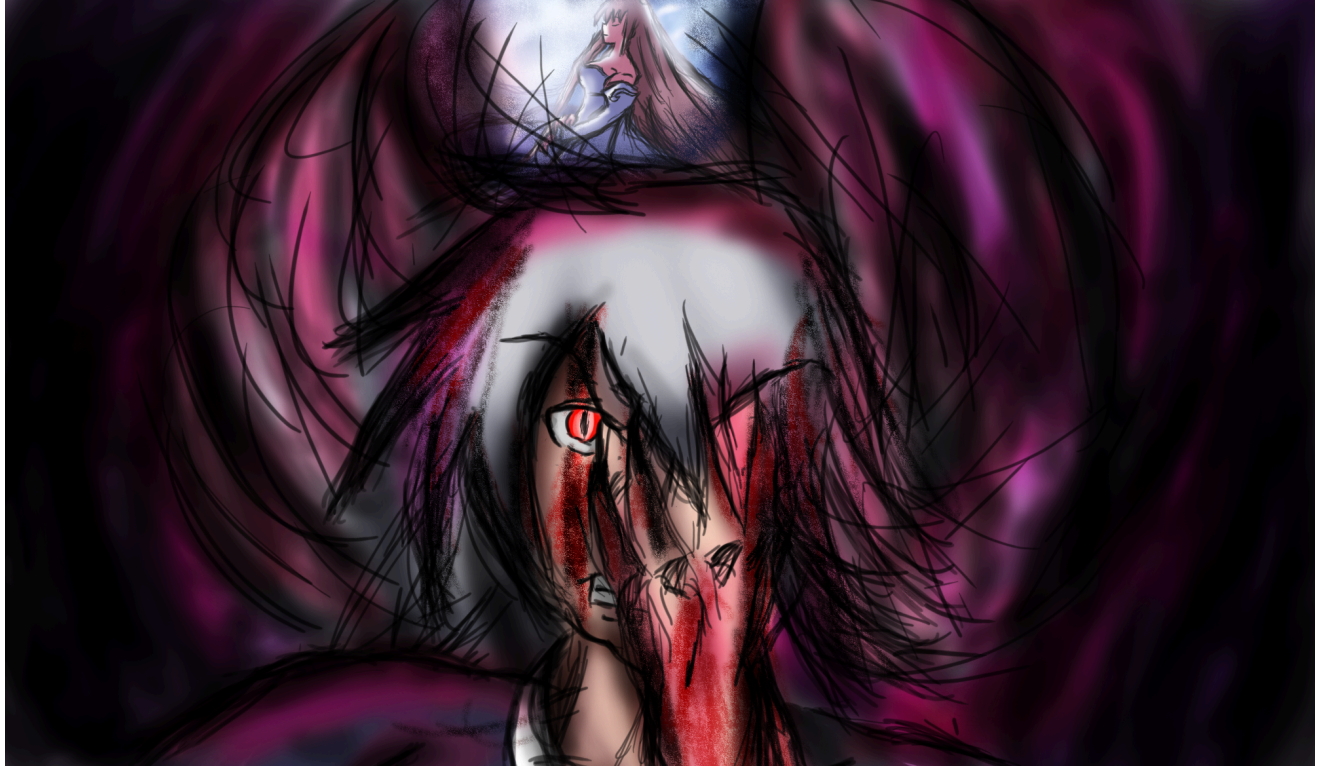
Ouroboros' snake-like weight opens its "jaws" and clamps down on SHIKI. His vision goes inverted before fading to black as memories of his past flash before him.

Memories of a past *not of his own* float to the surface. SHIKI sees multiple people in church-like outfits, though can't make out their faces, being just too obscured in shadows to make out. One name slowly comes to surface though, one he's sure he hasn't heard himself, but at the same time is familiar with: *Narbareck*. Despite not being able to clearly make out their looks, SHIKI senses that all of them were extremely powerful. For some reason he can't explain, he feels like he would be the target of these figures if they found out about his endeavors among the Tohno Mansion.

More memories quickly spring forth. This time, SHIKI sees images of creatures with blood red eyes, much like his own. He and the people in the church robes from the previous memory fight against these beings countless times. However, some of these battles stick out. Among these creatures, many of them meet the receiving end of bladed black keys without much effort. The ones that fight back, however, possessed power of unimaginable heights. These creatures... the *Dead Apostle Ancestors*. Through the current onslaught of memories, just the name alone tells SHIKI they aren't meant to be taken lightly, hence why the church clothed people were the adversaries to these monsters.

Another memory. This time, of many, *many* hours spent researching *something*. Reincarnation. The soul. Transfer. Immortality. *The Root*. Until finally, he feels like he's found the answer he'd been searching for. The memories shift again, and suddenly, SHIKI is face to face with a blonde, red eyed woman in an outfit befit a princess. Before he can say anything, she seizes hold of his shoulders and viciously bites down into his neck. Pain engulfing his body, SHIKI tries to shake her off, but he can't so much as budge her. His vision slowly fading away, SHIKI thinks about the irony of this situation, considering the people he himself had drunk blood from.





SHIKI:  
Ngh...

SHIKI grits his teeth, his white hair briefly turning black before fading to normal.

SHIKI:  
*(clenched teeth)*  
That's... enough...

His eyes open as sparks of electricity start to course around him, slowly at first, but gradually building up.

SHIKI:  
*(furiously)*  
Get the hell out of my HEAD!

With this enraged roar, a barrier of electricity suddenly erupts from SHIKI's body, causing Terumi to scream as he's blown back. The intense, paralyzing pain spreads across Terumi's body as a strange ghost-like form briefly flashes from within. Despite the pain, he quickly lands on his feet, his hand resting against his hood. He looks up at SHIKI, but the white-haired psycho disappears before his eyes. Terumi's eyes widen in shock before he senses something behind him. His gaze shifts to his right to see SHIKI lifting his knife overhead. SHIKI swings the blade in an

overhead arc, but Terumi ducks under it. Spinning toward him, Terumi performs a sweeping slash that misses as SHIKI leaps into the air.

Terumi lunges after him with both knives in hand, striking as swiftly as a cobra, but SHIKI blocks it with own blade. After glaring into each other's eyes, the two men begin pushing themselves. Their movements become imperceptible to the naked eye, moving so quickly they seem to be teleporting across the cathedral. Swift cuts and wild slashes fly through the air, yet none of them are able to hit their mark. Trying to turn the tides in his favor, Terumi uses the knife in his boot and unleashes an axe kick, but SHIKI seizes the flat of his boot.

**CRUNCH!**

A sharp twist snaps Terumi's ankle, making him let out a muttered curse before SHIKI flings him into the air. Terumi flies higher and higher, but he backflips in the middle of it to ensure he lands on the ceiling. Before gravity can even start to affect him, Terumi bursts toward him, now coated in a green, snake-like aura. The snake-like aura bites down as Terumi seems to phase past SHIKI, hitting him so hard that the vampire bounces into the air. He then lunges forward, throwing a seithr-infused upward swing that drags SHIKI even higher before slamming him into the ground. Chuckling, Terumi then lifts SHIKI's chin with his boot before quickly following up with a flash kick.

SHIKI groans as he's sent flying, but he suddenly stops in midair as a series of green chains wrap around him. After tightly ensnaring him, Terumi swings Ouroboros' chains, slamming him into one of the cathedral's walls. He then throws SHIKI to the other side, slamming him through a pillar before dragging him diagonally into the floor and out of the wall! SHIKI gets smashed into the first floor, his teeth clenching in pain before Terumi quickly reels him forward.

Terumi's lips split into a wicked grin as he watches SHIKI race toward him, raising his leg to plant his boot firmly into SHIKI's solar plexus. But right as he's about to, SHIKI swings his arm, unleashing a wide slash with his knife. Terumi leans back, feeling the air rush past him before SHIKI follows up with a sweep kick, sending Terumi to the ground. Regaining his own balance, SHIKI flashes Terumi a grin before thrusting his knife forward, ready to plunge it right into his chest! Terumi's response is just as quick as he rolls out of the way, watching as SHIKI's knife leaves cracks in the tiles.

Terumi:  
Not bad. You almost had me there!

Keeping a firm grip on Ouroboros, Terumi throws out an upward hooking slash, digging into SHIKI's side before ripping out of his stomach. An infuriated look spreads across SHIKI's face as he swings his knife toward Terumi's face, but the hooded man delivers a second swing, using Ouroboros' sharp edge to sever SHIKI's arm and rake it across his chest.

Terumi:

It's a shame you're just too damn slow!

Terumi charges into SHIKI as a pair of seithr snake constructs envelop his arms, using them to grab SHIKI by the collar and lift him into the air. A strange green energy spreads through the constructs, rapidly pumping SHIKI with dose after dose of a strange, searing hot energy.

Terumi:  
*(mockingly)*  
Awww, can't get enough?!

The energy then doubles in intensity, injecting into SHIKI faster by the second until it eventually overflows.

**BOOM!**

An explosion of green and black ruptures out, causing SHIKI to howl in pain as he's sent flying into the air.

Terumi:  
Hey, no tapping out now! The fun's just getting started!

As he says these words, Terumi launches two chains and has their weights clamp down on SHIKI. Pulling himself forward, the Black Susano'o lands a hard, energy-infused kick to the stomach before landing behind SHIKI, at which point he reels himself back in and quickly slices SHIKI across the back. Using the chains as leverage, Terumi swings around the battlefield, striking SHIKI with kicks and slashes from all angles, while SHIKI can seemingly do nothing about it.

Upon reaching the height of their ascension, Terumi repositions himself in midair so that he's directly above SHIKI, but this is exactly what SHIKI's been waiting for. Throwing one arm into the air, the vampire calls down a bolt of lightning from the heavens, the electricity slamming through the cathedral's rooftop and striking Terumi with impunity!

Terumi:  
AAAUUURRGGH!

Pain sears through his body, followed by an intense, seething anger.

Terumi:  
HHHRRRAAAAGH!

A furious roar escapes Terumi's lips as he dives down, his body coated in a black, snake-shaped aura. As his opponent closes in, SHIKI keeps his arm outstretched, firing off an enormous wave of lightning! Millions of volts roll through Terumi's body, filling him with an

intense, numbing pain. Still he continues his descent, ready to slam this damned vampire into the dirt!

But as he's closing in, he notices the stump on SHIKI's arm. Blood is still spilling out of it, but it's now taken on a shape of its own: an enormous, long blade. Before Terumi even has time to think of a counter, he barrels right into the blade's path, allowing SHIKI to land a critical hit!

Terumi's pupils shrink as the blood sword runs him through, the momentum of his own attack forcing it in even deeper. His seithr-covered body slams into SHIKI's, sending them careening into the cathedral floor.

**THOOM!**

A massive explosion of debris and dust covers the area as they hit the ground, but SHIKI recovers quickly, lifting Terumi into the air with his sword. The blade gets dragged even higher, reaching from the stomach to the solar plexus, and Terumi clenches his opponent's arm, glaring hatefully at him as his appearance is obscured by the dust. However, once it clears, he can immediately tell something is off.



The man who's now holding the blade looks completely different from the one he's been fighting. His hair is shoulder-length and black, and his clothes have switched to an open, white dress shirt and black pants.

With an arrogant smirk, **Michael Roa** casually flings Terumi to the side, watching in amusement as his opponent lands in a crumpled heap. Terumi groans as he gets back to his feet, dusting himself off before glaring at Michael.

Roa:

*(chuckling)*

Pardon for the rude welcome. I have you to thank for reminding me.

Terumi:

*(scoffs dismissively)*

You're welcome. Maybe now you'll actually put up a fight!

After flipping his knives at his hands, he uses one of them to give a taunting "come on" gesture.

Terumi:

Come on, old man! Show me what you've got!

Rushing in, Terumi threw out a wild swing of his knives, ready to feel their tips tear through Roa's skin. His anticipation morphs into confusion as he hears a metallic *CLANG*, followed by an opposing force pushing him back. A bemused scoff escapes his lips before he heads back in, mixing wild swings with wide, sweeping kicks, but each time his opponent manages to keep up.

Whether he's blocking with these strange silver blurs or mirroring Terumi's own movements, Roa's ensuring that his sadistic opponent won't get the chance to overpower him.



Intrigued, Terumi doubles down, with their clashes growing more intense and picking up in speed before an X-shaped, seithr infused slash collides with Roa's own weapon. As the butterfly knives grind against opposing steel, Terumi finally gets a look at what Michael's been using to fend him off: a series of long, slender blades. Weapons originally used by the Burial Agency, the Black Keys.

Terumi:  
(*smiles*)

So you decided to take a page out of my book, huh? Sorry, pal, but I don't approve of copycats.

Roa:  
(*scoffs*)

Please! I've been doing this for far longer than you. And besides...

Quicker than Terumi can react, Michael breaks their blade lock and uses an underhanded thrust, impaling him through the stomach hard enough that he's actually sent skidding back.

Roa:  
(*smirking*)

You'll find that these have a few more tricks than your average knife.

The stained glass windows surrounding them shatter as a murder of crows fly in, each one swarming around Terumi and pecking or clawing at him violently. Terumi's screams and protests can be heard, albeit muffled by the smothering blackness surrounding him.

Terumi:  
Ow! Goddammit, cut that shit out! That hurts. SERIOUSLY! What the FU-

The sounds of cawing and tearing flesh each through the cathedral halls before Terumi screams in rage as an explosion of seithr erupts from his body, vaporizing some crows and scattering the rest. They soon regroup and head back in, but Terumi leaps into the air, his wounds already healing. The irate sadist swings his arms and unleashes a barrage of snake constructs, devouring or destroying the crows upon contact.

With his numbers thinning out, Roa leaps after Terumi, who prepares to slam him back to the ground with an Agonizing Fang. Right as it's about to make contact, the Dead Apostle spins through the air, coating his body in an aura of lightning. Outstretched arms batter Terumi as electricity rolls through his body, and as Roa's trip comes to an end, he grabs Terumi by the coat and throws him to the ground. With swift recovery time, Terumi backflips in midair, his boots skidding across the ground as he plants his palm flat against the floor. Looking up, he sees some sort of orb appear behind Roa, which immediately sends a bolt in Terumi's direction. Terumi smirks as a green portal appears underneath, and from it a den of black and green serpents race out. Each one travels in a corkscrewing pattern to avoid the electricity, which responds by firing at machine gun like speeds. Unfortunately, Terumi's summons prove too

much as they quickly overwhelm Roa, tearing out chunks of the vampire's flesh. When the last of the snakes fade, Roa's body collapses helplessly onto the ground, landing in a pool of his own blood.

The sound of footsteps and chained links clanking together fills Michael's ears, and he tilts his head up to find Terumi casually strolling toward him, absentmindedly twirling Ouroboros in his hands.

Terumi:

Well, doesn't *this* look familiar? I guess no matter what form you take, it's the same outcome either way. Laying there on all fours, just waiting for that dead body to finally give out!

Immediately recognizing the serpent's intentions, Roa doesn't let the words bother him save for a momentary annoyed twitch. Still deciding to play his game, Roa tests his response by throwing a needle. The projectile sails past as Terumi leaps over, landing right behind Michael.

Terumi:

Over here!

Ouroboros' chains suddenly wrap around Roa, and Terumi pulls as hard as he can to squeeze them tight.

Terumi:

Now die!

The chains clench shut, ripping into Michael's body and spilling blood out of the deep, X-shaped gash in his chest. Terumi grins as he hears Roa's screams, but when he looks back, his opponent's body instantly fades away.

Terumi:

*(confused and annoyed)*

An illusion? Are you shitting me?

He receives his answer as a sharp piercing sensation stabs into him from behind. The perpetrator? Roa, now armed with another Black Key. With two of the sabers jammed into his opponent's shoulder blades, Roa's lips spread into a mocking grin.

Roa:

Let me assure you, *this* pain is all too real.

With each word he speaks, the intense pain in Terumi's back becomes sharper, even burning.

Terumi:

GGGYYYAAAHHH!

In an instant, Terumi's body is set ablaze by the Cremation Rite, every inch of him now engulfed in an orange inferno. As his opponent burns, Roa nonchalantly kicks him in the back, ripping him off the Black Keys and sending him rolling along the ground. The fire continues burning for several seconds before it slowly extinguishes, allowing Terumi to let out a low, audible groan. His skin is now horribly burned, his clothes have been charred, and smoke can be seen curling off both.

Despite the pain coursing through his body Terumi rises to his feet, swaying drunkenly from side to side as he watches Roa. He locks eyes with the vampire, who licks the blood from his swords before flashing a grin.

Roa:

Your blood... there's something different about its taste. Far more ancient.

Terumi:

And I bet yours tastes like shit.

A manic grin spreads across his face as the shape of a black incorporeal snake wraps around him.

The enshrouded serpent throws itself at Roa, whose body transforms into a bolt of lightning as he responds in kind. Electricity and seithr meet in the middle, their collision an explosive clash of black and purple that spreads shockwaves, yet neither one backs down. Even as the force pushes them back, Terumi plants his feet against a nearby wall and leaps toward Roa, whose body once again morphs into lightning. Terumi spawns his snake-like aura once more as it closes in. It bites down on the lightning, only to hit thin air as its target flies away.

The Gleaming Fang lunges again and again, trying to devour its target, but Roa narrowly slips from its grasp each time. With each dodge Roa's Thunder Flash gets faster, and soon he's moving so quickly that even Terumi can't track his movements! All he can feel is the lightning hitting him from all sides as it races past, and this only pisses him off!

As his opponent surges directly overhead, Terumi leaps after him, having his snake construct unhinge its jaw and swallow the bolt in one bite. Its jaws clamp down in satisfaction, but the victory is quickly ripped away. With wide open arms, Michael incinerates his seithr-based prison and unleashes hell on Terumi with a stream of three massive bolts. The Black Susano'o can do nothing but yell in pained frustration as the lightning amplifies his fall, making him fall like a lead weight.

Terumi's impact shatters the tiled floor for an entire mile, but he quickly shakes it off and gets back up, hearing his back pop a few times.

Terumi:



*(pained, then irritated)*

Ugh... speedy little bastard, aren't ya? Kehehe...

As he says this, Roa drops down a few feet away, eyeing Terumi with amused interest. Terumi returns the gaze with a sly smirk.

Terumi:

Alright, grandpa, you've had your fun. Now let's get you back **six feet under where you belong!**

He removes his hands from his pockets, revealing the snake-like weights of Ouroboros in his grip.

Terumi:

Unholy Wrath...

With lightning fast movements, Terumi throws both chains at Roa's feet, tightly ensnaring him.

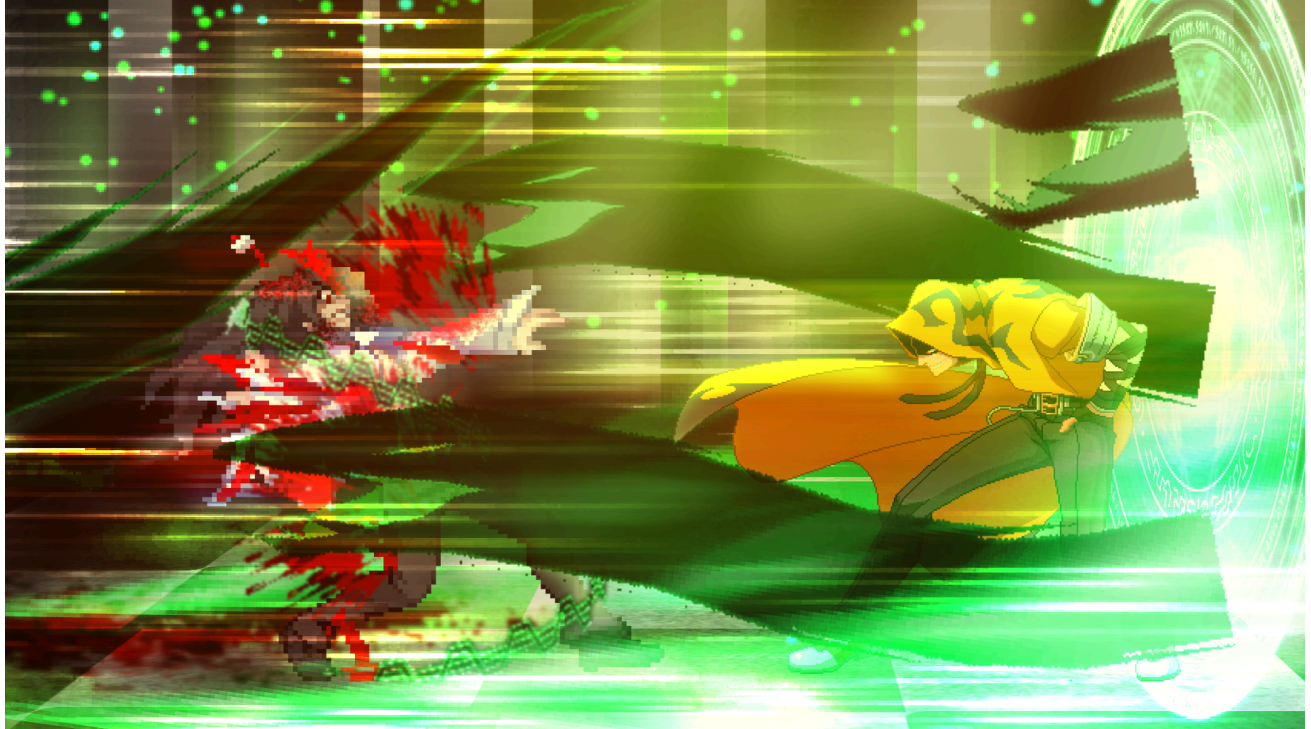
Terumi:

...of the Basilisk!

He then leans forward as a massive green portal opens behind him. From this portal emerges dozens of dark green snake constructs, each one flying towards Roa at high speeds from different angles. The constructs barrel into Michael, ripping chunks out of the Dead Apostle's body as Terumi cackles.

Terumi:

*Hehe... hehehehe hyahahaha!!*



But even as each snake tears into him, Michael grits his teeth. The Curse of Restoration regenerates whatever pieces of his body were ripped away, and as the assault goes on, Terumi takes notice.

Terumi:

*(intrigued, grinning)*

Well, would you look at that? Another shitty vampire that doesn't know when he should just stay dead!

Black and green smoke suddenly covers Terumi's entire body.

Terumi:

*(distorted)*

Let me put you to rest...

The smoke fades away to reveal Terumi's body now resembling a pitch black suit of armor with green highlights and summoning a long sword made of energy.

Terumi:

...as you witness the sword of a god!

Terumi reels his arm back, ready to deal a finishing blow, but Roa proves quicker on the draw. With a swift flick of his arm he sends a bolt of lightning directly into Terumi's chest, causing him to howl in pain as his body fades back to normal.

Taking advantage of his opponent's brief paralysis, Roa triumphantly lifts one arm directly into the air. Three purple circles suddenly wrap around Terumi and drag him into the air.

Terumi:  
*(strained, through clenched teeth)*  
What the hell is this?

Roa:  
*(smirking)*  
*Kukuku..... you're not a god. You're merely an eyesore, a disappointing eyesore that will be purified in **the name of the fourth gospel!***

As Michael replies four spinning runic circles slowly fade in around Terumi, and when he's right in the middle, a purple light shines down from the heavens, surrounding the hooded man. A split second later, each of the runic circles consecutively unleash massive bolts of lightning from different angles. Terumi's screams of pain grow louder with each bolt that hits him.



Once the last bolt has faded, Terumi is nowhere to be seen, his entire body having been vaporized by the barrage of lightning.

Roa:  
For the sword of a god, I expected more.

Terumi:

*(echoing)*

Then let's try that again, shall we?

Roa's eyes widen and he looks around, trying to figure out where that disembodied voice is coming from. Static briefly overtakes his vision as the world around him flickers black and white. A strange, monochrome specter appears some distance away, and when the color snaps back to normal, streams of green and black energy begin radiating off of the ghostly being. After a few seconds the ghost's form solidifies into the familiar shape of Yuki Terumi, having survived the Heavenly Crashing Thunder via a last second self-Observation.

But even with this sudden revival, Terumi's condition is anything but prime. He's hunched over, sweat pouring down his forehead as he breathes heavily, yet he still manages an amused chuckle.

Terumi:

Ya know, it was a real pain in the ass having to come back from that.

He straightens his posture, takes a more relaxed pose, and grins.

Terumi:

But now that I'm back in my own body, let me show you what you so rudely interrupted last time!

A pool of black energy spawns beneath Terumi's feet, and from its depths emerges a pristine white suit of armor. As the Susano'o Unit rises to full height, Terumi theatrically spreads his arms.

Terumi:

Get ready, Mr. Vampire, because your undead ass is about to witness something it couldn't imagine in a million years!

Terumi and the Susano'o Unit are engulfed in shadow as they merge into one, and as the darkness fades, a tall figure in black armor can be seen standing at full height, [his ass not even touching the ground](#).

Susano'o:

This is the birth of a god!

Roa:

*(whistles)*

Ha... hahaha... HAHAHAHAHAAAA! So this is how it feels!

After madly laughing at the armored visage of his now godly opponent, Roa can't help but stare in awe at Susano'o.

Roa:

*(thinking)*

The last time I felt like *this* was with the princess.

*(grins, then speaks aloud)*

Come then! Let's see if you can end me this time, stubborn god! Let's tear each other apart!

Susano'o:

So eager to meet your end... Very well, Dead Apostle! Let's see how much you can stand!

Susano'o begins rushing towards Roa, with the vampire sensing waves of death and malice coming forth from his foe, now even stronger than before. Grinning, Roa quickly turns into a bolt of lightning and races towards his opponent.

The two meet in a violent collision, creating a shockwave that briefly forces them away from each other.

Roa:

*(frowning, shaking his head)*

This power... you rival even the True Ancestors from the ancient times. However...

Coating his body in another layer of electricity, Roa adapts a fighting stance, left arm extended outwards, with his right hovering just off the side of his chin.

Roa:

*(smiling venomously)*

You challenge one who rose to the top as the strongest Dead Apostle Ancestor!

Roa leaps forth, spinning, and launches a roadhouse kick towards Susano'o. Despite his build and size, Susano'o reacts quickly, catching the leg in his right hand. Immediately, he's assailed by volts of electricity shooting through his body, but he holds fast this time. Tightening his grip, he tosses Roa towards the ceiling of the cathedral. Reorienting himself a nanosecond before he could make contact with the ceiling, Roa immediately transforms into lightning again, racing back down towards Susano'o. Just before he reached him, Susano'o disappeared. Halting his descent, Roa morphed back into his human body, and looked around.

Roa:

*(Confused)*

Wha-



Suddenly, a giant fist connects with his face, and he's sent shooting towards the wall, where he creates a giant fissure in it upon crashing into it, cracks spreading across all walls of the building they were occupying. Dazed, he looks up, and sees Susano'o, who had suddenly reappeared out of nowhere.

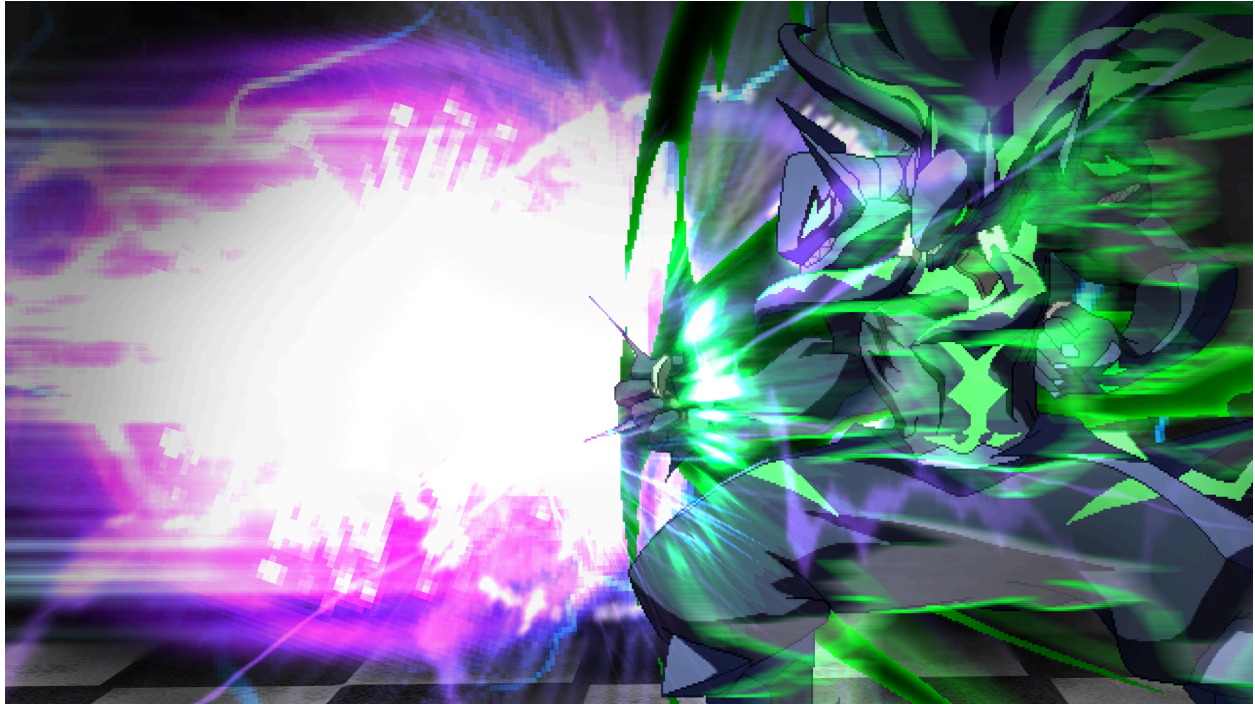
Roa:  
(murmuring)

Teleportation, is it? Uncommon among Magecraft in this time.

The god once again barrels towards Roa, who immediately responds with a quick snap of his fingers. Suddenly, mist fills the spot he was standing at, and Susano'o, caught unawares, is engulfed by it after closing the distance. He swings his massive fists around, punching this way and that, trying to find the sneaky bastard, but none of his punches connect. Out of nowhere, the now all too familiar powerful volts of electricity course through his body again. Now more pissed than he'd felt in eons, Susano'o looks around as the mist now begins to fade, searching for his quarry. He spots Roa deftly running along the walls, who had evaded the deity at the last second just before he ran into the mist, and, after leaping backwards on to the wall behind himself and getting his footing to run across them, had retaliated by firing a particularly strong blast of electricity at the monochrome figure. Sensing he'd been spotted, Roa flips off the wall, twirling three times before landing upright, just over a handful of feet separating the two.

Michael theatrically spreads his arms, conjuring a volley of enormous balls of electricity, each one large enough to completely engulf Susano'o. He then points at his opponent, sending the

ball lightning forth one by one. Each blast hurtles toward Susano'o at the speed of lightning, but the god of storms leaps out of their range or swiftly dodges, leaving massive impact craters and trails of green fire. But even with this artful dodging, one of Roa's balls still manages to get dangerously close, threatening to consume its target. Seeing no other choice, Susano'o stretches his arm toward the ball, feeling the volts surge across his hand before violently clenching his fist.



Shockwaves of green and black explode from Susano'o's fist, dispersing the final ball in its entirety. As the electricity disperses and fizzles out, the god immediately lunges toward Roa, grabbing the Dead Apostle by his head. The two fly across the room for some distance before Susano'o **SLAMS** Roa into the nearest wall. The impact creates a spider web of cracks a microsecond before an enormous wave of green and black seithr erupts around them.

The floor and walls are instantly eroded as Roa gets launched through the wall, bits of rubble trailing around him as he flies. He slowly hits the ground, feeling his skin grind against the stone floor, but he doesn't even have the chance to come to a halt.

Susano'o:  
Your time is at an end, vampire.

All of a sudden, Susano'o unleashes a hard kick, creating a pillar of energy that launches Roa into the air. Susano'o leaps after him, spinning and covered in green and black energy before grabbing Roa by the face. They drop from above, slamming him into the ground hard. The floor around them instantly crumbles, and both god and apostle fall into the pitch-black depths below.

Pain spreads across Roa's body as Susano'o slams him into a hard metal surface, unleashing a massive pillar of energy that ravages his body, but their impact also brings another sensation.

The dark room around them is suddenly illuminated by an orange light, dim at first but slowly growing in intensity. An orchestra of groaning metal can be heard around them, and as it grows louder, the subtle change in temperature steadily rises until it feels like a blazing inferno.

As the fires of the cauldron roar around them, Roa can feel his body starting to grow weak.

There's a strange sensation in the air, almost like another form of energy, and he can see Susano'o's body is reacting to the change as well. But rather than choking him and making him weaker, Susano'o's body seems to be empowered by it. The green highlights on his armor start to glow, and Susano'o can feel his strength rising as he lifts Michael into the air.

Susano'o:

Enjoying the heat, apostle? That is but a taste of what awaits you in the netherworld.

Opening his hand, a long sword of green and black energy appears in Susano'o's grip.

Susano'o:

Allow me to send you there personally!

Tossing him into the air, the deity unleashes a savage horizontal slash. His sword cleaves straight through Roa, splitting him by the waist. His bisected torso falls onto the metal floor, but this doesn't seem to bother him.

Roa:

*(grinning)*

Stronger than you have tried!

The Curse of Restoration kicks in, already restoring his lower half. Pushing himself back to his feet, he flashes a mad smile at Susano'o.

Roa:

Give it your worst! I'll just keep coming back!

Still feeling his strength waning from the cauldron, Roa slowly raises his right arm forward. A blue magical crest forms beneath him. Susano'o senses the sudden change in the air. It's almost as if...the cathedral had become *a part of the vampire himself*. The Bounded Field now activated, the destruction caused to the cathedral by both parties steadily begins to repair itself, the rubble and now wrecked ceiling rising into the air to fix themselves back into their original places. In moments, it looks as if no grand fight had ever taken place, the cathedral looking as pristine as ever.

Roa:



*(smiling)*

So, how do you like my lair? Within these walls, anything that's been destroyed will return to its original state before the point of destruction. Should also even the playing field against whatever magic you're using to drain away my power.

At first, Susano'o doesn't know what the bastard meant by that particular last line, but after a pause, he senses his own energy depleting, the cathedral rapidly depleting his power. Thanks to the cauldron empowering him still, this isn't too much of an issue, but knowing the Dead Apostle still had more tricks up his sleeve infuriates him. Both are essentially locked into a stalemate, Susano'o getting fed power by the nearby cauldron, and Roa feeding off of Susano'o's rapidly increasing energy. This, however, will not last long.

Roa:

*(thinking to himself)*

Already, I can feel whatever he's using to suck away at my magical energy losing effectiveness thanks to my current host's innate ability to negate whatever has affected him. Not like he needs to know that though. Still, just got to hold out a bit longer, then it should be rendered obsolete entirely.

Susano'o:

*(shakes head, then scoffs)*

Even in the face of death, you can't escape your true nature. Leeching off the power of others to fuel your own meager strength.

He clenches his fist, then continues angrily.

Susano'o:

Still, that you would *dare* turn this power on a god... such an offense cannot be overlooked.

With the green of his armor still glowing, the savage deity enters a fighting stance.

Susano'o:

Know this, Michael Roa: you can regenerate your body and your fortress as much as you'd like, but before me, it is nothing more than a minor setback. In fact, that will just make it all sweeter when this shrine to your arrogance finally crumbles!

Roa:

*(entering his own fighting stance)*

This power of the "gods" you keep boasting about is still futile against the strongest Dead Apostle, which you'll find out very shortly!

Susano'o:

*(chuckles)*

I'll make sure you live up to that title.

Both Roa and Susano'o hold their stances for a moment, not moving. They sense that this charade that started at the upper level of the cathedral will soon reach its conclusion. One of them will not be leaving this underground area alive. The final bout is at hand. And then, at the same time, both leap towards each other.



Susano'o throws a massive front kick, to which Roa narrowly avoids by stepping to the side. Responding in kind, Roa goes for a sweeping leg kick, but Susano'o simply leaps backwards out of range. The instant he lands, Susano'o lunged forward with a punch to the gut, but Roa blocks it, doing the same when his opponent tries landing a kick to his side. With an angered yell, Susano'o spins back around, slamming into him with a seithr-infused axe kick. Though Roa manages to block it, the strength behind it is still enough to push him back. Not wasting this brief opportunity, Susano'o lunges toward Roa and unleashes a powerful double-handed palm thrust to the stomach. Michael spits up blood, and as he doubles over, Susano'o coats his body in energy and charges forward, slamming the vampire into the ground with a downward swing of his claw. The blow's strong enough that Roa was actually sent back into the air, his body spinning uncontrollably. Two hard, seithr-infused punches slam into him before Susano'o follows with a hard kick that ruptures the ground with a wave of seithr. The blast hits Roa in the stomach, causing him to reel back as he lands on his feet, staggering unevenly.

Seeking to continue his combo, Susano'o leaps through the air and spins toward Roa, his body still coated in that green and black energy. Hoping to put a stop to it, Roa jumps toward him, coating his body in electricity as he spins through the air. The electricity shocks Susano'o, but he pushes through the pain and continues forward, dragging Michael back to the ground and shredding his body before landing with a powerful *THOOM!*

Upon impact, a pillar of seithr erupts where Susano'o's leg hit the ground, blasting Roa skyward. But rather than give his opponent the chance to continue, the Dead Apostle corrects his course and spawns several pink orbs both behind himself and around his opponent. With a flick of his wrist, numerous bolts of lightning surge toward Susano'o, approaching him from every possible angle. The god of destruction responds with a furious roar as he slams his hand into the ground, causing spikes of energy and chunks of rubble to blast out of the floor. This last second defense completely nullifies Michael's strategy, yet he's completely unphased as he watches the bolts disperse. Even when Susano'o emerges from the smoke and comes barreling toward him, he shows no signs of worry. If anything, it only seems to excite him!

By now, the weakening effect of the cauldron had disappeared, SHIKI's adaptation having finally managed to nullify it. Feeling reinvigorated, Roa locks eyes with the approaching Susano'o.

A wicked backhand strikes Roa across the face, sending him hurtling through the air. As he comes back down, Susano'o slashes against Roa's chest before slamming his hand into the ground, conjuring spikes of energy that run his opponent through. Susano'o unleashes a powerful kick that Roa barely manages to block, and as the force pushes him back, Susano'o jumps into the air, his body a spinning vortex of razor-sharp green and black energy. The spindash tears into Roa's arms, ripping into skin and spilling copious amounts of blood, which only intensifies when Susano'o lands and creates a pillar of energy that burns away at his skin. The pillar doesn't even have time to disperse before Susano'o charges toward Roa, coated in an aura of energy as he slams into the vampire multiple times. The deity throws a high kick, conjuring another pillar set to launch Roa again, but it's intercepted by a pink orb. The energy springs to life for only a millisecond before a bolt of lightning smites it from existence.

With a grin, Roa extends his arm and fires a wide arc of lightning, but Susano'o responds in kind, clenching his fist and unleashing shockwaves that send them right back. Roa groans as his body is bombarded by the electricity, but he remains focused enough to see Susano'o lunging toward him. The god attempts to hit Roa with a lariat, but this only succeeds in getting him electrocuted upon contact. Susano'o grits his teeth as he tries to push through the pain, only for it to grow as the blood around him coagulates into intricate spikes and blades.

Susano'o:  
I grow tired of these games!

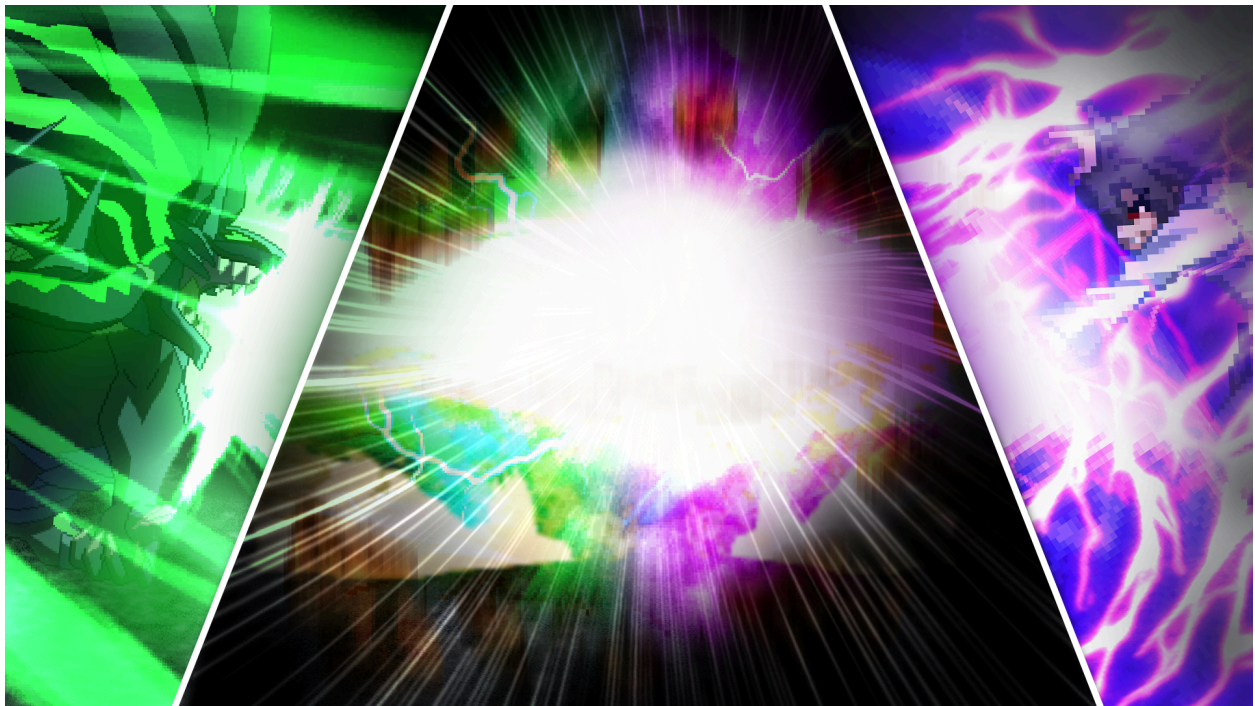
Summoning a green and black sword, Susano'o unleashes a hard swing that cleaves through the blood constructs. The blood doesn't even have time to splatter against the ground before Roa sends out a volley of Black Keys. Each one strikes a vital part of the body, and in an instant Susano'o's armored form is turned to stone! Michael grins victoriously, but this expression is quickly wiped away as Susano'o shatters the Interment Rite with a flex of his muscles!

Susano'o:  
Your struggles are in vain, Apostle! Accept your fate!

Reeling back, the green on Susano'o's armor begins glowing brighter than ever before, turning almost white. He opens his mouth, energy rapidly building within his armored jaws.

Susano'o:  
**EAT SHIT AND DIE!**

The god of destruction fires an enormous beam of green energy, its height nearly as large as his own. It races toward Roa at intense speeds, melting the metal beneath it to slag and seemingly unopposed in incinerating its vampiric target. In fact, Roa didn't even seem phased by the oncoming threat, only giving an amused smirk before countering with a blast of his own.



It's far larger than anything he had conjured thus far, and even his previous bolts combined aren't enough to match the sheer power he's now outputting. Electricity and otherworldly energy clash in a blinding mess of violet and green as they vie for dominance, but the winner soon becomes clear as Michael's lightning consumes both the beam and Susano'o himself!

Susano'o:  
RRRAAAGGGGHHHH!

The entire room is covered in a blinding white flash, and as it fades, Susano'o can be seen hunched over and breathing heavily. His armor is now somewhat burned, and short arcs of electricity are briefly surging out of his body. A heavy groan escapes his gritted teeth as he struggles to remain on his unsteady feet. Even with the boost from being this close to the cauldron, he can feel his stamina slowly draining, a process only made worse by the Bounded

Field's effects. But even with all this against him, Susano'o still manages to dodge the next barrage of Black Keys. Unfortunately, they still hit a target: his shadow.

Unaware of what this entails, Susano'o rushes toward Roa, but this burst of strength comes to a screeching halt when he... stops. He hasn't even moved a meter before his legs seemingly shut down. It's like he's completely paralyzed.

Susano'o:

*(furious)*

WHAT?! What trickery is this?

Roa:

*(chuckles)*

What's wrong? Surely that **godly strength** of yours can overcome a mere shadow binding?

As he taunts him, Roa gets in close, dodging Susano'o's savage blows and countering with precise slashes. Susano'o groans in pain before raising his fists and slamming them into the ground. The Towering Flame explodes outward, only to miss entirely as Roa deftly jumps away.

Susano'o:

A minor trifle. Once I've freed myself from these depraved shackles, I'll let you bear witness-

Roa:

Yes, yes, I know already! *(grins)* All that godlike power, yet you spout the same crap like a broken record!

Roa begins blitzing around Susano'o, blasting him from afar with lightning or striking from unexpected angles.

Roa:

You can talk yourself up as much as you'd like! These eyes see the truth!

Numerous gashes form across Susano'o, tearing open his arms, legs, and stomach as he swings around, trying in vain to hit the speeding vampire.

Roa:

You're no god!

A particularly deep slash tears through Susano'o's faceplate, revealing the furious yellow eye of Yuki Terumi.

Roa:

Just a madman with a bloated ego!

This insult really sets Susano'o off as he lunges forward, prepared to rake his claws across Roa's chest, but a quick slash severs his right arm. Howling in rage as he watches his opponent dart around him, the deity utters in a cold, seething voice.

Susano'o:

*(voice overlapping with Terumi's)*

Watch your tongue, worm! You don't know who you're speaking to!

Smirking at his opponent's fury, Roa spots a particular line on Susano'o's body and rushes forward, ready to sever it. Sensing the oncoming attack, Susano'o powers through the numerous gashes and blood spilling out of his body. He whirls around, landing a hard elbow strike to the stomach. Roa's eyes widen as he vomits blood.

Susano'o:

I am **might!**

With his remaining arm, Susano'o grabs Roa by the back of his head and slams him face-first into the ground.

Susano'o:

I am **power!**

A green burst of energy erupts from beneath him, sending the Dead Apostle flying back. But Susano'o isn't willing to let him escape.

Susano'o:

I am **EVERYTHING!** My very **being...**

Black energy courses through the air, radiating with a green aura as it solidifies into a sword.

Susano'o:

...is the sword of the god that shall destroy **all!**

With black and green energy swirling around him, Susano'o lifts his sword through the air.

Susano'o:

**I am Takehaya Susano'o! Your end has come!**

The god of destruction swings down with the Blade of Judgment, unleashing a chaotic and destructive series of slashes. The energy races toward Roa, who merely grins as his body is suddenly torn apart by the numerous slashes. The screen suddenly goes black before fading back in to reveal Susano'o standing triumphantly in the blackened, ruined battlefield, its terrain now covered in black and green flames.



Roa:  
I'm afraid you're mistaken.

Susano'o:  
**HM?!**

Shock fills the god as he hears Roa's voice call out from behind him. He turns around, ready to unleash another slash, but Roa swings his arm, using a blood sword to cut through the "lines" in Susano'o's waist. Susano'o's sword disperses, and he lets out a groan as he falls to his knees. Before he can collapse, Roa grabs the armored deity by the neck and hoists him into the air, ripping Terumi right out of the armor.

Roa:  
Phew, that was close. If it wasn't a full moon, that would've been it.



Tossing the Susano'o armor to the side, Roa holds Terumi by the neck, whose lower half now lays discarded on the floor.

Roa:

*(smiling pitifully)*

Well, these games were certainly lively, but it's high time for the curtains to close. Any final words?

Terumi:

*(scowls)*

Tch... I never thought I'd go out like this. Losing to a vampire, it's enough to make me SICK! *(grins and briefly chuckles)* But I can't be TOO mad. At least I had some fun before I went out, and hey...

His smile widens as if he's trying not to burst out laughing.

Terumi:

For once someone actually had the balls to go through with killing me. I never thought I'd see the day! HeheheAHAHAHA-

Terumi's laughter is suddenly interrupted by a violent coughing fit that ends with him throwing up blood. Despite this, he still lets out a bit more laughter before looking at Roa.



Terumi:

Well, what are you waiting for? Come on! Don't keep me waiting!

Without a word, the smile that had been on Roa's face drops. From the darkest corners of the pit both had fallen into, shadows could be seen moving ever so slightly, gradually taking shape. Taking flight into the air, they came into view, and dark, snake-like beings with red lines across their bodies flew towards where the Dead Apostle held his helpless victim. They quickly swirl around both at rapid speeds, blocking out the light, and screams can be heard from Terumi for a handful of seconds, before dying down altogether. Dispersing just as quickly as they came,

Terumi is now nowhere to be seen, having been completely devoured by the serpentine creatures. Roa stands alone, his arm that had been holding Terumi earlier still raised in the air.

Letting it drop slowly, he looks around. Of course, due to the effects of his Bounded Field repairing all destruction caused by the two during their duel, and not even a piece of Terumi remaining, it looked as if nothing had ever happened. Shaking his head, Michael walks away.

Roa:

*(muttering)*

Well, first order of business is to rebuild my undead army since that guy managed to kill all of them. Maybe double the amount this time. The Church likely picked up on the ruckus here and will be arriving soon. The princess of True Ancestors will probably be accompanying them, too.

Still...

Looking back over his shoulder, Roa gives one last rueful smile.

Roa:

As much as I hate to admit it, *he did* rival the Gods during their glory days. Power of that magnitude is a rarity when the Age of Gods is a far gone era. He easily would've been mistaken for one had he been around then.

So saying, the Dead Apostle Ancestor disappears into the shadows of the pit. Before fading completely, his body flickers, and for just a second, his appearance changed yet again. His previously black hair was now light blond. The white shirt he had worn was now replaced with a dark cassock. And around his neck, he sported a golden cross necklace. Then that too, was soon obscured as the darkness swallowed him.

Outside, the moon shines brightly on the now quiet cathedral. And underneath that sky, standing atop a hill miles away, looking in the direction of the cathedral, stands a woman with short blond hair and blood red eyes. She's dressed in a long, purple skirt, long sleeve white shirt, and black boots. Her arms are currently crossed, and she has an annoyed look on her face. She'd sensed the entire fight that had taken course while patrolling for the undead; two very formidable beings vying for dominance for a good while. The presence of one was all too familiar, unfortunately. The other was definitely foreign, and felt just as malevolent and time immemorial as the other. Heading towards the location, she had waited atop a hill, head tilted,

unsure how to proceed. Finally, feeling the life of one flicker out, she had her answer. Giving a small sigh, she shakes her head.

Arcueid:  
(*annoyed*)

Tsk, and here I was hoping someone else could deal with Roa for a change. Guess it's back to our usual song and dance. Hopefully, I can wrap this up before Shiki finds out about this.

With a determined look, **Arcueid Brunestud** braces herself and leaps high into the sky, towards the lair of Michael Roa Valdamjong. Her silhouette vanishes into the high, overhanging clouds in seconds. The night was still young, and another fierce fight would soon occur.

