

High school

8

DxD

A DEMON'S WORK

ICHIEI
ISHIBUMI

ILLUSTRATION BY
Miyama-Zero

PARENTAL ADVISORY
WARNING
EXPLICIT CONTENT





Whaaaaaat?!

Slam!

High school

DXD

8

A DEMON'S WORK



Her enthralling
body stimulated
me all over!

I could see her
gorgeous
white thighs
through the
slit in her
gown! Her
legs truly were
beautiful!

"Unicorns only let down
their guard around
pure virgins."

The unicorn
approached
Akeno.



"...Issei?"

**I wrapped my
arms around the
prez from behind,
embracing her.
"I've never once
thought of you
as a failure."**

High School DxD

A DEMON'S WORK

8

ICHIEI ISHIBUMI

ILLUSTRATION BY
MIYAMA-ZERO


New York

Copyright



Volume 8

Ichiei Ishibumi

Translation by Haydn Trowell

Cover art by Miyama-Zero

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HIGH SCHOOL DXD Vol. 8 AKUMA NO OSHIGOTO

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First published in Japan in 2010 by KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo.

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New York, NY 10001

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First Yen On Edition: August 2022

Edited by Yen On Editorial: Jordan Blanco Designed by Yen Press Design: Andy Swist Yen On is an imprint of Yen Press, LLC.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Names: Ishibumi, Ichiei, 1981– author. | Miyama-Zero, illustrator. | Trowell, Haydn, translator.

Title: High school DxD / Ichiei Ishibumi ; illustration by Miyama-Zero ; translation by Haydn Trowell.

Other titles: Haisukūru Dī Dī. English Description: First Yen On edition. | New York, NY : Yen On, 2020.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020032159 | ISBN 9781975312251 (v. 1 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312275 (v. 2 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312299 (v. 3 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312312 (v. 4 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312336 (v. 5 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312350 (v. 6 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312374 (v. 7 ; trade paperback) | ISBN 9781975312398 (v. 8 ; trade paperback) Subjects: CYAC: Fantasy. | Demonology—Fiction. | Angels—Fiction. | High schools—Fiction. |

Schools—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.1.I836 Hi 2020 | DDC [Fic]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020032159>

ISBNs: 978-1-97531239-8 (paperback) 978-1-9753-1240-4 (ebook)

E3-20220624-JV-NF-ORI

CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Insert](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Epigraph](#)

[Life.1 A Demon's Work](#)

[Life.2 Gotta Catch a Familiar](#)

[Life.3 A Memory of Breasts](#)

[Life.4 The Breasts of Tennis](#)

[Life.5 Hell Teacher Azazel](#)

[Life.6 Three Hundred Isseis](#)

[Strategy 1: Fishing](#)

[Strategy 2: Seduction](#)

[Strategy 3: Intimidation from the Governor of the Fallen Angels](#)

[Extra Life The Wonderful House of Gremory](#)

[Afterword](#)

[Original Publication List](#)

Before Reading!

Continuity discrepancies may have arisen between the main narrative and these short stories since they were first serialized.

Furthermore, this collection features an excessively high usage of the word *breasts*. Please keep it out of the hands of small children.

Life.1

A Demon's Work

This may sound like a strange thing to admit, but I had no idea what to do with the two objects sitting directly in front of me.

I was staring at a pair of tits.

Yep, you heard me right. They were most definitely breasts. Two perfectly round, exquisitely soft boobs. And they were staring right back at me.

Should I suck on them...?

First, let me explain how I found myself in this situation.

I had been sent to the infirmary after feeling unwell during PE class. Unfortunately, the school nurse was out, so I decided to lie down on one of the beds to wait for her to return.

I guess I dozed off for a bit, because when I opened my eyes, those snow-white breasts were positioned directly before me.

I knew this chest well. I mean, to be fair, the only breasts I'd ever seen in person were my mother's and this person's. I glanced around, confirming the face of the young woman they belonged to.

"...Zzzzz..."

She was sound asleep—my crimson-haired, elder sister—like Prez.

Why was she resting beside me? And why was she naked?

Not only that, but her black demon wings were hanging down behind her back.

Prez...

Had she let down her guard when she fell asleep?

I'd found myself sharing a bed with the prez before, too. I won't go into the details here, but trust me, it happened.

She had been completely naked on that occasion as well. That beautiful scene was forever engraved in my memory, filed away for posterity.

Yep, saved forever in permanent storage! I brought it out every now and then to help quell my raging adolescence!

I would never have expected that this could happen again so soon... And the way she was positioned, it was like she was trying to hug my head in her sleep...

I could all but feel my nose brushing up against those wonderful breasts...

They were incredible! They felt so soft!

Dammit, I was tearing up! Such glorious treasures were positioned right in front of me, and I couldn't lift a finger to touch them!

Would I have to make do with nose contact only?!

It was at that moment that the prez silently opened her eyes.

"...Oh, Issei. Fuwahhhhh..." Her mouth opened in a wide yawn.

"...P-Prez, wh-what exactly...? Wh-why...?" My heart raced as I tried to order my thoughts and get out a question.

The prez wrapped her arms around my head, stroking it softly. "I was tired, so I thought I'd take a nap in the nurse's office. When I found you, I decided to intrude on your rest a little."

"I-intrude...?"

I didn't know how to respond. Wow! So that whole situation had unfolded while I had been asleep?!

"Did I bother you?"

"No! Not at all! You're the best! I—I don't really know how to put it!" Did she bother me?! No way! I was moved to tears! "B-but, I mean, isn't stripping naked, er, a little much? You know, for a nap?"

"I can't sleep with clothes on. And I need a pillow or a stuffed animal to hold to really feel at ease."

A p-pillow. A stuffed a-animal. So my head had served as a substitute for one of those. Frankly, that was totally cool with me!

The prez stared intently into my eyes.

Wh-what is it, Prez? I wondered nervously.

“...Issei. Do you like girls’ breasts?”

Without hesitation, I replied, “Yes! I love them!”

Obviously.

That was my honest opinion. On that one issue alone, I could tell no lie. I was the kind of high schooler who was fueled by erotic things.

At my response, the prez flashed me a demonic grin.

She brought her face up to my ears. Her crimson hair smelled good enough to melt my brain. And then, she dealt me a critical blow.

“Do you want to touch mine?”

—!

That had to be one of the top ten must-hear lines from a girl! Her whispering voice sent a mysterious energy coursing through my body.

I wanted to touch them! Fondle them! Suck on them! This was a dream come true for just about any guy!

My mind was doing somersaults, and the prez continued, “Then will you do something for me?”

“Of course!”

What was it?! I was ready for anything if the reward was touching the boobs of this great lady! Whatever her wish, I would grant it!

As my mind was adrift in lewd thoughts, the prez flashed me a grin. “Please try to secure a pact with a client.”





“We’re here!” Asia greeted everyone in a lively and energetic voice.

She and I had made our way straight to the clubroom after class.

“Oh dear. You’re early, Issei, Asia. Would you like some tea?” Akeno said with a warm and bright smile.

Ah, Akeno. I see you’ve put your lustrous black hair up in a ponytail today. And your bosom is just as large as ever.

“Please!”

No sooner did I give my lively reply than she began to fill the teapot with hot water. The rest of the club members were already present. The prez was seated in the back of the room, sipping from a cup.

“Hey, Koneko,” I said to the petite girl sitting in the corner.

“...Hi.”

Heh-heh-heh. If Akeno and Koneko were to team up with Asia and our school’s number one beauty, Rias, they would make the ultimate charming team. They would be invincible! The Occult Research Club was stocked to the brim with hotties! I could think of no greater workplace!

It was no exaggeration to say that my real reason for coming here was to hang out with them all! Ah, I was so glad I had become a fellow member! The atmosphere in the clubroom was so clean and delicious!

“Hi.”

Another person waved their hand...Kiba. That pretty boy and his refreshingly handsome face never failed to get on my nerves. That accursed guy was the archnemesis of every other male at school.

“Ah, yeah, hi,” I replied vacantly, not bothering to look Kiba’s way.

Tch. Damn pretty boy.

“It looks like we’re all here,” the prez stated. “In that case, let’s get started.”

We took our seats on the sofas by the table, with the crimson-haired prez naturally taking the head. And so, the day’s regular meeting of the Occult

Research Group got underway.



The meeting would continue until nightfall, but the first words to come out of the prez's mouth were: "I'll accompany Issei today in a supervisory role."

The Occult Research Club's activities were ostensibly just that, studying the occult here on campus. In short, we supposedly investigated ghosts, monsters, magic, and anything else like that.

In reality, though, what we actually did was quite different.

To begin with, we were all demons. When the sun set and darkness blanketed the world, our real work began.

A demon's job was to forge pacts with clients who summoned us through magic circles. We granted their wishes and took payment in return.

This remittance could take the form of money, material possessions, or sometimes even a life.

These days, few people went to the trouble of manually drawing a magic circle to call upon a demon. Instead, we handed out leaflets with pre-drawn arrays for them to use.

Anyway, back to the meeting. I still hadn't gotten the hang of typical demon work and had yet to make any tangible headway.

Truthfully, I hadn't secured a single pact... Ugh, I felt pathetic.

Oh, I was getting jobs. That wasn't an issue. Yet every single time, some inexplicable problem would arise before I made the pact, and thus my jobs always ended in failure.

Admittedly, I was getting along quite well with the people who summoned me... But seeing as a demon's whole purpose was to forge pacts, having a friendly rapport with clients was meaningless if I couldn't grant their wishes.

The prez was clearly worried about my lack of success in that department, which was why she had announced that she would be supervising me today.

To think that I was such a bother for her... What kind of man was I? Even I understood that I was a disappointment. Plus, all the people who summoned

me wound up being perverts or deviants.

At this rate, my dream of becoming a harem king would never come to fruition. Yeah, you heard me! I had to secure pacts left, right, and center to pull that off, racking up enough results that the Demon Kings would notice me and grant me a title of my own!

Once I became a high-class demon, I would recruit a horde of beautiful young women to serve me as my own Familia—my harem!

I endured a lot of hardship in pursuit of that goal... Reality sure could be cruel.

Dammit! I wanted to hold a girl in my arms, to live a life of joyful polygamy!

“...Vulgar thoughts are prohibited.”

Whoa!

Koneko was glaring at me out of the corners of her eyes. Apparently, she possessed some way of recognizing my perverted delusions.

She was usually so quiet and reserved, but every now and then, the words that came out of her mouth shocked me to my core.

“Ha-ha-ha, that’s a lecherous grin you’ve got there,” Kiba remarked coolly.

At that moment, something snapped inside me!

“Shut up! Kibaaaaa! Some of us can only enjoy popularity in our imaginations! The only place I get to do anything erotic is in my head! So leave me alone! Damn you! You think I don’t want to be a good-looking dude, too?! I wish all you damn pretty boys would just disappear off the face of the earth! Every single primate capable of making a harem is my enemy!” I was so angry that tears flooded my eyes.

“Come on, don’t cry. And are you trying to make enemies out of gorillas and chimpanzees?” The prez let out a sigh as she stroked my head.

“Ugh... If I was popular, I could be the drummer in a death metal band... Why didn’t we evolve from gorillas...?”

Even I could tell that the words coming out of my mouth didn’t make the slightest bit of sense.

Thankfully, the way the prez was stroking my head was simply the best. Having a beautiful girl do something like this for me was enough to melt away the pain in my heart.

Flash!

At that moment, the huge magic circle in the center of the floor abruptly lit up, illuminating the whole room in a pale burst of light.

Whenever this happened, it meant someone in town was trying to summon a demon.

In other words, a human possessed by greed was trying to summon one of us. In turn, we used this array to jump straight to their location and grant them their wish. That was a demon's job.

With a swing of her ponytail, Akeno approached the magic circle, holding her hand up to it to see who it was.

After a few seconds, she smiled at me and the prez. "President, I believe even Issei will be able to take care of this wish."

The prez nodded. "Very well. In that case, let's go, Issei." She took my hand and guided me toward the glowing symbol on the floor.

"P-Prez! Are we seriously going together?!"

Was she really going to supervise me? If she did, I—I would be too embarrassed to function normally!

The prez placed a hand against my cheek, her lips curling in a smile. "You're my adorable little servant, Issei. I'll take care of you. Just follow me."

Ugh... That was a cheap move, Prez. If you talk to me like that, I'll end up becoming dependent on you.

"Okay! I'll be in your care!" I declared, my face reddening.

"Issei! You can do it!"

As Asia cheered me on, the prez and I disappeared into the light of the magic circle.

When the dazzling brightness subsided, I found myself in an unfamiliar room. Based on the layout, I was guessing we had jumped to an apartment.

As I glanced around me, I realized the room was filled to bursting with objects related to Japan's Sengoku period, the era of warring states!

There were imitation swords complete with scabbards hanging on the walls, posters of castles plastered here and there, and a *Furinkazan* banner written in large, powerful letters: AS FAST AS THE WIND, AS QUIET AS THE FOREST, AS DARING AS FIRE, AND IMMOVABLE AS THE MOUNTAIN.

The shelves were lined with helmets worn by old warlords. What light there was came from a few lanterns and torches.

"Whoa!"

I was so taken aback that I cried out in shock. Of course I did! I mean, there was a full set of samurai armor looming before me!

This is one of those suits of armor complete with a difficult, hard-to-remember name, right?

It must have been seriously expensive, and it looked incredibly creepy in the dim illumination.

Who exactly had called me and the prez out here? I glanced around but couldn't see anyone.

"U-um..." As a woman's voice called quietly, the armor began to move.

"Wha—?!" I cried out in alarm.

"A-are you the demons...?"

Someone was staring at me from behind that helmet's mask! The force of that gaze was really making me feel uneasy! Yet as oppressive as those eyes were, her voice was the exact opposite—incredibly cute! W-was she seriously a girl...?

"Y-yes. We're demons." I nodded, trying to conceal my apprehension.

"I—I really did call a demon, then...?"

"I—I'm sorry, but I just want to make sure... You *are* a girl, aren't you...?"

“Ah, but that was such a shock... To think a real-life demon would have popped out...”

That was my line! / was the one taken aback here! What kind of young woman wore a full-body suit of Sengoku period armor?!

“My name’s Susan. As you can see, my hobby is collecting items related to the Sengoku period...”

Susan?! A foreigner?! Today was just full of surprises!

“I’m sorry about the way I’m dressed. It’s dangerous at night, so sometimes I put this armor on to protect myself...”

It probably wouldn’t have done much good to point out that right now *she* was the threatening-looking one...

“The basis of any cross-cultural exchange is direct contact with its unique properties,” the prez commented, nodding in admiration.

Hold on. I get the sentiment, but this is clearly something else entirely.

“This is such a relief. You’re a pair of kind-looking demons. If you were a scary one, I might have used my Kijinmaru Kunishige sword on you...”

Sure enough, Susan was gripping the hilt of a Japanese sword sheathed at her waist. / was the frightened one here! Susan was a spooky client!

“S-so why did you summon us, if you don’t mind my asking...? You have a wish you want granted, right?”

No sooner did I ask this question than she began to cry. “...C-can you come to the university I attend as an exchange student and help me pick up my notes...? Please? I’m so scared of going out at night...”

Seriously, *she* was the frightening one, but I respectfully held my tongue.

Cl-cl-clatter.

A figure in a full-body suit of armor was marching down the street in the dark. It was such a bizarre sight. At this rate, my hometown would become the subject of urban ghost stories.

The prez and I had accepted Susan’s wish, and we were escorting her to her

university campus. To be honest, I doubted she really needed an escort.

Susan was an armored warrior, walking the town after dusk. Her atmosphere and bearing were more imposing than ours, and we demons were supposed to be denizens of the night!

Dammit! Why did every single person who summoned me have to be so weird?!

I had suggested that the prez and I go alone to her university to pick up Susan's notes, but that idea had only caused her to start crying. "No, no, I couldn't make you both go by yourselves! I'll tag along!" she had insisted.

"Wahhhhh..." Nonetheless, she sniffled tearfully as she followed behind us.

Please don't cry in such a low, growling voice.

Her intensity was giving me the creeps.

"It's a waste to leave such a talented individual as a human," the prez remarked, curious about Susan's peculiar character.

You had better watch out, Susan! A demon has her eye on you!

However, Susan was easily frightened and swung her sword around to protect herself when anything upset her.

Apparently, she had left a notebook that she needed for tomorrow somewhere on campus and was in serious trouble. So when she came across a leaflet advertising our demon services, she had taken the opportunity for help.

We had already received payment. Seeing as it wasn't a particularly involved wish, I was happy to do it pro bono, but Susan had insisted on paying.

The cost, incidentally, had been a small model castle. I guess we would probably use it to decorate the clubroom? Akeno would no doubt be pleased. We had already sent it back to our base of operations via a magic circle.

"Don't be scared. I'm here with you, so hold your head up high," the prez said to Susan, trying to encourage her.

"Ugh... Thank you..."

Hold on there, Prez. Wouldn't a bold and confident armored warrior be more

terrifying than the one we already have?



“Hey, isn’t that heavy? Wearing all that armor, I mean?” I asked.

It seemed to me that you would need a lot of physical strength to walk far wearing so much. It couldn’t have been easy, no matter who you were.

“It’s no problem. I exercise in my armor whenever I have a spare moment. Indoors, of course. In the past, warriors wore their equipment all the time and had to run across the battlefield in it. What good am I if I can’t even do that much?”

Just what are you competing against...? You’re seriously incomprehensible, Susan.

Our nighttime stroll was rapidly approaching its end, as our destination was in sight.

“Ah, this is my university... See? It’s got such a scary atmosphere, don’t you think?”

No, that would be you.

“Let’s go inside. Ah, I’m so frightened...”

Now our armor-clad client would be lurking in the halls. Just thinking about it gave me chills.

Fortunately, we completed our job without issue.

Having successfully retrieved Susan’s notebook, the three of us made our way back to her apartment.

As soon as the pact was completed, the prez set about reopening the magic circle so we could return to the clubroom.

“All right, we’ll be going now,” I said to Susan, waving good-bye.

Heh-heh-heh. I couldn’t help but smile. I had just completed a job, after all. And that meant something special.

Yep, I had fulfilled my promise to the prez! Now that I had finished some actual work, she would let me touch her breasts!

When I thought about burying my face in her buxom bosom, my libido skyrocketed! Ah, the flames of youth were raging out of control!

My eyes locked on the prez's chest for a moment.

Right, I would start with the right one. I would fondle it, making concentric circles with my hand! I would relish its weight as my other hand encased the left breast, savoring its tremors— “U-um...”

Susan called out to us meekly, and my erotic fantasies melted away.

What could it be? The sight of an armored warrior addressing me while fidgeting so nervously was uncomfortable...

“...I know this may be a little ill-mannered to ask...but...I have another wish, too...”

Another wish? Did she want to make another pact? I was just about to go home and enjoy myself with the prez's— “Of course. We don't mind.”

My annoyance must have been plain on my face, but the prez nonetheless readily accepted.

Prez! Are you saying we have to put up with another crazy demand from this armored warrior girl?!

The prez paid no heed to my tearful, entreating gaze, deactivated the magic circle, and turned her attention back to Susan.

Ugh... I could picture her breasts moving farther and farther away...

The prez listened carefully to Susan's newest request.

Susan, in turn, fretted like an innocent maiden. “A-actually... Th-there's someone at university... I—I'm thinking about taking the plunge, about approaching him...”

“You mean in battle? Huh? Don't tell me you want to test your blade on him?!”

“N-no, not that!”

Ah, so I had been mistaken. Her choice of phrase had given the impression that she wanted to attack this person.

“I—I like him... I'm so clumsy and slow on the uptake, but I want him to know...”

Ah. So she had a crush on someone.

I pictured an old warrior-like person from the Sengoku period, complete with a huge mustache. Yep, that was the kind of guy an armored-warrior girl might fall in love with... He probably even had a distinctive laugh. Something that sounded akin to *Gwa-ha-ha!*

The prez nodded, flashing Susan a grin. “That’s a wonderful wish. Very well, we’ll assist you.”

Susan began to all but jump for joy. “You will?! Thank you! You demons are so kind!”

Please don’t make any sudden movements in that armor! I’m petrified enough as it is!

“What do you want us to do? Set up an extravagant play so that you can confess your feelings? Or do you want us to bewitch him so that he falls in love with you?”

“No, no! I—I mean, I want to do it by myself as much as possible... But this is my first time... So I don’t know what to do...”

Susan didn’t want us to use our demon powers to win her crush by force. In other words, she wanted to get him to reciprocate her feelings naturally.

The trouble was that she had no idea how to go about it. And that was where we came in.

“It would probably be quickest just to tell him how you feel directly,” the prez pointed out.

Susan, however, shook her head at this suggestion. “I—I can’t!”

“How about in a letter, then?” I suggested.

The prez nodded. “That’s right. Love letters can work wonders. They’re a fantastic way to convey your feelings.”

“I—I see! I—I’ll try writing something!”

With that, Susan retreated into a corner of the room and began rummaging around.

She came back with a calligraphy set, laid out a blank sheet of calligraphy paper, and dipped her brush into the ink...

What with the contents of the room and Susan's armored appearance, seeing her draft a message with brush and ink was a strikingly uncanny experience.

An armored warrior writing with brush and ink... She looked like one of those resentful spirits inescapably bound to a specific location...

Her armor shone eerily under the light of the lanterns.

Quick, someone call an exorcist! This house is haunted!

"S-Susan...? Wouldn't it be better to use a normal pen and paper? What are you writing there?" I inquired nervously, sweat dripping down my face.

"Huh? A letter, right? A love letter. *Though this missive may reach thee unforeseen, I pray that thou puttest thy heart at ease—*"

"Hold on! What language is that?!" I blurted out when Susan began to recite what she had just written.

"Japanese, of course. It means not to worry because it's nothing too serious."

"No, you can't write it that way! You'll only confuse him! No one in this day and age will be able to understand any of that! And no one writes with a brush anymore, either! What is this, the Sengoku period?! Why does your letter have to be like something from five hundred years ago?! And it doesn't make sense to say it's nothing too serious! It's a confession of love, right?! It doesn't sound like you're really interested in him! If you don't come right out with it and tell him you care, he'll just think it's some anonymous curse or something!"

My outburst must have come as a shock to Susan, as she fell to the floor with an audible *crash*.

"Th-that's... I—I don't know how to write any other way..."

"What?! You're saying you came to Japan as an exchange student and haven't learned how to write normal Japanese?! Heck, you could just write it in English, then! You're an exchange student, after all! He'll be so happy just to get a letter that he'll get someone to translate it if he has to!"

"But then why did I even come to Japan?! Japanese men are supposed to be

descended from samurai! I want to go out with a noble warrior, someone who excels in manners and etiquette!”

Susan was done for! I had to do something, and quickly!

This girl was an extreme case, one of those foreigners who made their way to Japan all on a flawed preconception of what the modern society actually was! This went way beyond a mere cultural mix-up!

“I haven’t met so much as a single samurai since I came here, either,” the prez stated. “I thought there would have to be at least one in this town.”

No! Even the prez had made a spectacular misunderstanding!

Hey! There are no samurai wandering the streets in ultra-modern Japan! The only person who would openly brandish a sword is the college girl in this very room!

Just who was this person who had captivated Susan? Don’t tell me he was a burly warrior-type guy or something...

“I suppose I won’t need this, then.”

Susan let out a resigned sigh as she stroked the string of a bow.

“You were planning to fix that letter to an arrow?! Susan! If you shoot that at him, you will be arrested immediately! It’ll be an international incident!”

I could envision the newspaper headlines: “Love Letter Sharpshooter Revealed as Armored Female Exchange Student”!

I could even imagine her statement to the media. It’d be something like *I wanted to conquer his heart...*

The news would talk about it for days, one endless commentary after another...

“Oh... I thought it was normal to attach love letters to arrows here in Japan.”

“Yeah. Maybe hundreds of years ago. Times are different now. This is the Heisei era, okay? It isn’t the Azuchi–Momoyama period anymore. If we had a time machine, maybe we could send you back five hundred years...”

Susan was one unfortunate individual, having been born in the wrong country

and year...

I cradled my head in my arms, not knowing what else to do.

The prez let out a sigh. “I suppose there’s no other choice. We’ll spend tonight teaching you how to write a proper confession.”

And so I spent the night at Susan’s place. As romantic as that might sound, she was an armored warrior. And the prez was with us, too.

I felt like weeping.



A few days later, the prez and I were standing at one corner of a park.

Across from us was a military encampment, filled with flags and banners all emblazoned with some family crest. In the center of it all was an armored warrior sitting on a simple chair.

It should go without saying that it was Susan.

After a lot of trouble, she had successfully completed her love letter and had handed it over to the man in question. It was here, in this park, where the target of her affection would apparently deliver his response. I was interested in seeing what would come of all this for myself, and Susan had requested that we keep an eye on things. Thus, the prez and I had made our way here to witness the historic event.

Seriously, though, what was Susan thinking, establishing an old-fashioned samurai outpost as a way of confessing? I had no words to describe this radical course of action. At this point, as far as I was concerned, she could just do whatever she pleased.

“Mommy, what’s that?”

Children visiting the park asked their mothers what was going on.

“Don’t stare!”

As soon as the parents laid eyes on that intimidating sight, they hurriedly ushered their kids away.

Yeah, you should do as you’re told. You’re better off not witnessing this if you want to become decent adults yourselves one day.

“Oh my. They must be filming a historical drama, dear.”

An old couple was watching from a bench, completely mistaking the situation for a film set.

I was more interested in the identity of Susan’s crush. What kind of guy was he? Would he be a splendid Sengoku period warrior?

Susan herself was visibly trembling in her suit of armor.

She must have been nervous, but watching her from over here, she just looked creepy. This was a bizarre spectacle to behold in open daylight.

“This looks like him.”

I followed the prez’s line of sight and spotted a figure approaching from the distance.

Clatter. Clang.

That was the sound of metal rubbing against metal. I had heard this noise before.

The figure approaching from afar was dressed in a complete set of Western armor.

He carried a conical lance in his right hand, in his left was a large shield, and an iron helmet encased his entire head.

...

I dropped to the ground, face in my palms.

I didn’t know how to respond to this! Seriously, what was going on?! That deviant was dressed like a full-on knight, complete with weapons that were clearly in violation of the Firearm and Sword Possession Control Law!

“P-Prez...? Can I go home now?”

“Not yet. Let’s see what happens. Ah, this is amazing. A collaboration between a samurai and a knight.”

“I’m not interested in this kind of partnership!” I cried out.

The prez, however, looked to be enjoying herself.

Hold on.

When I looked closely, I spotted an arrow stuck to the side of the knight's helmet. Was that a direct hit to his brain?! He was a real-life arrow knight!

"Susan! He's been hit with an arrow! He isn't a defeated soldier; he's a knight fleeing the battlefield!"

"Yes. I gave it a lot of thought, and I ultimately decided that an arrow was the only way to deliver my letter."

"You could have just handed it to him! Use your head! Why not mail it?! But you launched an all-out attack on him?! That's what this is! An instant kill! An arrow to the head! That's assault is what it is! Why do you think he's carrying a lance?!"

"It *is* such a wonderful lance...", Susan remarked, fidgeting from side to side.

What was she doing, letting herself be enchanted by weapons designed to tear people apart?! Was that strange personality of hers what this guy found charming?!

"Dammit! Why do all my clients have to end up being so weird?!"

As I cursed my fate when it came to doing business, the knight paced over to Susan.

With a loud clamor, he strode straight into her encampment.

From a distance, it looked like a battle was about to unfold.

The knight positioned himself before my client, who similarly rose to her feet as she squared off against him.

I could feel the hostility and murderous intent from my spot on the sidelines!

The space between the pair felt like it was positively warping from the powerful fighting spirit they exuded.

No one witnessing this could possibly deduce that it was a love confession. It had to be a duel!

The knight plunged his lance into the ground and pulled something from his armor—a letter. "This letter. I have read your words..."

“I see...” The armored warrior was squirming in anxiety.

Quit it, insane historical recreation! This is the most frightening thing I have ever seen!

Susan’s innocent young lady demeanor sealed within that terrifying samurai getup was the worst of all!

“...It’s a wonderful love letter, delivered by arrow with unmistakable finesse. For me to have let down my guard against this attack... Yes, it was a great strike.”

Huh? Wonderful...? Huh? Was this Western-style knight all right in the head?

“A-all I’ve been able to think about was loosing that arrow at you...Horii...”

That’s what’s been on her mind?! Shooting someone with a deadly weapon?! What a thing to admit! Hold on, Horii?! Is that the name of her target? Horii the armored knight?

“I-if I’m good enough, I—I would be happy to go out with you...”

Oh my. He actually gave a positive response. Horii didn’t mean going out into battle, though, right? That would be my first guess at the implication.

“H-Horii... *Sniff*. Thank you. *Hic...*”

Susan’s voice began to waver. There was no telling for certain, but it sounded like she was crying.

“Susan...” The Western-style knight took her in his arms, embracing her gently.

They were both fully armored, of course, so all I could hear was the raucous sound of metal against metal. Just what kind of scene was this?

“I can’t wait to talk to you about *The Book of Five Rings* that you mentioned in your letter.”

“Yes. I’ve wanted to discuss Miyamoto Musashi’s school of swordsmanship with you for so long...”

The two armor-clad figures began to leave the park, hand in hand.

“Thank you so much, you two!” Susan called out, waving to me and the prez.

The prez responded with a warm smile. To think that she could react to this bizarre display with such poise. Rias was amazing.

Thus, a new deviant couple was born before my very eyes.



Sometime afterward, I received a photograph of an armored warrior and a knight.

Apparently, Susan and Horii were getting along well.

Not long after, there was a special feature on TV about a collection of urban ghost stories titled *Armored Warriors and Knights Seen on the Streets of —— at Night!*

Please stop with the late-night dates, Susan. I don't want to know any more about this scandal.

The cost for Susan's Lovey-Dovey Campaign—no, her Lovey-Dovey Stratagem—was the lance that Horii had been carrying. It now decorated a corner of the clubroom.

Every now and then, I saw Kiba, who was familiar with Western weapons, taking it in his hands.

Despite the bumps along the way, I was glad to have seen the job through to completion. For a while, it seemed certain things would fall apart...

Anyway, my attention had been squarely focused on the prez's breasts recently. After my first successful pact, they were all I could think about.

Heh-heh-heh. At last! Finally, she would let me touch them! Squeeze them! Enjoy them!

I—I was drooling in expectation... I couldn't stop grinning.

Today, the prez and I were alone in the clubroom! The other members were nowhere to be seen! This was my chance! I needed to work up the courage to cash in!

With resolution in my heart, I approached the prez.

"What is it, Issei?" she asked with a graceful smile. Posing the question to someone so cute was going to make me feel super guilty...

Yet after a deep swallow, I laid my determination bare! “P-Prez! Th-that promise we made the other day... What do you think?!”

“What promise?” The prez flashed me a mischievous smile.

She knew! She knew exactly what I meant!

It was obvious that she was enjoying this, making me say it specifically!

“Y-you know! Your...b-b-b-breasts!”

“Heh-heh. Yes, I know. You don’t need to look so serious, Issei.”

So she claimed, but this was a matter of life and death to me!

The prez stood from the sofa, standing proudly before me. “Very well. I’m going to start counting. Until I reach five, my breasts are yours. Let’s go, shall we? *One.*”

Wh-wh-wh-wh-whaaaaat?!

What was going on?! Five?! Th-this was happening so fast!

“Two.”

Aughhhhh! We had already reached two! This was bad! She had started counting before I was ready! Whyyyyy?! At this rate, I wouldn’t be able to touch them at all!

I took a deep breath, trying to calm my thoughts. *Get a grip, Issei. You should have been ready! Touch them! Squeeze them! Rub them as long as you can!*

“Three.”

Three?! I’m almost out of time! Maybe I should start with the right one?! Or the left one?! Arghhhhh!

I didn’t have time to debate this with myself! Ultimately, I decided to go for both at once!

I raised my hands into the air, when—

Click.

The clubroom door suddenly swung open.

“Issei? Did you get here early?”

“Sorry we’re late.”

“...Me too.”

“Man, all that cleaning sure took a while.”

Asia, Akeno, Koneko, and Kiba had all entered the room!

“Oh dear. Were you in the middle of something?” Akeno inquired, staring at me and the prez with a soft smile.

“Yes, but we’re finished now. Sorry, Issei.”

Never before had crueler words reached my ears!

Whyyyyyyyyyy?! I cried silently.

Had she finished counting while I was preoccupied with everyone else?! How could this have happened...? I fell to the floor in disappointment.

Ugh, a chance to touch real-life breasts... And now...

The other club members stared at me with evident suspicion. The prez merely let out an amused chuckle.

How could this happen? I’d helped that bizarre armor-loving couple, and yet... My reward, my prize...

The prez crouched down beside me, stroking my head. “Heh-heh. You’re an amusing one, Issei. Did you want to touch my chest that much?”

“Of course I did. I—”

Before I could finish, the prez embraced me.

—.

It happened so quickly that it took a second for my thoughts to catch up.

“Then how about I hold you like this for a little while?” She spoke as though consoling a child. Faced with the warmth of her body, I could feel my face turning bright red. Everyone was watching, after all! “Try again next time, Issei, my cute little servant.”

When I heard those words, my brain all but exploded in joy.

Yep, I knew it. The prez was the best.

I would never forget this feeling. With the prez's guidance, I would strive for great success as a demon!

As determination filled my heart, I savored her generous hug.

Life.2

Gotta Catch a Familiar

I was in the midst of witnessing a magnificent sight.

Before my very eyes...was a girls' changing room scene! Yes! The girls' changing room!

I was savoring the immodest figures of the first-year girls, peeping on my underclassmen as they got changed! My sense of immorality and guilt was like an added spice that accentuated my erotic obsession!

They may have been younger than me, but the well-developed among them were incredible. Whether they were naked or encased in a bra, those boobs asserted themselves with delightful confidence!

Huh? Where was I watching from, you ask? Heh-heh-heh. I was hiding in a metal locker, complete with a notice saying that it wasn't to be used. Thanks to that, I could enjoy this magnificent view to my heart's content. It was a spectacle worthy of being registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Whoa! That girl has incredible legs! Thank you for showing me those wonderful thighs! I struggled to keep myself from shouting as much aloud.

Incidentally, two other lockers were marked as being not for student use a short distance away. My brothers in arms, Matsuda and Motohama, were lurking in those.

"I've got VIP seats lined up for us! They're worth more than front-row tickets to an idol concert!" That was how I had introduced this scheme to my buddies. Yep! No performance or show could compare to this!

Huh? That petite figure over there... Oh, it's Koneko! This is her class? What a miraculous coincidence!

Koneko really was petite! In a whole lot of ways!

Guh.

At that moment, an indescribable feeling, a sense of burning spirit, emanated across from Motohama's VIP seat. Right, that bastard loved flat chests.

He could probably hardly contain his excitement seeing Koneko like this. I'm sure he was taking many mental snapshots. He was going to be busy tonight.

No, this is wrong. Koneko is my precious underclassman. I shouldn't be ogling her petite body... Huh? How strange. I thought I wasn't into less curvaceous bodies...

The girls left the room one after the other. Koneko, however, remained, despite having put her clothes on.

Had something happened? At this rate, we wouldn't be able to leave, either...

When Koneko was the only girl left in the changing room—

Slam!

Whaaaaat?!

A violent punch slammed right into the locker I was hiding inside! I had managed to dodge it by twisting my body at the very last second, but Koneko's fist still punctured the metal. That superhuman strength was nothing to sneeze at!

Screeeeeeeeeeech!

She tore the door clean off the locker. What was the point of building it out of steel if it could be destroyed so easily?!

My gaze met hers.

"...H-hi."

I tried to force a smile, cautiously lifting a hand in greeting, but—

"...You're the worst."

Thud! Slam! Thump!

"Gah! Ugh! H-hold on! Koneko! Please, just— Gyaaaaarrrrrrggggghhhhh!"

She positioned herself on my back as though riding a horse, slamming her fists

into me in cruel silence. Damn, it hurt! I really felt like I was going to die, Konekooooo!

Later that day, Matsuda, Motohama, and I, our faces all bruised and battered, agreed that this was the first time any of us had witnessed such a bloodbath.



After school—

“Ow...”

“Are you all right?”

Asia and I were in the meeting room. She was graciously using her healing ability to restore my swollen cheeks.

There was obvious worry in her expression.

“...You reap what you sow,” Koneko muttered from the sofa a short distance away. Her lips were pursed, and she didn’t look at all pleased.

She had every right to be angry. We had been spying on her as she got changed. But she sure hadn’t held back with that spectacular punch combo. I’d been confident she was going to beat me to death there.

“Why do you have to be so...so...?” The prez wore a similar look of astonished disgust.

“Oh dear. If you insist on spying on girls, you need to learn to do so within certain boundaries,” Akeno chided with her usual smile as she poured me a cup of tea.

“I guess I *did* let myself get carried away...”

“I’ll let you watch me getting changed any time you want,” Kiba quipped.

“Shut uuuuupppppp! Why the hell would I want to look at you undress?! I can’t even bring myself to enjoy watching underdeveloped girls properly!”

“Underdeveloped...” Koneko fixed me with a razor-sharp glare.

S-sorry, Koneko! Forgive me!

“Issei, you shouldn’t spy on women as they change... I-if you want to see a naked body so much, I...” Asia trailed off, fidgeting bashfully.

“No, no, no! You don’t have to do that, Asia! I want to see, but not like that!”

Lately, Asia had become quite bold. Her recent behavior was undeniably cute, but as someone who was supposed to protect and watch over her, that attitude of hers always left me in a quandary.

“That’s right. If you want to see a naked woman, you should just say so, Issei. I’m happy to let you join me in the bathroom or in bed whenever you want.” The prez stated that so casually!

I already lived in the same building as her, and now she was offering me this! I felt so thankful! Tears dampened the corners of my eyes! The prez was always laying into me with erotic attacks. My body couldn’t withstand it! Regretfully, I couldn’t actually do anything because I was still living with my parents. On top of that—

“...”

Ow.

Asia, her expression sullen and her cheeks puffed out, silently pinched me on the cheek...



“A...familiar?” I repeated uncertainly.

The prez nodded. “Yes, a familiar. You and Asia still don’t have any of your own yet.”

For demons, familiars were vital assistants, just as important as one’s hands and feet. I remembered hearing a while ago that they also came in handy when it came to our work—handing out leaflets and the like. Although, newcomers to a Familia had to take care of that sort of work in person. I’d had to pedal my bicycle around town to distribute those pamphlets for so long...

Pop!

With a sound like a theatrical magic trick, a red bat appeared in the palm of the prez’s hand.

“This is my familiar.”

The creature was the same color as Rias’s crimson hair. Not only that, it had a

similarly noble demeanor, too.

“And this one’s mine.”

Next, Akeno summoned up what looked like a palm-sized Japanese ogre...

“...This is Shiro.”

Koneko was cradling what looked like a white kitten. That made sense—Koneko’s name in Japanese meant *small cat*, after all. That tiny kitten was so cute.

“Mine is—”

“Ah, I’m fine, really. I don’t want to know.”

“How cold.”

Kiba flashed me a bitter smile as I tried to interrupt him, but he summoned a small bird that perched itself on his shoulder anyway.

Basically, everyone apart from Asia and me already had a familiar. The prez’s bat flew over my head.

“Having a familiar is a basic necessity. They can be used to conduct errands, transmit and gather information, and track persons of interest. They can be incredibly versatile and useful, so it’s essential that you two get your own,” the prez stated as she stroked my cheek.

Ah, the prez’s caresses helped to wash away all the day’s pains. My wonderful elder sister–like Rias...

Just as I was letting her lull me into a daze, the magic circle in the center of the clubroom burst to luminous life.

What now?

“The preparations are complete, President,” Akeno reported.

Preparations?

Asia and I exchanged concerned glances, but the prez addressed us both with a smile. “Now then, you two. It’s time for you to go get your own familiars.”

She cut right to the chase. Yep, that was my master for you.

When the light of the magic circle subsided, we found ourselves in a strange forest.

“A lot of the familiars we use were recruited here,” the prez explained. “You two are going to find your own in this place as well.”

A forest of familiars, huh? I would never have guessed that somewhere like this was real.

The trees surrounding us were so tall that only a few small shafts of sunlight managed to cut through and reach the ground. Demons could see in the dark, however, so that wasn’t much of a hindrance.

The woods were dense and also strangely humid. It was hard not to feel like something might jump out at us in these surroundings.

“You’re mine!”

“Kyagh!”

“Wha—?!”

Asia and I jumped in alarm at this sudden voice, and she hid behind me.

Out of nowhere, a young man wearing a cap and dressed in casual urban clothing appeared before us.

“The name’s Azh, of Easel Town! I’m a demon in training, and I’m on my way to becoming a Familiar Master!”

Ugh. Where did this weirdo come from? A demon? Him? Hmm...

“Azh, these are the two I mentioned,” the prez said, introducing us to the wannabe Familiar Master.

“Heh. A dull-faced kid and a blond-haired beauty. Okay! Leave it to me! With my help, we’ll catch you any familiar you want before the day is out!”

This so-called master sure seemed to enjoy the word *catch*. And where did he get off calling me dull?

“Listen, Issei and Asia, Azh is a professional when it comes to acquiring familiars. Follow his advice to make sure you get one of your own. Do you understand?”

““Yes,”” Asia and I replied, nodding.

Was it really that easy to find my own familiar, though? I couldn't help but wonder what different kinds there were out here.

While I pondered the notion, Azh inquired in a friendly voice, “So what kind do you want? A strong one? A fast one? One with a poison attack, maybe?”

“Please don't talk about poison all of a sudden. Or anything else dangerous, for that matter. What, er, do you recommend?”

Azh flashed me a grin and pulled out an odd catalog in response to my question.

Without hesitation, he pointed to a ferocious beast that occupied a two-page spread.

“This one here! A legendary Dragon King, the Chaos Karma Dragon Tiamat! She's the only female Dragon King! No demon has ever caught her before, so that makes her the obvious choice! We're talking about a familiar as strong as a Demon King!”

Even if no one *had* caught her before, she was on the same level as a Demon King! Was this kid insane?!

No matter how you looked at that picture, Tiamat resembled the final boss from an RPG—not a starter partner!

“This doesn't look like it's familiar-level! You even said that no one's caught her before, right?! You're practically throwing me straight into the last dungeon!” I cried.

“This might be a good idea, Issei. Seeing as you're both legendary dragons, you should be able to hit it off with Tiamat. Knowing you, my adorable little servant, it's nothing you can't handle.”

How could the prez say something so unmistakably reckless that casually? Was she trying to get this adorable servant of hers murdered?! Sure, I had the power of the Red Dragon Emperor, but even that had limits!

“I can't, Prez! From looking at that picture, I can tell that there's no chance Tiamat and I will get along!”

“That’s just your imagination, Issei. You can do it. I believe in you.”

“Shut up, Kibaaaaa! Why don’t *you* go do it, then, if it’s so damn easy?!”

Things were off to a bad start, to say the least. I fought to regain my composure before asking again: “Um, if we go for the ultimate familiar right from the start, there won’t be anywhere higher to aim later, so can’t we shoot for a different one? Maybe one that’s a little friendlier and easier to catch?”

“Ha-ha-ha! I see! How about this one, then? A hydra!”

The next illustration was of a massive serpent with more heads than I could count. Azh’s friendly tone of voice was at complete odds with that picture. Maybe the hydra’s intimidating appearance was misleading, and it really had a laid-back personality? Perhaps it specialized in sewing or brewing tea or something?

Nonetheless, its sharp eyes and fangs sent a shiver down my spine, and its description contained a poison warning.

Hold on. The illustration is surrounded by skulls...

“This one’s amazing! Its venom is deadly! No demon can survive it! Plus, it’s immortal! It’s the most ferocious monster *ever*! Hydras are even known to kill their masters! What do you think? Sounds useful, right?”

...

I could hardly hold back my anger.

“Can I punch this guy, Prez? Please?”

“Calm down, Issei. Hydras are certainly rare and wonderful creatures. And if I remember correctly, there *is* one somewhere in these woods... We would be able to go home before the day is out.” The prez was staring into the depths of the forest.

Was she that eager to acquire it?! I wouldn’t be going home if we went after that thing! I’d be listed as a missing kid on milk cartons! If something went wrong, I could end up in the stomach of that allegedly useful hydra!



“Ha-ha-ha,” Azh laughed, giving me a thumbs-up. “Everyone needs a little adventure in their lives!”

“Cut it out! I don’t need a monster stronger than I am!”

“You sure have a lot of conditions. What *do* you want, then?”

Azh was plain messing around with me. I almost wanted to use the dragon that dwelled inside me to slaughter him.

“Aren’t there any cute familiars? Like girl-type ones?”

Surely, there had to be some like that, right?

Azh immediately clicked his tongue, his expression one of obvious displeasure. “That’s what you newbies don’t get about familiars. Listen, you need to catch powerful ones. They’ve all got different abilities. And if you want to be a Familiar Master, you need to get the same one multiple times and then pick the strongest male and female between them. Then you breed them together, and they give birth to a baby with even higher power. And then...”

From there, he launched into his theories on advanced familiar training. Man, this guy was annoying.

“I want a cute familiar, too,” Asia said, finally peeking out from behind my back.

Azh answered with a warm smile. “Okay. Got it.”

What was with this guy? It sounded like this process of catching a familiar was going to be a long one...



“Many different varieties of sprites gather in this spring here,” Azh explained, his voice hushed.

A large spring sat in a clearing, its surface like glittering glass. There was a sacred feeling to this spot. We were hiding in the shadows nearby, concealing our presence.

“The water sprites here, undines, don’t show themselves when people are around.”

According to Azh, undines were lovely maidens with pure hearts and beautiful figures. On top of that, they were skilled healers!

This will be perfect! A young woman! Pure! Beautiful! Sure, Asia already embodied all those traits, but thinking of having my very own Asia-class spirit filled me with energy! *Heh-heh-heh*. This would be the first step toward realizing my harem. First, I would make a cute girl-like sprite my familiar. I could already picture it—a beautiful, slender beauty, complete with an all-but-transparent robe!

Ah, an undine! One of my very own! My first order would be for her to let me rest my head on her thighs as a pillow! Then I would have her clean my ears! After that would come her b-b-b-breasts!

I couldn't wait!

"P-Prez! Am I allowed to do whatever I want with my familiar?" I asked, just to make sure. I had to be certain there weren't any rules prohibiting sexual stuff.

"Yes, anything you want. It would be *your* familiar, after all," she answered plainly.

I shed tears of joy at this response. Soon, I would have a girl of my own with whom I could do whatever I pleased! Excitement practically poured out of me!

"Ah, the spring is glowing. An undine is about to appear," Azh observed, pointing to the water.

At last! I looked gleefully in the direction Azh indicated. *Deliver me to that world of my dreams!*

A light-blue entity with hair sparkling in the light and garbed in an almost see-through robe appeared. Oh, she was also gigantic.

The undine had insane biceps, calves thicker than my waist, a torso that looked like an iron chest plate, and a face covered in battle scars.

For a second, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I rubbed my eyes again and again. Surely, this had to be a mistake.

...

Wh-whaaaaaaaaaat?! What is this? HUUUUH?!

“That’s an undine,” Azh confirmed, his cruel words stabbing into my poor heart.

This wasn’t a dream! It was a nightmare!

“N-n-no, just look at her! She’s a training martial artist who came here to bathe! She has to be! I mean, look at her arms! They’re clearly designed to snap a person’s body in two! She could conquer the world with those fists! There’s no way I would stand a chance! She’s a veteran!”

“Yeah, undines are always squabbling over territory. There’s no way one would be able to hold on to a whole spring by herself without considerable brawn. Sprite society is based on martial prowess. Still, that one *does* look exceptionally strong. That’s a high-level undine right there. I’d recommend catching her. A water sprite with an exceptional attack stat ain’t bad.”

An undine that excelled in physical power?! That was something I didn’t want to hear out loud! The words alone were dangerous!

“I’m sorry! But that isn’t a healer-type familiar at all! It’s a murder-type! I don’t need a spirit with massive attack power!”

I wept with disappointment, howling in lamentation. This was beyond spiteful! How could fate do this to me?!

“But she’s a female, like you wanted. And a really strong one, too.”

“I don’t care!”

I covered my face with my hands and wailed! Aaaaauuuuuggggghhhhh! Was that really a girl?! Why did reality have to be so unforgiving?!

“The world is changing, Issei,” the prez consoled me as she rested a hand on my shoulder.

I didn’t want it to change!

“She has such pure eyes. I’m sure her heart must be pure as well,” Asia commented with a bright smile.

Asia, please don’t call the undine a girl so casually. Maybe she had a kind of

innocence, but it wasn't the sort I wanted! My tears were endless.

"Ah, there's another one."

At Akeno's words, I looked to the spring again with renewed anticipation... And found another sprite with the same light-blue-colored hair and the same burly physique.

...Ugh. Wh-why...?

"Arrrrrrggggghhhhh!"

"I-Issei. I don't think crying is going to change this."

"Kibaaaaa! I had it all planned out. I was searching for an enchanting beauty. I already work for an incredibly gorgeous demon boss, so I got greedy and yearned for more. And look what it's brought! This is like a scene from a martial arts film! I hate it! This fantasy is ruined!"

"It's all right. I'm sure there are other fantasies out there for you, Issei," Kiba replied, doing his best to comfort me by patting me on the back.

He may have been an accursed pretty boy, but he did come across as a good guy every now and then.

Azh perked up. "Oh, look." Once more, he pointed to the spring.

The two undines were now glaring at each other. Fierce hostility flowed from them like water. And then—

Thump! Thrash! Thud!

One undine's huge arm slammed hard into the other's stomach. At the same time, her opponent's punch met her chin with terrifying force. A low kick collided with one of the undine's thighs, releasing an explosive sound, while the other fighter hurled a punch straight into her enemy's face.

Both of them were bleeding all over, but they were spectacular in their showy battle regardless.

In mere moments, this sacred sprite fountain became an arena.

Wait. Hold up. Wh-what are those two doing...?

"They're fighting over territory. Both warriors look like they have considerable

experience.” Azh nodded, watching with his chin rested on one palm, utterly engrossed in the spectacle.

“A territorial skirmish...? Shouldn’t this be more like a fantasy battle? Don’t sprites have magic powers?” I questioned.

“Strength of arms is what’s most important here.”

“Prez, can I go home now? At this rate, I’m going to break down into tears, you know?”

Heck, I was already crying! I wanted to take Asia and leave this place! Even if I caught one of those sprites, it didn’t look like they were capable of using much magic anyway! They clearly favored their muscles. Still, they might actually be useful on missions with bodies like that. Then again, with those huge physiques, there was no way they’d be able to hide behind a pole if they needed to!

“Ha-ha-ha! Look at that, kid! Whichever wins will be your familiar! An undine showdown! What an incredible adventure! Whoa! That’s a rare attack style they’ve got there!” Azh patted me on the shoulder, clearly enjoying himself.

“Quit laughing! And shut up with all this adventure stuff! Since when did I ever ask for an adventure like this?!”

“Wh-what if we named her Little Diney?” Asia whispered, cautiously watching the martial arts fight.

Huh?! Are you serious about catching that undine, Asia?!

“No matter how you look at it, Asia, Little Diney would be too much for us. Keeping a familiar like that around would guarantee that you’ll be pregnant in no time. It’s radiating intensely hyper-masculine energy...”

“I-if it’s your child, Issei, I’ll accept it gladly!” Asia exclaimed.

“I see... Hold on, what was that? That’s not what I’m saying...! You’ll have *my* child?! You’ve got it wrong! Forget about Little Diney already! You won’t be able to control her, Asia!”

“B-but Little Diney must be so lonely all by herself... I understand how she must feel.”

Asia was apparently relating to the undine. I, however, glimpsed nothing

within that sprite but danger, so I rested a hand on Asia's shoulder and twisted my lips into a forced smile. "Even so, she knows how to look after herself. See how well-trained she is? And her body? Nothing can stand against her. Let's give up on Little Diney, okay? Besides, we can't call her that! And which one is supposed to *be* Little Diney in the first place?!"

"Hey, kid! Little Diney is in a tough spot! The other one just hit her with a shoulder throw!"

"Azh! Just shut up alreadyyyyyy!"

The prez let out a resigned sigh. "All right... Perhaps we should move on to another location. This isn't going anywhere."

And so, having renounced any hope of taking Little Diney home with us, we made our way to the next point of interest.



"An azure lightning dragon?" I repeated.

Azh nodded. "That's right. Just like the name suggests, it's a dragon that can use blue electric-type attacks."

As we members of the Gremory Familia departed from the undine fistfight, Azh began to tell us the story of a super-rare dragon.

Apparently, one had recently been spotted gliding through the depths of this forest.

"Don't you want to catch it?" Azh suggested.

The last time he had suggested catching a dragon, it had been the final boss-like Tiamat. The mere mention of another one had me trembling with fear.

"Is that dragon, like, superstrong?" I asked cautiously.

Azh broke into a broad grin. "It's still a baby. So if you're gonna catch it, this is the time. You wouldn't stand a chance once it matures. It isn't quite at the level of a Dragon King, but it's definitely top-tier."

A baby dragon? Maybe we will be able to make it a familiar, then? Hmm... A top-tier dragon. Who knows, being the vessel for the Red Dragon Emperor might even grant me a certain affinity with it. And most of all, the word dragon has a

powerful ring to it. Although, a girl-type familiar would be good, too... Hmm...

What was I to do?! How could I choose?! Breasts or a dragon?

While I pondered on this quandary, Azh suddenly exclaimed from beside me, “Whoa!”

Before us, a mass of scales gave off a brilliant bluish glint... A draconic creature roughly the size of an eagle was perched on a nearby branch.

“That’s it! The azure lightning dragon!” Azh said, barely able to keep his voice below a shout from his excitement.

Wh-whoa! Th-that’s a dragon?! A—a real-life one?! It may have been small, but it was so cool! And its round eyes were absolutely lovely!

“An azure lightning dragon. This is the first time I’ve ever seen one in person. Those scales really are beautiful. They glimmer in the light like a coat of blue diamond...” The prez was clearly moved by this sight.

Evidently, this was her first time seeing one of these creatures, too, huh? It must have been a rare dragon indeed.

All right! I had made up my mind! Sure, I would have liked a cute familiar, but a dragon would be good enough! I choose you, azure lightning dragon!

And that was when it happened.

Asia let out a loud scream. “Kyah!”

I spun around, only to find that a weird, sticky gel was attacking her.

“Wh-what’s this?!” the prez cried out in alarm.

Whoa, that viscous gunk was all over her, too! Glancing around, I saw that the goo was going after all of the female members of the Familia!

Plop! Plomp!

More of that gel dropped from above. Was it coming from the trees?

Whatever it was, it was moving! Did that mean it was alive?!

“Slimes,” Kiba stated.

So they’re slimes?! Like from video games?! Hold on! Are they poisonous?! No

sooner did that dangerous idea surge through my mind than it was swept away.

“M-my clothes... They’re melting!” Asia wailed tearfully.

She was right. Those slimes were indeed dissolving the girls’ school uniforms! Before I knew it, their clothes were in tatters, revealing their underwear!

Bah!

Blood gushed from my nose! What an incredible turn of events!

The slimes’ onslaught didn’t let up. Before long, the panties and bras of the females in the group began to disintegrate as well!

Whoaaaaa! I couldn’t take my eyes away from this spectacle!

Koneko, shielding her privates, punched me hard!

Thump!

“Gah!”

“...Don’t look.”

That was all she bothered to say...

Maybe these slimes really were dangerous...? Regardless, I would store this sight of the prez, Asia, and Akeno in my memory forever in my brain’s long-term storage.

Kiba looked embarrassed and was doing his best to avert his gaze. That guy was quite the gentleman. I, on the other hand, didn’t bother holding back.

At that moment, some kind of tentacle-like appendage emerged from behind a giant tree, ensnaring the almost-naked girls!

“N-nooooo!” Asia shrieked.

A sticky extremity coiled around her leg, moving inside her tattered clothes as it crept upward. Asia’s thighs! Her breasts! Her buttocks! That thing was going to defile them all!

I glanced around and saw the others suffering the same predicament, with yet more tentacles creeping toward their privates.

B-but even if this was rather indecent, it was a fantastic spectacle!

Azh had a nosebleed as he watched the events unfold. “These ones don’t have a name. They’re just slimes that melt clothes. And those are just tentacles. They often team up when they target prey. They aren’t particularly dangerous, however. The slimes are only interested in clothes, and the tentacles only target female secretions...”



—.

What...? I couldn't believe my ears. S-slimes that melted clothes?! Tentacles that fed off women's secretions?!

"Neither creature is rare, but they can be a major annoyance when exploring the forest. Your best bet is to use a fire technique to evaporate them—"

"Prez!" I called out, interrupting Azh's glittery-eyed explanation. "I'll take these slimes and tentacles as my familiars! They can dissolve garments and feed off women's fluids! These are what I've been looking for!"

Heh-heh-heh. I had found them! At last! Creatures that I would be happy to have serve me! My very own familiars!

The prez heaved a sigh as she loosed a barrage of flame.

Ahhhhh! My slimes! My tentacle creatures! They're all being destroyed! Nooooo!

"Just so you know, Issei, a demon must take an *appropriate* familiar. Do put some thought into this."

"All right." I closed my eyes for a second, sinking deep into thought. "Yep, I choose these ones!"

"Issei. You spent all of three seconds dwelling on that," Akeno scolded while roasting the slimes around her like the prez.

My... My poor slimes! They were being sent on a journey up to Heaven! My Two Great Ladies were eradicating them so majestically!

Koneko was mercilessly tearing through the tentacles, pulling them from their roots and casting them into the flames.

Stop! Don't be mean to my dear tentacles!

"Get out of the way, Issei. I'll lay waste to these useless creatures. Such a nuisance."

How can you be so cold, Prez? So cruel?!

"No! No! I want to make these slimes and tentacles serve me as familiars!"

I shook my head, doing my best to protect the creatures bearing down on Asia.

I would guard them with my life! They would become my dear comrades! My friends! My familiars! I needed them! Why couldn't the prez understaaaaaand?!

They would be such lecherous servants! I would never have another chance to catch them!

"These are the ones I've been searching for! I want to use them to spread my wings! I'm going to aim for great heights!"

Seriously, these things would be invaluable in creating my own harem! I knew they would be handy in many erotic situations!

"Issei... Um, you're holding me a little tight..." Asia's face had turned scarlet.

Be patient, Asia. I want to protect these slimes and tentacles. Some things simply have to be defended!

"Ugh, Oogly... Squiggly... My dear partners... I'll save you!"

Holding back tears, I hugged them, along with Asia, as tightly as I could.

"Oh dear. You've given names to them, have you?" Akeno remarked in clear amusement.

Yes, I had. Those names carried a mystical power.

"...I've never seen a demon who craves slimes and tentacles like this... Today is just full of surprises. You've shown me that the world's bigger than I thought, Lady Gremory." Azh spoke with a sort of profoundness in his tone.

"I'm sorry... My servant can be rather up-front about his desires, and he hasn't given this a lot of consideration...", the prez replied dejectedly.

Judging by her expression, one might have thought she was looking at a pitiful child.

I can't deny that it stung, but I wasn't going home until I'd recruited these godly things!

I wasn't going to move a smidge—or so I thought. Unfortunately, I heard the

sound of something moving through the air.

Cautiously, I turned my head in the direction of the noise, and I spotted a blue-scaled dragon floating in the air.

It was the azure lightning dragon. I hadn't even noticed it approach me.

Bzzzzz-bzzzzz.

Blue electricity began to course along its body.

Huh? There's no way it's about t—

Bzzzzz-bzzzzz-bzzzzzt!

I had no time at all to dodge! A powerful current of electricity surged through my body!

"Aaaaauuuuuggggghhhhh!"

M-my whole body was being shocked... If this had been a cartoon, people would've been able to see my skeleton...

"U-um, Issei...? Are you all right?"

...Asia, still in my arms, looked absolutely fine... What was going on here...?

"Azure lightning dragons only harm their intended targets. It probably doesn't consider the young lady an enemy," Azh, who was also charred black, explained from beside me.

He had been electrocuted, too! Was he saying that the dragon believed the two of us were its enemies?! Looking around, I saw Kiba was charred as well. He was putting on a smile, but I could sense his anger at the dragon.

Then I realized that the slimes and tentacles attached to Asia had been reduced to ashes.

Nooooo! My dear friends! My precious familiars!

"Ooglyyyyy! Squigglyyyyy!"

I broke down into tears as I cradled their miserable remains. Why was this happening?! How could the world be so heartless?!

"It looks like the dragon has destroyed the slimes and tentacles that were

attacking Asia. I wonder if it's a male? I remember hearing somewhere that male dragons are often attracted to females of other species," the prez said as she stroked the small dragon's head.

It sounded like that scaly murderer had rather blunt motivation.

Still, this was awful. My Oogly... My Squiggly... They were both dead.

I was despondent. That dragon must have been a lecherous fiend like me. It was the only explanation for why it laid into the only three guys present! Props to it for getting Kiba, but still! There was no forgiving it! Oogly and Squiggly may have been perverted, but they weren't bad! At least, I didn't think they were! They were just trying to live their best lives!

I wiped away my tears, slowly rising to my feet to face the young dragon.

"...Oogly and Squiggly were good guys. Really good guys... The best of friends... And you killed them..."

I was literally trembling with rage. This dragon was now my mortal enemy, and I was determined to avenge my fallen comrades!

"Gwahhh." The small dragon let out a sound—a yawn.

That only served to piss me off further. I could feel my demonic aura, stoked by fury, raging around me.

Even the other club members looked taken aback by the explosion of power.

"...You've made me angry, you damn azure lightning dragon!"

I thrust my fist forward in rage as energy radiated from me. The surrounding trees began to sway back and forth, rustling. Even chunks of the ground began to split and float into the air by the force of my strength.

"Incredible. I've never seen such a strong wave of demonic energy before! Issei, that power must have been lying dormant inside you! And now you've awakened it!"

"What an overwhelming aura! Issei, why haven't you ever drawn on that for something useful?"

Akeno and the prez both offered comments as they watched with obvious

astonishment.

Sorry, my Two Great Ladies. The rage over having my desires so ruthlessly thwarted awakened this latent strength.

Unlike the others, Kiba was analyzing the situation rather calmly. “Now that Issei’s lecherous cravings and sexual desires have been betrayed, his fury has pushed him to the next level, I guess.”

Right on all counts, you accursed pretty boy! No one shall contain my indignance!

“...That sick freak has snapped.”

Koneko really hit the nail on the head. It was the most accurate way to put it.

Know this, azure lightning dragon, I will never forgive you! Oogly, that slime that liked to melt women’s clothing! And Squiggly, that tentacle that liked to feed off women’s secretions! I fell in love with both of them at first sight, and now...

Neither the prez nor Akeno would be able to stop me! It was futile for them even to try! There were times when a man had to step up and do something!

“The ultimate! Invincible! The power of this dragon that dwells within me has been called the greatest on earth! And now you’re going to experience it for yourself! Die!”

I parroted Riser Phenex’s words to that accursed monster as though they were my own and readied my hands, sparking with demonic power, to attack—
“Don’t bully him,” Asia said, embracing the blue dragon in a warm hug. Her tone was the kind a person might use to scold a kid.

I stopped my fists just inches before they connected.

When my dear Asia, who was like a younger sister to me, pleaded with me, I was helpless to resist her...

I continued to glare at the small dragon as Asia doted on it.

“They say that azure lightning dragons only open up to those who are pure of heart. It looks quite attached to the young lady,” Azh explained.

Hold on, did that mean it had fallen in love with Asia? That was proof of the innocence of her soul. Yep, my Asia was simply the best.

“Looks like you lost, Issei,” the prez stated with an amused grin as she rested a hand on my shoulder.

I let my demonic powers dissipate and took a deep breath.

“C-can I keep this dragon as my familiar?” Asia asked, looking a little uneasy.

“That depends on Issei,” the prez answered. “What do you think?”

Everyone glanced my way. Were they trying to make me out to be the bad guy? I couldn’t deny it this time. I *was* the villain. My sexual desires had driven me crazy. None of this was the dragon’s fault. Heck, it had helped free Asia from those slimes and tentacles...

“I’ll let Asia decide,” I said with tears in my eyes.

Oogly, Squiggly, I’ve failed to avenge your deaths. It’s over.

Anguished tears rolled down my cheeks.



“I—I, Asia Argento, command thee! A-accept my contract and become my familiar!”

We had made our way back to the entrance of the forest. Asia had opened a green magic circle with the azure lightning dragon at its center and was conducting the ritual necessary to recruit the creature as her familiar.

Naturally, as this was Asia’s first time doing this, Akeno was helping her. Thankfully, the process went off without a hitch. Akeno wore an expression of relief.

Yep, Asia sure was an exceptional demon. Unlike me.

“Normally, azure lightning dragons aren’t willing to pledge themselves to a demon, but this one must have been especially attracted to your young lady’s purity,” Azh explained. “It’s rather unprecedented, but it doesn’t look like there’ll be any problems.”

Heh. Asia had succeeded in satisfying some incredibly complicated conditions to recruit that rare creature. Damn, she was incredible.

The light of the magic circle began to fade away gradually. The contract must have been completed, as the baby dragon glided to Asia, showering her with affection.



“Ha-ha-ha. That tickles, Rassei!”

“Rassei?” Was that what she had named it?

“Yes,” Asia responded. “He attacks with lightning, like the Japanese god Raijin, and I thought it would be nice if he grew up to be just as kind and generous as you, Issei... So I thought I’d call him Rassei... You don’t like it?”

“No, it’s all right... I’m fine with it, I guess. Okay then, Rassei—”

I moved to approach the baby dragon, when its body sparked.

Bzzzzz-bzzzzz-bzzzzzt!

“Gyargghhhh! Auuuuuggggghhhh!”

Rassei just blasted me with another electric shock...

“Right, I forgot to mention that male dragons hate males from other species.” Azh, looking like an overcooked steak, offered words of advice much too late.

Behind him, Kiba was similarly well-done. It looked like our little Rassei wasn’t the kind to discriminate between male targets.

“Apparently, Asia’s new familiar has a bit of a naughty streak,” the prez commented.

Too much of a naughty streak, if you ask me...

“Heh-heh. He’s a lot like you, Issei. He sees you as a rival,” Akeno said with a laugh.

So he hated other guys like I did, eh?

“...Yep, I really should have recruited Oogly and Squiggly...”

But no matter how much I regretted their deaths, they were gone forever. Why did the good die young?

Koneko scowled. “...You should join them, you sick freak.”

I still had a long road ahead of me before I could catch a familiar of my own. Still, at least Asia had managed to recruit Rassei, which put an end to our familiar hunting for the time being.

Life.3

A Memory of Breasts

It was the start of summer. The shrill droning of the cicadas was so loud that I could hear it from indoors.

I was sitting near a window in the clubroom, staring vacantly outside. I'd been in a dejected slump all day.

"Issei? What are you up to?" came a singsong voice. The prez wrapped her arms around me from behind.

Normally, I might have jumped at this, saying something like *Wha—?! P-Prez! Y-you can't just grab me like that and push your breasts against my head!*

Yet in the moment...all I did was let out a deep sigh.

"What's wrong? This isn't like you." The prez rested her head on my shoulder. She sounded almost bored by my weak reaction.

"Sorry, Prez. I was just thinking back on some things..."

"You were remembering something?"

"Yeah." I was brooding over a sad farewell from back when I was in elementary school. "I lost something precious at this time of year when I was younger."

My sorrowful eyes remained blankly fixed on the world beyond the window.

The prez, realizing at once that something was up, wore a perplexed expression, but she kissed me lightly on the cheek. "Tell me about it. I'll listen."

"Hmm... Okay. Maybe the others should hear this, too..."

"Are you sure? Very well. Everyone, would you come here, please?"

The members of the Occult Research Club all gathered around at the prez's urging.

Asia tilted her head in apparent worry. “What is it?”

“Oh dear. Has something happened?” Akeno asked.

“...I’m curious,” Koneko added.

“This is about your past, Issei? As your friend, I want to know what’s bothering you,” Kiba said.

Xenovia looked a bit puzzled. “Does this count as club activities? I guess I still don’t really understand Japanese customs, huh?”

Everyone took seats around me, watching with visible concern at my melancholic mood.

When they were all settled, I began my tale.

When I was seven years old, there was a nearby park that I liked to always visit after school.

An old man who lived in the neighborhood used to perform *kamishibai* storytelling plays with a series of illustrated boards there. I always looked forward to the old man’s shows.

After the ring of a bell, he began his latest work.

There weren’t many people in the audience, and they were all children. Some days, I was the only one who came. Yet the old man still gladly performed his latest story just for me.

I loved his shows.

“Once upon a time, there lived an old grandfather and grandmother. One day, the grandfather went up to the mountains to gather firewood, while the grandmother made her way to the river to wash some clothes. There, floating down the river from upstream, came...”

I sat there in anticipation, eagerly waiting to hear what happened next. The old man fixed me with a smile before moving on to the next picture board.

“...breasts.”

Child though I was, I was beyond excited by the realism of that illustration. Ah, how I wanted to fondle those boobs!

The old man's drawing skills were genuinely top-notch!

"Wriggly-woggly, bounce-bounce. Wriggly-woggly, bounce-bounce. Those breasts exceeded G cups in size. They were wonderfully firm, exquisitely shaped, and utterly perfect tits."

I listened to the tale, my heart racing as I treated myself to a snack of a breast-shaped pudding.

He talked about an ogre that suffered defeat because of breasts and a man who found happiness because of them. There was a youth who suffered divine punishment for his interactions with boobs and a dog that liked to dig them up.

Through those tales of breasts, I learned just how absurd the world could be.

When the old man finished his latest tale and started to pack up his things, I asked him, "Have you ever touched a breast?"

The old man answered with a warm smile. "Ah, I have. Many a time. But listen, my boy. Breasts aren't only things that you touch... You can suck them, too."

"...Huh? But I thought only babies did that?"

Back then, I had thought that boobs existed only for fondling—but I was wrong.

"You're still just a child, so you've got a lot to learn. But you'll understand one day, when you're a little older. Adult men fight the urge to suck them every single day."

At the time, I hadn't comprehended the meaning in his sage words. However, I knew what he was saying sounded cool.

"Listen up, boy. This is how you suck 'em."

The old man opened another breast-shaped pudding and vigorously slurped it up into his mouth. The whole thing had disappeared in a split second.

"Wh-whoa!"

My young heart was struck with admiration by the speed of his actions.

"Here, I'll let you take some of these puddings. Practice at home."

The old man spoke as though trying to nurture a successor. I brought those breast-shaped puddings home, sneaked them past my parents, and sucked them up as hard as I could.

Yet despite my best efforts, I couldn't suck them into my mouth as he had. Every failure served to inform me of his greatness.

One hot summer day, it came time to say farewell.

I pedaled my bicycle to the park excitedly.

It was time for a new story! Just what kind of folktale would the old man have for me this time?

Would it be a funny story? A sad one? One about big breasts? Small ones? I was all but exploding with anticipation.

Unfortunately, when I arrived at the park...

"All right, now come with us. What makes you think you can show kids this sort of thing in broad daylight?"

...the old man was being taken away by the police.

This couldn't be happening! Why him?! He hadn't done anything wrong!

Child that I was, the old man was my hero. I ran over as the police marched him away.

"Gramps! Gramps! What's going on?!"

One of the police officers took hold of me, stopping me from helping the old man.

"Stop! Stay away from him! He's a bad guy who shows kids things he shouldn't!"

"He isn't bad! He taught me about breasts! Gramps! Gramps! Breasts! Breasts!" I cried out tearfully.

I'd learned so much from the old man. He wasn't an evil guy, just a perverted one.

The old man threw me a smile. "Boy, touch breasts for yourself one day. And then, suck 'em," he said softly.

Those were his final words to me.

“Hey! What do you think you’re saying?! And to a child?! Come on, you’re coming with us!”

“Gramps! Gramps! What about your next story?!”

My hero was ruthlessly subdued by the power of the state and hauled away. All I could do was glare after the police officers as they left the scene.

I never saw his latest performance. What kind of tale would it have been? The more I thought about it, the greater a sharp regret cut into my heart.

Give them back! The old man! Those breasts! Give them back!

Amid the chirping cicadas in that summertime park, I lost something important.

“...And that’s what happened.”

I finished telling everyone about the bitter, intense event from my past. My storytelling hero was gone, never to return.

Still depressed, I glanced across at the other club members—all of whom wore expressions of bewilderment.

This was unbelievable... They all looked utterly stupefied. I expected them to be sobbing!

Asia looked so confused that she might as well have had a question mark floating above her head.

“Oh dear. So that’s where Issei’s obsession comes from,” Akeno stated with quiet poise.

“I see. I don’t know how to respond. Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that you witnessed a deviant being brought to justice?” Kiba said with a forced smile.

No! That old man was no criminal! He was a god!

“...I don’t understand Japanese ways of thinking.” Xenovia shrugged as she stood from her seat.

“No, Xenovia. That’s disrespectful to other Japanese. The vast majority of us

aren't like that," Kiba hastily clarified. Was he trying to stand up for me or just defend himself? Was I completely worthless in everyone's eyes?!

Koneko, eyes narrowed with evident contempt, also rose to her feet. "A perverted geezer showing kids indecent images... A sick freak. That's the worst story ever."

"What are you talking about?! I'm the guy I am today because of that old man!" I cried as I looked from one person to the next.

The prez rested a hand on my head, ruffling my hair. "We know, Issei. I'm sure he was a great influence on you, but it might have been nicer to tell a story with a more gentlemanly character."

"I can't imagine what Issei would be like without his perverted eroticism, though," Akeno remarked. "He wouldn't be Issei without that indecent gaze."

"That's true. An Issei with no interest in breasts isn't Issei. When I feel his gaze on my chest, I know he's in good spirits. There's nothing more reassuring."

The prez and Akeno were discussing me as if I weren't in the room. Were my eyes truly so lecherous? Look, I'm not going to deny that I visually devoured their boobs every second I could, but still!

"A non-perverted Issei..." Koneko cocked her head to one side, wearing a serious expression.

Huh?! Is it really that difficult to imagine me any other way?! Try as I did, even I couldn't picture a chaste version of myself!

It must have been fate that brought that old man and me together! Thanks to his guidance, I had been able to bury my face in the delicious texture of the prez's breasts!

Dammit! Nothing beat Rias's wonderful boobs!

That evening, after club activities, I made my way home with the prez and Asia walking at either side of me. Now that we all lived together, we traveled back to the house in one another's company.

Man, today had been the worst. I had revealed my past to everyone, and yet none of them had so much as sympathized.

Fine, then! My memories of that old man will be mine alone!

“...President, Issei looks like he’s in a bad mood.”

“It’s best to give him some space when he ends up like this, Asia.”

The two of them were busy talking between themselves, but I didn’t care. What was I supposed to do now that everyone had mocked my precious memory?

I continued down the road, my head filled with confusing thoughts, when I heard a nostalgic sound.

Ring-ring!

—!

I hurriedly scanned the area for the source, my eyes opening wide in astonishment at what I saw.

Ten years had passed. Yep, a whole decade.

Ring-ring!

That bell signaled the start of the picture show.

In a corner of the park we had just passed, a familiar old man was preparing a set of illustrated storyboards for a *kamishibai* play.

“—.”

My legs took off, carrying me to him the moment I realized who he was.

There was no mistaking that face. He had aged considerably, but I’d never forget it.

“G-Gramps...?” I asked nervously.

The man, noticing me, peered into my face before immediately breaking out into a broad grin. “You... Ah yes, I remember. You’ve grown, boy.”

Ah! So I was right... It’s him!

“G-Gramps! You’re alive!”

What a touching reunion! So much time had passed! I wasn’t a little kid anymore, but he recognized me immediately! I was filled with such joy that a

tear came to my eye!

The old man's face was marked by more wrinkles now...

"Ah... How many years has it been? Around ten, maybe? Ha-ha-ha, you sure have gotten tall, boy... So have you touched breasts for yourself yet?"

—.

I had been waiting for him to ask me this question for ages. Just thinking about it made me choke up. I nodded over and over joyfully.

"Yep, I've touched them! Breasts are awesome! This girl's were my very first!" And with that, I introduced the prez, who was standing beside me.

Rias clearly didn't know how to react. Hopefully, she wouldn't get too upset!

Hearing this, the old man grinned in satisfaction. "I see, I see. That's good to hear. Ten years later, and you've got a girlfriend of your very own. And how splendid those knockers of hers are! Surely, you now understand what I meant back then, right? The urge to suck 'em?"

"Yep, I want to suck them, Gramps! I want to suck breasts so much!"

The old man's face lit up in joy. "Boy. Do you want to watch the play you didn't get to see last time?"

It was a dream come true. The old man retrieved the story I had missed from his bicycle.

My ungranted wish from that fateful summer day was coming true at last. I wiped the tears from my face and beamed wider than I ever had. "Yes!"

Ring-ring!

The bell sounded, signaling the beginning of the show. At long last!

"Then let's begin the 'Tale of the Breast Snatcher'...Once upon a time, in a faraway place, there lived an old man who lived by plucking boobs."

I sat on the ground with a breast-shaped pudding in my hand, listening intently, just as I had done a decade ago.

Behind me, I could hear two people having a hushed conversation. It was my hope that they'd enjoy the performance, too.

“U-um, President...? Wh-what should I do...?”

“Let’s let him be, Asia. What do you think Koneko would say if she were here? Oh, Koneko? When did you arrive?”

“...He’s the worst.”

Those cold words did little to dull my excitement as I listened to the “Tale of the Breast Snatcher.”

Life.4

The Breasts of Tennis

Hi there, everyone. Summer sure was hot this year.

I was sitting in the clubroom, glaring at the open dictionary in front of me.

Hmm...

This was tough. My research demanded a serious delve into the topic.

“What are you looking for, Issei?” Asia inquired, glancing at the hefty tome I was reading.

“Oh, I was trying to find out where the word *boobs* came from.”

“...*B-boobs*...?” Asia looked a little flummoxed.

I was being serious. This was a question that had long weighed on my mind.

Boobs.

The word had such a wonderful ring to it. Whoever first uttered that sound deserved to be remembered as one of history’s great figures. There weren’t many words capable of moving a man’s heart the way that one did. In fact, only *breasts* and *boobs* were capable of making me tremble in awe.

I wanted to know why people had started calling breasts *boobs*, and so I set off on this journey.

“There are a lot of theories. One is that it comes from baby talk for something that tastes good, with the word *yummy* changing to *booby*. Another suggests that it comes from an ancient Korean word *pae* meaning *to suck out*. Personally, I’m leaning toward the first option. But what do you think, Asia?”

Asia seemed a little taken aback by my question but gave it consideration, nonetheless. “Wh-what do I think...? I suppose babies probably do think breasts taste nice, so maybe the first one? Maybe they’re trying to say ‘Ah, yummy,’ but

all they can manage is ‘Booby’?”

Wait. Could this be viewed as sexual harassment? I should probably drop the subject...

Anyway, men of all ages regarded breasts as delicious!

However, before I could say as much aloud, I stopped myself. I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t let Asia, who trusted me so implicitly, get any bad ideas. A non sequitur conversation shift was in order!

“Th-the prez sure is taking her time talking with the student council, huh?”

Smooth. Now I just had to—

“The president’s discussion with the chairwoman may continue for a while. How about some tea, Issei, Asia?” Akeno said, pouring us both a cup.

The members of the Occult Research Club were gathered in the clubroom, waiting for Rias to return.

The prez and the chairwoman were friends, so I couldn’t help but wonder what exactly they were talking about.

“Checkmate. I win.”

“Hmm. Looks like there’s no way out of this. Did I lose?”

Kiba and Xenovia were playing Japanese chess on a nearby table.

“...That’s five straight losses for Xenovia,” Koneko muttered as she spectated.

“Do you want some tea, Gasper?” Akeno asked of the cardboard box in the corner of the room.

“Y-yes please!” the cardboard box called back.

Yep. Gasper was hiding inside.

“Gasper, get out of there already and join us,” I said with a sigh.

The person in question, however, broke out into a tearful wail: “I—I’m sorryyyyy! B-but I can’t! Not outside!”

My underclassman wasn’t good around people and often hid in boxes. He’d already caused us a good deal of trouble.

“I’m back,” the prez called as she entered the room.

Now that she had joined us, the entire Occult Research Club was assembled and ready.



Worry showed on the prez’s face as she announced, “I have to submit a club activity report.”

“Huh? Didn’t you just do that?” I questioned.

I had been under the impression that the reason she had gone to see Chairwoman Sona was to deliver that very thing.

Rias gave a troubled exhale. “That was our public-facing activity report, ‘On the Relationship Between Demons and UFOs.’ The problem is our real activity report as demons. Given all the incidents that have happened recently, I completely forgot that the submission deadline had been moved up a little earlier than last year.”

“Our real activity report...as demons?” I tilted my head to one side. This was my first time hearing about this.

“Normally, as a pure-blooded high-class demon, the president would be expected to attend a high school in the underworld,” Kiba began to explain. “She’s received special permission to study here in Japan, but if she doesn’t acquire all the necessary credits for the mandatory demon subjects, she’ll be forced to return to the underworld to complete her education.”

In the present age, demons had taken to welcoming reincarnated humans into their ranks as a means of continuing their species. The prez, however, was a pure-blooded demon, which meant that life for her was a little complicated.

“In the president’s case, she can acquire credits by making pacts with humans and researching different kinds of creatures and monsters here in Japan,” Akeno added. “In truth, we members of her Familia have been aiding her, which is why we’ve been permitted some degree of freedom when it comes to organizing our club activities.”

Ah. It was all beginning to make sense now. That was why the prez had founded the Occult Research Club—so that we, her servants, could assist in her

activities. In turn, that allowed her to continue living in the human realm. Basically, to stay here, she needed an office and responsibilities.

The prez glanced around at each of us. “That being the case, we’re going to prepare another activity report to send to the underworld. I want you all to investigate the creatures and monsters living in the area. As usual, we’ll start by talking to the well-informed kappa that resides in the swamp on the outskirts of town.”

A kappa? Did she mean those creatures that lived around water, the ones that loved cucumbers and always wore a plate on their heads?

At this, Kiba raised his hand. “President, that kappa has already returned to his hometown to take over his family’s cucumber business.”

“...He did, did he? I see. I suppose that *is* a more dependable career pathway than trying to become a rapper.” The prez nodded in understanding.

“H-hold on, what’s this about a rapping kappa?” I asked Kiba.

“There was a kappa that ran away from home because he didn’t want to have to take over the family cucumber business. He settled nearby, and he loved rap music. I often went to listen to his song, ‘*The Shirikodama Rhapsody*.’”

What a weird name for a tune... If I remembered correctly, a *shirikodama* was supposed to be a mythical ball found inside the anus and the object of many a kappa’s covetous desires. What kind of rhapsody was that?!

“...*The light of this city that dries my plate, this anger than I can’t convey, I’ll pluck your shirikodama right out from your—*”

Whoa! Out of nowhere, Koneko started spitting some lyrics!

“Koneko was a big fan of his,” Kiba stated.

Seriously? Koneko liked rap music? That song sure had unique lyrics... I guess that’s because a kappa wrote it?

Kiba continued to explain the bizarre life of this creature. “I heard that his father developed plate atrophy syndrome, so he decided to go back home. His family uses an old-fashioned mystical farming method to cultivate cucumbers, and he wanted to help maintain that tradition.”

Wh-what...? A mystical farming method...? Plate atrophy syndrome...? All those unknown words just left me even more confused.

“In that case, what about the dullahan that set itself up in the abandoned mansion over in the fourth district?” the prez suggested.

“A dullahan?” I whispered. Another unknown word had entered the fray.

This time, it was Xenovia’s turn to explain: “A headless armored knight. One that rides a huge horse and holds its head in its arms. It’s a creature that’s said to foretell coming death, mainly found in Europe. I’ve taken down a few of them myself in the past.”

As to be expected of one of the Vatican’s former demon slayers! Monster hunting was what she did best!

At that moment, Kiba placed a large book in front of me. What now?

“This is a monster encyclopedia. When you say the name of a creature, it opens to the correct page automatically. For example, *dullahan*.”

No sooner did he finish speaking than the thick tome opened by itself, flipping through its pages. It was an enchanted book! The pages came to a stop on one with an illustration of a headless horse rider, surrounded by paragraphs of text written in incomprehensible writing. That was the demon script, which I couldn’t yet read.

However, even if I couldn’t understand the explanation, the picture alone gave me a pretty good idea of its essential characteristics.

Beside me, Asia also stared at the picture with clear interest.

“The dullahan recently had a severe cervical hernia and has been admitted to a specialist hospital,” Akeno said, reading over the materials in front of her.

How can you have a cervical hernia without a head?! That didn’t make any sense! Could that happen even when you carried your head in your hands?!

Foiled again, the prez exhaled with evident dejection. “I see. So the dullahan won’t be able to help, either. I hope it takes good care of its head.”

Judging by the situation, it sounded like Rias’s regular informants were no good.

That being the case, I turned around, pointing to the cardboard box in which Gasper was lurking. “How about this, Prez? We could write a report on a rare vampire-in-the-box! I’ve never heard of any other vampires who choose cardboard over coffins!”

“I-Isseeeeeei!!!! Wh-what are you suggesting?!” the box screamed back.

I walked over to it, tapping on its side. “You’re a member of the prez’s Familia, so you should be jumping at this opportunity to help out. What kind of containers do you like? How comfortable is it in there? Do boxes from different manufacturers feel any different? Heck, maybe we should just transport you and your box to the underworld and be done with it?”

“Waaaaahhhhhh! I-Issei’s going to ship me off!”

“A vampire-in-the-box. Fresh from the farm!”

The prez didn’t seem nearly as amused by the exchange as I was. “All right. Let’s find another way to do this.”

“Another way? Do you have anything in mind?” I inquired.

The prez nodded. “There’s someone here at Kuou Academy who’s a living compendium of monster knowledge.”

That was news to me.



Plock! Plock!

Tennis balls were being hit back and forth.

The prez had brought me to Kuou Academy’s tennis courts. Apparently, the person she wanted to speak with could be found here.

More importantly, the girls’ tennis outfits were simply outstanding! I could see the revealing short-shorts they were wearing under their miniskirts from a distance! Sure, they weren’t pieces of underwear, but they were revealing enough to be stimulating in their own way! Yep, naked legs! Those thighs were marvelous! There was no beating summer tennis!

“It’s Hyoudou the sex fiend! He’s staring this way!”

“P-pervert!”

Whoa! They had caught me watching excitedly from over the fence and had decided to greet me with intense resistance! Most girls at school despised me, probably because I was so obsessed with all things erotic. Hmph! Not that I cared! I was on good terms with the prez and Asia! What was wrong with touring the tennis courts anyway?!

“Shut up! It isn’t like I’m stealing anything from you all!” I shouted.

“Having *you* ogle us all sure makes us feel like you’re robbing us of something precious! If you want to watch, at least bring Kiba!”

“Eeek! Don’t look at me, Hyoudou! Help me, Kiba!”

Dammit! Why did they have to treat me like such garbage?! They treated *him* like a freaking prince. Damn that pretty boy!

Kibaaaaa! You’re coming with me next time! With you by my side, it will be an all-you-can-watch buffet!

“Come along, Issei. We’re going.” The prez was resting her hand against her forehead, clearly at a loss.

Sorry, Prez. When my eroticism sensors are triggered, I kind of lose control...

“By the way, Prez. Does this person know you’re a demon?” I asked.

“More or less. The academy also accepts human students from a variety of backgrounds with close relationships to demons. As such, the person we’re looking for now should already be aware that there are demons on campus.”

The prez and I were discussing this on one of the benches near the tennis courts.

Evidently, there were still many things about this school that I had yet to learn.

We were supposed to meet Rias’s mysterious contact here, but we must have come a little early, as they had yet to arrive.

I couldn’t stop thinking about the girls playing tennis and kept furtively glancing their way.

After a bit, the *clip-clop* sound of a horse’s hooves reached my ears.

“Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! Greetings, Rias! How strange to find you here! Welcome!”

That voice and haughty laugh belonged to the woman riding the steed! Her brown hair was coiled in elegant spirals. Since when was horse riding allowed at this school?!

I knew this person. She was a third-year student and the head of the Tennis Club—Kiyome Abe. When it came to confirming a beauty’s identity, you could always count on me!

But even more surprising was the figure behind her! A headless armored knight! *Whooooooooaaaaa! It seriously has no head!*

“Neeeeeeigh!”

The black horse let out a clamorous whinny! It was incredible! And its glaring eyes radiated suspicion! Not only that, it kept flaring its nose! It looked just like the horse that belonged to the Conqueror of the Century’s End!

Kiyome dismounted while muttering something to soothe the intimidating beast. The headless knight likewise stepped down from the horse.

“Oh-ho-ho. A fine steed, don’t you think? The head of Mr. Smith, the dullahan, had to be hospitalized the other day, so I’m taking care of his horse,” Kiyome said proudly.

Was this a monster horse?! I had thought it was giving off a strange aura! It wasn’t the kind of creature that a regular high school student should’ve been riding!

“And this here is Mr. Smith’s body.”

The armored knight had no head but bowed to us in greeting anyway. So this was a dullahan? Wasn’t it more than a little dangerous to let a creature like this stroll around the school grounds?! Plus, if the head was hospitalized for a cervical hernia... Was the body okay? It must have been sweltering, wearing such a heavy suit of armor in the middle of summer.



And if that wasn't enough, Mr. Smith was carrying a watermelon under one arm...

"You know, it's against the rules to bring a monster to school," the prez chided Kiyome.

This looked like more than a regular old violation of the rules, Prez!

"While the head is in the hospital, the body can't act by itself. So I'm looking after it, along with the horse. But I thought it wasn't enough just to feed him every now and then, so I gave him a job! He's the Tennis Club's new mascot, Honda the Headless! The watermelon's a substitute for his head. Perfect for summer, don't you think?"

"A mascot character?! No, no, no! Impossible! I mean, he's a monster! A real-life monster! And he's missing a skull! This is terrifying! What sense does it make to use a watermelon? And *Honda*?! Where did *that* come from?!" In my state of shock, I blurted out one remark after another...

The prez, however, nodded in apparent acceptance. "A mascot? I suppose that's fair."

"Prez?! What?! Are you okay with this?! He's literally headless!"

"That's not a problem."

Of course it is, Prez! He lacks a brain, and yet he's still alive! Anyone who sees him will know at first sight that he's some kind of supernatural monster!

"The student council chairwoman said the same thing. She granted us special permission," Kiyome added.

What?! That's crazy! The chairwoman really approved?! But he doesn't have a head!

"Eeek! Honda! Your armor is so brilliant today!"

"A headless mascot is such an original idea! And he's so cuuuute!"

A barrage of enthusiastic girls surged from the other side of the fence! The dullahan responded with a wave.

He was incredibly popular! It wasn't exactly the kind of admiration that most

guys were looking for, but that headless knight was the adoration of all the girls!

“Die, Hyoudou!”

“Keep away from him, Rias! He’s a beast! Vermin!”

“Honda! Take Hyoudou’s head!”

Whaaaaaaaaaat?! Why did he have to be so popular while I wasn’t?! This couldn’t be happening! No matter how you sliced it, I was much more human than he was! Sure, I was a demon, but I was still much more attractive than a decapitated knight monster! At least I had a head!

The headless knight—no, Honda—clapped me on the shoulder.

“Hondaaaaa! Why do the girls love you so much?! You’re not even complete, and I’m here with all my parts! Does the Tennis Club like headless people more?! Is that it?! It is, isn’t it?! Prez, please cut off my head! If that’s what it takes to win the masses’ approval, then it’s a small price to pay! Please cut it off!”

“Calm down, Issei. You’ll die if I do that.”

Ugh. I knew that. I understood that perfectly, and yet... I was so depressed.

Kiyome turned to the prez. “Well then, Rias. What do you need?”

“I’m sorry to bother you, Kiyome Abe. I know you’re busy managing the Tennis Club, but I was wondering whether you would let me interview you about your other job as a monster tamer. I would love to learn about some of the creatures you make use of.”

The prez’s request seemed reasonable enough.

“No,” Kiyome refused point-blank. “Why should I have to tell *you* anything? You’re a demon. I’m grateful to attend this school, but that doesn’t have anything to do with this, does it? And from what I gather, you have ties with a wide range of industries, so there’s no particular reason why you need to talk to *me*, is there?”

Something about this woman’s attitude toward the prez was really getting on my nerves!

Undaunted, the prez continued calmly. “Are you saying you don’t want to build ties with me?”

At this, Kiyome covered her mouth with her hand as she let out a boisterous laugh. “Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! You’re very self-confident! It seems to me that dealing with you could be to my detriment in the future! I want to keep a similar distance from the student council chairwoman. You can’t be too careful when dealing with demons. Let down your guard, and they’ll pluck your soul clean out!”

“...”

The prez wore a look of complete astonishment.

Ah. So that was how non-demons saw us.

After becoming a demon, I had dedicated myself to my work with such fervor that, at some point, I had completely internalized the demonic perspective.

For outsiders, though, demons were still symbols of evil. A pact with one of us meant paying a price. The notion of striking an agreement with a demon must have been terrifying to some.

Heck, I would probably have been scared, too, if a demon had approached me while I was still human.

The prez did her best to keep a smile. “An agreement with a demon isn’t such a serious thing these days, you know? I would usually just thank you by inviting you out to tea or a meal. Are you sure you want to refuse?”

“Akeno’s tea really is the best!” I said, doing my best to support Rias.

At that moment, Kiyome’s lips curled in a nasty smile, as though she’s realized something. “Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho. I just had an idea. It would be so boring to do this for free. How about a tennis showdown? Me and my monsters on one side and you and your Occult Research Club on the other. The loser will have to give the winner whatever they want, for free.”

Whoa, hold up there! A tennis showdown?! That’s her condition for doing this?!

“Oh, that does sound interesting. I *do* like playing tennis, you know? In that

case, if we win, you will let me interview you for my report, I assume? And what do you want if you win?"

What?! The prez is going along with this?! She sure is the competitive type!

Kiyome's gaze suddenly turned to me, and I felt like her eyes were peering through me to the other side. "Are you the rumored Welsh Dragon, the Red Dragon Emperor?"

"Uh, er, I am..."

I wouldn't normally have felt so uncomfortable when an attractive upperclassman was staring at me, but something about Kiyome's gaze sent a chill down my spine... Those eyes of hers were scary... That was the gaze of a collector... I was genuinely petrified. No one had ever looked at me like this before.

"I've decided. If I win, I want you to lend him to me. I've always wanted a rare dragon! I know you won't be willing to part with him permanently, seeing as he's a member of your Familia, but maybe you'd consider allowing me to borrow him someti—"

"No." The prez rejected the proposal with a forced smile.

Seriously, that expression of hers was cold enough to freeze our surroundings.

Damn, Prez! You can be scary!

Rias was the kind of demon who treasured her servants. And she liked to dote on me in particular. I was probably something like a beloved kitten to her. So of course she would have a visceral reaction to an idea like this.

She pulled me closer, as though to prevent me from being taken. "Issei is my cherished servant. I won't let you so much as touch him."

Kiyome breathed a deep sigh at this reaction. "In that case, let's forget about —"

"We'll agree to your terms," came another girl's voice from seemingly nowhere.

After looking around, I spotted Akeno approaching us from behind.

“If we win, you will help us with our report, Kiyome. And should you come out on top, we’ll let you borrow Issei for a short while. Those are your conditions, are they not?”

Huh? Is anyone going to ask me whether I’m okay with this?!

Honda was the only one to show me even a sliver of sympathy, patting me on the shoulder. Turns out he was a pretty good guy.

“Wait, Akeno!” the prez tried to object.

Akeno, however, continued. “President. All we have to do is win. If we can do that, everything will be fine.”

The prez looked like she wanted to say more, but she reluctantly held her tongue and nodded.

No one here cared what I thought!

“Very well. We accept your terms.”

Having received the prez’s approval, Kiyome broke out into a shrill laugh. “Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! Then it’s decided! You’re rather reckless, confronting the captain of the Tennis Club in a match! Be sure to practice! My cute monsters are aces on the court!”

“I’ll show you what a high-class demon is capable of! I’ll never surrender my adorable little Issei!”

“This should be fun! Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! Once Issei’s mine, I’ll dote on him in an altogether different way!”

Rias and Kiyome brought their faces close in confrontation, both laughing in self-assurance!

It was terrifying! They were both chuckling, but I could hear the murder in their tones! I—I was the object of a real-life bet! What was going to happen to me?!

Akeno embraced me. “Sorry about this, Issei.” Ah! I could feel her breasts pressing against my body! “This was the only way to ensure that the president gets what she needs for the report. I’ll do my best in the match.”

“R-right! I’m sure I’ll be fine!”

There was no way I could complain when Akeno had her arms around me!

So long as the prez won, everything would be fine. I couldn’t help but fret over what would become of me if Kiyome wound up winning, however. That collector’s gaze of hers was seriously unnerving. Then again, she *was* a beauty... And she had said that she would *dote* on me. Maybe she meant bathing with me?! My mind flooded with wild fantasies. I was such a disloyal servant!

But truth be told, I didn’t have much experience actually playing tennis...



The day of the match arrived.

“Oh-ho-ho. I applaud you for actually showing up.” Kiyome welcomed us onto the tennis court with a dauntless grin and a teasing remark.

Beyond the fence, various monsters stood staring at us. Were those the creatures that Kiyome had serving her? There were an awful lot of them. And they were all giving off a disquieting atmosphere!

The Tennis Club’s mascot, Honda the Headless, waved my way. He really was a good guy!

“Victory is going to be ours today!” the prez declared, brimming with confidence. She really was ready to go all out!

“There will be two singles matches and one doubles match. Whichever team wins two matches will be the victor. Rias and I are automatically confirmed as participants. The remaining players will be decided by drawing lots.”

Kiyome had already prepared a raffle to decide the remaining participants. She sure was fully prepared.

Please, whatever happens, don’t pull out my name! I’m hopeless at tennis! I’ll just be a hindrance, so please pick Akeno, Kiba, or Xenovia instead!

Anyone who drew a blue lot would be assigned to a singles match. Those who drew red ones would play doubles.

“Singles.”

“Me too.”

Whoa! Akeno and Xenovia had both pulled blue, just as I'd hoped!

"Doubles here."

The prez got a red one!

Come on, Kiba or Koneko has to pick the remaining red one! Asia's no good at sports, and I'm just as awful with a tennis racket!

I squeezed my eyes shut as I took my lot, then glanced timidly at the result. Red!

"It looks like you're my partner, Issei. Let's go all out."

"Whaaaaat?! Seriously?!"

The prez flashed a fearless grin, but I could feel my own face blanching. Sweat began to run down my back. The prez was giving off an incredibly intimidating aura. I was definitely going to end up holding her back here!

And so, the first match got underway. Akeno versus—

"Greetings!"

It was a monster that resembled a girl—except that her arms were both wings! And she was super cute! I had no idea beings like this existed!

"She's a harpy, a winged creature. Most harpies are female," the prez explained.

Seriously?! The monster industry must have been huge indeed to have girls like this in its ranks! And she had huge breasts, too! Sure, she had talons for feet, but she was at least 70 percent human! I couldn't get enough of her!

The harpy, who was dexterously holding a racket with her wings, stepped onto the court, ready to face off with Akeno.

"You can do it, Akeno!" I cheered at the top of my voice.

My unfaithful heart silently called, *You can do it, Miss Harpy!*

I was awful and a lecherous pervert to boot. But being able to feast my eyes on such a cute creature was a rare treat! Perhaps I could invite monsters like her into my harem one day?

“Oh dear. You’re full of openings, my harpy friend!”

“Kyagh! This demon lady is too strong!”

The bout came to a quick end, with Akeno dominating the match. That was one victory for us! All right! If Xenovia won the next one, we would be declared the champions automatically! I wouldn’t have to play doubles!

“I suppose it’s my turn.” Xenovia stepped onto the court, spinning her racket in her hands.

She had said that she didn’t possess much experience playing ball games, but with her dexterity and infallible hand-eye coordination, I was confident she’d be able to pull through!

“I’ll be your opponent.” The next creature to enter the fray was a woman whose lower body was in the shape of a snake’s.

Whoa! Her bottom half was like a serpent, but that was it! The rest of her was a gorgeous young beauty! I-it was a pity that she didn’t have thighs, but her chest was amazing! That alone was enough for me!

“She’s a lamia. It’s another mostly female monster race.”

Really?! Are there that many different species made up predominantly of women?! Incredible!

The world was so much bigger than I’d thought! Maybe I could try catching one as a familiar? I would have to go to a village populated entirely by monster ladies!

While I was adrift in my fantasies, Honda approached, treating us to pieces of watermelon. I was grateful for the refreshing snack, but didn’t he need that in place of his head...?

As I thought on that, I realized that a woman who was half snake would have a tough time maneuvering on a tennis court. Seeing as Xenovia had more freedom of movement, maybe this would be an easy victory for her?

“Ngh! You’re good!”

Unfortunately, Xenovia was struggling to keep up!

“Over there!”

That snake lady was surprisingly strong! With her serpentine tail, she could occupy almost the entire court just by stretching her body! On top of that, she was just as persistent and tenacious as a real-life snake, capable of enduring all sorts of attacks and turning them around to snatch victory!

“Sorry. I wasn’t good enough,” Xenovia apologized to the prez.

After a long match, Xenovia had lost!

Now all the responsibility fell on me to help win the final round!

“Don’t worry, everyone. Issei and I will finish this!” The prez was fired up and raring to go. Did I have to be as enthusiastic about this as she was?!

“All right, time for our doubles match. And my partner will be...you, yuki-onna. Come on out, my cute little snow lady!” Kiyome called to the monster crowd.

Seriously?! A yuki-onna?! I could already visualize a beautiful creature garbed in a thin, almost-transparent kimono! Yuki-onna are those snow woman creatures people trapped on freezing mountaintops sometimes encounter, aren’t they?! The kind that might adopt human form to come down to your village and eventually marry you, right?!

A harpy, a lamia, and now a yuki-onna! Please, yuki-onna, freeze me to death!

“Roouooooaaaaarrrrr!”

A pale-white gorilla let out a tremendous cry.

Thump-thump-thump-thump-thump!

Next, the creature started beating its chest with its hands!

“Let me introduce you all,” Kiyome began. “This is my yuki-onna friend Christie. She’s a yeti.”

“Christiiiiieeeee?!

This cruel truth, combined with the gorilla’s extremely average human name, was almost enough for my eyeballs to pop from their sockets!

Whaaaaaaaaaat?! She’s a yuki-onna?! This had to be some sort of joke!

Christie was a huge white ape! Ah, but she did have a pretty ribbon on her head! Still, this was unforgivable!

“You’ve got to be kidding me! Yuki-onna aren’t supposed to be huge hulking gorillas! And what’s with that drumming?! That’s how gorillas face down their enemies, right?! Is she trying to threaten us?!” I wailed, tears in my eyes.

Anger bled into Kiyome’s voice. “Shut up! Christie is a wonderful yuki-onna! Her mother drove away countless mountaineering teams to protect her home!”

“I’d run away from that monster, too! Who wouldn’t?! Meeting a hulking ape in the mountains?! What other choice would you have?! You wouldn’t even be able to distract it with a banana! It would freeze as hard as a rock! The only thing a banana would be good for would be hammering down your tent!”

Christie was even doing her species’s characteristic knuckle walk! There was no debating this! She was a great ape, scientific name *Gorilla gorilla*! She was a snow gorilla that had come down to visit human society! That thing wouldn’t freeze me to death—she would beat me to a pulp!

“Hoo-hoo-hoo!”

And now Christie was making gorilla noises! She was 100 percent ape!

“Issei! Yuki-onna have powerful frost breath! If it hits you, you’ll be stuck in ice!”

“Er, Prez. Are you saying that actually *is* a yuki-onna?! What happened to the beautiful lady kind that pops up in books and on TV?! Isn’t that ribbon on her head too cute for a yuki-onna?! Plus, she looks ready to commit murder! And what was that about frost breath?! I’ve never heard that tennis term!”

“Truth can be stranger than fiction, Issei. You should keep that in mind.”

“I don’t want to! I don’t want to live in that kind of weird reality! Give me back my dreams! I wanted a sexy snow woman! I don’t need a gorilla monster with frost breath! And her name’s Christie?! Get out of here! Go back to your mountain!”

“It sounds like that one has a deep interest in snow women, Christie. Beauty is a sin, is it not?” Kiyome chortled.

What was with those ominous words?! I wasn't interested in apes, and the last thing I needed was Kiyome setting Christie loose on me!

The gorilla's gaze turned my way. "Hoo-hoo-hoo," she laughed as though in mockery.

Dammit! That was enough to make something inside me snap! Curse her! I was angry now! I would show them!

"You can do it, Issei! Don't lose to Christie!"

"Good luck, Issei. Show us how cool you are."

Asia and Akeno were cheering me on! I couldn't afford to let them down! A red-hot mix of anger directed at that gorilla and enthusiasm from the girls supporting me coursed through my body!

"Looks like I've got no choice. Let's do this, Prez!"

"Well said, Issei! I'd expect no less from a member of my Familia!"

I couldn't say that I was particularly confident in my tennis skills, but I would have to manage. There was no turning back, and I refused to disappoint the girls! My perverted side pushed me forward.

However, some unseen force began to blur my vision.

Vrrrrr!

The air was vibrating! Christie was waving something terrifying around!

"What the heck is that?! It's huge!" I exclaimed.

The gorilla had a massive racket in her grip! It was practically a weapon!

I was so shocked that my eyes almost popped out of their sockets again.

"It's a specially designed racket," Kiyome explained.

"It's a blunt instrument, is what it is! That thing's big enough to beat a real-life monster to death, and you have the guts to call it a racket? *That?! A-are you going to slam me with that thing?!'*"

If that massive thing came my way, it would pound the guts out of my poor little body!

Now that the players were set, the match—no, the *death match*—got underway.

The prez won the coin toss, giving us the right to choose who would serve first. This meant Kiyome had the option of selecting which side of the court to start from.

Bounce-bounce.

The prez bounced the ball on the ground a few times before hurling it up into the air—and hitting it with all her strength!

The ball went flying to the other side of the court, with Kiyome hitting it back after one bound! Before I knew it, our first rally was underway!

“Ugh! Ah!”

I tried my best to follow the ball, but I couldn’t keep up with these two veterans!

Heck, the prez and Kiyome were both skilled enough that they could have carried this match alone!

I had started this match feeling terrified, but did I really need to worry? Over on the other side of the court, Christie wasn’t moving at all. She looked almost bored. Her ominous aura hadn’t abated one little bit, however.

I couldn’t help myself—I turned my gaze to the prez’s legs and sports shorts. Ah, those wonderful thighs of hers! Those brilliant white legs were the stuff of dreams!

“Christie! It’s heading your way! Hit it!” Kiyome cried out.

Sure enough, the ball was speeding toward Christie while I was preoccupied with the prez’s thighs. The snow gorilla was quick to ready herself. I wasn’t about to call her a snow woman!

“Hoo-hoo!”

Thump!

An explosive noise that didn’t sound anything like a tennis racket shook the air! Less than a second later, something went flying right past me at an

incredible speed.

Boooooooooooooom!

Something like a thunderclap sounded at my back.

I glanced timidly over my shoulder...only to find a huge crater! Half the court had been destroyed!

I wasn't so stupid as to doubt whether Christie's slam was responsible! But where was the ball?!

"Issei! Watch out! That last strike completely destroyed the ball!" Kiba called.

That was one of our Familia's Knights for you! His visual acuity was top-notch!

Hold on. It destroyed the ball? Seriously?! So Christie's slam annihilated the court and the ball? She's going to kill me! Trying to return one of those hits is a guaranteed death!

"Go back to the jungle, you damn ape!" Our rally had resumed, and I dived in to hit the ball back to the opposing side.

"No! Christie's home is in the Japanese Alps!"

"You're saying she's from Japan?! Or is the Japanese Alps your name for some foreign country?!"

My verbal exchange with Kiyome continued like that as our match wore on. Bit by bit, my confidence was building.

Before long, though, Christie opened her mouth wide.

Fwoooooosh!

From that maw came a literal blizzard! It was seriously cold! Freezing! Was this that frost breath of hers?! She really was a monster!

Ah! My hand gripping my tennis racket was now a chunk of ice!

I could hardly move properly. With me immobilized, the opposing team started scoring one point after another!

"Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho! It looks like victory is mine!" Kiyome declared, covering her mouth with her hand.

Gah...

There was no way I could beat that ice monster. At this rate, I'd be Kiyome's plaything in no time. S-sure, that might not have been so bad, but the prez would definitely hold a grudge against me if I let it happen... She'd been particularly strict about that kind of thing lately.

In the midst of my struggles, the headless armored knight approached me.

"What are you doing, Honda?"

He detached his armor and pointed into the cavity behind it.

"Are you telling me to don your armor?" I asked.

At this, Honda gave me a thumbs-up sign.

"Why? It's not like this is a real battle."

At this question, Honda pulled out a small whiteboard panel and a marker and wrote: THAT SNOW YETI HAS WRONGED ME, TOO. WEAR IT! BURY HER!

—.

I couldn't hold back my tears of gratitude!

Hondaaaaa! You totally get it! After seeing a harpy and a lamia, it's only normal to expect the yuki-onna to be an exquisite beauty, too, right?! I know how you're feeling, Honda! A monster like that shouldn't even exist!

"Honda! I may just be a novice demon who isn't worth his salt when it comes to tennis, and you a headless knight mascot! But still!"

Yes, if we combine our strength, we have a chance of snatching victory! Honda responded on his whiteboard panel.

"Exactly! We can do this!"

I equipped Honda's armor—or rather, Honda himself—to my body and stepped back out onto the battlefield. Damn, it was hot in that suit! Sure, it was summer, but this seriously felt like hell! It was nothing my raging spirit couldn't overcome, however!

"Prez, I still have my head! So there's nothing to be worried about!"

“Y-yes, I suppose you’re right...” Even Rias seemed a bit intimidated by the immense sense of pressure emanating from Honda and me.

“A dragon knight, complete with a head! He’s burning up!”

“That’s our Issei! He sure likes to embrace the unexpected, like equipping a dullahan’s armor!”

“...He looks both cool and freaky at the same time.”

Xenovia and Gasper observed the development with clear excitement, while Koneko tilted her head to one side, seemingly confused.

“Let’s show that frozen gorilla just how strong a dullahan complete with a head really is!”

That day, Honda and I became one, and together, we dominated the battlefield.



“My team lost. I suppose I have no choice. I’ll answer your interview questions,” Kiyome muttered despondently.

We had triumphed! Honda’s power, combined with my rage at the gorilla, had pushed me far beyond expectations. The game had been close, but we’d come out on top. The only problem was...

“...It isn’t coming off, Honda...”

I couldn’t get out of the armor.

The next moment, my hand moved entirely of its own volition, writing a few words on the nearby whiteboard panel.

SORRY. YOU’LL NEED A BIT OF TIME TO REMOVE IT BECAUSE OF THE CURSE PLACED ON ME.

“What?! You’ve got to be kidding! You couldn’t have told me you were jinxed?!” I wailed in response.

“This could be a problem. Honda and I signed a contract. He has to work as the Tennis Club’s mascot until his head is fully healed,” Kiyome remarked.

“What do you expect *me* to do about that?!” I shot back.

“Perhaps we could have you carry out Honda’s duties, Hyoudou? Would that

be all right with you, Rias?”

The prez nodded at this suggestion. “Okay. I don’t mind lending the Tennis Club a helping hand. With Issei stuck in that suit of armor, I know you won’t be able to lay a hand on him, so I can rest easy.”

Prez?! This is too heartless!

“Hoo-hoo...”

Through my tears, I saw that the ice gorilla was staring my way with fire in her eyes.

Uh...? What’s up with that look?



“It looks like Hyoudou managed to win both the match and Christie’s heart,” Kiyome observed, stating something absurd like it was nothing.

Whaaaaaat?! That had to be a joke! Was she saying that our victory had only succeeded in bringing me greater tragedy?!

“Hoo-hoo!” Christie was coming my way with hearts in her eyes!

As an instinctual sense of self-preservation gripped me, I did my best to escape. Honda must have felt the same way, as we were unexpectedly swift on our feet!

Unfortunately, the gorilla took off after us, knuckle walking at an incredible pace!

Cut me some slack! Why did that frozen gorilla have to be so damn fast, too?!

“Nooooooooooooo! I don’t want a gorilla monster falling in love with meeeee!”

And so, garbed in Honda’s dullahan suit of armor, I become the Tennis Club’s temporary mascot. Christie cast me sultry looks while I did my best to endure Honda’s sweltering insides! Meanwhile, the prez managed to finish her report on time. In the end, it all worked out. But it was still the worst summer job of my life...

Life.5

Hell Teacher Azazel

Hi there, everyone.

With summer vacation having just gotten underway, I was on track to truly enjoy this long holiday!

At least, that's what I would've liked. Instead, I was holding my head in my hands at the sight unfolding in front of me.

"Itchei, hold me...," a young crimson-haired girl pleaded.

"Please, hugsies...," cried the blond-haired child at my other side.

I was staring at a pair of young girls closely resembling Asia and the prez. However, the genuine articles were nowhere to be found.

Upon waking, I was left utterly dumbfounded when I discovered that both young women were gone, replaced with this pair of children...

These kids... It couldn't be...

As impossible as it seemed, I couldn't dismiss a certain possibility...

Knock-knock, came a sound at my door.

"Issei? Rias? Asia? It's time to get up!"

The door swung open, and Akeno stepped into my room. "Oh dear... Children." That was her response as she laid eyes on this scene.

"U-uh, Akeno, what's going on...?"

The two young girls were pulling at my cheeks and ruffling my hair.

Akeno rested a hand against her cheek, sinking into thought for a moment, before flashing us a smile.

"It may be summer vacation, but I'm afraid I'll have to call everyone over."

Thus, an emergency meeting of the Occult Research Club was convened.



At Akeno's urging in her capacity as vice president of the Occult Research Club, the rest of our Familia gathered in the living room of my house.

They were all staring curiously at the two little girls. The one resembling Asia was hiding behind my back, while the one who looked like the prez was sitting on my lap. Apparently, they were both very attached to me.

"They certainly *do* look like the president and Asia, though," Xenovia remarked, head cocked to one side.

"I think they *are* the president and Asia," Kiba replied.

"Seriously, Kiba? You think they've been transformed into kids?" I asked.

He gave a sharp nod. "It would appear so."

I had vaguely suspected that was the case. There was no denying the similarities between this pair and the missing Rias and Asia. But how on earth had this happened? Not only had they been made much younger, but they appeared to have lost their memories as well. Although, they clearly recalled some things, because they kept calling me Itchei...

"...I remember there being a technique that can turn people into infants," Koneko offered quietly.

"Is that really possible, Koneko?" I asked.

"Yes. Demons are capable of using their powers to alter their appearances," Akeno answered as she brewed a pot of tea. "You've heard about demons who appear as old women or as small children in folklore and legends, no? A lot of demons like to alter their appearances to some extent when they reach a certain age. In demon society, it's quite normal for a middle-aged woman to want to appear younger than she actually is. Most men, on the other hand, prefer to be seen as their true age."

I bobbed my head. *So demons can adjust their looks...*

In that case, had the prez and Asia used their powers to do this to themselves...? If so, then why?

“Still, people don’t normally lose their memories when they shift their appearance...” Akeno held her hand to her head, her expression obviously troubled.

“That’s what they call a rebound,” Azazel said as he sipped at his tea.

“A ‘rebound’?” I repeated.

The fallen angel nodded. “Yeah. When someone with high-grade powers uses a technique they aren’t familiar with, there’s a risk of messing it up such that it bounces back at them.”

“You’re saying the prez’s technique failed? And they both lost their memories?”

“Looks that way. The kickback must have sealed away their recollections at the same time, and it turned them into a pair of little kids. But for a demon like Rias to make a mistake like that... She must have been really distracted while she used that magic. Anyway, there’s two possible solutions—you can wait for the effects to wear off or find someone capable of casting an antispell.”

The prez had screwed up a demonic technique? How had it gotten to that?

I glanced down at the mini-prez sitting on my lap, only for her to tilt her head to one side and stare back at me curiously.

“You look funny, Itchei.”

She was *seriously* cute! Was this what she had been like as a kid? It was no wonder her older brother doted on her so much!

“No fair. *I* want to sit on Itchei’s lap, too...” Mini-Asia was moping behind my back, staring at the mini-prez with plain envy.

Ahhhhh, this was just too adorable! She was so innocent that my urge to protect her rocketed through the roof!

Could this have been some form of paternal love? Or maybe brotherly affection? In any case, my mini-prez and mini-Asia possessed an incredible power over me!

“Th-the president and Asia...are adorable...,” Gasper commented timidly.

“Hey, Gasper. Try to get them both to laugh,” I said, adopting the role of a wise upperclassman.

Though seemingly taken aback by this suggestion, he nonetheless nodded cautiously. Gasper placed a hand into his backpack—and pulled out a paper bag.

Suddenly, I had a bad feeling about this.

Rip!

He poked holes in the paper bag with his index and middle fingers.

Plop!

Then he put it over his head! I knew it!

“Hey there, President, Asia. It’s me, Paper Bag Gasper. With this magic, you can boost your confidence a hundred times over.”

Two red, glaring eyes stared out at the girls through the eyeholes.

“...Eeek!”

“...Wahhh!”

The mini-prez and mini-Asia clung to me, trembling in fear.

See! I knew it! They’re scared! Paper Bag Gasper was a bad idea.

Incidentally, Paper Bag Gasper was the result of a power-up that I had given my half-vampire underclassman to help him overcome his social phobia. The idea was that by keeping his face concealed, he might be able to muster the courage to engage with other people.

Regretfully, the transformation left him resembling a monster that instilled fear in those who met him. And that just about does it for my explanation!

“What are you doing, Gasperrrrrrrrrr?!”

I pushed that creep with the bag on his head away! What had he been hoping to accomplish?

“Wh-wh-wh-wh-why...?!” Gasper pleaded.

“Why do you think?! Sneaking up on the prez and Asia was obviously going to

frighten them!”

“I—I... I just wanted to show them that wearing a paper bag can help boost your courage...”

“As if! Anyone watching this will think you’re a pervert about to do something weird to those poor kids! Dammit! I can’t believe I bothered asking you!”

“...Ugh. I’m scared...” Asia was quaking where she stood.

The prez, on the other hand, was trying to act strong. “He’s so scary! But Rias won’t cry!”

Ah, the both of them sure were cute!

“It’s all right now. Everything will be okay. I’ve scared Gasper off,” I assured them, patting the two girls on the head.

“Ugh, you’re awful, Issei. I’m going to go and hide in my box!”

I don’t know when Gasper had gone to retrieve his cardboard sanctuary, but he quickly withdrew into its depths.

Cardboard Box Gasper was essentially the guy’s stationary mode. Whenever something proved too much for that purehearted cross-dressing vampire boy, he would pull out that cardboard box and crawl into his own little world. Don’t try that at home, though! You could get shipped out somewhere by mistake!

“Oh-ho-ho. The president and Asia really are adorable. Perhaps you and I should raise them, Issei?” Akeno suggested happily.

“Me and you?”

“Yes. You can be the father, and I’ll be the mother. That would make us a couple.”

“A couple?!”

A scene began to play out in my mind’s eye upon hearing that keyword.

“I’m home!” I called as I returned from work.

“Oh dear. Welcome back, darling,” Akeno replied, appearing in the entranceway wearing an apron!



“Daddy! Welcome home!”

“Let’s play a game, Daddy!”

I was greeted at the door by the mini-prez and mini-Asia, my two daughters.

“Now, now, you two. Your father is tired from work, so don’t make a scene, all right?” Akeno chided.

“No! I want to play with Daddy!”

“Me too! I’ve been waiting like a good girl!”

"It's all right, Akeno. Come on, girls. Let's have some fun. Ha-ha-ha!"

“You’re too soft on them, Issei.”

...

Wonderful. Spectacular, even. What I would give for a life like that! It would be fantastic!

“...Issei’s drooling again... Look at his lecherous eyes... He’s off in a fantasy world of his own again...”

“Ha-ha-ha, he’s probably envisioning a day as a family man. Issei’s the sort that enjoys leaving the real world behind now and then.”

Koneko and Kiba were talking about me behind my back.

Ah, even if it was only a brief musing, it was wonderful to imagine.

At that moment, Azazel rose to his feet. “Well, I guess I should try to find a way to undo this. You guys start looking for a cure, too, got it? Leaving those two like this would put us all in a bind. Let’s split up for now. We can contact one another once someone finds a solution.”

“““““Roger!””””” we all replied in unison.

Huh? We're splitting up? So we can't just fix them here and now?

“I’ll start by examining any remaining traces of demonic power that might explain what Rias was trying to accomplish. Issei, I’m going to take a look at your room where the technique was first activated,” Akeno said.

"In that case, Koneko and I should try looking elsewhere," Kiba suggested.

“Okay,” Koneko agreed, and the two of them left the living room.

“Hmm. I don’t know much about demonic power. I guess I could keep training Gasper? Hey, vampire, get outta there! If you don’t, I’ll slice you clean in half!”

“Kyaaaaagh! Xenovia’s bullying me again!”

With a wailing cardboard box in her arms, Xenovia departed.

“I’ll leave these two to you, Issei.” With that, Azazel vanished as well.

Only the girls and I remained in the living room.

“I—I guess I’m babysitting, then?”

“Let’s play, Itchei!”

“...Hugsies!”

I embraced them both, but honestly, I had no idea what to do now.



“A cat!”

“So cute!”

“It is, isn’t it?”

Ultimately, I’d wound up taking mini-prez and mini-Asia for a walk, holding their hands as we made our way down the street. They were interested in practically everything they laid eyes on, dragging me from one place to another.

And if you’re wondering how it had come to this, it’s simply because the girls insisted on going out.

I still didn’t understand how they’d been transformed into young children. Just what had these two been hoping to accomplish?

Anyway, for the time being, our destination was the local convenience store. With any luck, buying them ice cream would get them to calm down.

Now that the noble and elegant Rias had become a kid, she was behaving like any other little girl. Even Asia, who was usually quiet and docile, was acting spoiled and selfish.

That was all perfectly okay with me! Still, raising a child sure seemed tough...

“Yo! Issei!” called a familiar voice.

Up ahead were my buddies Matsuda and Motohama.

Had they been on their way to my place for a summer vacation hangout? Normally, I wouldn’t have minded, but why did those annoying guys have to show up *now*?

“What are you up to...? Are those kids?!”

“Hey, hey, hey! What are you doing with two little girls?!”

Unsurprisingly, Matsuda and Motohama were both taken aback by the sight of Rias and Asia.

“A-are they *yours*?!”

“Judging by their hair color, they’re Rias’s and Asia’s kids, maybe...?”

My friends were quick to speculate wildly! Did they really believe I’d had children that quickly?!

“They’re obviously not mine!” I exclaimed.

Being a father without so much as experiencing the baby-making first was plain cruel! I wanted to tell Matsuda and Motohama as much, but I kept that to myself. I *did* live with some incredible beauties, after all, and thought it might be fun to bask in my friends’ envy a little.

I tried to offer excuses, but that wasn’t enough to stop them from elaborating on their horribly inaccurate assumptions.

“Looks like they’re three, maybe four years old... Issei’s seventeen now, right...? I guess it’s possible?”

“Seriously?! Y-you’re telling me he’s been laughing about us behind our backs all this time?! That he’s only been *pretending* to be a virgin...?!”

Matsuda and Motohama stared my way, their expressions incomprehensibly stern.

“H-hold on a minute! J-just what are you guys planning?!”

“We need to call an emergency summit!” Matsuda quickly pulled out his cell phone. “It’s me here! It’s Case D! Case D!”

Wh-who's he calling?! And what's "Case D" supposed to mean?!

Flash!

Meanwhile, Motohama snapped pictures of mini-prez and mini-Asia!

Hey! What's that for?!

"Matsuda! We have the proof! Let's retreat to the headquarters of the Issei Suppression Committee!"

"Yeah! Issei! You'd better be ready for us when we come back! We'll be wishing misfortune on you the whole time!"

My two buddies quickly skedaddled.

"Hey!" I called out after them. "What's this about an 'Issei Suppression Committee'?! And misfortune?! Stop! What kind of friends leave their buddy behind?!"

""Die!"" they cried out ruthlessly from a distance.



Maybe I was a little tired, because when we finally arrived home from the convenience store, I collapsed onto the sofa in the living room.

"It's so cold!"

"Yummy!"

Mini-prez and mini-Asia were eating their ice cream with relish. But now I had a new problem. All kinds of weird rumors about me would undoubtedly be circulating by the time summer vacation was over and I went back to class. I was terrified!

While cradling my head in my arms, I wondered what I was going to do. And that was when Azazel returned.

"I found a way to undo it."

He was dressed like a member of an expeditionary team. He handed me what looked like a Western-style sword and shield.

Huh? What are these for?

"We need to collect materials, the kind filled with latent magic. Mixing them

together will get us an antidote to restore them to their true ages. Let's get going, Issei!" He pointed outside the house, seemingly enjoying himself.

"Huh? Go? Where?" Kiba asked with evident doubt as he reentered the room. "We've worked out how to bring the president and Asia back. First, we found some vestigial traces of the technique lingering in the room, so we're currently trying to work out how to read the spell backward to reverse its effects. With the documents that Azazel shared with us, it will only be a matter of time before Akeno and I can restore them."

That was a relief. It sounded like the others would be able to deduce what Rias had been trying to accomplish.

"That's fine and all, but I believe it would be best not to put all our eggs in one basket. We should try the antidote plan, too," Azazel asserted. "However, we're going to need ingredients. And you and I are going to fetch them, Issei."

"And where are these ingredients exactly?"

"A bunch of different countries. Akeno, you come, too. Issei ought to be able to learn the ropes with you and me leading the way."

Akeno's expression soured at this instruction, and she flashed us all a displeased frown. She didn't exactly get along with Azazel, after all.

"...As much as I don't want to, if it means helping the president, Asia, and Issei, I'll join you," she responded, her arms crossed.

That gesture, with her elbows pressing against her chest, really emphasized her breasts!

"What about me, Teach?" Xenovia questioned as she pulled Gasper by the collar.

So she really has been training him?

"Keep at it with Gasper."

"Got it. Come on, Gasper. Let's see you practice dodging the Durendal's holy wave attacks."

"Ahhhhhhh! This is a real-life vampire hunt!"

Xenovia dragged the poor Gasper from the room again.

At least she looks like she's having fun. Do your best to get stronger, Gasper.

"Where are you going, Itchei?"

"...Don't leave us."

The prez and Asia were tugging at my pant legs. Oh dear. What was I supposed to do with them?

"Hmm. They can come along with us, I suppose," Azazel decided. "I'll make sure to keep them out of danger."

There was nothing to worry about with the all-powerful governor of the fallen angels tagging along.

And so we set out, using magic circles to jump ultra-long distances as we began to collect all the necessary ingredients.

We had only just started our expedition, and yet...

"Roooooooooaaaaarrrrr!"

An ominous howl was directed my way!

In the mountains of a certain far-off country, I was facing down a huge monster with the sword and shield Azazel had given me!

The enemy was a minotaur, a humanoid beast with a bull's head! It must have been at least four or five meters tall! It was ridiculously huge! Its arms and chest were enormous! Despite its bull head, its mouth was lined with fangs. What kind of bovine was carnivorous?!

Worst of all, I was the only one who had to deal with this threat!

Vwoosh!

The minotaur's enormous battle-ax cleaved through the air! The weapon was bigger than I was! A single hit meant an early death! It would slice me clean in two!

This was all for our first ingredient—the minotaur's liver! Yup, we were here to hunt this creature!

“That’s it, Issei! You can do it!” Azazel called out from behind me as he prepared a cooking pot.

“Teach! I’m going to get killed here! There’s no way I can fight this beast!” I screamed, pleading for help.

There was no way I could take down this colossal bull monster with some dinky sword!

“What are you going on about? Your love for Rias and Asia should be enough to see you through this! Besides, I’m keeping careful supervision.”

Despite Azazel’s claim, I knew he was actually checking the soup stock in the pot! He’d even brought out a table and gas stove!

“I’ve cut the ingredients, Azazel.”

“Oh, thanks, Akeno. Now we just need to wait for that idiot to slay the minotaur. All we need is the liver, so we can eat the rest.”

“I’ve never had minotaur meat before.”

“The minotaurs around here are amazing. One taste, and you’ll be completely hooked. It’s on the level of organic *Matsusaka* beef. Rias, Asia, here are your plates.”

“Meat!”

“Mr. Cow!”

“Heeeeeeey! Quit acting like this is a family picnic when I’m literally caught in mortal combat! This minotaur is about to rip me to shreds!”

I was in a desperate situation and doing my damndest to avoid the minotaur’s every strike!

“Rias, Asia! The butcher will be delivering the meat soon! Thank goodness!”

“Teach! Your *butcher* is about to get butchered himself! By the bull you’ve sent him to hunt! It’s too strong! I’ll be dead before I can deliver anything!”

Wha—?!

The minotaur swung its battle-ax down once more, slamming it into the ground hard enough to leave a crater! There was no way I could parry those

attacks!

“Help me already! Come on, you’re supposed to be the governor of the fallen angels! Doesn’t that make you like the last boss or something?!”

“It does indeed. I’m really strong. If this were a role-playing game, I’d be like the secret enemy you encounter after clearing the ending. Be thankful you’ve got me as an ally.”

“Then would you mind actually doing something?! I’m liable to meet my ancestors here!”

“Talk about boring. If I shoot a ray of light out of my hand to defeat that creature, it will all be over in a second. Is that really what you want?”

Azazel launched a radiant beam from his hand.

Minotaur defeated.

Item received.

“See how quick that was? Totally underwhelming.”

“Underwhelming is fine! You’re a billion times stronger than I am, so that should’ve been your responsibility from the beginning!”

As we engaged in this exchange, I could hear a deep rumbling approaching from afar.

When I turned toward it—I laid eyes on what looked like a group of charging minotaurs.

Whaaaaaaaaaat?!

An all-you-can-eat buffet of organic *Matsusaka* beef! Had they realized one of their friends was in trouble and came to assist? I could feel death’s cold hand on my nape! Those bulls would eat *me*!

“Oh dear. It looks like a whole herd,” Akeno remarked with a troubled expression.

Azazel, beside her, looked vaguely annoyed. “Tch. Talk about lame.”

He pointed a finger at the approaching horde, and—

Stzsssss!

A ray of light shot forth.

Booooooooooooooooooooooom!

A massive explosion ripped through the group of minotaurs, taking a huge chunk of the surrounding scenery with them!

That attack was insane! Azazel seriously was as powerful as a hidden final boss!

“Hmph. Now that they’re out of the way, get to it, Issei.” With that, Azazel gave me a thumbs-up!

With that many of the monsters, Azazel could have taken all the livers he wanted! Yet instead, he’d reduced them to ash!

“Can’t you use that attack on this one, too?! You can end this battle now! Weren’t there even stronger ones than this guy in that herd?!”

“Quit your griping and fight. There’s no need to worry. I’ll take care of anyone who might interfere, even if they’re a Demon King.”

“Come on, Teach! Your level’s way higher than mine!”

Whether good fortune or bad, the minotaur had been left terrified by Azazel’s power. I could understand how it felt! The idea of going up against someone like that scared me out of my wits!

Seizing my opportunity, I pushed my sympathy aside and lashed out with my sword!



Somehow, I’d managed to acquire a minotaur’s liver. And with it safely in our possession, we were off to the next destination.

In front of us, Akeno was dressed in no more than a thin cloth!

“Will this do?” she asked.

Her enthralling body stimulated me all over! Ah, she sure had huge breasts! And I could see her gorgeous white thighs through the slit in her gown! Her legs truly were beautiful!

“Yeah, unicorns only let down their guard around pure virgins,” Azazel explained.

As you might have guessed, we were after a unicorn’s horn this time. The five of us had come to a beautiful spring in a forest. Apparently, unicorns only approached pure and unsullied maidens.

Naturally, Akeno had been selected to fulfill this role. The rest of us were hiding in the shadows, trying to quiet the sounds of our breathing until our quarry appeared. The thin gown Akeno was wearing supposedly possessed the ability to suppress her demonic powers. A unicorn would’ve likely steered clear of a demon otherwise.

Akeno stood alone by the side of the spring as we kept watch from nearby. The prez and Asia were both sitting quietly on my lap.

That’s it. Be good now, girls.

“Ah, maybe this sounds weird coming from me, but Akeno sure has an erotic body, huh?” Azazel whispered beside me.

He was staring at her thoughtfully. It wasn’t a lecherous gaze, though. To me, it felt closer to one of familial affection, the sort a person might have when they were surprised by a daughter or sister’s growth.

“I agree. Why is she so sexy?” I replied quietly.

“That’s her fallen angel blood at work there. Fallen angel women tend to be naturally sensual.”

“Seriously?!”

I couldn’t deny that the fallen angel ladies I’d met previously had all been incredibly attractive!

“Yeah. Part of the job involves seducing men from other races. Their bodies are shaped to stir desire. Still, Akeno has to be top-class. If you get an opportunity with her, you shouldn’t let it slip.”

“I—I mean, I would love to, if I ever had a chance...”

“Good, good. It’s still my job to watch over her. So it’s a relief to hear that.” Azazel nodded to himself.

What was he talking about, exactly...?

“Er. H-ha, I guess so...”

“You’re making a perverted face, Itchei.”

“Pervert.”

The two girls were pulling at my cheeks. They looked angry. What had gotten them all upset?

“Ugh, don’t pull...”

“Looks like you’ve got a lot of trouble ahead of you...,” Azazel remarked. “Ah, there it is.” I turned back to the spring and spied a white horse standing nearby. And it really did have a horn sticking out from its head. “Unicorn horns have been used in medicine since antiquity. They’re also effective in dispelling magic techniques. That’s why we need one.”

“Are you sure? Will it grow back?” I questioned.

“Don’t worry about that. I’ll apply a special medicine to make it regenerate.”

Evidently, Teach had put a good deal of thought into appropriate aftercare.

The unicorn approached Akeno. The moment her hand grazed against it...

“Hyah!”

Thump!

She karate-chopped its neck! The unicorn, having been caught off guard, fell to the ground with a *thud*.

Once we were sure it was out cold, we leaped from the shadows and began removing its horn.

Sorry about this, unicorn.

She may have been dressed as an innocent maiden, but Akeno was undoubtedly still a demon.

Thus far, our targets had effectively been a bull and a horse. At this rate, maybe our next prey would be a boar?

If only that had been the case...

The final ingredient...couldn't have been worse!

"Roooooooooaaaaarrrrrr!"

A literal monster, at least fifteen meters tall, bellowed fiercely. It was a red-scaled behemoth. Its arcing wings spread wide—a dragon!

"This is a flame dragon, a creature that can wield fire. We need one of the scales from its back for our last ingredient," Azazel explained calmly.

Impossible! Absolutely impossible! No matter how you looked at it, this was a hulking monster! I had met a young dragon before. The one Asia had recruited as her familiar. It had been small enough to hold in your arms. There was no way I would be able to carry this guy!

Against this thing, my sword was nothing more than a toothpick!

"...T-Teach... This is..."

I was seriously trembling in fear, but that didn't stop Azazel from responding plainly, "The dragon in you is loads stronger than this one. Show him who's boss."

A legendary dragon, the Red Dragon Emperor, dwelled within me. There was no denying that! But I still couldn't draw on his power properly, so fighting this creature was out of the question!

"Roooooooooaaaaarrrrrr!"

The dragon let loose, spewing out a massive plume of flame!

"Arrrrrrggggghhhhh!"

All I could do was try to flee the oncoming barrage, tears streaming from my eyes! One hit and I would be a pile of ash!

It was hot! Seriously hot! Why did I have to endure so many near-death experiences today?!

"Hey, Teach! Shouldn't you and Akeno be backing me up?!"

He *had* said something like that before we had set out on our multi-country expedition! Yet they hadn't offered me a drop of aid so far!

“You got to see Akeno in her erotic getup a short while ago, no?”

“Yeah!”

I’d already saved that image in my brain!

“Then our job here is done.”

“Seriouslyyyyyy?!”

My eyes almost shot out from my skull at what I was hearing! That was it?! Look, I was the last person who was going to complain about seeing a nearly naked Akeno, but still!

“This is still too cruel, Azazel,” Akeno said, coming to my defense.

Ah, Akeno! I knew I could count on your kind nature!

“It’s fine, it’s fine. I’m sure you’d like to see him act a little manly, right?”

“...Th-that *would* be nice.”

Huh?! That’s enough to change her mind?!

Shocked though I was, I couldn’t risk stopping to gawk! I had to keep dodging the dragon’s tail and fiery breath attacks! It took all my energy just to do that much! My breathing was already ragged!

“Teach! I’m literally going to die! I can’t keep this up!”

Perhaps my desperate pleas finally got through to him, because Azazel shook his head. “All right,” he said. “I guess I’ve got no choice. How about this?”

He snapped his finger, and a huge magic circle unfolded on the ground below us.

The circle emanated one dark pulse after another as some huge figure appeared in the middle of it!

“What’s *thaaaaat*?!”

Screeeeeeeeeeech!

A humanoid super robot as large as the dragon took shape before me.

Hold on, a mecha?! I blinked quickly in disbelief, not sure what to think about the world anymore!

“Where did that thing come from?! Outer space?!” I exclaimed.

“It’s from my secret base under the pool at Kuou Academy! As promised!” Azazel said with a wink.

“You can’t just repurpose our school however you like!”

Had he been building this thing while we had all been busy with swimming practice?! If the prez, the secret ruler of Kuou Academy, found out about this, she would be livid!

“This is the Maouger, a demon support robot built from fallen angel technology! Specially ordered by Sirzechs himself! It’s powered by the hatred and negative energy of every human on the face of the earth! And the world is overflowing with hatred! It’s practically this planet’s natural ecology!” Azazel explained, now standing atop the robot’s shoulder.

“M-Maouger?! This thing clearly belonged in a different franchise! And powered by hatred?! Didn’t that make it a machine of pure evil?! Could we really afford to use such a weapon?! And what was Sirzechs thinking, ordering something like this built?! And why would he ask the wicked fallen angel governor of all people?!”

“Don’t worry about the details. Just go with the flow! Do it, Maouger! Absorb the hatred of the world! You’re a masterpiece born of this dark age!”

The Maouger directed one of its arms toward the dragon. Man, Azazel’s mind truly was wicked!

“Eat this! Rocket Punch!” Azazel cried.

Booooooooooom!

With a burst of fire, the robot’s arm launched straight for the dragon! It really was a rocket punch!

“Rooooooooaaaaarrrrr...”

That high-speed fist sped right by the dragon, vanishing into the distant horizon.

...

Huh? Was that it? Did it just...?

“Teach. U-um, let me ask you something.”

“What?”

“Th-that rocket punch isn’t coming back, right?” I asked.

Azazel closed his eyes for a moment. “And so, the hatred of the world has been scattered to the wind,” he responded with a cool smile.

“What’s that supposed to mean?! You’re saying it’ll just keep flying?! There’s no way that’s eco-friendly!”

Where had it gone?! I shuddered to think it might land in some distant nation!

Ahhhhh! To the citizens of whatever place it lands in, I’m sorry! I didn’t mean for a gigantic fist to show up in your territory uninvited!

“Alas. In the end, robots are mere weapons... Can you hear me, Sirzechs? How many times must we dip our hands in evil before we can escape this way of life...?”

“Stop acting all dramatic! Besides, did you really need the Maouger? Is it stronger than you?”

“Of course not! I’m way more powerful!” Azazel declared, shamelessly pointing to himself with full confidence.

“Then why’d you waste time building it?! It’s a waste of resources! You could have finished this with that beam attack from earlier!”

“Just so you know, there are days when I can’t use that.”

“I literally saw you fire it today!”

Amid my argument with Azazel, the dragon let out another roar as it plunged down upon us.

“Shut up!”

Stzsssss!

Azazel, evidently snapping in anger, launched a luminous ray.

Thump...

That gargantuan dragon collapsed to the ground in one hit. After all that, he didn't even need the Maouger or me at all!

"Hmph. As if a wild dragon could ever lay a finger on *me*."

There was nothing I could say in response to Azazel's final boss-like victory phrase.

And so, thanks to all our efforts—mostly Azazel's—we had succeeded in gathering all the necessary ingredients.

He truly could've done it all by himself. Why did he insist on tossing me in harm's way...?



At long last, we arrived home.

We had all the necessary components now. I was completely exhausted, both physically and mentally.

How many times had I almost bit the big one today...?

According to the others, the prez and Asia had been trying to perform some kind of ritual in my bedroom, and when it had failed, they had both been transformed into younger versions of themselves.

To reverse the effects of that ritual, we had decided to try using a new spell in the same location.

The prez and Asia were seated in the center of a large magic circle, drinking the potion we had brewed from all the gathered ingredients.

"It's so bitter..."

"Ew..."

They both had to hold back tears as they forced themselves to swallow the mixture.

"With that out of the way, I'll activate the spell and turn them back to normal." So saying, Akeno poured her demonic powers into the array, which gave off a glow.

With this, we would finally be able to return the pair to normal. It felt like we

had been waiting for this moment for so long...

As I breathed a sigh of relief, Azazel turned to me. "Hey, Issei."

"Yeah?"

"What would you do if we could only use the potion and magic circle on one of them?" he asked.

I didn't need to think about my answer. "I would use the Boosted Gear to double its effect!"

Azazel let out a chuckle at this response. "Ha-ha-ha! Looks like that didn't take much consideration! Good idea! I almost forgot you could do that. Having a legendary dragon around must come in handy with those two, eh?"

"...?" I wasn't sure what he was getting at, but it was true that I'd stop at nothing to help Asia and the prez.

The light of the spell intensified, bathing the two girls in its all-enveloping radiance. And then, it happened.

"Kyaaaaagh! Issei! Help meeeee! Xenovia's going to kill meeeee!"

Gasper burst into the room with Xenovia hot on his heels.

"Ngh! Get back here! All I want is for you to drink this healthy garlic juice!"

In Xenovia's hand was a glass filled with a strangely colored liquid.

Uh-oh! Gasper's heading straight for me!

"Help me, Isseeeeeiiii!"

D-don't!

Thump! Gasper and Xenovia all but tackled me, sending me flying backward into the magic circle!

Augh!

The array on the floor released a powerful and luminous burst!

When the light subsided, the prez and Asia, still in the center of the circle, had been returned to their proper selves.

"...Looks like we're back to normal."

“Phew, we’re okay!”

Thank goodness! They were both safe! My big-bosomed prez and my adorable Asia!

“So how did it happen?” Azazel asked them both.

The prez and Asia exchanged embarrassed glances.

“...A short while back, Asia and I were interested in what Issei had been like as a child. So we thought that maybe we could transform him into a younger version of himself for a little while...”

“And when you tried casting your spell, it rebounded on you both, huh? Geez.” Azazel let out an exasperated sigh.

The two young women turned red, very obviously mortified.

They had been trying to turn *me* into a little kid, huh? Ah, right. They *had* loved looking at all those photos of my younger years. I guess that explained it.

“I’m very sorry.”

“Me too.”

The two of them bowed to all of us in apology.

“It’s fine,” I answered with a smile. “I’m just relieved to have you both back.”

“Issei... I can still remember everything from when we were turned into children,” the prez said.

“Yes. You were so kind to us both, Issei,” Asia added.

“You fought so hard for both of us, so desperately...”

“I’m really grateful...”

They were staring at me with tears in their eyes! Now it was *my* turn to be struck with embarrassment.

Huh? Maybe it’s my imagination, but they seem a little bigger than usual...

Hold on. Why did it feel as if *all* my surroundings were larger than they should have been...? Had everyone always been so tall?

I glanced around nervously until I noticed Azazel grinning in my direction.

“Looks like it’s your turn. Ha-ha-ha! Look how teeny he is!”

“Wha—?” I gawked. Not sure what he was saying, I turned my attention to my hands. They *were* small!

Huh?!

I looked in the mirror—only to find a toddler staring back at me!

“Whaaaaaat?!” I cried out loud.

Azazel flashed a mischievous smile. “Looks like the spell must have done something to you when you were flung into the magic circle.”

“Whaaaaaaaaaat?! You mean *I’ve* been turned into a kid?! But I can still remember everything!”

“Guess that means it worked as intended this time. Well done, Rias, Asia.”

They looked unabashedly joyous at his praise!

“Ah, Issei! You’re just as cute as I imagined!” the prez exclaimed, embracing me tightly!

What’s with her reaction?! I’m not some doll!

“P-President! Can I hug him, too?”

“Oh dear. I don’t suppose I can take a turn after Asia, then?”

Asia and Akeno were getting all emotional as well! Their eyes were positively sparkling in delight!

“I think you’re cute, too, Issei.”

“S-so do I.”

Man, Xenovia and Gasper, the ones responsible for this fiasco, sure had some guts to say that so calmly! *Apologize! Apologize already! I can’t go outside looking like this! And how will I explain this to my parents?!* It was a huge problem!

“I imagine you’ll be all right if we leave you this way for a bit. Besides, Rias, Asia, and Akeno look pleased enough. Yup, it’s a happy ending,” Azazel stated cruelly!

I wasn't happy at all!

"Wait! What about that potion?!"

With a ruthless grin, Azazel replied, "There's no more left."

No! How could he be so wicked?!

"Teach! Can't you get more ingredients?! It should be a piece of cake with that laser beam attack of yours!"

"Don't wanna. I've had enough fun for today. You'll just have to put up with being like that for a while. I'm going home."

Azazel was seriously awful! Today had been all about having a good time for him! But for me, it had been one misfortune after another!

"I'll head home, too, then."

"...I need to finish my homework research project."

Kiba and Koneko were heading out, too! How could they do this to me?!

"Nooooo! Someone help meeeeeeeeeeee!"

Summer vacation had only just begun, but it already looked like I alone would be reeling in misfortune!

Life.6

Three Hundred Isseis

I had found myself trapped inside some mysterious capsule-like device!

“Ha-ha-ha! You really did pick a great time to drop in, Issei!”

The one letting out a mirthful laugh as he activated this experimental contraption was none other than Azazel!

I had come to bring some tea to his laboratory when he suddenly exclaimed, “Good timing!” And with no more than that, he had thrown me right in here! I had no idea what was going on!

Thud! Thud!

No matter how hard I beat my fists against the walls of the capsule, it wouldn’t budge!

“What are you going to do to me, Teach?!”

“Well, there’s something I’ve wanted to attempt for a while, but I never had a proper test subject. And when you arrived with tea, I figured it was the perfect opportunity.”

“That’s it?! You’re saying you’ve got no issue using a student like a guinea pig and tossing him into some weird machine on a whim?!”

“Progress demands sacrifices.”

“What?! You’re already prepared to lose me?! Get me out of this thing! Nooooooooooooo!”

Fwoooooooooooooom.

Beg as I did, Azazel had activated the contraption anyway! There was another capsule next to mine, identical in every way save that it was empty. Was I the only one trapped?

“Just what kind of experiment is this?!” I demanded.

Azazel glanced at me over his shoulder, opening his mouth to speak, when—

Bang! Booooooooooom!

There was a brilliant flash of light as I was engulfed in a powerful explosion.

“Cough! Gah!”

Ugh, there was so much smoke. But at least I was free to climb out of the device.

Glancing around, I found the capsule I had been trapped inside was broken. Had it ruptured when the experiment failed?

The room was in disarray from the blast, littered with broken objects and pieces of equipment.

There was no sign of Azazel. He must have grown bored of this failed test and left without saying anything.

I wish he’d stayed so I could give him a piece of my mind, though. Using a student for his own private mad scientist procedures made him unfit to be a teacher! Perhaps I should’ve expected as much from the leader of the fallen angels. He definitely had a wicked way of thinking.

“Damn that Azazel, disappearing as soon as this experiment of his was over,” I spat under my breath as I quickly left the laboratory.

I headed for Kuou Academy’s old school building. As I reached the clubroom, I heard a noise.

“Eek!”

It was a girl—Asia!

Following the sound to its origin, I discovered her standing stark naked!

Bah! Blood gushed from my nose. Hmm! Yep, you’ve sure matured a lot since we first met, Asia! As a brother-like figure to you, I’m moved!

“S-suddenly destroying all of my clothes was cruel, Issei.” She was staring up at me, her eyes brimming with tears.

Huh? What's she talking about? I had no memory of doing that.

It was true that I had a special move, Dress Break, which could instantly shred the clothes of any girl I touched, but there was no way I would use it on Asia. Even if I had, I wouldn't forget the second after I'd done so.

"Hey! Stop right there, Issei!"

This time, it was Xenovia's voice that echoed down the hall. It sounded like she was chasing someone.

I glanced over my shoulder—only to find *myself* running around the corner of the corridor!

Hold on, how can I be looking at myself?!

The guy was my spitting image. He dashed right past Asia and me, and I caught sight of his lecherous face and prodigious nosebleed as he went by.

Xenovia rounded the corner not long after, and she was just as naked as Asia was! She had a razor-sharp blade in her hands, too!

Her eyes darted around wildly, and when they locked on me, she began to move in with her Holy Sword at the ready, her breasts swaying all the while!

I was a demon, so I was done for if she hit me with that! Deader than dead!

"What makes you think you can strip me naked and then run off without even getting down to it?!"

Wait, that's why she's pissed?! Her way of thinking was utterly incomprehensible! She lunged toward me, prepared to strike!

"That's enough, you two," scolded someone unseen.

Xenovia froze, her Holy Sword coming to a stop just inches from my face.

I scanned the area and saw Akeno standing beside Azazel, along with another guy who looked just like me!



"The whole academy is filled with Isseis," the prez stated with a sigh, resting a hand against her forehead.

An emergency meeting of the Occult Research Club was currently in session.

All of the Gremory Familia members were standing by the window, observing the situation in the new school building through sets of binoculars.

I-it was filled with copies of me!

They were running amok throughout the school, chasing after all girls who were still on campus now that classes were over, and using my Dress Break technique on every last one of them!

There was so much bare skin that I didn't have time to visually devour it all!

"This horde of Isseis are making their way through the whole school, stripping every girl they come across," the prez explained with a look of stern worry.

For her part, Koneko was staring formidably through her own set of binoculars, her petite body all but emanating menace. "...I was attacked by one on the way here. I didn't know what he was trying to do, but I sent him flying."

Whaaaaa—?! Her rage was terrifying! Technically, I didn't do anything wrong, but it still felt like she wanted to hurt me!

"What should we do with the one we caught earlier?" Akeno questioned, glancing toward a cage in the corner of the room.

Contained within was one of those Issei copies!

"This is the one who blew off Asia's and Xenovia's clothes, isn't it?" Akeno reached out to touch the figure inside the cage, when—

"Show me your breasts! Your breasts!" he cried out with a lecherous grin as he tried to attack her!

Whoa! That faker was a real menace!

"Everyone will need to be cautious. Especially the girls. It looks like those Issei duplicates have a much stronger libido than the original," Azazel stated.

"S-so this is the one who destroyed our clothes?"

"I see. His face *is* much nastier than our Issei. A lot more pervy."

Asia and Xenovia, having changed into fresh uniforms, stared warily at my imprisoned look-alike.

I was just happy we could all agree that I wasn't the one who had attacked

them. I would never use my Dress Break ability against Asia, who I thought of as a younger sister, and there was no way I could ever risk using it against Xenovia. Her unreadable emotions meant she was a powder keg that could go off at any moment.

Admittedly, I *had* used Dress Break to vaporize Asia's clothes in the past...

"Hold on, Azazel. What exactly were you trying to accomplish with your experiment?" the prez asked.

"Well, the first doppelgänger started going berserk while I was testing him. Because of that, I ended up with a bunch of extra copies. Anyway, I activated a barrier around the academy the second things went south, so they shouldn't be able to escape the school grounds. So I *did* keep the damage to a minimum."

How dare he say all that so plainly while lounging on the sofa!

"What?! Why were you conducting insane tests in the first place?! And what do you mean, *doppelgänger*?!" I demanded.

"A doppelgänger is like a spiritual copy of a person. It's a phenomenon wherein you can come face-to-face with yourself," Akeno explained.

So those things really were me?! Had that experiment produced duplicates?

"Ha-ha-ha! Issei chose a good time to come visit my lab, that's all! One copy would have been enough, but I slipped up and made a bunch of 'em with enhanced libido! Ha-ha-ha! What a bother!" Azazel said with a hearty laugh.

H-he didn't seem remorseful in the slightest!

"Are you saying this is all because of a *slight error*?!" I demanded.

"Look, how many doppelgängers are we talking about here?" the prez asked with a sigh, still covering her face with her hand.

"About three hundred."

""""""""Three hundred?!""""""""

We were all taken aback by Azazel's words! Naturally! There were *three hundred* extra Isseis?!

"That's... Azazel! Do you realize what you've done?! Are you trying to hurl this

academy into the depths of darkness?! You do realize that Issei is no ordinary pervert, don't you?!" Kiba shouted in indignation.

I didn't get to see this side of him very often. He'd said something pretty rude about me, I thought.

"...That many sick freaks walking the grounds is the stuff of nightmares," Koneko muttered, quivering with rage.

That murderous intent of hers was leveled squarely at me! How was this *my* fault?!

"Eeeeeek! Th-three hundred Isseis... Th-th-they'll strip *me* naked, tooooooooooooo!" Gasper cried from inside his cardboard box.

Shut up! As if I would ever destroy a guy's clothes by mistake!

"I'd love to have an Issei of my own, but not one that thinks only of sex. No, the original is the best by far," Akeno said, embracing me in a hug.

Ah, I could feel her breasts pressing up against me!

Thank you, Akeno! You understand!

"Indeed. In any event, we need do something about this," the prez declared as she pinched my cheek.

Ow. That hurt, Rias...

After talking to someone on his cell phone, Kiba announced, "They've already caused considerable damage throughout the academy. Most of the girls still on campus have had their clothes destroyed by Dress Break. The student council—that is, the Sitri Familia—is trying to mitigate things, but seeing as most of their members are female, too, they're having a difficult time making any progress."

The student council was composed wholly of demons like us. And apparently, Kiba was in contact with them. More importantly, however, it sounded like those me-look-alikes were wreaking havoc!

I'm really sorry about this, Chairwoman Sona and Saji!

Azazel had deployed a small magic circle in the air in front of him, operating it with his fingers like a touch screen.

Flash!

A moment later, a blinding burst of light seemed to course through the entire academy!

When it subsided, Azazel began to explain. “I’ve put the remaining students to sleep to keep this from getting any more out of hand. And I’ve placed all the schoolgirls behind individual barriers. That should be enough to stop those Issei copies from doing anything indecent to them while they’re unconscious.”

Seriously? He did all that with one surge of light? The power of the governor knew no limits, huh?

“““““Thank you.”””””

Azazel bathed in the applause and compliments of our female members...

Why did I feel so conflicted about this? This wasn’t my fault, and yet it felt like everyone was blaming me!

The fallen angel rose to his feet and declared, “All that’s left is to annihilate those Isseis. They should go up in a puff of smoke once they take damage.”

I knew he wasn’t talking about *me*, but for him to use the word *annihilate* in that way... It left me feeling like an invasive pest.

“Well, there’s three hundred of them, so think of this like squashing bugs. An extermination.”

“Don’t say what I’m already thinking! Why are you so mean, Teach?!” I cried.

He was the one responsible!

“One Issei is enough.”

“I concur, President. Too many are liable to cause considerable damage. Shall we dispose of them?”

Rias and Kiba were fired up!

“...A true enemy of all women. The worst phenomenon imaginable. We have to destroy them.”

Wha—?!

Koneko struck her fist out, clearly champing at the bit to smash my face! Our expressionless superhuman girl was a force to be reckoned with!

It looked like none of them were particularly bothered by what Azazel had done and were instead directing their energy toward defeating the copycat Isseis.

You're awful, all of you! I'm the biggest victim here! Seriously, I'm going to break down into tears!

"All right, everyone. Let's get to strategy. Don't underestimate the technology of the fallen angels!"

""""""""Yes, sir!""""""""

Thus, we devised a plan to defeat my many doppelgängers.



Using the one copy we had apprehended earlier, we set about developing our battle tactic.

"S-seeing breasts...makes me feel so calm... G-give them to me... Breasts...," the impostor pleaded.

He sounded just like the zombies in an old movie my dad had shown me a long time ago... But this was worse than I had thought. Were these guys suffering from some kind of disease? A breast deficiency syndrome or something?

In any event, we put together our plan of attack.

Strategy 1: Fishing

Azazel pulled an object out from his pocket with a dramatic flourish as a piece of light music sounded from somewhere nearby.

"First, we need a fishing rod. Then we can attach an erotic magazine to the end like this, and we're ready!" He handed each of us one such rod, complete with a pervy magazine to use as bait.

Apparently, we were supposed to dangle them out the windows of the clubroom and wait for my doppelgängers to bite.

The offensive team waited down below, ready to destroy those impostors once they had been enticed by the trap. As it happened, I had been assigned to that group.

However, would such a simple strategy really work? I had my doubts. And was *this* supposed to be the fruit of the scientific and technically advanced fallen angels?! A kindergartener could have devised this plan!

“No matter how sex-obsessed I am, I’m not stupid enough to fall for such an obvious—”

“““““““““Porn magazines!””””””””””

“Erotic pictures!”

“Give ‘em to me!”

“They’re mine!”

How could so many of my doppelgängers swarm around the fishing lures like that?! I was so taken aback that my eyes bulged! Were my copies all right in the head?!

“Th-they’re biting at every line, Azazel!” Kiba, one of the club members in charge of the fishing rods, seemed utterly stupefied by how well this had succeeded.

Thud! Thump!

Koneko lashed out, striking down and eliminating every last doppelgänger that came running for the magazines.

“...What a bloodcurdling haul.”

You could say that again, Koneko! I was utterly aghast!

“But there are other bands of Isseis watching on from the shadows!” Gasper observed, pointing to spots where more fakers were hiding.

Evidently, some of my copies were more cautious than others.

“Use a hardcore magazine for those ones. They’ll come.” So saying, Azazel changed the bait on Gasper’s line.

No, they can't be that stupid, I thought.

“Y-you’re right! Amazing!” Asia quickly landed one of the supposedly cautious doppelgängers with a more explicit erotic book!

While she did seem a little surprised by this, she also looked as if she was enjoying herself! Was she a fan of pervert fishing?

“...Exterminate all the lechers.”

Thud! Thump!

My cute petite underclassman was mercilessly striking down my countless doppelgängers!

“...Another one!”

Wha—?!

Koneko’s superhuman fist came racing my way! Couldn’t she tell I wasn’t one of the impostors?!

Thud!

Gah...! A punch landed straight in my gut! She had aimed right for my solar plexus!

“...K-Koneko... I’m the real one...”

“You can’t fool me. The real Issei’s face is much lewder than yours.”

Is... Is that how she views me?

“Koneko. It seems like this *is* the actual Issei. He hasn’t disappeared after taking damage.”

Only after Xenovia, who was also on the offensive team, pointed this out did Koneko relent.

Ugh. Today was just one calamity after another.

The fishing tactic allowed us to clear out close to half of the doppelgängers.

Unfortunately, nothing would help soothe my conflicted feelings...

Strategy 2: Seduction

Now that none of the copies were falling for our erotic magazine strategy, we

realized we needed a new plan of attack.

“They aren’t going for the pervy books anymore. It looks like even Issei is capable of learning.” I guess Azazel had nothing but cruel insults for me today. “Akeno,” he called out all of a sudden.

My sister-like upperclassman’s usually cheerful expression turned sour. She didn’t get along with the fallen angel one bit.

“What?”

“I’ve got another plan. But we’re gonna need your powers.”

“...As much as I despise the idea of taking orders from you, I’ll hear you out.”

Akeno let Azazel whisper his plan to her, her expression only growing more conflicted.

“I—I suppose it *might* work...”

“I could use Rias, but we should probably keep her in our pocket as a last resort. Starting with you seems best,” replied Azazel.

Akeno nodded with evident reluctance. “I—I understand.”

Huh? What were they talking about?

Akeno used her demonic magic to rearrange a corner of the room into a makeshift fitting area, and she stepped into it.

She’s changing clothes? I found myself pondering what outfit she might don. When she emerged, she was in a bunny-girl costume!

Akenooooo!

Her wondrous legs were clothed in close-fitting tights! That erotic bunny getup emphasized her cleavage magnificently! And those ears completed the image! She already had a sexy body, but this costume boosted her powers beyond my imagination!

“See? Even the real one’s losing his mind over you. This should be supereffective.” Azazel chuckled as he took in my reaction.

I couldn’t help it! How could I *not* get excited for Akeno in a bunny outfit?!

She stepped out from the old school building and, in a loud voice, called out,
“Issei! My breasts are waiting for you!”

There was a brief moment of silence.

“Breasts!”

A wave of doppelgängers that hadn’t fallen for our fishing strategy emerged;
their faces contorted in perverted grins! Where had they all been hiding?!



“Give ‘em to me!”

“They’re mine! Those breasts are mine!”

“Breeeeeeaaaaasts!”

They all wore such lecherous expressions, but they were all deathly serious! Just how much did they want to devour those boobs?! I wanted to have my fill of them, too!

Just when it seemed the doppelgängers would reach Akeno...she struck.

Flash! Booooooooooom!

Lightning crackled as it streaked across the area, rocking the air with thundering sounds and tearing through the impostor Isseis! Whoa! Attacks like that were Akeno’s specialty, and this barrage was enough to eliminate those doppelgängers in an instant!

Talk about effective. My doppelgängers hadn’t given so much as a thought to the fact that they would be immediately destroyed and had leaped blindly toward Akeno’s chest—only for her to bury them, and not in a good way.

Watching them all rush to their doom like moths to the flame was enough to bring a tear to my eye.

Seriously, you guys... What are you doing...?

This bunny-girl Akeno strategy certainly seemed to be working. Nonetheless, I felt empty inside.

Hey, doppelgängers! Was that momentary flash of hope, that brief glimpse of Akeno’s boobs before your cruel demises, worth it?

“Oh dear. I would gladly dress up in a bunny costume for the real Issei... I’m so sorry about this, all of you,” Akeno said to the fallen doppelgängers.

I was so moved by her words that I wanted to leap into her arms, but I restrained myself.

Azazel tapped me on the shoulder and nodded in understanding. His expression was one of sorrow. And yet, he was holding a video camera. “Do you mind if I show this to my colleagues later? It’s hilarious.”

“I don’t think anyone would blame me for hitting you right now.”

Azazel and I began to lash out at each other.

Later, I wrote a haiku on the matter:

A burst of lightning

Leaping to their destruction

Summer memories

by Issei Hyoudou

Strategy 3: Intimidation from the Governor of the Fallen Angels

We had already eliminated around half of my total doppelgängers prior to employing our bunny girl Akeno stratagem, and now there were only ten remaining.

We decided to adopt a new strategy as we moved on to the final phase of our operation.

“Ha-ha-ha! Foolish Isseis!”

Azazel was standing perched on the roof of the old school building, clad in an outfit that made him look like the boss of an evil organization! And having unfurled his twelve black wings, he certainly looked like some wicked leader.

He cried out at the top of his voice to all the remaining doppelgängers that had yet to show themselves. “Take a look at this!”

Next to Azazel was the prez in a dress! She was the very portrait of a damsel in distress. A captive princess! Well, strictly speaking, she *was* a princess, and that outfit really did look amazing on her!

This was our final gambit—using the prez as a hostage to lure out the remaining doppelgängers.

If Rias was ever genuinely captured by an enemy bigwig, I would lay my life on the line to save her! She was my master and, more importantly, the woman whom I loved most!

Therefore, Azazel’s tactic was to take advantage of my love for her. How

thoroughly despicable of him! I should have expected no less from the head of a real-life evil group!

“Eeek! Help me, Issei!”

The prez didn’t seem wholly enthused about this. Her tone of voice was obviously stilted. I could hardly blame her, however. Even I thought this was a bit of a farce.

Azazel sighed in response to her half-hearted acting. “Hey, Rias. Put a little more feeling into it. You sound phony.”

“That’s easy for you to say... What makes you think this will even bring out Issei’s doppelgängers?”

Just as the prez had said, my remaining impostors were nowhere to be seen.

“You’re right. At this rate, we’ll never get any of them. But I’ve got an idea.” Azazel paused there, inhaling deeply, before bellowing, “Listen up! I’m gonna grope Rias’s breasts myself! You hear me?! If you don’t like the sound of *that*, you’d better come rescue her! Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

How could he scream something so absurd?!

Heeeey! G-grope the prez’s breasts?! No one told me the plan was going to go this far! He was just acting, wasn’t he?! Azazel wouldn’t actually do it, right?!

“...Ugh! What a wicked ploy! Using the prez’s breasts as hostages!” I shook my fist in anger.

Koneko exhaled in evident exasperation. “This plan is disgusting.”

You can say that again, Koneko!

Azazel addressed the doppelgängers once more. “If you don’t come out by the count of ten, I’m gonna do it! I’ll fondle ’em! You got that?! I’ll grab ’em as hard as I can! I’ll force you to watch me do something to her that *you’ve* only ever dreamed about!”

His fingers flexed lewdly!

“...You’re really going all out there,” the prez remarked with a displeased sigh.

“Ha-ha-ha. I’m not the last boss of fallen angels for nothing. Leave this kind of

thing to me.”

“Very well. I suppose I should try a little harder, too, then...” The prez took a breath to affirm her resolution before crying out, “Eeek! Issei! Help meeeee!”

What an adorable scream! My heart skipped a beat just hearing it!

“““““Prez!”””””

Rias’s plea was enough to convince the remaining doppelgängers to show themselves.

Their faces were so stern! Even if their most distinguishing feature was their insane level of sexual desire, it looked like they really did care about the prez’s safety! I was moved by their sense of loyalty to her!

“Look! The rest of those idiots have popped out! Just as I expected! Did you see that, you guys?! That’s the science and expertise of the fallen angels at work!” Azazel declared triumphantly.

How exactly had that required *any* science or expertise?! Still, his outburst *did* sound convincing, probably because Azazel was always incredible, even when messing around!

Shinnnnng!

Azazel fired a merciless beam of light from his fingertip that pierced my doppelgängers, obliterating them!

Booooooooooom!

There was a huge explosion, powerful enough to send those few remaining impostor Isseis flying! Man, that attack packed one hell of a punch! And Azazel was likely holding back! His power level was positively terrifying!

He continued to unleash more destructive rays at those doppelgängers that were trying to fight back.

Booooooooooom!

With no means of countering the deadly bombardment, the copies were reduced to nothingness.

A chill ran down my back as I imagined myself falling victim to that attack.

Azazel remained oblivious, breaking out into a mirthful laugh. “See that! Those Isseis are no more than trash!”

He sounded like he was really enjoying this!

“Hold on, Azazel. You’re going a little overboard. You realize that we’re the ones who will have to repair all this damage, right? Maybe I should bill the fallen angels?” The prez’s expression was one of profound displeasure.

“Ha-ha-ha. Don’t say that, Rias. It’s just a bit of fun.”

During this exchange, the last remaining doppelgänger was pulling his wounded body upright, taking off once more toward Azazel.

“...He looks desperate,” Asia whispered from beside me, worry plain on her face.

This certainly didn’t look like something we could afford to ignore.

Then, the doppelgänger called out, “I’ll save the prez!”

—!

My heart was moved by that cry... That was precisely how I felt!

Before I knew it, I had taken that doppelgänger’s hands in my own.

My counterpart stared back at me with suspicion, but he nonetheless exclaimed, “Let’s go! This is all Azazel’s fault! Let’s save the prez together!”

Yep, this *was* the fallen angel’s doing. I had almost forgotten that vital point.

As the doppelgänger and I shook hands, we truly connected. Heh-heh-heh. Our minds were one.

“Let’s gooooo!”

“Hrahhhhhh!”

The doppelgänger and I charged toward Azazel! He’d started all this! I—no, *we*—had finally realized the truth! There would be no peace at Kuou Academy unless Azazel was brought to his knees!

“Huh? So they’ve decided to team up, have they? Geez. You ain’t leaving me with much choice here.”

Shinnng!

Another luminous beam lanced forward!

Whoosh!

The doppelgänger and I managed to dodge it, but only just! We couldn't afford to fall now! Not until we had defeated the last boss—Azazel!

"Hmm! So you evaded? How about this, then?"

Shinnng! Shinnng! Shinnng!

A consecutive volley! Rapid-fire rays! Explosions erupted all around us, but we charged forward undaunted, like the protagonists in a superhero TV show confronting a villainous mastermind!

Whenever one of us fell to our knees, the other would help him back up, and we would push on!

Unfortunately, Azazel refused to cease his attacks.

Flash!

A beam was racing straight for us, yet it was deflected before striking us down. And the ones who had stopped it...were Kiba and Xenovia. Each of them had a sword in their grip.

The two grinned at me.

"...I can't exactly say why that happened. My body moved on its own."

"Yep. Same here. Something inside told me I should help while watching you."

At that moment, a gentle green glow enveloped me and the doppelgänger, healing our wounds. My whole body felt lighter.

It was Asia's power that had restored us.

"Seeing you two struggle caused something to well up inside my heart," she said.

With Asia by my side, I could feel my courage multiplying a hundredfold!

"Indeed. Now that I think about it, isn't Azazel the root cause of all this?"

Even Akeno had elected to join our noble cause!

“...It might be good to rake him over the coals every once in a while.”

“I don’t really know what’s going on, but let me help!”

Koneko and Gasper joined the fray, too!

It looked like my doppelgänger and I had lit a fire in everyone’s souls.

Heh. Thanks, everyone... You’re all good people.

We were true friends and comrades in arms.

“Let’s crush Azazel!”

“Right!”

Now that we had recognized the true evil here, we stood united under one cause.

Together, we charged toward Azazel—the wicked governor of the fallen angels!

There was no doubting he was the most sinister person here!

The person in question was so shocked by this sight that his eyes opened wide in alarm. “Huh?! You’re all teaming up?!”

“It’d do you a bit of good to face some punishment now and again. You *do* have a habit of getting up to some awful things,” the prez remarked with a deep nod.

“Y-you’ve got to be kidding me!” Azazel was utterly stupefied. He clearly hadn’t foreseen this development. He spread his black wings wide, ready to take off and escape, but we were there before his feet could leave the rooftop, catching his leg to prevent him from fleeing.

“I—I won’t... Not here! Aaaaargh!” he screamed with a cry worthy of a final boss as we brought him down.

“Tch. Did you have to gang up on me? Bullies,” Azazel groaned, his body completely covered in bandages.

“How can you say that? This is all *your* fault, you know,” Akeno shot back with a grin.

“Exactly. Why don’t you reflect on your actions, Azazel?” the prez added.

“Ngh...” It looked like he had no response to that.

Once we had caught him, we made sure to give him a thorough disciplining. A bit of humility never hurt anyone. None of this would’ve happened if not for that experiment he’d conducted on a fickle whim.

“Ah! Your doppelgänger looks like he’s disappearing!”

I turned around at Gasper’s words and saw that my doppelgänger was indeed fading away. The impostor Isseis must only last for a limited span of time.

I gave my disappearing comrade a silent salute, which he reciprocated.

It had only been a short battle, but we had fought arm-in-arm.

Glancing around, I found Asia, Xenovia, and Gasper saluting him, too. We had all marched on the field of battle together.

A moment later, my doppelgänger was gone from the world. He vanished with a look of satisfaction at having helped defeat Azazel. In the end, he had done a great deed.

We decided that erasing all memory of my doppelgängers’ mischief from the minds of the regular students was the best course of action. That way, we could hopefully prevent any rumors from spreading about my stripping everyone naked...

“No, if we erase their memories completely, it’ll cause many other problems, so I’ve just erased all details of the doppelgängers. In other words, they still remember that *you* destroyed their clothes,” Azazel explained.

...Huh? What exactly did—?

But before I could voice my concern, Kiba pointed down to something out the window. “This is bad. There’s an army of girls marching on the old school building.”

“Wh-whaaaaat?!”

I glanced down from the rooftop, when—

“There he is! Hyoudou!”

“That pervert! How dare you destroy our clothes!”

“Get down here! You’re as good as dead!”

“We’ll make you regret ever trying to defile us!”

Azazel’s sleep technique had clearly worn off quickly, because everyone was awake and at our doorstep! That horde of girls with their tattered clothes radiated pure bloodlust!

Th-they’re going to kill me!

“Ha-ha-ha. Sorry about this, Issei. I’ll treat you to a meal sometime, so just try to hang in there for now.” With a casual laugh, Azazel vanished.

D-don’t just run away! What kind of teacher are you, you accursed fallen angel?!

“Wha—?!”

My body felt suddenly weightless! Koneko had lifted me up into the air!

“...We can’t let you drag the rest of us into this. Please sacrifice yourself for our survival.”

Whoosh!

My adorable and petite underclassman threw me into the horde of murderous schoolgirls!

Thud!

A group of athletic girls caught me like a baseball before dropping me into the middle of the crowd.

“...”

I was surrounded by young women. In a way, it was a harem of sorts, but it certainly wasn’t the kind I wanted!

They were all glaring at me—silent and foreboding. Hostility washed over the area like ocean waves.

I scurried to my knees, desperately trying to flee. They were going to kill me for sure!

“““Don’t you dare, Hyoudooooouuuuu!””” the girls cried out as one, giving chase!

“Whaaaaat?! Teeeeeeaaaaach! Where are you?! Dammit! I swear I’ll take you down with meee!”

With an army of furious girls hot on my heels, I wept as I raced around the school grounds in a mad search for the missing Azazel.

Extra Life

The Wonderful House of Gremory

Today was a day off from school, yet the prez had been wearing a stern expression since morning.

“This is bad.”

She was clearly flustered, and she looked wholly unlike her usual self, pacing back and forth between my room and the first floor of my home.

“Rias is acting very strangely,” Asia remarked, watching anxiously from her seat beside me.

Just as Asia said, the prez had been behaving oddly all morning. She’d started cleaning the house out of nowhere and was repeatedly checking her appearance every ten minutes.

We had recently returned from our intense battle against the evil Norse god Loki. The second-year students at Kuou Academy would soon be leaving for a school trip to Kyoto.

As such, the other second-years and I really needed to go shopping soon to prepare for travel. But right now, all I could think about was the prez.

“Is something wrong?” I asked cautiously.

Rias turned around, answering sternly, “My sister-in-law is coming.”

“Your sister-in-law? Ah, you mean Grayfia?”

The prez fell silent at my response.

Grayfia was a maid in the service of the House of Gremory. She was deeply involved in all of the family’s doings, from setting their personal schedules to managing their finances.

On top of that, she was also the wife of the prez’s older brother, Sirzechs, a

Demon King. This made her Rias's sister-in-law in addition to being a House of Gremory maid.

The prez typically referred to Grayfia by her name, so why had she abruptly started addressing her as sister-in-law?

It was Akeno who tried to clear up my confusion: "Today is Grayfia's day off, you see."

"Ah. So that means she's technically not a maid right now?"

"Indeed. Typically, Grayfia and Rias keep a servant-master relationship. But it's a different matter when she's not on the clock. Only then does Grayfia become Rias's sister-in-law."

"The president is scared of Grayfia when she becomes her sister-in-law... It sounds like she's really strict," Koneko remarked.

Now I understood why the prez was fretting.

Nodding, Xenovia said, "So even the president has someone she can't handle."

Although the prez was destined to be the next head of the noble House of Gremory, she *was* still a teenage girl.

So basically, when Grayfia wasn't working, she went into full-on sister-in-law-mode? I was kind of intrigued to see how she and Rias interacted. Just what kind of marvelous topics would those two beauties discuss...? Judging by how nervous the prez was, I couldn't help but worry that something less than marvelous was about to happen.

"I'm guessing she decided to spend her day off visiting my place?" I inquired.

Akeno let out a soft chuckle. "Indeed. There must be a matter she wishes to discuss with Rias as her sister-in-law."

While the prez went about her tidying, Akeno and I sat down to continue talking.

You can't make this place any neater than it already is, Prez.

"I—I need to prepare tea as well. Issei, make sure you're properly dressed.

She will undoubtedly want to take a look at you while she's here," the prez said as she fixed my collar and checked my hair.

"M-me? Um, what does she want with me...?"

"You..." She paused there, her face turning red. "...Y-you're, er, s-special..."

Special...? I didn't really get it. Was it because Rias lived with me? Or maybe it was due to all the training I had been subjected to in the underworld during summer vacation?

We had visited Rias's home during that time, and people made a big fuss over me for some reason.

In particular, I was put through dance lessons, a crash-course in her family's history, and other exercises that the rest of the Familia weren't. Even now, I was unsure what all that had been for.

To top things off, the Gremory servants kept on calling me Young Master...

Try as I did to rack my brain for an answer, I couldn't come up with one.

Ding-dong.

That was the sound of the doorbell. Seeing the prez's reaction, I had a pretty good guess who had arrived.

Rias hurried downstairs, and she headed for the front door. The rest of us exchanged concerned glances before following after her.

A beautiful silver-haired woman dressed like nothing if not a celebrity was standing at the entrance to my home. I recognized her at once. Her clothes and hairstyle were at odds with her usual maid outfit, but she was definitely Grayfia!

She was wearing her hair up, and her outfit appeared to be very expensive.

Whoa...

She was striking even in her usual maid getup, but today she was utterly gorgeous!

Normally, Grayfia visited us via magic circle. Today, however, she'd knocked on the door like an average visitor. She must have wanted to make a different

entrance because she was in sister-in-law-mode.

As though Grayfia's own appearance wasn't glamorous enough, there was a luxurious limousine parked behind her! It definitely befit the wife of a Demon King!

Grayfia regarded us all pleasantly. "Good morning, everyone." She flashed a graceful smile before focusing her eyes on the prez. Cheerfully, she added, "Good morning, Rias."

"Good morning, Sister-in-Law." The prez did her best to return that smile, but it was clear as day how nervous she was.

"It's been so long, Princess," came a voice that was definitely not Grayfia's. A strange creature stood in the doorway with her!

Its face was shaped like an Eastern dragon's, and its whole body was covered in crimson scales. The torso, however, looked more like that of a horse or a deer. It must have measured around two meters in size. Whatever the case, I had never laid eyes on this being before. Was it this creature that had spoken?

It must have realized I was staring at it, as the creature bowed its head to me. "You must be the Red Dragon Emperor. It's a pleasure to meet you at last. I'm Lord Sirzechs's Pawn. Enku is my name. How do you do?"

I-it talks! And so politely at that!

"A-ah, yes, nice to meet you!" I responded, doing my best to be courteous, but it was hard to believe that voice belonged to the odd dragon-being. *Enku, right? Hold on. He serves Sirzechs? That means...*

"Issei, Enku is a legendary kirin and a member of my brother's Familia. It's nice to see you again, too, Enku. You look well." The prez patted his neck.

These days, people tended to associate the word *kirin* with a giraffe, as that was the Japanese word for the animal. This Enku guy was obviously the sort of kirin that appeared in ancient myths and legends, however. Even I had heard of those beings. I might not have known the details, but I recognized them from ancient Chinese folklore.

Man, to think that Sirzechs had an actual kirin in his Familia... And while Enku

may have been a Pawn, he was clearly worth more than just one or two such pieces. I was a Pawn myself, but he was obviously far beyond me...

Enku addressed Grayfia. "If you require nothing more of me, I shall retire to my post."

"Yes. Thank you for the escort, Enku. I *would* have been fine coming by myself, though..."

"Don't say that. You are our Queen and the wife of our master. It would be unthinkable to let you make such a journey alone... Not that I believe anyone would be able to threaten you in the slightest were they to catch you by yourself. In any event, I thought it would be nice to bring some good fortune to the Red Dragon Emperor's abode. And I'm glad to see the princess and the new Young Master for myself."

So that was it. It sounded like a big deal for Grayfia to make an official visit here as Sirzechs's wife and Rias's sister-in-law.

Hold on, did he just call me the Young Master? What exactly was my position here? Plus, there was that bit about good fortune...

Akeno must have noticed my bewilderment, as she whispered in my ear, "Kirins are supposed to bring favorable luck. They say that whenever one visits a house, you can expect something good to happen there."

Oh? Well, thank you, then. A pleasant surprise would be welcome.

"By the way, Sirzechs is the only demon to have successfully recruited a sacred kirin into his Familia. Normally, kirins are completely incompatible with demons. The fact that Sirzechs was able to overcome that natural antipathy is what sets him apart from the rest of us," Akeno explained.

Seriously?! The prez's brother is truly something else.

"You could stay with us for a while, Enku." The prez appeared forlorn at the idea of him leaving so soon.

"Ha-ha-ha. It's enough for me just to hear you say that. I have duties of my own as a member of Lord Sirzechs's Familia. I'm needed back in the underworld. Truthfully, I *would* like to run through the hills and dales with you

on my back again someday, Princess. I must take my leave, however. I look forward to meeting you all again.”

With those parting words, Enku vanished into a cloud of crimson mist.

“He often lent me his ear when I lived in the underworld. And he gave me rides, too,” the prez stated with a soft smile.

Enku had watched over her as she grew up, I guess.

The prez evidently let herself sink into recollection. When Grayfia let out a feigned cough, however, her expression changed to one of nervous anxiety.

“That should be enough for the formalities. May I come inside?” Grayfia asked.

And so the prez’s sister-in-law stepped foot into my house.

“I’m relieved to hear that Rias isn’t causing you any trouble.”

“Not at all. It’s thanks to her that I’m allowed to stay here.”

Grayfia and Asia were in the midst of conversation. Rias’s sister-in-law was cheerfully speaking with each of us in turn.

The prez was sitting next to me, clearly doing her best not to let her smile falter for even a brief instant. I could tell how uncomfortable she felt.

All of us living here had gathered around the table, including Asia, Akeno, Koneko, Xenovia, and Irina.

Incidentally, my parents were away on some kind of errand today.

“Rias can be somewhat selfish at times, so I was a little concerned that she might be inconveniencing her Familia members.”

“Not at all,” Akeno replied, coming to the prez’s defense. “Rias is our leader and has arranged for us all to live here on homestay. She takes excellent care of her servants.”

Akeno was so reliable! She and Rias really were great friends!

“You’re fortunate to be blessed with such good companions, Rias,” Grayfia commented with a grin. As she looked around at each of us, I got the sense that she was genuinely pleased.

However, Grayfia's expression altered a bit when it rested on the prez...and me. Why was it always something to do with me?

"Now we just need to consider...the gentleman."

With that remark, the whole room turned tense.

"N-no... Is that what this is about...?" Asia, who had been beaming not a moment before, now appeared deeply worried.

"...I see. That must be why Grayfia called on us in such an official capacity," Akeno said.

I could literally feel the pressure behind her forced smile!

Even Koneko, usually so stoic and expressionless, appeared stern. "...I always knew this day would come."

Xenovia and Irina, on the other hand, looked truly baffled. Honestly, I was in the same boat as them. Why had that one sentence made everything so strained? Did this have something to do with the complex feelings of young women? I didn't know!

Kiba and Gasper weren't with us today. Apparently, the prez had told them that the Familia members already residing in my house would be enough for this meeting. Rossweisse had gone out earlier this morning buy some furniture so that she could move in with us. I'd heard her muttering something about not spending a single yen more than was necessary. She seemed to be quite frugal.

The prez's face flushed as she replied, "S-Sister-in-Law! Is that why you're here? I thought we had all agreed to let things develop naturally!"

"Dear me, Rias. Your mother and I never said anything like that. And let's not forget, *you* were the one you broke off your previous engagement, so wouldn't you say the responsibility is *yours* to reassure us all that the fate of our house will be in safe hands?"

The prez had no response to Grayfia's calm assertion. I had to imagine she was doing her best not to offend her sister-in-law.

Previous engagement... Grayfia means Rias's relationship with Riser, right?

That had been a major debacle for the House of Gremory, so much so that the

other great houses had taken to speaking ill of Rias's family in secret, accusing the prez of being so self-centered that she had broken off her arranged marriage all by herself.

For the upper echelons of demon society, with their preoccupation with status and noble blood, maintaining good relations between families was paramount. High-class demons seldom had the freedom to wed for love. Aristocratic society sure sounded difficult.

Ultimately, I was responsible for ending Rias's engagement by spiriting her away after beating Riser into submission.

I was lucky the prez's parents had generously forgiven me for my actions.

"As a species, we demons are in decline. Birth rates have dropped precipitously. We don't want to see our noble lineage go extinct. You must bring the next generation into the world. That is what your father, mother, brother, and I all wish for." Grayfia looked solemn as she spoke. Then, after a brief pause, her expression softened, and she smiled. "That said, I also had a hand in what happened. And...long ago, your brother and I married out of love as well. Our situation back then was even more complicated than yours is now."

With rosy cheeks, Akeno added, "The romance between those two is the stuff of legends for demon women."

Huh. I had no idea. So Grayfia fell in love... Given that Sirzechs is a Demon King, maybe that's to be expected.

"...It's also been turned into a play," Koneko added.

Whoa, a play?! Like theater?! Awesome!

Asia was getting pretty amped up about the idea. "I—I want to see it!"

Yep, it was true what they said—girls couldn't resist a good love story.

Grayfia, clearly embarrassed, gave a weak cough before changing the subject. "As that incident demonstrated, I'm on your side. I wish to see you become a great high-class demon and a worthy lady. And I want you to have a strong sense of what is required of you as the next heir to the House of Gremory. That's why we must see to improving a great many of your attributes and

qualities. For example, your belief that you can get away with selfish indulgences because you have the money. Or your tendency to act before thinking. I wonder whether your possessiveness has abated at all. And it remains regretful that you take so long to reach a decision when called on. When it came to your brother and me, we kept pushing forward without pause. Don't forget that there are girls your age who are already married. Once you graduate high school, you will be expected to participate in a great many more social functions. You will bring considerable shame to the House of Gremory if others consider you egoistic and hardheaded. You may be popular among some circles thanks to that television program, but... Well, in any event, we need to ensure that your partner's education continues apace. I'm sure you don't need to be reminded that your marriage preparations must begin by the time you start attending university. There's the matter of ensuring a smooth transition when replacing your father, too. I hope you understand. Speaking personally, I think it's time for you to settle down. Rating Games are important, but if you focus all your attention on them, you run the risk of people viewing you as single-minded. What's more, you..."



Grayfia was lecturing the prez like a rapid-fire machine gun.

Poor Rias had to sit and listen in silence. Her face had turned bright red. She typically conducted herself with dignity and poise, as was expected of the House of Gremory's heir. Yet at the moment, she looked no different from any girl on the receiving end of a long scolding. Her family and relatives probably still viewed her as a child who couldn't be left alone.

There was no end to Grayfia's tirade. My guess was that she was taking out all her pent-up frustration from her maid's work.

"Come now, Grayfia. Rias *is* doing quite well, wouldn't you say?"

—!

Another new voice entered the fray, but I recognized this one! Everyone turned to look at the far end of the table. There sat a crimson-haired man!

The prez rose to her feet in clear surprise. "Brother!"

That's right! Our latest guest was none other than Sirzechs Lucifer! Yep, a Demon King had just made an entrance, everyone!

Hold on, when did he arrive? I hadn't felt his presence. How did he enter my living room undetected?

"Hey there, Rias. How are things? You look well. And I see that your Familia members are doing fine, too." Sirzechs flashed us all a graceful smile.

The Demon King had a lofty and formidable social status, but he really was an incredibly kind and caring individual.

"I've brought a present. It's a photo collection I'm producing that features Rias. I've titled it *A Girl Called Switch Princess: A Chronicle of Little Rias's Physical Development*. It follows her growth from her early childhood up until the time she started high school here in Japan."

Sirzechs pulled out the photo compilation in question and passed it around to us.

Whoa!

It even included photos from when the prez was middle school age! She'd

already possessed a generous bosom back then. Ah, how I wished I could go back in time to meet that younger version of her...

The prez tried to snatch the book away from us all. “Don’t look! Don’t look!” she cried out, her cheeks like tomatoes. What an adorable reaction!

“Aren’t you supposed to be attending an important meeting of the Four Great Demon Kings today? Don’t tell me you sneaked out?” There was a sharp glint to Grayfia’s eyes as she asked that question.

Sirzechs, however, didn’t seem particularly bothered. “Ha-ha-ha! I thought I’d attend remotely from here,” he answered calmly. “So long as we can broadcast in real time, everything should be—ow! Ow, ow, ow! That hurts, Gwayfia.”

She was pulling Sirzechs’s cheeks as hard as she could! Sirzechs maintained his grin, but he couldn’t hide the tears in his eyes.

“Why are you always like this whenever I take a day off...? Maybe I should have stayed at work. I could go back to being a maid this very instant, if I wanted,” Grayfia muttered.

Whoa, she was seriously angry... Her aura was rising dangerously; my skin prickled just by being near such a tremendous reservoir of magic power.

A foreboding atmosphere flooded the room. Even the prez was visibly frightened.

Pop.

Three small lights appeared above the table, taking the form of little magic circles.

Sss... Ssssss...

What looked like a three-dimensional image took shape over the floating arrays. Though initially filled with static, the image slowly cleared until three faces were visible.

“Sir...zechs... Sirzechs... Can you hear me...? Hey, Sirzechs...”

The voice was still somewhat distorted, but I recognized that distinctive tone! A moment later, and both the image and audio were clear enough to fully understand.

“Sirzechs! What are you thinking, running off to the human realm all by yourself?! I wanted to go!”

It was a magical girl—no, a Demon King girl, Serafall Leviathan!

“Ah, Serafall. Sorry. I’m at Issei Hyoudou’s house right now,” Sirzechs explained.

At this, Serafall’s eyes turned my way. *“Oh, so you are. Hi there, Red Dragon Emperor! Oh, is Rias there, too?”*

“How do you do, Lady Serafall,” the prez greeted.

“Yep, good morning, Li’l Ria! Hey, Sirzechs! You should have said something! Ajuka and Falby were wondering why you hadn’t joined us!”

Even Serafall seemed mad, and that wasn’t a common occurrence. Then again, that pouting look of hers was adorable enough to set my heart at ease. She truly was like a magical girl—or rather, a Demon King girl.

H-hold on. A-Ajuka...? And Falby...?

The names were familiar. Did that mean the two other faces belonged to...?

“Sirzechs. To think that you would wriggle out of our meeting to visit the human realm... Either a great incident is underway, or something interesting is about to take place. I’m guessing this is the latter?” said an incredibly handsome youth with a bewitching smile.

“Er, don’t do anything crazy. I don’t want any extra work...” The last voice belonged to a sleepy-looking figure resting his cheek against his hand.

I knew these people. Back when we had all gone to the underworld, the Four Great Demon Kings had held a social event for the prez and five other promising young demons from noble backgrounds. I had only met Sirzechs and Serafall, so this was my first time addressing the other two directly, but it was undeniably them!

Whhhhhooooooooaaaaa! This was incredible! The Four Great Demon Kings all at my table! A full set! This was a huge deal!

Sirzechs must have realized I was freaking out, because he said, “Ah, I still haven’t introduced you, Issei. This mysterious fellow here is Ajuka Beelzebub.

He's our chief adviser for technological development. His main focus is our research program."

Ajuka Beelzebub looked at me. *"A mysterious atmosphere is rather fitting for a demon, wouldn't you say? But where are my manners? Greetings, Red Dragon Emperor. I've heard a lot about you."*

"Ah, h-hello! I'm Issei Hyoudou!"

I was so nervous! I was speaking to a Demon King! And wasn't he the guy behind the entire Evil Pieces system...?

Sirzechs motioned next to the final member on this momentous conference call. "This languid figure may not appear like much of a go-getter, but Falbium Asmodeus is in charge of our military affairs."

"...Hi. I'm Falbium."

Wh-what a dull voice..., I thought. Was he seriously a Demon King? And in control of the demon military, no less...? I didn't know how to feel about entrusting something so crucial to an utterly disinterested guy. Before I knew it, I was fretting about issues that were beyond me.

"""""Greetings, Lord Beelzebub, Lord Asmodeus,""""" the other members of the Gremory Familia said in unison.

"Hold up, Falby! This is Li'l Ria's Familia and the Red Dragon Emperor! You've got to greet them properly!"

Leviathan was getting angry. Apparently, *Falby* was Leviathan's nickname for Falbium Asmodeus.

Asmodeus's listless expression remained unchanged, though. All he did was breathe another sigh. *"You work too much, Serafall, Sirzechs. You work, you lose. That's my motto. I only do critical stuff. My servants can handle everything else. That's why you need a good Familia... Ahhh, I'm tired."*

Wh-what's with that attitude? If I remembered correctly, the present Asmodeus was from the House of Glasya-Labolos, right? His personality was the polar opposite of the wild, tough guy currently in the running to become the family's next heir!

“The only time Asmodeus ever went all out was when recruiting the members of his Familia,” the prez explained under her breath. “He made sure to gather extremely talented individuals. Ever since then, he’s been delegating his responsibilities to them. Basically, he’s the kind of person who races through all their homework on the first day of summer vacation and spends the rest of his time idling around. However, he *is* supposed to be the underworld’s greatest strategist and tactician...”

Thanks for the easy-to-understand analogy, Prez.

That made sense. Basically, Asmodeus had gone to great pains to recruit the right individuals to foist his tasks on. I appreciated the logic, but I couldn’t help thinking less of the title of Demon King.

I’d always suspected the other Demon Kings were eccentric after meeting Serafall, but the reality exceeded my expectations!

“Incidentally, Serafall handles the diplomatic front,” Sirzechs remarked.

The one in question beamed and made a peace sign with her fingers.

“Yep! Leave negotiating with foreign nations to me!”

Sure, she was cute, but was entrusting her with that really okay? A short while back, Serafall had been close to launching an attack on Heaven when she had learned that she hadn’t been invited to Open House at Kuou Academy...

Why did I get the impression that Sirzechs was doing the most work out of the four of them? It felt like the underworld was peaceful because he alone was an earnest and steadfast individual.

I really didn’t have a clue when it came to demon society!

“All right, Sirzechs, what are you doing away from home?” Beelzebub questioned, clearly curious.

Sirzechs grinned, then glanced at the prez and me for a moment. Only when he was finished did he reply. “To tell you the truth, I was thinking of having Rias perform that old family ritual at the ruins. That was Grayfia’s reason for visiting, too.”

“““Oh...””” The three other Demon Kings smiled in unison at this explanation.

Huh? What was he talking about?

I obviously wasn't the only one confused.

The prez lifted an eyebrow in consternation. "Brother—no, Lord Lucifer. What exactly do you mean, if I may ask? By ruins, do you mean that place we've *watched over* for generations?"

Sirzechs nodded. "Yes. Members of the House of Gremory are expected to perform a rite of passage there once they reach a certain age... It's a ritual conducted with a loved one. You understand what I mean, don't you, Rias?"

Immediately, the prez's face went a deeper red than I'd ever seen before.

Uh-oh. What is it, Prez?

"This should be interesting. Certainly much more significant than our meeting."

"There hasn't been a ceremony since Sirzechs's!"

"Ah, congratulations, you two."

Beelzebub, Leviathan, and Asmodeus all seemed to understand the underlying meaning and were looking forward to it! I wish someone would've clued me in!

Grayfia rose to her feet. "And there you have it, Rias. Your father and mother have ordered you to perform the ritual. They want some reassurance, and they won't take no for an answer. Surely, you can provide that much... Even if my husband has brought unneeded attention to the matter. Sirzechs, you realize that I'm going to have to punish you once we get home?" Grayfia stared at him coldly as she pulled at his cheeks.

I'd never seen her so terrifying!

"Ha-ha-ha. You heard her, Li'l Ria! Make sure to do your best, too, Issei... Ow, that hurts, Gwayfia..." Even with his cheeks being yanked so violently, Sirzechs's smile didn't waver! An endless stream of tears was coursing down his face, though!

So the strongest one here was really a Demon King's wife!

Wait a second. I'm part of this ceremony?! Why?!

Puzzled, I glanced at the prez, hoping for an answer.

“Ahhhhh... Issei... Wh-what should I do...?”

—.

N-no fair! Prez! Don't go putting on a helpless face like that! That's Asia's signature move! Before my very eyes, my dependable-elder-sister-type Rias had gone into full-blown worried teenager mode!

First Grayfia's visit, then a discussion with the Four Great Demon Kings, and now talk of some mysterious ritual. I didn't understand a lot going on here, and it all seemed connected... Worse yet, I was somehow involved and needed to participate in the ceremony.

Seriously, why did I have to keep getting caught up in things like this? Was it because I was the Red Dragon Emperor?

“Look at all this! I found a hundred-yen shop that has every daily necessity you can think of! Japan is just filled with wonders! Nothing beats cheap!”

No sooner did Grayfia and the Demon Kings leave than Rossweisse burst through the door after a busy shopping spree at a hundred-yen store.



Several days had passed since Grayfia and Sirzechs came to visit.

The prez and I arrived at an abandoned ruin deep in a mountainous area of the Gremory territory. We were dressed as we usually were, in our Kuou Academy uniforms.

The other Familia members were all staying at home. Naturally, they'd wanted to join us, but apparently, this place was super important to the House of Gremory. Only those directly involved in the ceremony were permitted to come.

And that only begged the question of why it was okay for *me* to be here.

Before us stood the huge entrance to the expansive ruins. Stone pillars lined the path on either side, with statues depicting Gremory ancestors standing between them.

Each sculpture was a true work of art. None of them looked damaged in the slightest.

“Augh... What will I do if he ends up hating me...? I *knew* I shouldn’t rush this...” The prez exhaled hard beside me.

I couldn’t think of anything to ease her stress. The best I could do was work hard to finish this quickly so we could go home.

“It’ll be all right, Prez. I’m here with you, so don’t wor—”

An abrupt shout cut me off.

“You there!”

Something glimmered high above us. A group was descending toward the ground! Were they enemies?! As I braced myself for the worst, they landed, revealing themselves to be a band of masked figures like something out of a special effects—laden television show!

One, two, three, four, five! They were dressed like a team of superheroes! Red, blue, yellow, green, pink! Judging by their physiques, red, blue, and green were men, while yellow and pink were women.

Immediately after they touched down, the quintet adopted a group pose!

Booooooooooom!

A mysterious and flashy explosion erupted behind them, along with plumes of multicolored smoke! What was the meaning of this?!

“Wh—who are you?” the prez demanded, evidently wary.

It made perfect sense that she was on her guard! When faced with this bunch of weirdos, who wouldn’t have been?!

The figure in the middle—Red—made a fancy pose before declaring, “Bwa-ha-ha-ha! We are the Mysterious Sata—”

Thump!

Out of nowhere, Yellow hit Red over the top of the head.

Hold on, Red’s voice just now...

“Sorry. *Ahem*. Let me start over! We are the Satan Rangers, led by me, Satan Red!”

“I’m Satan Blue.”

“This is a pain, but I’m Satan Green.”

“Levia—I mean, Satan Pink!”

“*Hahhh*... Um, I’m Satan Yellow.”

...

The prez and I were both so shocked that our jaws practically hit the ground.

Whaaaaaaaaaat?!

No, no! This was *them*! The Satan Rangers?! No!

They were clearly the Four Great Demon Kings!

No matter how you looked at this, Red was Sirzechs, Blue was Beelzebub, Green was Asmodeus, and Pink was Leviathan! Heck, Leviathan had even used her name!

So...was Yellow Grayfia? The way she had hit Red/Sirzechs over the head all but confirmed that... She seemed rather embarrassed to be dressed up.

It was clear just from witnessing the spectacle that Sirzechs and Leviathan were really into this. They were adopting one dramatic pose after another.

“How’s this? Pretty cool, right? I spent last night practicing with my son.”

“What?! I was thinking about cute poses, too!”

I dropped to my knees, wrapping my arms around my head.

The underworld truly was at peace! *Too much* at peace. I couldn’t help but weep. This explained why that Breast Dragon superhero modeled after me was so popular. It was because these crazy, fun-loving people stood at the top of demon society. Why on earth did Sairaorg want to be a Demon King, knowing full well what his peers would be like? Perhaps he aspired to set the underworld on a more serious track? I had no idea how to respond to this development...

“P-Prez? Wh-what should we do?” I tried asking.

This was her brother, after all...

“Wh-who *are* these people...? I can sense a huge amount of demonic power in them. The Satan Rangers... Could they all be Demon King-level fighters?”

—!

She doesn't recognize them?! Preeeeezzzzz! This wasn't good! Not at all! Had Rias suffered a fatal wound?! Wake up! That's your brother! Your own brother! He might be disguised as a superhero and jumping around, but he's a Demon King! All the other Demon Kings are here, too, along with one super-powerful Queen! A band of the most invincible figures in the underworld! A mock hero squadron!

In response to the prez's obvious bewilderment, Sirzechs—heck, I might as well just go with the flow and call him Satan Red—called out, “We have been enlisted by the House of Gremory. Three trials await you both. We expect to see you employ your strength and power to push through together. To succeed, you must work as a team!”

At that moment, Pink pointed into the distance. “Ah! A mysterious flying object!”

“What?! Everyone, attack! Ruin Extinct!”

“Kankara Formula!”

“Er... Celsius Cross Trigger!”

“...Right, um, Some Asmodeus-Style Attack...”

“Hmm... I'll just call this a Yellow Shot for now.”

Booooooooooooooooooooooooooom!

An explosion of unprecedented scale rocked the air.

The five Demon King-class superheroes loosed simultaneous signature moves up into the sky, their combined power causing the entire mountainous region to tremble violently. I could spot forest animals screeching in panic as they fled...

The air itself was being torn apart, and some unknown dimension opened overhead. Brilliant multicolored beams of light cascaded down around the

mountain range.

It was like watching an aurora... An incredibly rare phenomenon was taking place before my eyes...

“Huh. It was just an evil spirit. Don’t startle me like that, Pink.”

“Heh-heh!”

The Demon Kings had launched a joint attack against a measly ghost?! Talk about overkill! And to think that poor spirit had just taken the full brunt of that unified strike... Just how evil and powerful was it?!

I was sick of these people! If they could do all this, why hadn’t *they* fought Loki?! Auuuuuggggghhhhh!

“What kind of trials will we face?” the prez inquired. It baffled me how she could act like nothing had happened.

“P-Prez, didn’t you just see that...? Those guys just went all out against that ghost or whatever!”

“Calm down, Issei. Evil spirits are evil for a reason. They need to be defeated.”

“That isn’t what I mean! Aw, I give up!”

Apparently, my only option was to play along! Whatever else happened, I would just let it go right past me! If the Demon Kings were okay with it, then so was I!

“We will await you at each trial, you two who would inherit the name of Gremory! Push through all three as you journey into the heart of this place! We will be waiting for you! Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!”

With that, Red disappeared into the ruins, with the other four following after him quickly.

Only the prez and I were left. This was ridiculous.

I had no idea what they were planning, but the Demon Kings expected us to reach them.

“All right, Issei! Let’s go! Now that we’re here, it’s time to cast our doubts aside! Let’s show those Satan Rangers the depths of our bonds!”

It looked like the prez was getting pumped. We'd come this far, after all; turning back wasn't an option!

Burning with resolution, I was ready to smash through any trial that awaited me and the prez!

After crossing through a stone passageway, we found ourselves in an open room.

A figure in pink was standing there to meet us! In other words, it was Leviathan.

No sooner did Pink spot us than she made a peace sign. "Come on, you two! Time for your first test!"

I swallowed nervously. Just what was she going to make us do? I didn't like the idea of fighting her. Rias was strong, but we stood no chance against a Demon King. More than that, however, I hated the idea of fighting the adorable Leviathan.

"For your first trial... I want to see you dance!"

Huh? I was left dumbfounded by this unexpected development.

As for the prez... Well, it looked like she'd been expecting something like this, as she nodded her head.

Er... Wh-what kind of challenge is this?

"I want to see you both strut your stuff! Impress me with your moves and coordination, and you'll pass my trial! Come on now, let's go! If you're both going to be a part of high society, you need to know this!"

Pink summoned up an audio system from nowhere with a click of her fingers, and an elegant classical tune began to play.

We're seriously doing this?!

"Let's go, Issei!" the prez declared, taking my hands.

Ah, right. The prez's mother taught me how to do this back when I visited the underworld.

With the prez's palm clasped in my own, I bowed to her. Then we began to

move in sync with the tune.

Thanks to those lessons back during summer vacation, I could move smoothly enough. The prez's dancing was incredibly graceful, and at times she took the lead to compensate for my lack of experience.

S-so this is the first trial, I thought, still a bit unsure. Maybe I had misunderstood, and there wouldn't be any combat? I was beyond confused. I had believed that the reason why I was here was to support the prez in battle...

Instead, I was her dance partner.

I continued to shuffle my feet to the music as I pondered what was going on. When my eyes met the prez's, I realized her cheeks had turned bright scarlet. What was that reaction for?

"Issei... You're good. You took my mother's lessons to heart, didn't you...? Thank goodness. If we're ever in a bind, we should be fine..." The prez's eyes were glistening.

When the song came to an end, we bowed to each other and concluded our dance.

Clap-clap-clap.

Pink was applauding us both. "Oh-ho-ho. Looks like I needn't have worried. You were both wonderful!" As she complimented us, the stone door at the end of the room swung open with a low groaning sound. "Now then, push on ahead to your second trial!"

Thus concluded our first challenge. We had cleared it without incident.

Upon entering the second expansive room, I found myself gawking in bewilderment once more.

"...Hi. Welcome."

It looked like Green—Asmodeus—was in charge of this trial.

He didn't seem particularly motivated, however. On close inspection, I spotted two women who looked like members of his Familia. They were both dressed as maids.

There was also a table and a set of chairs, too... And the table was lined with plates and various knives and forks.

“Um, right. The second challenge is about your manners. I’ll observe from over here, so go and eat. The maids will monitor your etiquette... It’s a point system, so you’ll be deducted for any mistakes. Once you reach zero, it’s game over.”

T-table manners? I had no clue what was going on anymore. These weren’t the kinds of tasks I’d expected to face in an ancient structure. It felt more like they were assessing our aptitude for engaging with aristocratic society.

Was the point for Rias to be recognized as a proper member of the upper crust? She was in line to be the next head of her family, after all. Still, why was I involved? I couldn’t explain it.

In any event, I sat myself down at the table, took my napkin, and began to eat with the prez.

I alternated between my knife and fork and used the appropriate spoon to sip at my soup with poise.

The prez’s mother and the maids serving the Gremory family had instructed me on this during my visit, as well. Even at home, the prez would drill me on proper etiquette.

While the meal was delicious, I was too nervous to appreciate the wonderful tastes properly.

The prez ate everything so elegantly. This would’ve made a nice portrait. She truly was a princess! I had to take care not to embarrass her! Things continued like that for a while, and before I knew it...

“The meal is now over. Your second trial, focusing on your table manners, is complete,” one of the maids announced as she bowed.

I felt so nervous. Following the appropriate procedure while eating was far more difficult than dancing. I was a humble commoner, so I wasn’t used to conducting myself with this level of elegance. If not for the prez’s mother’s teachings, I would have been completely lost.

“You have passed with a perfect score, Lady Rias.”

Whoa, way to go, Prez!

The maid’s gaze turned next to me. My heart was racing!

“We did have to deduct several points from you... Yet you passed with a high mark nonetheless. Congratulations.”

—!

I was so happy that I did a fist pump!

“Whoo-hooooo! I was pretty worried when I made a noise with my knife and fork, but I did it! I did it!”

“Well done, Issei!”

Squish!

The prez caught me in a tight embrace! The sensation of her breasts pressing against me was the best!

Prez...

She looked incredibly pleased. There were tears in her eyes, and her face had reddened again.

“That’s my Issei. I knew I made the right choice. I’m so happy... At this rate, we might pass with flying colors.”

Whoa. Evidently, she was really moved by our accomplishments.

“All right then, you can go now. Congrats.” Green let out a yawn as he motioned to the next door.

What was going to happen to the prez and me when this was all over?



While making our way down the passage to the final trial, I turned to Rias. “Say, Prez...”

“What is it?”

“Back at the house, someone mentioned the love affair between Sirzechs and Grayfia, and I was wondering what exactly happened between them.”

Their early relationship fascinated me. However, if it was something I wasn't supposed to know about, I would drop the topic.

"Hmm. As a member of the Gremory Familia, you do have a right to know. My sister-in-law's surname is Lucifugus. Grayfia Lucifugus. She belongs to a noble family that has been serving the Demon King Lucifer for generations."

"Y-you mean...people from her family are like confidants to a Demon King?" I asked.

The prez nodded. "As you know, there was a conflict long ago between the old regime that wanted to continue the war with the angels and fallen angels, and those opposed to their plan. At that time, the House of Lucifugus served the old Lucifer. Yet the sole daughter of that family fell in love with the eldest son of a different noble house."

The Great War that encompassed both Heaven and the underworld had ended only with the deaths of God and the original Demon Kings. All three sides—the angels, fallen angels, and demons—were left utterly exhausted by the conflict, and the long-term survival of each faction was cast into doubt. Unfortunately, the followers of the old ways continued to cause trouble for those who wanted peace. In the end, the devotees to the previous demon regime fled to the ends of the underworld, allowing the present demon society to develop. There were still issues stemming from that difference in ideals to this day.

I knew the more significant details about the war, but Rias's story surprised me. Sirzechs and Grayfia had fallen in love amid that terrible bloodshed...?

"That's..."

But before I could put my thoughts in order, the prez continued. "Yes, my brother and sister-in-law. Back then, my brother was the ace of the new-minded side. People even called him a hero. Grayfia belonged to the opposition, the old demon regime. Not only that, she fought on the front line and was famously powerful. Apparently, she even competed with Serafall for the title of the ultimate female demon."

I—I didn't know what to say to that.

So Sirzechs and Grayfia had fallen in love as enemies. It must have been a pretty complicated situation for them. Perhaps their feelings blinded them to those obstacles.

“My brother and sister-in-law saw beyond their respective factions and fell in love in the heat of battle. And when the conflict was over, that feeling between them only deepened. It’s a wonderful story, don’t you think? Their romance continues to be admired by women in the underworld even today. I adore their story, too. Some people think my sister-in-law stays on as a maid out of loyalty to my brother and the current Demon Kings, but she actually just likes taking care of the housework and managing intricate details. It must be easier serving as a maid than seeing to all the things expected of the wife of a Demon King. When she acts as a maid, she puts her body and soul into it, even changing how she addresses the rest of my family and me.”

Wow. I could certainly understand why underworld ladies thought so highly of that tale. A man and woman, sworn enemies, had found love on the battlefield.

At that moment, a thought came to mind. Didn’t all that mean Millicas had been born to two of the strongest fighters alive...? In terms of natural talent, he had to be top-tier!

“For me, it’s more than just admiring them... I love and respect them as well. But when I think about how great they are, I can’t help but compare myself to them. It always leaves me wondering if I’m a failure. Am I really qualified to succeed as the head of my family?” The prez looked terribly defeated.

So that was it. She had been measuring herself against those two all this time. Rias felt inferior because her brother and sister-in-law were so distinguished. I could understand that. Who wouldn’t feel inadequate when their sibling was a Demon King and his wife was a super-powerful Queen?

The prez’s admission helped me realize that everyone had major worries of their own. Even Rias, one of the Two Great Ladies, whom I so admired, who conducted herself so gracefully and proudly, had troubles that plagued her heart.

I mean, she was still a teenage girl.

Now and then, something happened to remind me of that. Obviously, I

recognized that she was a girl like any other, yet I hadn't comprehended the depths of her anxieties. Dumb as I was, I'd been entirely ignorant of them.

I wrapped my arms around her from behind, embracing her.

"...Issei?" she asked quizzically.

Not letting go, I said, "I can't even begin to comprehend all your troubles... But I've never once thought of you as a failure. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to live this awesome life you gave me. As far as I'm concerned, you're the best, the greatest woman there is. Nothing can change my mind on that. I'll stand by you forever, Prez. So let's overcome these obstacles together!"

I put my whole heart into those words. I don't know if you could really call what I was doing offering encouragement...but I wanted to help as best I could.

The prez took my hand in her own. "...You're always watching out for me. Yes. You're right. With you by my side, I can make it. I'm crazy about you, Issei. Let's keep going. Together. Forever."

She glanced over her shoulder, flashing me a radiant smile. Ah, that expression was another of her wonderful charms!

Now that I had seen Rias Gremory looking so lovely, I felt prepared to power through the final test at full speed.

"...But you still call me Prez..."

"What was that?"

"...Nothing. Don't worry about it. Let's go! We need to finish the last challenge!"

"R-right!" I replied, taking off behind the prez.

She had muttered something under her breath, but I hadn't quite caught it...

We made our way through the passage with renewed vigor. Only a single trial remained before this bizarre ritual was complete!

"Hey there."

When the prez and I arrived at the site of our next test, Satan Blue—Beelzebub—was waiting for us.

There was a set of desks and chairs. Writing implements and sheets of paper rested atop each of the desks.

“Your last trial is a written exam covering the history of the House of Gremory and general knowledge questions about demonkind and the underworld.”

An exam?! We had come all this way for the kind of test I hated most?! I could literally feel my face blanching!

“So that’s that. Take your seats.”

The prez and I both did as instructed. Blue summoned up a large hourglass with his demonic powers.

“You have one hour. Starting now.”

The hourglass turned upside down, signaling the beginning of the exam! We weren’t even offered a moment to pull ourselves together?!

I hurriedly flipped over the papers on my desk. Sweat beaded on my forehead as I read the questions.

They were all crazy difficult!

There were ones about different ranks and noble titles, about high-, mid-, and low-class demons, and more...

Demon Kings, archdukes, princes... They were all major notables. Then came the marquises, earls, margraves, counts, viscounts, and barons... Were baronets and knights mid-class rankings? The hierarchy was mostly similar to peerages in the human realm, but there were some original elements mixed in. Man, these questions sure pushed one’s knowledge to the brink.

With each one, I felt so close to knowing the answer, yet I couldn’t be entirely sure!

The prez was scribbling away next to me! She truly was a prodigy! She had this test in the bag! I, on the other hand, was in serious trouble. Failure here meant I could never show my face to her or her parents again!

Glaring down at the exam, I racked my mind as best I could.

“All right, time’s up,” Blue announced, marking the end of the exam. The sand

in the hourglass had all gathered in the bottom half.

...

I had pushed my brain to its limit for a full hour and could do little else but rest my exhausted head flat on the desk.

It hadn't been easy, but I'd managed to fill out everything. All that was left to do was await my mark and hope I passed.

Blue's red marking pen coursed down the finished papers. He kept making one check movement after another for the prez's exam, but when it came to mine...his hand seemed to be drawing an awful lot of Xs.

Watching someone grade my work was so stressful.

The prez remained calm, however, retaining her usual elegance and dignity. She probably realized that she couldn't possibly fail this. Conversely, I felt more dead than alive.

"Now then."

Blue had set the papers down in a pile on his desk. It looked like he had finished grading us.

I swallowed with trepidation.

"Rias Gremory has passed with flying colors. And as for the Red Dragon Emperor, Issei Hyoudou..."

Wh-why are you pausing there, Blue?!

"You pass, but you still need to clear an on-the-spot quiz! Get a question wrong, and it's over! And only you can answer!"

Whaaaaat?! What the heck is this?! Why?! Please cut me some slack, Beelzebub!

"Demonkind was once ranked by a hierarchy known as the Seventy-Two Pillars. Recite the names of the Seventy-Two Pillars from first to last."

Huh?! That's his question?! He's talking about the ancient order of high-class demons, right? Er, the prez's mother taught me this during my stay in the underworld, so I should have it burned into my brain!

Trembling, I began to answer. “Bael, Agares, Vassago, Gamigin, Marbas, Valefor, Amon, Barbatos, Paimon, Buer, Gusion, Sitri, Beleth, Leraje, Eligos, Zepar, Botis, Bathin, Sallos, Purson, Morax, Ipos, Aim, Naberius, Glasya-Labolas, Buné, Ronové, Berith, Astaroth, Forneus, Foras, Asmoday, Gaap, Furfur, Marchosias, Stolas, Phenex, Halphas, Malphas, Raum, Focalor, Vepar, Sabnock, Shax, Viné, Bifrons, Vual, Haagenti, Crocell, Furas, Balam, Alocer, Caim, Murmur, Orobas, Gremory, Ose, Amy, Oriax, Vapula, Zagan, Valac, Andras, Flauros, Andrealphus, Kimaris, Amduscias, Belial, Decarabia, Seere, Dantalian, and Andromalius! How’s that?!”

I had listed all of them successfully. The prez’s mother had gone over those names repeatedly until I knew them by heart. Although I hadn’t been able to remember everything during our stay in the underworld, I’d continued reviewing back home until I could recite the Seventy-Two Pillars perfectly.

Apparently, there were other pure-blooded demons not included in the list. That must have been the case with Grayfia’s House of Lucifugus. They were known as Extra Demons.

“Excellent. In that case, which of those great lineages has since gone extinct?”

—!

Blue hurled out another relentless question! Seriously?! He was asking me which of those families had died off?! It was frustrating, but thankfully, I *had* learned which houses died out during the war when memorizing the full list. It was in there! I just had to pull the information out of my brain!

I closed my eyes, reciting the names that floated up before me: “Marbas, Valefor, Buer, Gusion, Leraje, Eligos, Botis, Bathin, Morax, Ipos, Aim, Buné, Ronové, Foras, Gaap, Marchosias, Halphas, Malphas, Raum, Vepar, Sabnock, Viné, Bifrons, Haagenti, Crocell, Alocer, Caim, Murmur, Orobas, Ose, Amy, Zagan, Andras, Flauros, Andrealphus, Kimaris, Amduscias, Decarabia, Seere, Andromalius! H-how did that go?!”

I was less confident about my answer this time!

Nonetheless, Beelzebub nodded. “Correct. Good job. Seeing how recently you were reincarnated as a demon, I didn’t think you would get that one. I know it was a rather mean-spirited question. You pass.” Blue stopped there to clap his

hands.

Even he knew how cruel that question was. I was so nervous... To be honest, I was certain I'd screwed it up.

"This concludes the ritual of the House of Gremory. The trials of man and woman are complete. Congratulations," Blue announced loudly.

""Yes!""

The prez and I hugged each other in joy when we heard that we had triumphed!

"Preeeeezzzzz! We did it!"

"Well done, Issei! Now no one will doubt our bonds! You and I are the best of partners!"

I wasn't entirely sure I followed her train of thought, but I agreed!

Kiss. Kiss.

Whoaaaaa! The prez pecked me on both my cheeks! Today's hardship had been worth it for that alone!

What looked like the final door swung open with a heavy *rumble*.

"Red awaits you within," Blue declared, motioning toward the passage. "You should report your success to him."

The prez and I exchanged nods before venturing onward.



As we continued down the passage, there was a light that grew nearer and nearer. When we passed through it, the ceiling vanished, replaced with the sky of the underworld.

We had to be in the depths of the ruins, yet it resembled a large space with no roof.

I wondered if it was a coliseum. A circular arena lined with rows of spectator seats surrounded a large flat plot.

The prez and I emerged from one spot in the observation area. Red and Yellow—Sirzechs and Grayfia—awaited in the middle of the arena.

After locating a staircase, we proceeded down to them.

“Congratulations, you two,” Yellow greeted us warmly.

Did that mean this was the end?

As if in answer to that question, Red stepped forward, bellowing up into the sky, “At last! Well done, making your way here! However! Don’t assume the trials of the House of Gremory are complete! For your final challenge, I will have Issei Hyoudou fight me, Satan Red, one-on-one! Defeat me!”

Red’s aura surged powerfully!

Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaat?!

I was so taken aback that I initially thought he was kidding! Anyone would have! I—I mean, I was supposed to fight *him*?! Red?! Sirzechs?!

“As the leader of the Satan Rangers, I’ve long desired a battle with the Breast Dragon! Ha-ha-ha! Let us see which of us is fit to be the true hero of the underworld!”

Satan Red—no, Sirzechs—was getting way too into this! How could he possibly expect me to take him on?! I mean, he was an all-powerful Demon King! This was insane!

“Oh-ho-ho! Satan Red! I don’t know who you are, but my Issei is the Red Dragon Emperor! You had better prepare to face the mighty dragon who defeated the evil Norse god Loki!”

But, Prez! My opponent is literally Demon King—class! A-and while I did defeat Loki, that was only because I had a legendary weapon and all my friends helping me! I couldn’t have done it alone!

There was no way I could handle this by myself!

Oblivious of my panic, Red exuded overwhelmingly powerful and destructive demonic energy!

“So I am to face the Red Dragon Emperor, he who bested Loki? How nerve-racking! It’s been a long time since I’ve felt such an uplifting sense of elation!”

He was talking crazy! My only hope was that Grayfia might intervene!

“...Just please don’t go overboard.”

Whaaaaaaaaaaaat?! She’s okay with this?! Your husband is about to use all his power on a single unranked demon, and that’s all good?!

“Let’s go!”

Whooooooooooooosh!

“Gaaaaauuuuugh!”

With that roar, Sirzechs unleashed a merciless barrage of magic attacks!

Fortunately, I managed to dodge it.

Boom!

Not a moment later, though, Sirzechs’s energy blasts crashed into the back of the coliseum behind me, blasting a huge hole in the ruins!

This was bad! I had witnessed what the prez was capable of countless times before, but this was the first time I had ever seen a technique that completely erased whatever it touched! Was it all right that he was annihilating an ancient structure?!

If I was hit by one of those attacks, I would be beyond dead!

Recognizing the danger to myself, I summoned up my gauntlet and called out to the dragon that lay inside it, “Ddraig! I need my Balance Breaker!”

“Very well! I was getting tired of waiting!”

The moment the countdown started, Sirzechs adopted a strange pose.

Was he feeling overly confident, or did he just like striking theatrical stances?

“I won’t attack while you’re transforming!”

Ah. He wants to uphold that unspoken rule between heroes. Thank you.

“Welsh Dragon: Balance Breaker!”

As that voice rang out, a red aura enveloped my body, solidifying into a set of armor!

“Balance Breaker: Boosted Gear Scale Mail! Satan Red! Now that it’s come to this, I won’t hold back!”

“Ha-ha-ha! I’d expect no less!”

I hurled myself into battle against the Demon King Sirzechs Lucifer.

Our battle continued for nearly ten minutes.

“Hahhh... Hahhh... Hahhh...”



Obviously, I was the one gasping for breath.

“What’s wrong, Issei Hyoudou? Can you muster no more? Is this the extent of your feelings toward Rias?!” Satan Red mocked with a confident pose.

Dammit... I knew he was leagues stronger than me... And yet...! I couldn’t even get in a single hit!

He effortlessly destroyed all of my Dragon Shots!

I tried to use a mix of small and oversized ones, but Sirzechs’s powers of destruction were on a whole other level. None of my attacks managed to reach him! Even when I started shooting wildly, he erased every blast with orbs that he sent flying through the arena!

Those spheres, concentrated masses of raw destruction, may have been small, but there was no withstanding them. They outright deleted any attack they so much as grazed.

I had tried unfurling my dragon wings and rushing into close quarters, but Sirzechs easily parried my every punch. He was no pushover when it came to close-quarters fighting. His fists radiated raw devastation. It even seemed a trivial matter for him to tear through my armor.

To cut a long story short, there was simply too wide a gulf between our respective levels of ability.

Heh-heh. I had become stronger recently, I was sure of it, and yet Sirzechs remained so far ahead. How could he be this powerful?

“Red Dragon Emperor! Hang in there!”

“Don’t be afraid. Standing your own against Sirzechs for more than ten minutes is a testament to your promising future. To tell you the truth, I doubted you would make it this far. You’ve exceeded all expectations, Red Dragon Emperor.”

“...Zzzzzzzzzzz...”

The other Demon Kings were supporting me from the spectator gallery. Heck, they looked like they were enjoying this spectacle! They’d all removed their masks, freely revealing their true identities!

Asmodeus had fallen asleep, though! I guess everyone was enjoying today in their own way!

“Power of destruction... It can’t be!”

The prez had her hand on her chin in apparent deep consideration. Perhaps she’d finally realized the truth! I was currently facing off against—

“You’re from the House of Bael!”

She got it wrong! W-well, maybe she believed it impossible that her brother was so into hero cosplay...

Red leveled a finger at me. “You love Rias, do you not? Is this the limit of your affection? If you don’t have the mettle to defeat me, how can you be trusted to protect her?!”

He was right, of course! But how many people actually were there in this world who could defeat this guy? *That* was the actual problem here!

Guess there’s no choice. I’m gonna use what you taught me, Old Man Tannin!

I took a deep breath, filling my lungs with air, then remained still, trying to imagine a whirling flame building in my stomach. I was forging a mass of fire in my gut! The strongest demonic blaze I could muster!

Here goes! The technique I learned during my summer training! And if I use my other dragon powers, too...

“Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost!”

“Transfer!”

I sent my increased strength into the flames as they surged up from my stomach and opened the mask that covered my face!

Bwooooooooooooooooooooooooooom!

I breathed out a massive plume of searing crimson aimed straight for Sirzechs!

This was my favorite trick that I had picked up during my training—Flame Breath! Sure, it wasn’t as flashy or as powerful as when Tannin used it, but unlike my Dragon Shot, this technique had an incredibly wide range! I would

ignite Sirzechs with this! This move wasn't called Flame Breath for nothing!

"A splendid dragon breath. And yet..."

Sirzechs nodded, then moved his hand from one side to another. As he did so, his spheres of destruction arced straight into the blaze and enlarged to a humongous size!

The orbs swelled to encompass the flames, snuffing them out. How could they stretch so big?! Sirzechs had successfully eliminated almost all of my attack, and he easily brushed aside what little remained.

"Partner. You're at a disadvantage in a prolonged fight. If you're going to win this, you need to decide it in a single blow."

That's easy enough to say, Ddraig, but what chance do I actually have?

"...It will be tough. To tell you the truth, I wasn't expecting him to be this strong. He may be even more powerful than the old Lucifer... In terms of raw power and destruction, he's beyond reason. He has concentrated his skills and talents toward a single goal—annihilation. There probably isn't anything he can't eradicate."

That wasn't what I wanted to hear right now! The situation was growing bleaker by the second!

At that moment, Yellow—Grayfia—beckoned for me to approach. What was it now?

The prez was standing beside her, too.

Without taking my eyes off Sirzechs, I rushed toward them and opened my visor to speak. "S-something up?"

"Issei," Grayfia began. "Touch Rias's breasts."

—!

I was so shocked by this remark that blood spurted from my nose! The prez's face had turned bright red! We were both at a loss over this sudden and unexpected piece of advice!

Yellow quickly used her powers to summon up what looked like a simple

fitting room and threw me and the prez inside!

Next, she addressed the prez. "Listen carefully, Rias Gremory. This is my advice to you. Your trust runs deeper for the Red Dragon Emperor than it does for anyone else, yes? In that case, you must understand his unique quirks... He can become an entirely different person through the power of your breasts."

Being reminded of that by Grayfia was genuinely painful. Still, she was right! I was the Breast Dragon, capable of transforming through the power of breasts!

"Yep. It's like she says."

Ddraig's words were cold and monotone. Come on, Red Dragon Emperor! It wasn't that bad!

The prez thought on the suggestion for a moment and ultimately nodded in approval.

"I can't say I like having to take advice from someone when I can't even tell if they're friend or foe, but I can see that it's the only option here."

Prez...

She still hadn't realized that Yellow and Grayfia were one and the same...

Immediately, Rias began to remove her uniform! The dazzling white skin around her beautiful round breasts revealed itself!

Click.

The second she unhooked her bra, her boobs plopped down!

Whoaaaaaaa!

I would never grow tired of those pink nipples! I shed tears of joy! Yep, the prez's chest was unmatched! There was no beating it! The tips were plucky, soft, and so wonderful that I could have breathed my last without a single regret!

The prez met my gaze, her eyes filled with determination. "Now, Issei! If you can overcome this trial, I'll be happy to let you have my breasts! I want us to break past this together and for everyone to acknowledge us! Let's finish this, Issei!"

Preeeezzzzz!

To think that she could be so resolute while her chest hung there for me to gawk at! Yes! We would see this through together!

“Prez! Rias Gremory! I’ll touch your breasts, and then we’ll defeat Satan Red and make it to the end!”

I dispelled the armor around my hands and reached out for her boobs! I would grope both of them together, with every finger!

“I’m your Pawn! Issei Hyoudou, the Red Dragon Emperor! I’ll show them all the dedication of the Breast Dragon!”

Plop.

I buried my digits into the prez’s rich breasts, making sure to slowly savor that wondrous sensation! It felt as if the exquisite texture of those soft mounds of flesh was completely enveloping my hands!

I squeezed them! I fondled them! What an awesome feeling!

Bah!

Blood shot out from my nose at maximum velocity!

Ahhhhh! These soft, squishy breasts are stimulating my senses to the extreme! Yes! Nothing can beat this! Nothing can top the prez’s tits!

“...Nnnf.”

—!

That sensuous sigh was the killing blow! My hands had made her cry aloud!

“Whhhhhhoooooaaaaa! Here it comes!”

I could sense a huge surge of dragon energy welling up in my body!

Rooooooooaaaarrrrr!

A draconic aura erupted from the exhaust vents all over my armor! The jewels embedded across the suit emitted brilliant red light!

I was brimming with power! The power of the prez’s breasts! It had pushed me so far!

Maybe we really were the Breast Dragon and Switch Princess!

“If we’re going to do this, let’s end it in one blow, Ddraig! Let’s pour all our might into one massive Dragon Shot and use it to take down Satan Red!”

“All right! Leave it to me!”

I concentrated everything in my hands! My target was Satan Red—Sirzechs!

Sirzechs! Taste the depths of the prez’s and my feelings!

“That’s it! Come! A strike born from the love between you and Rias! As a brother and future brother-in-law, show me what you’ve got!”

The spheres of destruction orbiting around Sirzechs gathered into a single point. He was planning to meet my attack head-on!

“You’ve got it! Satan Red! Take this! From the prez and me! Dragon Shot: Neo Bust Burst!”

As I shouted the name that I admittedly made up on the spot, I fired my attack!



“...Oh?”

When I opened my eyes, the prez’s face filled my vision. I could feel a soft sensation against the back of my head. Was I lying on her legs? She had to be treating me to a thigh pillow.

“Are you awake? You lost consciousness during the fight,” the prez said with a chuckle.

I sat up and realized I was still in the center of the coliseum. Glancing around, I saw that the building had been totally demolished!

“Your battle against Satan Red has left the arena in a bit of a mess. We’ll need to send in a repair team to fix it up later.”

Had we caused that much damage? I’d been so absorbed in the moment that I hadn’t given much thought to preserving the ruins.

“What about Satan Red?”

“He’s vanished. The others, too.”

There was no way I defeated him.

At that moment, Ddraig called out from inside me, *"Partner."*

"Huh? What is it, Ddraig?"

"That Demon King, Lucifer, negated your last Dragon Shot. I always suspected he possessed incredible power for a demon, but I never imagined he could be that mighty... He made a hasty retreat with the other Demon Kings during the explosion. For you to be able to fight him so well at this point in time is a testament to your growth. Just a few months ago, he would have destroyed you in the blink of an eye."

"—."

Seriously? I *had* put a lot of effort into my training. Even after defeating Loki, I hadn't allowed myself to grow complacent.

Still, I'd been rather confident about that last Dragon Shot... But even with the power boost granted by the prez's breasts, it had still been for naught. However, I did feel a little proud for holding out for so long.

Maybe it was my imagination, but judging by his voice, Ddraig seemed to be a bit impressed. He hadn't spoken to me like this since we'd fought Fenrir. Although, that wasn't too long ago.

Damn, Rias's brother was incredible.

"You both did well."

That was Sirzechs's voice!

He was standing before the prez and me in his normal clothes. Grayfia stood beside him in her maid outfit.

"Brother. Did you just get here?"

"Er, yeah. I figured you should be finishing up your trials right about now."

Prez... Open your eyes, seriously. Sirzechs was Satan Red all along. And Sirzechs, please just come out and admit it!

The prez and I stood up, and Sirzechs placed a hand on each of our shoulders. "Well done indeed. You both passed."

Hearing this, the prez and I looked at each other, exchanging proud grins.

We had done it! The two of us had survived the barrage of tests! In the end, I'd fought Sirzechs himself, and while I didn't beat him, we still cleared the challenge!

"The master and mistress will be relieved to hear the news," Grayfia stated. It looked like she had returned to full-on maid mode.

"I should apologize for dragging you into this with no warning, Issei," Sirzechs said.

"N-not at all! I-it's fine, really! I got to touch the prez's breasts, so everything's totally okay!"

That was the honest truth. Besides, it had been fun. And the prez's chest was amazing!

"I'm glad to hear it. Your future with Rias has weighed on my mind for a while, but judging from what I glimpsed today, the path ahead looks bright. I'll leave the rest to you, Rias, Issei."

"Okay!" I wasn't actually sure what Sirzechs was getting at, but I was determined to protect the prez for the rest of my life!

After all, I was completely infatuated with her!

"Congrats, Rias!"

Out of nowhere, Leviathan jumped out beside us.

Uh-oh. How long has she been there?

"...Ah. It's finally over," Asmodeus said with a deep sigh.

He'd had a long day, too, being made to serve as a judge. Hopefully, that wouldn't give him reason to neglect his duties as a Demon King...

As I thought on that, Ajuka Beelzebub approached me. His expression was serious and probing. From what I could tell, his interest lay less with me and more with my Sacred Gear.

"Do you mind if I inspect your Evil Piece for a moment?" Without waiting for a reply, he pressed a finger against my chest and opened a small, multilayered

magic circle.

Numbers and letters in the demon script flowed through the magic circle at an incredible speed.

“Hmm. It looks like you’re up to something interesting... You’ve been delving into the Sacred Gear, I take it? That’s only possible when a soul has been sealed inside it... It must have been the governor of the fallen angels, Azazel, who suggested this approach...”

Ajuka was grinning, evidently enjoying himself. I couldn’t believe he seriously worked all that out from a casual checkup! Sure, I’d heard he was a technological genius, but this was amazing!

Teach! This Demon King deduced your hypothesis in an instant!

“...The power and characteristics of your piece are being affected by something. It’s transforming, little by little—an intriguing phenomenon. It looks like some extra code that wasn’t in my original program has overwritten part of it. This is just conjecture, but I suspect your Juggernaut Drive may be responsible... The new code is all over the place. A malfunction could arise rather easily if we leave it like this... Very well. How about I apply a little ingenuity to your Evil Piece for you?”

—!

I was taken aback by this sudden offer!

“A-are you sure? W-wouldn’t that give me an unfair advantage in the Rating Game?”

“Of course. I’ll have to make sure you can’t activate it during an official match, but there shouldn’t be any issue employing it in actual battle, wouldn’t you agree? Then again, it *would* be interesting to try it out in a match... It could even prove quite popular among those fans who like a little irregularity now and then. In any event, being the Red Dragon Emperor, you will no doubt face a great many enemy forces in the future. You would benefit from an environment where you can deploy your abilities to their fullest extent. Most importantly, it should be amusing to watch. Ah, and I should thank you for stopping that out-of-control relative of mine, by the way.”

He was referring to Diodora.

I had beaten him to a pulp during the incident with Asia. Afterward, he was killed by one of the leaders of the old demon regime. Like Diodora, Beelzebub hailed from the House of Astaroth.

“Don’t worry yourself over that. The blame lies entirely on our side. Rather, I should be apologizing to *you*.” As he spoke, Beelzebub activated more magic circles to adjust my Sacred Gear.

From his tone of voice, he didn’t seem particularly interested in the incident with Diodora. Honestly, despite being that guy’s relative, Beelzebub could have been the one who paid it the least mind.

Thinking of a question, I asked, “Um... How many hidden functions did you include in the Evil Pieces system?”

“I can’t tell you that. Each piece’s user needs to discover that for themselves,” the Demon King answered, turning back to his work.

He really was an unfathomable individual. And he had referred to demons as users. I felt as though I had caught a glimpse of his unique character.

Sirzechs let out soft chuckle. “Ajuka is a rare creator among demons. The underworld’s technological capabilities have advanced by leaps and bounds thanks to him. Yet he’s rather indifferent to the usual demon methods of industry.”

“I prefer making things and having fun.”

Hmm. He certainly seemed like an unusual demon.

“Sirzechs and Ajuka have always been friends and rivals,” Leviathan whispered in my ear. “They were both in the running for the title of Lucifer, but Sirzechs was better at gathering people around him, so he got it, and Ajuka became Beelzebub.”

Huh. Sounds like they have a complicated past... Rivals? Like Vali and me? No, we aren’t nearly as close... Vali’s more an enemy than a rival.

“You both work too much... You should relax more... I just can’t keep up... You work, you lose, right...?”

Asmodeus was another type of rare demon. Seriously, that guy needed to put some effort into his job.

“Okay. That should about do it.” Having apparently finished adjusting my Sacred Gear, Beelzebub deactivated his magic circles.

I rubbed my hand against my chest. It didn’t *feel* any different...

“Has something changed?”

“That will be up to you. All I did was provide you with the keys to open previously locked doors. The choice of which to take lies ahead.”

Basically, Beelzebub had expanded my skill tree, but it was my responsibility to select the route.

“I think you would really hit it off with Azazel, Beelzebub,” I said.

Both of them were scientists, after all.

To my surprise, however, Beelzebub shook his head. “No. It might seem that way, but I’m afraid not. His talents lie in researching and building out from that which already exists. I, on the other hand, prefer to create from scratch. Our interests appear similar, but an enormous gulf lies between them.”

Hmm. I couldn’t help but wonder if that was true, and I cocked my head to one side.

Now that his work was concluded, Beelzebub turned his back to us. “How about we go home? I need to manage a certain game that I created in the human realm. There will be problems if I ignore it for too long.”

“Are you talking about *that*, Ajuka? Or is this a different hobby of yours?” Sirzechs inquired.

Beelzebub’s lips twisted in amusement. “Yes, a cherished hobby. By the way, Red Dragon Emperor. Would you care to try my game? All you need is a smartphone.”

His way of asking came off really creepy.

“I—I’m fine,” I answered, politely declining.

Beelzebub responded with a forced smile. “I see. That’s a shame. I look

forward to when we meet again. Rise to the next level.”

Vrrrrrrrrrr.

Beelzebub deployed a magic circle, disappearing into a flash of light that made the air around us vibrate softly.

Before I knew it, Asmodeus had vanished as well. He sure made a quick exit.

“We’ve arranged a party at the Gremory estate to commemorate your success. The rest of Rias’s Familia has already arrived,” Sirzechs said.

Seriously?! Everyone’s already in the underworld? And a party for me and the prez? Count me in!

I was rather pleased to hear this! Think of all the delicious food! It hadn’t been long since I last ate, but with everything that had happened today, I was starving!

Huh?

Grayfia was activating another magic circle. What was she up to?

I watched skeptically when a creature—I couldn’t tell whether it was a hawk or lion—appeared from the array.

Ah! I remember! It’s a griffin!

“This is the one that helped me and the prez escape her engagement party!” I exclaimed.

Sirzechs nodded. “Yes. Grayfia and I will return by magic circle, but you and Rias should let our friend here carry you.”

I had to wonder why. Surely, it was quicker to jump there.

“This is a special present for Lady Rias,” Grayfia whispered into my ear to allay my doubts. “Please accompany her, Master Issei.”

A p-present...? That only left me more puzzled.

“There’s one more thing. I was planning to announce this at the party, but I’ll let you both know in advance. The date of your match against Sairaorg has been decided.”

““—?!””

Both the prez and I were left stunned by Sirzechs's revelation. After a long wait, our fated battle was now in sight.

“It will be at around the same time as the Academy Festival at Kuou. We'll finalize the exact timing later on, but do plan with that time frame in mind.”

The Academy Festival was to take place after the school trip. The match with Sairaorg would be held after we returned from Kyoto.

Heh...

It looked like the second semester was going to be busy.

After receiving that shocking news, the prez and I sat ourselves down on the griffin's back and took off into the sky.

Close to ten minutes had passed since we had begun soaring over the underworld.

The prez and I stared down at the scenery below, a pleasant breeze blowing around us.

This brought back memories. During the first semester, I had forced my way into the prez's engagement party, activated my Balance Breaker for the first time, and beat the living daylights out of Riser Phenex. Then I'd made off with the prez.

From her spot behind me, the prez suddenly leaned against my back. “...This reminds me of last time.”

“Same here.”

She'd been thinking the same thing.

“Do you remember what you said back then, on the back of the griffin?”

“Yeah. That I would help you no matter what because I'm your Pawn.”

“That's right.” The prez wrapped her arms around my waist. She held on tightly, as though refusing to ever let go.

It was bliss. I was seriously overjoyed. I was essentially taking a leisurely drive with the woman I loved. Only we were flying through the air on the back of a

mythical creature. Nothing could've beat this.

Ah, right. I said something to her else back then, too.

"Just so you know, my feelings haven't changed! I still want to take your virginity!" I announced boldly.

The prez looked startled at first, but then she sighed. "Do try to think about setting the mood a little better, Issei." She scolded me. Hmm, maybe I had been too up-front about my desires? Not a moment later, the prez let out a soft chuckle and said, "We'll always be together. My beloved Issei."

"Yep. Of course!"

Someday, I wanted to call her my beloved Rias, too.

AFTERWORD

Hi there. It's been a while since we last spoke. It turns out I may have had a lot more freedom with this short story collection than I'd expected.

In the afterword of the last book, I said that this one might end up being called Volume 7.5, but in the end, we decided to call it Volume 8. Sorry for the misunderstanding.

Now then, let's take a look at each of the stories.

"A Demon's Work"—Set after Volume 1.

This story holds a special place in my heart, as it's the first one I wrote. When it was first published, Asia didn't appear in it, but I made sure to include her in this version. It was initially published in *Dragon Magazine* the same month that Volume 1 came out. It may have been an important promotional opportunity, but I went a little overboard and had it feature an armored warrior. I wonder what I was thinking... We ended up using this story's name as the subtitle for Volume 8.

"Gotta Catch a Familiar"—Set after Volume 2.

This story arose from a suggestion Miyama-Zero made to my editor after learning how much I like a certain monster-catching franchise, so I poured all my energy into it. There's a character who resembles the protagonist from that franchise and a similar attack as well, but don't worry too much about the details. Rassei is a Dragon-and Lightning-type creature. Hold on, seeing as the members of the Gremory Familia are all demons, that would make them all Dark types... In that case, they should all be weak against Fighting-type opponents, right?

"A Memory of Breasts"—Set after Volume 3.

This short story was included on the back of a poster included in *Dragon*

Magazine. In a way, it details a crucial chapter of Issei's—the Breast Dragon's—growth as an individual. What would he have been like if he had never met the old man with his *kamishibai* storytelling plays...? I can't even begin to imagine.

“The Breasts of Tennis”—Set after Volume 4.

This one came to be after telling my editor how much I like to play tennis. This is another shocking one. In the previous afterword, I promised you all a yuki-onna, so I wonder if she met your expectations? I never expected to lay eyes on an illustration of such a love-obsessed gorilla. I literally burst into laughter the moment I first saw it. Miyama-Zero really is the greatest of illustrators, with a range that stretches from cute girls to shocking snow women!

Just so you know, this short story bears no connection at all to another tale about tennis royalty.

“Hell Teacher Azazel”—Set after Volume 4.

This was my first attempt to really go for something big with one of these short stories. I had been waiting for an opportunity to showcase Azazel's powers, and I had always wanted to display what Rias and Asia would be like as children. A super robot showed up, too, but I like to think of these short stories as parallel to the mainline books, which allows me to be a little more creative than usual. This one took place around the time that Akeno began to let loose with her seductive side.

In case you were wondering, this story is unrelated to a certain other hell teacher.

“Three Hundred Isseis”—Set after Volume 5.

This was a contribution to *Dragon Magazine*. I based it on the theme of the number three hundred, writing it as a tragedy depicting what would happen if Issei was multiplied by that number.

To be clear, this one is not at all connected to a particular action film featuring three hundred strongmen.

“The Wonderful House of Gremory”—Set after Volume 7.

This is a new story to help enrich the broader setting. I also wanted to delve

deeper into the characters of Sirzechs and Grayfia. There is a common view, one shared by Issei, that Sirzechs's Familia is largely composed of monsters, but I think you could say the same thing about the members of Rias's Familia, starting with Issei. What a frightening pair of siblings.

My editor pointed out that Rias hasn't been in the spotlight much recently, and so suggested that I write a tale focusing on her, which is how this one came to be. Rias is undoubtedly the main heroine, but Akeno's aggressive attacks seem to have pushed her to the sidelines recently... Akeno is just too popular! But the prez is popular, too, you know?

Several new characters made their first appearances here. We met the remaining members of the Four Great Demon Kings, Ajuka and Falbium (aka Falby). The former is an old rival of Sirzechs's, while the latter is a particularly lazy Demon King. Ajuka is of a similar class to Sirzechs, and he's a natural inventor who's involved in a lot of stuff behind the scenes.

Something that Ajuka said should also serve as a special bonus for longtime fans. And maybe it hints at something that's yet to come...?

I'd like to discuss the background setting a little. Bahamut, the Glowing Fish of the Deep, is a part of Sirzechs's Familia. Behemoth, the Beast King of the Earth, is a member of Serafall's Familia. Falak, the Serpent of Hades, is in Ajuka's Familia. And Kujata, the Azure Holy Bull, belongs to Falbium's Familia. Each one is a creature of legend.

These characters are part of the wider setting...so they might not get much chance to feature in the main story. But I thought I'd let you all know for fans of this sort of thing.

Extra Demons are famous demons who don't belong to any of the Seventy-Two Pillars. Among their members are some extremely strong people like Mephistopheles, but these figures have all voluntarily withdrawn to the recesses of the underworld and are keeping their distance from the current demon government. Only a small number of their clans have survived to the present day. Even the fate of the other members of Grayfia's family remains unknown. For the moment, these Extra Demons are just part of the wider world.

The third arc of *High School DxD* will be about Issei's growth as he witnesses, learns, and lives the various experiences within and without demon society. He will come into contact with other figures involved in underworld society and with forces from outside. What will he obtain from all that, I wonder? Naturally, the Khaos Brigade will continue to advance its agenda.

Man, Issei attacked a Demon King head-on... He's just as hot-blooded as ever.

Not only that, but he let Ajuka change something inside him... Just what is going to happen in the next volume?!

Well, I'll tell you. He and his fellow second-year students at Kuou Academy will finally go on their school trip. I'm sure Issei and the gang will run wild (?) around Kyoto.

Time for my acknowledgments. To Miyama-Zero and my editor, H, we did it. Volume 8 is finally out the door. Thank you! It's a shame that we couldn't include all the illustrations from the magazine serializations due to space limitations. I would love to release an illustration collection one day. Yep, even as the author, I'm a fan of those drawings, too.

My gratitude similarly goes out to my readers! Thanks to you all, sales are continuing to climb! I don't know how long we'll be able to keep this up, but I'd like to keep going for as long as we can. Thank you all for your continued support.

Next time we put together a short story collection, I'd like to write something about Team Vali.

It might also interest you to know that I'm actually writing another story right now. I'm hoping to publish it concurrently with *DxD*.

It takes place in the same world as *DxD*, but I want to write it so that fans old and new can enjoy it without issue. *DxD* is still my highest priority, though, so please be patient.

Actually, there are some hints hidden throughout this collection of short stories...maybe. All the best!

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION LIST

Life.1: A Demon's Work

Dragon Magazine, November 2008 issue Life.2: Gotta Catch a Familiar *Dragon Magazine*, May 2009 issue Life.3: A Memory of Breasts *Dragon Magazine*, September 2009 issue Life.4: The Breasts of Tennis *Dragon Magazine*, November 2009 issue Life.5: Hell Teacher Azazel *Dragon Magazine*, January 2010 issue Life.6: Three Hundred Isseis *Dragon Magazine*, March 2010 issue Extra Life: The Wonderful House of Gremory First publication



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LIGHT NOVEL



MANGA

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