

High school

DX

VAMPIRE OF THE
SUSPENDED CLASSROOM

4

ICHIEI
ISHIBUMI

ILLUSTRATION BY

Miyama-Zero

PARENTAL ADVISORY
WARNING
EXPLICIT CONTENT



High School DxD

4

VAMPIRE OF THE
SUSPENDED CLASSROOM

SPECIAL



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**Not even God would forgive anyone
for defiling such wonderful breasts!**

**Though Vali
tried to escape
at high speed,
I effortlessly
grabbed hold of
him and delivered
a powerful punch
right into his gut!**



VAMPIRE OF THE SUSPENDED CLASSROOM

4

ICHIEI ISHIBUMI

ILLUSTRATION BY
MIYAMA-ZERO



New York

Copyright



Volume 4

Ichiei Ishibumi

Translation by Haydn Trowell

Cover art by Miyama-Zero

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Did you think this world would lack meaning without God?

Did you think it would be doomed to decline?

Sorry to break it to you, but it hasn't.

I'm alive and well right now, and so are you all.

The world keeps on spinning, even without God.

Life.0

Hi there, everyone, Issei Hyoudou here.

My new existence as a demon began back in spring, and now it's already summer. Time sure does fly, huh?

I was currently taking a bath while I clutched at my nose in a vain attempt to keep blood from spurting out of my nasal cavities.

“Oh, you have such beautiful skin, Asia. I’m envious.”

“N-not at all... Yours is paler and has such a nice texture, President.”

“Oh-ho, that’s kind of you to say.”

The red-haired and blond beauties sitting in front of me enjoyed light conversation as they lathered their bodies with soap before my very eyes.

That’s right! The prez and Asia were both naked! And sitting right there! Two gorgeous young women!

Was this paradise on earth? A utopia? Faced with my dream scenario, I felt like I could start bawling my eyes out at any moment. Actually, I was already weeping. I couldn’t have been happier!

A bath scene! I had recently learned God had died a while ago, but was that really true? I mean, this certainly felt like a reward from Heaven! Or rather, in my case, a boon from the Demon King, maybe?

Then again, the Demon King was the prez’s brother...

Jumping back a bit, I had made my way to the bathroom as usual, when I had bumped into a naked Asia! Naturally, I had apologized and prepared to leave, when—

"Are you taking a bath, too, Issei? Oh, and Asia as well?" Suddenly, Rias had appeared by the entrance, also ready to wash. "We'll both have to wait if we take turns, so why don't we all go in together?" she suggested. I was floored.

That was how the three of us had ended up taking a bath together. Typically, this kind of situation would be entirely out of the question. However, neither the prez nor Asia seemed the slightest bit embarrassed at me seeing them nude. Thus, by some miracle, I found myself in this garden of delights.

Faced with delectable eye candy, I, the flesh-and-blood embodiment of perverted lust, was at a complete loss.

I was trying my best not to stare in Rias and Asia's direction, but damn, I really wanted to! Seriously, I wanted to devour that sight, burn it into my retinas, and store it to use as fuel for my wild fantasies in the middle of the night!

Unfortunately, if I did, I would certainly break out into a massive nosebleed, and the bathwater would end up dyed crimson. I didn't want this situation to end so awkwardly!

Still, I had to breathe in this scene for as long as possible! Directly gazing upon Rias and Asia might have been too much, but basking in the environment was electrifying enough! I wanted us to remain this way for as long as we could because this was a rare and unusual opportunity! Just listening to two beautiful girls chat with each other was incredible!

And so I sat in the bath staring up at the ceiling, my thoughts running circles around me. My whirling thoughts came to an abrupt halt when something dropped into the water.

Plop.

A weight pressed on my body, and an incredibly soft touch stimulated my skin. Petrified with trepidation, I looked down and saw...the prez leaning right over me!

Whoooooaaaaa! I-I'm in the tub with a g-girl! Heck, we're all but huddling together!

"You know, I've wanted to bathe with you like this for a while, Issei." Wearing nothing but a grin, the prez pushed herself close to me!

Nghhhh! A flowery scent wafted up from the prez's wet, crimson hair.

This skin-on-skin interaction was too arousing! My mind was racing, all but dancing in excitement!

Ugh, I can't keep up with this!

"Issei, do you not like soaking with me?" the prez asked.

"O-of course I do! I love it! It's awesome!"

However, it was just as much the case that my body couldn't endure all this! I was ferociously elated, but if things continued at this pace, I would die of blood loss! No, wait, wasn't that the secret desire of all men?!

Out of the corner of my eye, I could see that Asia was still busy washing herself. From time to time, though, she would send me sharp looks.

Asia, a-are you angry?

"I'm glad to hear that. I want to do this with you every day, Issei," the prez whispered, sidling over even closer!

Whoooooaaaaa!

Spurt! A small trickle of blood ran down from my nose. At this rate, I wouldn't be able to hold it in!

"Sadly, it looks like your body might have trouble keeping up, so indulging in this that regularly might be out of the question. How about once every three days? Or every five days, maybe? Once a week won't be enough for me."

Th-the prez is trying to rewrite my schedule! How wonderfully selfish of her!
Thank you!

Sadly, I couldn't afford to get too bold with Asia in the same room. Given my perverted nature, if I was able to work up the courage, I might end up—

"Do you want to throw yourself on me?" inquired the prez, as if reading my mind. She'd always been good at telling what I was thinking. "If Asia hadn't interrupted, I suppose you might have already thrown yourself on me while we were alone..." she cooed.

Splash! came a sound as something leaped into the bathtub with tremendous

force.

Wha—?! Something grabbed on to me! I knew this soft feeling! I glanced to my side and saw Asia clinging to my body!

“I don’t like being left out! I—I want to take a bath with you!”

Asia?! What an audacious thing to say!

Two young women were both embracing me in the bathtub!

The prez’s face suddenly turned stern, clouding over as she lifted an eyebrow in displeasure. “Now hold on there, Asia. Given the situation, I’m going to say this clearly. Issei is *mine*. He’s a member of *my* Familia. He’s *my* servant. Do you understand?”

Right, I thought. I was the prez’s servant—little different than a pet.

She was undeniably acting rather forward with someone she regarded as a plaything, but perhaps all demon women were so daring. More than anything, Rias hated it when other people touched her belongings.

The prez had told me that while she’d pretend to remain unfazed if other demons touched me, she still couldn’t stand it. That was especially true when the instigator was a female demon.

I was probably one of Rias’s most prized possessions, the star of her collection. Maybe because of my rare abilities, she wanted to treat me with care.

Yet I wasn’t some object to the prez, and her affections for me clearly went beyond what you’d have for a cat or dog... Maybe that was my imagination talking, though. My head was always filled with perverse thoughts, so I probably wasn’t seeing things straight.

“That may be so, but he’s *my* Issei, too!”

Asia liked to dote on me as well. For example, there had been a few times when I’d laid down for a nap and woken up to find her resting nestled next to me. When I roused her and told her to sleep in her own room, she’d asked me, in a sleepy, fawning voice, to carry her there.

I thought I was going to die of sweetness! Obviously, I did exactly as she

asked!

It wasn't all tender moments, though. All I had to do was talk to another woman, and she'd puff up her cheeks in displeasure.

I guess Asia was afraid of someone taking her brother figure away. She was acting like younger sisters often did in anime or manga. Unfortunately, this left it difficult for me to get into a romantic relationship with her. I'd made it my mission to protect, so I shouldn't have been hoping for that sort of development anyway.

Just having Asia fawn over me was enough! Ah, being spoiled by a beautiful blond was exquisite!

The prez narrowed her eyes at Asia's declaration.

Rias, you're scaring me! You two were getting along so well just a second ago! And now you're both ready to go to war?!

My home's small bathtub was quickly becoming a battlefield.

"...Asia, you always get to be with Issei, so why can't you leave him with me now? I'm only able to relax when I'm with him. He helps me to unwind after my daily toil."

The prez gently tried to pull Asia away from me. But Asia refused to cede any ground!

Whoa, her breasts are so soft! Asiaaaaa!

"No! No! The truth is, I'm holding myself back! I want to be with Issei more, too!" Asia shook her head back and forth, squeezing me yet tighter in her embrace!

Make up your minds! I-I'm going to bleed out...!

"Ah..." Asia stared my way, her eyes glistening, as if to entreat me.

D-don't look at me like that. It only makes me want to protect you even more.

"..."

The prez remained silent, but her eyes betrayed irritation. Then, all of a sudden, she took my hand, and—

Plump.

She placed it on her breast.

My fingers wrapped around that incredible softness! Entirely by its own accord, my hand was caressing Rias's flesh, but she didn't complain!

"Have you ever done this with Issei, Asia? He and I are already at the level where we can enjoy each other's company...naked."

The prez was starting to scare me! I could feel the thorns in her outwardly unassuming tone of voice! That hardly distracted me from the fact that I was holding her breast! Her flesh-and-blood breast!

Asia watched on, her body trembling. Her cheeks swelled as she puffed them out in the ultimate show of disapproval.

Then she took my other hand, and—

Plump.

She placed it on her chest, too!

A-Asiaaaaaa?! Wh-what a wonderful sensation—No, I can't think like that! She was becoming such an erotic young lady! It must have all been because of the prez's and Akeno's negative influence! She'd been such an innocent child!

Her breast wasn't as full as the prez's. But it had a perfectly marshmallow-like softness to it! I was impressed, truly!

"Issei. Do you prefer mine...or the president's? I admit that mine aren't as big, but I won't lose out in any other quality!"

"Oh? Issei loves them big. He often tells me how much he loves my chest. Don't you, Issei?"

They were sparring with each other as I held on to both of their breasts.

...Ngh. I couldn't do this anymore. It felt like something had ruptured inside my nose.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

...That was it. Blood had started spilling from my nostrils, dyeing the bathwater crimson. With so much of it seeping from me, I could feel my

consciousness waning.

“Hey, Issei!”

“Issei, hold on!”

I was wholly satisfied.

Unfortunately, my body couldn’t stand it any longer. If I couldn’t learn how to manage these two, I was bound to die! Was there no one who could help me?!

—○●○—

The following evening, I pedaled my bicycle through the dead of night to my next client.

It was time for demon work, and I was giving it my all!

I had still been short of blood during the day. Life with the prez and Asia was definitely fun, but it was just too stimulating. Had I only possessed more playboy-like powers, I would probably have been able to satisfy them both then and there—at the same time!

However, Asia and the prez came from entirely different worlds. Maybe what had happened in the bathroom was their way of acclimating to each other as a family? If I dared to touch them sexually, that relationship might fall apart, and then I would be left with neither.

I was sure the prez’s interactions with me were meant in a master-servant kind of way, and Asia doted on me because she saw me as family—as a brother-like figure. And I couldn’t lay a hand on family members living under the same roof!

I had heard that people from overseas were much more relaxed about physical contact than Japanese folks, but this was just too much...

If something of this level was giving me trouble, how would I create my harem?! It was my dream to become a harem king, but with things as they were, my goal seemed more distant than ever!

Regardless, the most important thing at the moment was to focus on my work. The more I toiled, the higher up the social ladder I would climb. First, I had to secure my own position! I was aiming to become a high-class demon,

after all!

While I still had to bike to clients because I couldn't teleport using a magic circle, I was definitely getting better at both my tasks and handling my patrons. At least, I thought I was...

"Yo, demon kid. Looks like we meet again."

When I realized who had summoned me, I let out a sigh.

My client was a dark-haired man putting on a badass character. He looked like he was in his twenties, judging by his appearance.

However, he was a foreigner, so I had trouble discerning his age. Every time I saw him, he was always wearing a loose-fitting, summer *yukata*. I suppose it had been getting warm enough lately to wear such a thing, though.

He was one of those pretty boys. It was debatable, but he had an even more attractive face than Kiba, who people at school often referred to as the Pensive Prince.

That said, the badass vibe that this guy positively reeked of was very different from Kiba. Still, some girls liked tough types, and they would probably fall head over heels for this dude.

He'd recently taken to summoning me almost every day.

I entered his apartment.

I was the one he kept calling for. I didn't quite get it, but he had taken a liking to me, apparently. The reason eluded me, yet he continually summoned me day after day for minor wishes.

Yesterday, he sent me to buy him bread in the middle of the night! And the day before, he wanted to go fishing and had made me join him at a local angling spot! And before that—

I didn't even want to think about it anymore! Was this really the kind of thing that someone needed to summon a demon for?!

Then again, we demons *were* in the business of granting people's wishes. It wasn't my place to complain. I would upset my master, Rias. And if I was ever going to lift myself out of this and achieve my goal of becoming a harem king,

then I had to give it my absolute best!

“Hey, demon kid, you wanna play a game? I bought a racing one this afternoon, but I don’t have anyone to play against.”

What?! This kind of thing again?! I thought. I quickly stopped myself, though. I couldn’t gripe.

“Y-yes, gladly.”

The guy was actually a pretty good client as far as pacts went. He would even overpay occasionally.

He had started with expensive-looking paintings, then jewels, then solid gold nuggets. Even the prez had been surprised. Thanks to him, my reputation was on the way up!

That much was certainly something to be grateful for. All I had to do was a little light work, and I would be one step closer to a boudoir of beautiful babes!

My client set up the game. Now that I thought about it, he hadn’t given me his name yet. He was basically a regular at this point, so it only seemed right to know what to call him.

“All right, we’re ready. Japan’s a pretty cool country, huh? Lots of things here to help pass the time. Here, take a controller.”

“Ah, thanks. Just so you know, I’m pretty good at this kind of game.”

“Oh? Heh, let’s see what you’ve got, then. I’m a beginner, so take it easy on me.”

Yes, I was an ace at racing games. I was known as the Top-Speed Legend Issei, a prodigy who had smashed all the records in town! I was excited to show my client the skills I had honed!

“Go!”

And so we took off from the starting line. After a few matches, however, things started to go awry.

At first, I had an overwhelming advantage, but after a few rounds—

“I think I’ve got the hang of it. I’m gonna overtake you.”

I thought he was just talking smack, but then—

“Whoa, seriously?!”

His car sped past mine with ease!

How?! I couldn’t believe it! I had just lost to a newbie!

“*You win!*”

He flew past the goal! This guy had mastered the game in record time!

“Looks like I won, demon kid.”

“It’s not over!”

“Oh? Getting into it, huh? Wanna have another race, then, demon kid? Or should I say, Red Dragon Emperor?”

Huh? Wh-what did he just call me...?

Those words... The moment I heard them, a wave of cold fear coursed through my body.

Wh-who is this guy...? How does he know that...? He’s just a human, right?

I swallowed hard and nervously asked, “Who are you?”

The corners of the man’s mouth curled up in amusement as he stared at the screen. “Azazel. I’m the head of the fallen angels. Nice to meet you, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor, Issei Hyoudou.”

“*You win!*”

The man’s car shot past mine—which had come to a stop a good distance from the goal—before speeding to victory.

At that moment, twelve jet-black wings burst out of his back.

Life.1

Summer! Swimsuits! Trouble?!

“You’re joking.” The crimson-haired beauty standing in front of me raised an eyebrow in apparent anger.

Rias Gremory was my master and a voluptuous high-class demon. Here at school, she was also the president of the Occult Research Club.

She could be extremely strict, but she was also incredibly kind. I adored her!

And that beautiful young woman of my dreams was currently letting me rest my head on her lap. Her thighs were as delectably soft as ever!

Incidentally, we were both wearing our short-sleeved summer uniforms.

It was a wonderful time of year, the season for wearing light, loose, revealing clothing!

“The Leaders’ Summit between demons, angels, and the fallen angels may well be scheduled to take place in this town, but to think that the fallen angels’ governor would dare invade my territory and interfere with our business operations!”

The prez’s body was shaking—jiggling even—with anger.

Whoa, talk about scary...

That scuffle between us, the forces of God, and the fallen angels from a few days ago had soured relations between the three factions. As such, the leaders of each group had decided to hold a meeting to discuss the future.

The Occult Research Club was directly involved in what had happened... Not only that, but we were also supposed to attend the conference in person to give a report.

Most shocking of all, however, was that Azazel was the foreigner who’d been

summoning me. Yep, *he* was my regular client.

He had been concealing his true identity from me until recently. There was no denying that he was interfering with our demon business. And that wasn't all—given that he was the governor of the fallen angels, one of the leaders supposed to be attending the upcoming conference, his actions had escalated the situation to a whole other level. This wasn't a game anymore.

All that aside, none of us in the prez's Familia were in any particular trouble.

"And to think he was trying to lay a hand on my cute little Issei... He deserves to die one thousand times over! Supposedly, he's taken an interest in Sacred Gears. He must have summoned you because of your Boosted Gear... But don't worry, Issei. I'll protect you, I promise," Rias declared as she patted me on the head.

She was the kind of high-class demon who took good care of her servants. And she hated it whenever someone tried to touch—or worse, to damage—her property.

The prez was especially sensitive to threats to me, probably because she fawned over me like one would a pet cat.

I was happy to be treated that way, but *my* feelings were more complicated. I mean, I revered her, but I doubted that she saw me in the same way. In the end, we were just master and servant...owner and pet.

She would find a boyfriend one day. After that, she'd grow bored with me and cast me aside...

If I didn't become a harem king by then, I would be despondent.

"...I guess he must have been after my Sacred Gear. I mean, that Azazel guy is the governor of the fallen angels, right?" I asked, giving voice to my anxieties.

What would've happened if he'd trapped me? I was too terrified to even imagine it.

At this, Kiba—our group's pretty boy, the Pensive Prince—spoke up. "It's true that Azazel has a deep knowledge of Sacred Gears and that he's been gathering those who possess them to his cause, but you don't need to worry." Kiba

paused there, his gaze shifting down to me. “I’ll protect you, Issei.”

That’s gross, Kiba.

“...Er, ah, I... Thanks... It’s a bit weird, though, you saying that to another guy with such a straight face...”

“Why wouldn’t I? You came to my aid when I needed it. You’re my friend. And I would be unworthy of my station as a Knight in the service of Rias Gremory’s Familia if I didn’t protect those dear to me.”

I could understand what Kiba meant, but his tone wasn’t meant for a friend, let alone another guy. It was how you spoke to the heroine of a story.

Nonetheless, Kiba continued. “There’s no problem. Now that I’ve unlocked my Balance Breaker, if we charge my Sacred Gear with your Boosted Gear, we’ll be able to overcome any crisis... Heh, I probably wouldn’t have gotten so excited over something like this before. But since I started hanging out with you, something’s changed inside me. I don’t know what this feeling is, but it isn’t bad... It’s like a warmth building in my chest.”

“...G-gross...! S-stay away from me! D-don’t touch me!”

He seriously needed to stop! There were already a whole bunch of indecent rumors circulating among the girls of our school about the two of us! I didn’t want to be made fodder for any more homoerotic fantasies!

Heck, he had been acting strangely around me ever since the incident with Kokabiel a few days ago! What was I supposed to do if he made a move on me?! He was supposed to save that for his clients!

“D-don’t say that, Issei...” Kiba pouted.

Argh, don’t act so downhearted! That only makes it worse! Why do you think you’re making me so uncomfortable?!

“But I wonder how we should respond...? Without knowing what Azazel’s up to, it’s difficult to know what would be proportionate. After all, he’s the governor of the fallen angels. We can’t afford to act recklessly around him.” The prez was busy sinking deep into thought.

She was right—we couldn’t afford to upset relations between demons and

fallen angels any more than we already had.

The prez was pretty strict on that issue. Unless the other side did something unusually provocative first, she wouldn't consider making a move.

"Azazel has always been that way, Rias," came a new voice from seemingly nowhere. It didn't belong to anyone present. The gathered members of the Occult Research Club glanced toward the sound's source and saw a crimson-haired man warmly smiling our way.

I knew that face. Akeno and the others fell to their knees on the spot, leaving only Asia and me unsure how to respond. Our newest member, Xenovia, wore a look of pure bewilderment.

Gah! Ouch! After pushing me off her lap onto the floor, the prez rose to her feet.

"B-b-brother," she murmured, stunned.

Yup, our visitor was none other than the prez's elder sibling, the present king of the demon realm, Sirzechs Lucifer himself! I would never have expected to see him again here of all places!

"He won't do anything rash like Kokabiel did the other day, not Azazel. He's partial to pranks, though, as you've already learned. What's more, he's here sooner than anticipated," the revered Demon King said.

Behind Sirzechs stood the silver-haired maid Grayfia. As the Demon King's Queen, that was natural.

Like Akeno and the others, I hurriedly fell to my knees—as did Asia, mirroring my movements.

"Please relax. I'm here on a private matter today," Sirzechs urged us all, beckoning for us to stand.

We couldn't refuse and so rose to our feet.

"Dear Sister. It looks like a murder scene in here. How is it possible for a group of young ladies your age to put up with all these magic circles?" Sirzechs inquired with a joking grin as he surveyed the room.

He wasn't wrong about the decor. I had gotten used to it, but I have to admit,

it was a pretty strange layout.

“Brother, wh-why are you here?” the prez asked distrustfully.

It was obvious why she was on guard. It was unheard of for the Demon King, who carried all demon society on his shoulders, to personally visit a dingy school building out in the human world.

In response, Sirzechs handed her a piece of paper. “What are you saying? It’s almost time for Open House, no? I’ve been thinking about observing your classes. I would love to see up close just how diligent my dear little sister is at her studies.”

Ah, right. Open House was an opportunity for parents and guardians to look in on their children’s classes at Kuou Academy, and it was fast approaching. My dad was so excited about it that he had already taken time off work.

That said, I think he was more interested in seeing how Asia was doing than he was me. Now that my parents had two girls living with them, they all but broke out into celebration at the smallest of events.

“G-Grayfia? Did you tell him?” the prez asked, her expression clouded.

Grayfia nodded. “I did. As I oversee the schedule of the House of Gremory, all notices from the academy reach me. Naturally, as Master Sirzechs’s Queen, I also report them to him.”

The prez let out a sigh.

Huh? Doesn’t she want her family visiting? Maybe the idea of them snooping around makes her uneasy?

“When I heard, I decided that it would be nice to take some time off work and pay a visit to my little sister’s classroom. Rest assured, Father will be coming, too.”

Oh! Rias’s father! I had only ever seen him once when I had interrupted her engagement party a while back. He had looked like a dandyish kind of man.

“Y-you can’t! You’re the Demon King! You can’t abandon your duties just to come here! You can’t single out one demon for special attention!”

Rias had a point. Even if they were blood relatives, the prez didn’t like the

Demon King giving her special treatment.

Sirzechs, however, shook his head. “No, this is part of my duties, too, Rias. I’ve actually been thinking about holding the Leaders’ Summit between the heads of the three factions here at your school. I’ve come to inspect the potential meeting place.”

Wh-wh-whaaaaat?! Seriously?!

I could barely contain my shock! And it wasn’t just me—everyone else was just as surprised as I was.

They were going to hold it *here*?! My school was going to host a conference between the leaders of the three factions?!

“—! Here? Really?” The prez’s eyes widened in disbelief. She must have been so stunned she wanted to double-check that she hadn’t misheard.

“Yes. There’s something about this school. Not only does it count you, my younger sister, among its students but also the legendary Red Dragon Emperor, the wielder of the Holy Demon Sword, the master of the Holy Sword Durendal, and the sister of the Demon King Serafall Leviathan. Let us not forget that both Kokabiel and the White Dragon Emperor have launched attacks here. All that can’t be brushed aside as mere coincidence. Various forces have come together, producing a whirlwind of unlikely happenstances. And the one who set this whirlwind in motion must be Issei Hyoudou—the Red Dragon Emperor.” Sirzechs’s gaze turned to me.

All of a sudden, I found myself gripped by apprehension...

“So you’re the Demon King? It’s nice to meet you. I’m Xenovia,” interrupted our newest member, a beautiful young woman whose hair had a shock of green. Despite her appearance, she was also the wielder of the Holy Sword Durendal, and she was the prez’s second Knight.

“Greetings, Xenovia. I am Sirzechs Lucifer. I’ve heard about you from Rias. To tell you the truth, I doubted my ears when I learned that the wielder of Durendal had chosen to be reincarnated as a demon, let alone a member of my sister’s Familia.”

“I never thought I would become a demon, either. If this isn’t too rude to say,

sometimes I even regret choosing to join the enemy I fought for so long... Yeah, I know, right? So why *did* I become a demon? Desperation? To tell you the truth, I would have been fine with anything at the time... But did I really make the right choice?"

Xenovia started clutching her head as she fell into spiraling thoughts. She was always saying too much and finding herself regretting it later. I just couldn't understand her.

"Ha-ha-ha. It's great to see my sister's Familia is filled with so many interesting faces. Xenovia, this may be selfish of me to ask, seeing as you've only just joined us, but please support the House of Gremory as a member of my sister's Familia. I wish you the best."

"If the legendary Demon King Lucifer from the Bible is asking, then I can't refuse. I don't know how much I'll be able to help, but I'll do everything I can."

Sirzechs broke into a smile—one that resembled Rias's. "Thank you," he replied.

Xenovia's cheeks flushed pink.

"Now then, let's save the complicated discussions for later. Hmm, it looks like it's already night here in the human world. Are there any accommodations available at this hour?" the Demon King inquired.

Right, where are he and Grayfia going to stay...? There might be a hotel or somewhere available, but it could take a while to find one. Hmm...

An idea popped into my head, and I raised my hand. "Ah, in that case..."

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"I see. I'm glad to hear my sister hasn't been too much trouble for you."

"Oh, Sirzechs! Rias truly is a wonderful girl."

"Yes, she's practically wasted on our Issei."

The legendary Demon King was exchanging greetings with my parents in our living room. The prez was sitting beside him. Grayfia stood waiting in the background.

Yes, I had suggested he stay at my house.

At first, the Demon King had stared at me wide-eyed, but probably remembering that the prez was living with me, he finally answered, “That would be wonderful. I’ve been hoping to thank your parents for taking Rias in.”

That settled it.

Still, the prez kept trying to convince her brother to change his mind. The way she continued resisting was actually pretty cute. Nonetheless, there was no stopping Sirzechs and Grayfia, and with our immediate business concluded, we all made our way to the Hyoudou residence—my home.

Asia and I watched on from a short distance away. The prez really was cute, what with the way she was blushing like that. She must have been concerned about what her brother, the Demon King, might say.

It wasn’t every day I got to see this side of her, so I was going to make the most of this moment!

As Sirzechs was the elder sibling, he was the one who was supposed to inherit the House of Gremory.

Sirzechs Gremory—that had been his name, up until he cast it aside to take on his current role. He seemed to be enjoying using his birth moniker again as he greeted my parents.

“And your maid is...?” my dad asked.

“Ah, she’s Grayfia,” the Demon King responded. “Actually, she’s my wife.”

“Huuuuuuuuuh?!” Excluding the prez, everyone was floored.

However, the individual in question, completely expressionless, pinched the Demon King’s cheek and said, “I’m Grayfia, Master Sirzechs’s maid. Do forgive him. He likes to play these kinds of jokes.” She was quietly angry.

“Ow, that huwts, Gwayfia,” Sirzechs said tearfully, unable to properly form the words while she pulled at his cheek.

The prez covered her face with her hands in embarrassment.

Her family sure was interesting. I hadn’t expected the Demon King to be the kind of guy to joke around like that. Grayfia seemed to be used to it, though, so maybe he’d done something like this before.

"So you'll be visiting Rias's class, Mr. Gremory?" my mom asked.

Probably without her even realizing it, my mom's cheeks had turned red. Was she attracted to the Demon King's handsome, pretty boy face? As a male version of the prez, he was good-looking. Although the way he was rubbing his pinched cheek wasn't particularly mature...

"Yes, I've taken a break from work, so I thought I would use this chance to see how my dear little sister is doing and what her school is like. Our father should be coming on the day as well."

"Ah, Rias's father, too?"

"Our father helped found Kuou Academy, so like me, he sees this as a good chance to pay a visit. Although, to be honest, I think he just wants to see Rias."

"Mr. Gremory! Would you like a drink? We have some good Japanese liquor if you'd like to try some." So saying, my father took off to the kitchen, coming back with a bottle of what looked like sake.

Hey, Dad! You can't just pull out a bottle of alcohol like that! I-it's rude!

But despite my concerns, Sirzechs's face lit up. "That sounds wonderful! Certainly! I love sake!"

The Demon King was more sociable than I had imagined.

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"Y-you're saying I can't sleep with Issei tonight...?"

With the party over, it was time for bed.

At the door of my room, the prez stood in front of Sirzechs, her expression stern.

"I wanted to talk to him for a bit tonight, so I've brought my mattress in here. Sorry, Rias. I'll only be borrowing him for one evening."

Yes, the Demon King wanted to talk to me before turning in and had already brought the guest futon into my room.

Rias had gotten used to sleeping with me in my bed. She seemed genuinely crestfallen that she wouldn't be able to do so tonight. My master's love for me looked to be at an all-time high.

Prez, you look like a little girl who has just had her stuffed toy taken away from her. That kind of expression isn't fair. It's just too cute.

Akeno had recently revealed that the prez's dependence on me was increasing by the day.

She kept calling me cute, as if she couldn't bear to be without me. For my part, I was starting to worry that I wouldn't be able to measure up to her expectations...

Incidentally, I was also sleeping with Asia every night. The three of us curled up in the same bed, with me in the middle as if wrapped in a sandwich.

Truthfully, I was starting to feel strangely at ease resting together with them both. I felt like I understood what it was like to sleep together with one's spouse. Was having a sister the same kind of feeling?

The prez would hug me like a body pillow, and Asia, not wanting to be left out, would grab hold, too. Every night was filled with beautiful memories...but nothing had progressed beyond that point... Was this what was meant by the term *familial love*?

The prez claimed to have a sickness—that if she couldn't sleep with me, she would die. Asia felt forlorn whenever I left her side and stuck to me like glue. I wondered whether my hugs were good enough for them both.

Speaking of which, Matsuda recently shrieked at me with tears running down his face. “Issei, I can smell Asia on you! What’s the meaning of this?!”

I lay in bed with her at the end of every day, so it was no wonder that I had picked up her scent. I’d given Matsuda some vague answer, but the whole thing was bound to snowball into another weird rumor at school.

Heh, the other guys in my class must have all thought I had graduated from virginity. That was fine by me! It wasn't like I had any real prospects to reach such a milestone, however!

If I had been Kiba, or any other guy even, I would probably have already taken the prez for my own...

No, no, I can't! I thought. Even in a situation as delightful as sharing a bed, I

had to do things in the proper order! I couldn't skip the entrée and go straight for the chef...

"With an attitude like that, you're more of a Red Virgin Emperor, partner."

All of a sudden, Ddraig came out swinging with a biting remark.

Shut up! Leave me alone! One of these days, I'm going to do it with the prez! Just you watch! I angrily thought back.

"Issei..." The prez embraced me in a hug.

Whoaaaaa! It felt good, but I was incredibly embarrassed to have her do this to me in front of other people.

Rias was so dignified and cool at school, but she had been acting like this a lot in private lately. She was kind of like that character stereotype, the model office lady who calmly carries out all her duties at work only to go home at night and talk to her pets as if they were her own children...

"Can you sleep by yourself? Are you sure you'll be all right without me by your side? I'm not. Without you, I—"

"Come along now, Lady Rias," Grayfia interrupted. "Let's go back to your room. You'll have me to keep you company tonight. Good night, Master Sirzechs."

The prez pulled away from me as Grayfia took her arm. "I know, it's just..."

Her regretful expression as she left resembled nothing so much as a parent being forced apart from their child.

"Ah, um, good night, Issei. I'm sorry, but it looks like I'll have to sleep in my own room tonight, too," Asia said, bowing her head. Then she scurried away.

That left only the Demon King and me.

"Well then, shall we go inside?" Sirzechs asked.

"Y-yes!"

It was my room, but I was still incredibly nervous!

Sirzechs's movements were nothing if not elegant. He had a gentle aura emanating from his body, but even someone as inexperienced as me could

sense that he possessed an enormous concentration of demonic power.

Undoubtedly, he could reduce me to dust if he so chose. Yet I found myself feeling overcome with pride.

Thanks to him, this man who stood at the top of the demon hierarchy, we lesser demons could go about our daily lives in peace and harmony.

We owed Sirzechs a lot.

Just breathing the same air was enough to prove that Sirzechs and I were of a completely different class.

We both got ready for bed without saying anything particularly notable. I was about to turn off the lights and go to sleep when he finally spoke to me.

“I heard that you met Azazel.”

“...Yes,” I admitted.

“I’m told he didn’t do anything to you, but did he say anything?”

“...Only that he would see me again soon.”

“I see... Azazel has a keen interest in Sacred Gears. Your Boosted Gear is no exception. In fact, he is already in possession of another Longinus like yours.”

“...What does he want with it?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know. However, he is the governor of an organization strong enough to influence Heaven, the underworld, and the human realm. If he was to decide to use that Longinus, there are countless paths he might take. Thankfully, unlike Kokabiel, he doesn’t relish conflict. It was for that reason the fallen angels were the first to withdraw from the last Great War.”

Well, if I had any choice in the matter, I didn’t want anyone other than Rias as my master. I mean, there was no way I would join Azazel, but what would I do if he tried to brainwash me and drag me to his side by force?

Perhaps realizing what was worrying me, Sirzechs continued, his tone amiable: “Be at ease. I will guarantee your safety. At long last, a legendary dragon has joined forces with demons, so rest assured that we will treat you favorably. And besides, my dear sister thinks very highly of you. I’ve never seen

her so happy, not even in the underworld. She must be enjoying every day here in the human realm—and I suspect we have you to thank for that.”

I could see that Sirzechs truly cared about Rias. His words were overflowing with deep affection.

“Issei Hyoudou. Please take good care of my sister, of Rias.”

“I will.”

Of course I will, my Demon King! I'll protect her for as long as I can. Forever! Even if one day I manage to work my way up to being a high-class demon, that won't change the fact that I'm a member of her Familia.

Yes, even if I were to become a harem king, I would rush to the prez's aid whenever needed.

“I'm... Er, I'm... I mean, I'm Rias Gremory's Pawn, right?”

“Thank you. Ah, that's right! Do you mind if I call you Issei, like my sister does?”

“O-of course not! I'd be honored!”

“Excellent. In that case, Issei, won't you call me by my name, too? Or you could address me as your brother-in-law if you prefer.”

M-my b-brother-in-law?! What's he getting at...?! I had no idea what he meant, but I was beyond honored.

“I'd feel a little out of place calling you that, so would Lord Sirzechs be okay?”

“Hmm, let's go with that, then, shall we? It is a shame, though. I would have liked for a legendary dragon to address me as his brother-in-law... Well, perhaps you will in the near future, so let's leave it at that for now.”

“...? O-okay...”

It looked like Sirzechs was thinking out loud. I had no way of even guessing what went on in the mind of someone like him, but as a king of demons, he probably had a lot of things to worry about.

“By the way, Issei?”

“Y-yes?”

"You can use your Boosted Gear to transfer your power to other people and objects, if I'm not mistaken, right?"

"Yeah."

"This may be a little off topic, but I hear you like women's breasts. Is that true?"

"Yep! I love them!"

Ah! I didn't mean to blurt that out so loud to the Demon King! How rude of me! I was deathly embarrassed! Still, it *was* the honest truth!

"Even speaking as her brother, I believe that Rias's breasts are quite spectacular."

"Yep, hers are the absolute best!"

Sirzechs! The prez's chest really is the cream of the crop! Thank you so much for bringing her up!

"I'm just thinking out loud here...but if you were to use your Boosted Gear to transfer your energy to her breasts, I wonder what might happen? It's just an idle thought. Don't let it trouble you."

"—?!"

I went rigid.

U-use my Boosted Gear Gift ability on the prez's chest...? That's crazy... Isn't it...? But if it is possible...

I had never even imagined what might happen! Transferring the Red Dragon Emperor's power to her breasts! Just what *would* happen?!

I couldn't even picture it! I had no idea what to expect!

This was crazy! Not even I, who people called a manifestation of raw sexual desire, could guess at the outcome.

Damn if the Demon King's imagination wasn't far beyond mine! What an incredible suggestion!

Would they simply increase in size? But if those beautiful twin peaks got any rounder, they'd be national treasures! Maybe they'd swell? Or glisten with

luster? A-argh! I have no clue!

My imagination was running circles around my brain. My head was spinning more than it ever had before. My fingers undulated, grasping at imaginary breasts.

I—I was wide awake! This was no good! At this rate, it would be impossible for me to get any rest!

If I did it, if I transferred my power to those breasts, what would lie in store for me?!

“Good night, Issei,” Sirzechs said from his mattress beside me.

I spent the whole night possessed by wild fantasies, unable to find an answer.

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Several days had passed since Sirzechs’s visit.

Both he and Grayfia had left my home the day after their arrival.

It sounded like they were supposed to be inspecting the town, but having accompanied the Demon King for these past few days, all they were doing was sightseeing as far as I could see...

No, given his status, he must have been taking everything in from a perspective that was above my ability to recognize! We played games against each other at the arcade (apparently, he wanted to set one up in the underworld), conquered all the local fast-food restaurants (he said something about inviting a particular famous chain to set up shop in the demon realm...), and went to a Shinto shrine to pay our respects (he used his powers to dispel the shrine’s sacred energy—the Demon King could do just about anything!). These might have all seemed like casual outings at first glance, but Sirzechs devoted himself to each one of them entirely.

When I thought about his dedication, it made me realize just how undisciplined I was!

Maybe that’s why I was no closer to realizing my dream of becoming a harem king...?

Incidentally, I still didn’t have an answer as to what would happen if I

transferred my power to Rias's breasts...

Maybe I should just ask her? I thought. But there was no way I could say *that* to her!

"Prez! Can I use my Boosted Gear on your breasts?"

As if! What a stupid line! Even so, it still bothered me. I had to know!

I turned the question over in my mind as Rias, Asia, and I left for school in the morning.

"We're off!" the three of us announced as we departed.

It was technically a holiday, but we had something special planned.

Hee-hee-hee! I had been waiting for this day!

Ah, I was so excited! My heart was racing, and drool leaked from the side of my mouth.

It was at that moment, my face twisted in a delighted grin, when a voice called out to us.

"Good morning!"

Xenovia had joined us midway through the trek to school. She was living by herself in a nearby apartment.

She had chosen to be reborn as a demon out of desperation and would never again be able to set foot in the Vatican. With nowhere else to go, she'd moved into my neighborhood. Xenovia hadn't liked the idea of living in the old school building, so she'd found an apartment.

That said, her complex still had a demonic atmosphere to it. That was because her master, Rias, along with Asia and I, lived so close to it. Xenovia lived nearby so that she could come to us for help if she had any difficulties with her new existence.

It was only natural that Xenovia wouldn't understand a lot of things after plunging into a new way of living. Speaking of which, I remembered being taken aback when I saw both her and Asia open an umbrella for the first time on a rainy day.

Neither had used one before. They had been incredibly startled the first time they had seen a plastic umbrella. Xenovia and Asia truly had come from very different cultures.

“Asia, did you finish that homework?” Xenovia asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “Did you?”

“I... There’s so much I don’t understand about the Japanese language. Can you teach me?”

“Of course! Leave it to me...! I’m not very good at kanji, though...”

“Neither am I. Just thinking about how many characters Japanese people need to learn gives me shivers. I suppose that’s one of the reasons why Japan is such an economic powerhouse.”

The two girls were chatting with each other.

Although Asia and Xenovia’s first meeting had been a complete disaster, they were becoming fast friends. Similarly, they had both struck up a friendship with our perverted, bespectacled classmate Kiryuu.

Perhaps the fact that they were both Christians played a role in that?

The boys at school had given these two foreign beauties unusual nicknames: Asia the Still and Xenovia the Frenetic.

“I see. This, too, must be the work of the Lord.”

“Yes, His will is everywhere.”

“Amen—!”

The two of them always tried to engage in prayer, only to find themselves getting hurt for it.

“What are you two doing?” I asked chidingly.

Seriously, they did that way too often. The pair should’ve learned by now.

The prez enjoyed a small giggle. “Now then, everyone. We have the pool all to ourselves today!”

Yep! Today was our long-awaited swim day!

We, the Occult Research Club, had been entrusted with cleaning the pool by the student council. Summer had arrived, and it was time to get it ready for use.

The prez had readily accepted the task so long as we were given special permission to be the first to use it. We went all in, cleaning away the gunk once the water had been drained.

On top of that, the prez had gone shopping for a swimsuit the other day. She had shown me a glimpse of it back at home. Even if she hadn't been wearing it, the sight alone had been enough to give me an unstoppable nosebleed.

I mean, it was amazing! It was so incredibly sexy!

"You'll see it again once we're in the pool," she had said.

And that was why I had been so looking forward to this day! Everything in my life had been leading up to this moment! Well, that might be an exaggeration, but I was going to enjoy summer this year!

This was the season when boys became men, when people like me graduated from our virginity! Maybe during this vacation, I, too, would be able to do that...?

Heh-heh-heh! Unlike last year, this summer I would be surrounded by beautiful girls! Wouldn't it be wonderful if my first experience ended up being with the prez? Akeno would be good, too! Ah, I couldn't bear it anymore! Just thinking about it set my blood on fire!

Kiba had said he wouldn't be able to make it today. He had something else he needed to do. I just had to enjoy this twice as much in his stead!

"...Issei, you're thinking about something dirty, aren't you?" Asia pulled at my cheeks, tears in her eyes, but even she couldn't wipe the smirk from my face.

Grampa. I know you're up there in Heaven. Summer has just begun. The sun is shining brightly, filling the town with warmth and light. I can't stop myself from crying at the sight before me. Even I can tell that I've become sentimental lately.

"Hey, Issei! What do you think of my bikini?"

Gah! Blood spurted violently from my nose!

The prez's swimsuit! She was showing so much beautiful, white skin!

A tiny piece of red fabric formed the top of her bikini! It was so revealing! I could even see the undersides of her breasts! And her leg lines were just as captivating!

“Oh dear. President, I see you’ve stretched yourself to the breaking point. Oh-ho, so you wanted to show off your body to Issei *that* badly... By the way, Issei, what do you think of mine?”

Akeno made her entrance!

An all-white bikini, the polar opposite of the prez’s! It was just as revealing, though! If she regularly wrapped her sexy body in that kind of outfit, she would have young guys everywhere leaning forward, trying to catch a glimpse of her!

“I-Issei, I’ve gotten changed, too...”

I turned around to find Asia standing there, fidgeting. She was wearing a school swimsuit.

Mmm, what incredible power! A blond-haired beauty wearing a Japanese-style school swimsuit! Her name, ASIA, was written on the front in eye-catching letters!

“Asia, you’re so cute! I’m touched! It looks great on you!”

She flashed me a bright smile at my reaction. The girl looked genuinely happy.

“Eh-heh-heh. I’m glad you like it. Koneko is wearing one, too.”

Whoa! Koneko was wearing a school swimsuit as well?! Just like Asia, Koneko had her name written wonderfully on the front of it! That adorable, quiet charm was precisely why she was known as the school’s mascot!



“...You aren’t looking at me obscenely for once. I don’t know what to think,” Koneko murmured under her breath.

Was she...disappointed? Huh?

The prez rested a hand on Koneko’s shoulder. With a grin, she said, “I’m sorry about this, Issei, but you see...”

“Huh?”

“All right, one, two, one, two...”

I held on to Koneko’s hands as she kicked her legs in the water.

No sooner had we gotten the pool ready than the prez gave me another job.

“Koneko can’t swim. Issei, I want you to teach her,” she said.

The individual in question was taking intermittent, ragged breaths as she gasped for air, kicking her feet as hard as she could. She was so cute, trying her best to learn the ropes.

“Hang in there, Koneko!” Asia encouraged from beside her.

By the way, Asia couldn’t swim, either.

I was tasked with instructing both of them. Truthfully, I wasn’t all that great in the water, either.

All I wanted to do was stare at the prez’s sexy bikini and worship her graceful form as she cut through the water.

If only I could dive down and watch her from the bottom of the pool! It would be wonderful to watch her breasts bounce back and forth with every stroke she takes!

“Gasp... Sorry for having you do this for me...,” Koneko said apologetically.

“No, it’s fine. It’s fun helping a girl learn to swim. It doesn’t bother me at all,” I replied sincerely. Had I been teaching a guy, I don’t think I would’ve liked it. But for a girl, I was all in. Since it was Asia and Koneko that we were talking about, I would stick by their sides all day long if I could!

“A-and we’re at the end of the pool.”

After kicking with all her strength for twenty-five meters, Koneko had built up considerable momentum and crashed straight into me. It was nothing more than an accident, but to any onlookers, it must have looked like she was hugging me.

Uh-oh...

At this rate, she was bound to hit me with one of her superhuman punches!

Spare me! I was on guard against any sudden swings, but Koneko's actual reaction caught me by surprise.

"...You're surprisingly kind, Issei...for a sick freak."

I couldn't tell whether she was complimenting me or not. Perhaps it was only my imagination, but Koneko's cheeks seemed a bit flushed.

"W-well, I do like helping my juniors out, you know. I'm always causing you trouble, so if I can be useful for once, then I'm glad," I answered, patting her on the head the way the prez did with me.

I knew from experience that having a member of the opposite sex pat you on the head was nice. Then again, I had no idea whether Koneko would appreciate it.

Splash!

All of a sudden, someone leaped into the pool. The prez was swimming gracefully down one of the other lanes!

Whoaaaa! This is my chance!

I dove underwater as fast as I could and activated my Sacred Gear! Then I placed my gauntleted hand against my forehead and focused my increased power.

"Transfer!"

The energy passed through my eyes as my visual acuity skyrocketed! My field of vision expanded up, adding incredible detail to my surroundings! I spotted the prez over on the far side. *This* was what my Sacred Gear was made for!

Water resistance caused Rias's breasts to bounce marvelously! This was it!

Perfection! It was a unique, awe-inspiring sight watching them move! Those voluptuous miracles swayed brilliantly!

Long had I dreamed of this! That incredible bust shook back and forth in every possible direction!

What fantastic movements! Dammit! Prezzzz! Thank you! They're irresistible today!

When I got home, I would be able to do *it* five times straight...! I would burn this image into my memory for all eternity!

Thud!

Something crashed mercilessly against my head.

“Gah!” I gagged, sending bubbles up to the surface. When I shot up to the surface, I found Koneko, her arm outstretched as if having dealt a karate chop.

“...You’re going to help Asia now, right?” she stated grimly.

Asia looked ready to cry. “Ugh, I...I...!” She was clearly upset.

I cleared my throat and turned my attention back to my job. “All right, Asia. Are you ready?”

“...Yes. Thank you.”

From there, we moved on to Asia’s swimming lesson.

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“...Ahhhhh, I’m so tired...”

Asia lay sprawled out on a vinyl tarpaulin by the side of the pool.

I had held on to her hands as she practiced paddling in the pool, but probably because she had been much more excited than I anticipated, we ended up doing more laps than I could count.

Exercising in water used up more energy than running on land. It must have been pretty hard on her, considering that she wasn’t particularly good at physical activity, even at the best of times.

Koneko was also taking a break in the shade, reading a book.

Phew. I let out a sigh of relief and sat down next to Asia. I was sure that my

strength and stamina had improved considerably since becoming a demon, but even so, I was exhausted.

I guess exercising by yourself and helping someone else to train were different tasks. Especially when the person you were helping was a girl.

“...Zzzzz...”

Was Asia snoring? I glanced toward her, only to find that she had fallen sound asleep. She was so cute when she nodded off like this. There was no way I would be able to live with myself if I let her marry someone else.

As I stared at her dozing face, a feeling of tranquility washing over me, a red bat came soaring my way. It was one of the prez’s familiars.

All of a sudden, I felt someone’s gaze land on me. I turned back around and found the prez standing on the other side of the pool. She was holding something in her hand—a small bottle? Oil? Lotion?

With a broad grin, she beckoned for me to join her. “Come here,” she mouthed in silence.

Wh-whoooooaaaaa! I-it couldn’t be?!

Overcome with a certain feeling, I sped toward Rias with inhuman speed! This could only mean one thing. Yep, you guessed it...

A midsummer sun oiling!

What else could the prez possibly have meant? She wanted me to oil her arms and legs, her whole body even!

I had to be dreaming! For an unpopular guy like me, it was a total fantasy!

I couldn’t believe it! The prez was about to let me enjoy her soft body with my own two hands! Whoa! Just thinking about it was enough to give me a nosebleed!

“I-Issei Hyoudou, reporting for duty!”

The prez wore a surprised expression for a moment as she beheld her overly excited servant before breaking into an amused chuckle.

“Well, look at you. And all I did was beckon you to join me.”

“Huh...?”

She had seen clear through me. I felt my cheeks turn red. Ugh, this was sooooo embarrassing! I—I had totally assumed that she wanted me to lather her in oil!

I was disappointed. No, that wouldn’t do. If Rias had called me over, then she must have wanted me to do something. I was her Pawn after all... But I would have liked to rub her down...

“Don’t look so sad, Issei. You guessed right.”

“Eh?” I exhaled in suspense.

Did I hear that right? I thought, unbelieving.

“Demons don’t get sunburned. But the sun’s light is still an enemy to us.” The prez paused there, handing me the small bottle that she had been holding. “This is a special beauty oil. Can you rub it on my back?”

“Of course! With pleasure!” I replied without even a moment’s hesitation.

My response was only natural! My brain understood this situation instantly! I had thought that lotioning up a girl’s body was merely a lofty fantasy, but here it was playing out in real life! I was weeping with joy!

“In that case, I’ll get ready.”

Click.

Without any hesitation, the prez undid her bikini top.

Bounce!

With nothing to hold them in place, Rias’s naked breasts revealed themselves! Why, hello there! How many times had I made the acquaintance of these beautiful darlings now?!

No, hold on! Prez! Are you really okay with removing your top in front of a guy like me in broad daylight?!

I moved to squeeze my nose to stem the flow of my blood surging forth, but I couldn’t stop my gaze.

Ah, Prez! What a beautiful shade of pink your nipples are!

"P-Prez! You should tell me if you're planning to take off your bikini like that! I wasn't ready! I—I mean, in front of a guy?! Are you all right with this?!"

"Yes. You're the only man here, so I don't mind at all," Rias replied with a confident smile.

I was touched that she would say that!

Hold on, so she does see me as a man? Maybe it's okay because I'm her servant? Hmm, I don't quite get it. Whatever the situation, this was undoubtedly a great treat!

The prez lay facedown atop a vinyl tarpaulin and threw her long crimson hair back over her shoulder as she glanced up at me.

Believe me, her pale skin was dazzling! She was lying on her stomach, so her voluptuous breasts were pushing against the ground, spreading out to either side. Incredible! I wanted to press my fingers against that magnificent bust!

Hold on. This is my chance to transfer my Boosted Gear's power to them, right?!

"Please begin."

The prez had permitted me to touch her! She was letting me fondle her soft, white skin! I had lived my whole life in wait for this day!

Thank you, Mom; thank you, Dad! I'm about to take another step forward on the journey of life! Matsuda, Motohama! I'm climbing to the next rung on the ladder of adulthood! I'm leaving you both further and further behind! You can both crawl and grovel down there, far below!

I was soaring! Just the thought of touching the prez's body had given me wings!

My fingers wriggled obscenely as I moved to touch Rias's back.

Whoa...

It looked so soft and smooth... It was just begging me to caress it. I opened the bottle of the special demon oil and rubbed it all over my hands.

Now to discover the mysteries of the feminine body!

Plop. Squelch...

I pressed my hands against her skin and began to rub the oil into her flesh.

Ahhhhh! Dammit! I knew you had great skin, Prez! It was so smooth that my fingers were practically gliding right over it! And at the same time, it was so supple that it felt like it wanted to cling to my palms! Every second my fingertips stroked that gorgeous, elastic flesh, my nerves positively billowed with life!

I spread the oil out uniformly over the prez's back, but even I realized that I lacked the courage to touch her breasts pressed against the tarpaulin! She would probably forgive me if my hand were to slip and brush against them, but I wouldn't be able to escape the guilt of having done so.

But I wanted to touch her chest sooooo much!

I was already rubbing way more lotion into her back than was necessary. If only this could have continued forever. Acting too obvious with this could result in the prez getting mad at me, though!

“Issei.”

“Y-yes!”

“There’s an area that you haven’t touched yet. I know that you want to dominate this body of mine.”

“—!”

That stimulating, provocative line set my mind on fire! Where on earth had she learned Japanese like that, the kind of words that could tickle a pervert’s heart in just the right places?!

“Won’t you rub my breasts as well?” Her delectable Japanese crept into my ears! I all but sobbed with joy!

“R-right! Of course! B-but are you sure?” I asked just in case.

The prez, however, flashed me a smile, nodding. “Go ahead. Take your time. Oh-ho, you do love breasts, don’t you, Issei?”

“Yep! I adore them!” I replied, tears streaming down my cheeks!

I really did! They were my absolute favorite things in the whole wide world!

Boobs were justice! I wanted to rub them! I wanted to squeeze them! I wanted to suck them both right up!

The prez was definitely spoiling me right now! I was overjoyed! What a wonderful master I had!

“Oh, Issei! Won’t you rub me down, too?” cooed a new voice.

Squish...

A soft, pliable sensation pushed against my back! I—I knew this feeling! I glanced over my shoulder and came face-to-face with Akeno!

Nghhhh! A-Akeno! When did you...?!

She wrapped her arms around me in a hug from behind. *Whoaaaaa!* The sensation of her chest pressing against my back coursed through me—

Hold on...

I couldn’t feel any cloth or fabric!

I-it couldn’t be... Are they pressing against me directly?! Akeno, did you take off your bikini?!

“Oh dear, it isn’t fair for you to keep him for yourself, President,” Akeno said as if reprimanding Rias.

Akeno’s breasts continued to smoosh wonderfully against me as she moved! It seemed like that soft feeling was running wild over me!

Ugh! She was doing this on purpose! She had to be! And I could feel the tips turning stiff!

This was too much for me to take in! How could it not have been? No matter how deeply I immersed myself in oiling the prez’s back, if Akeno were to do this to me, it was inevitable that she would stop me in my tracks!

Ahhhhh! Her tits, their pliable, elastic softness, their undeniable presence—it was all incredibly awesome! I was in love with this sensation. The weight and size of them felt so different from the prez’s!

“H-hey, Akeno. Perhaps you haven’t noticed, but Issei hasn’t finished oiling me. A-and I warned you not to try seducing him, didn’t I?” The prez lifted

herself up, her eyes twitching. She was clearly ticked off!

Hold on! P-Prez?! If you sit up like that, without your bikini top on...

They were in full view! I could see her chest in all its naked glory!

Rias's boobs were swaying gracefully before my very eyes! Wow! I could see them trembling up and down, side to side, with her every movement!

Plop.

Akeno rested her head on my shoulder. Just like that, our cheeks were pressing up against each other. She rubbed her face against mine.

Some unknown heat began to rage through my body. An untamed beast suddenly let loose!

"Issei, the president can be so terrifying at times, you know? I'm normally so busy running around doing errands every day, so I want to let off some steam with my cute little junior."

Nibble.

Gwah! Sh-she was biting on my earlobe! This was just too erotic! I stood frozen in place, unable to move a muscle!

Seriously, Akeno had me—the living embodiment of erotic desire—entirely under her spell!

It was all I could do to keep my nose from becoming a blood fountain. Not good! I could feel blood dripping down my face every few seconds!

"Really, Issei, you are just too adorable. President, won't you let me have him? I simply must take him with me when I set out on my own one day."

"No! He's mine! I'll never give him up!"

"There's no one else as wonderful as Issei here. Surely you won't mind if I coddle him now and then. Perhaps play some intimate games with him?"

"Out of the question! I don't want Issei to know any woman but me! W-well. I suppose I might not have any choice when it comes to Asia... But he'll turn into a beast if I let *you* have him!"

"Oh dear. That isn't a very nice thing to say. Don't you think men are at their

best when they act a little savage? But if you're hesitating...maybe I should take his chastity for myself?"

"Never! Don't even joke about that!"

Our Familia's King and Queen were fighting over who would get to keep me as their pet! Yet I was totally fine with it.

Call me whatever you want! Call me a vulgar cur! Prez! Akeno!

"By the way, Issei..."

Akeno! Don't whisper in my ear like that! I could feel her breath. No! Don't blow into my ear! Why are you so horny?!

"Did you get to suck the president's breasts?"

"I—I didn't!"

"Oh dear. You poor thing. The president is so protective of you, but she hasn't even let you do that?" Akeno sighed provocatively.

She may have been speaking to me, but those words were clearly meant for Rias!

Sure enough, the prez's expression turned increasingly grim. This was quickly getting scary.

"In that case, I'll let you suck mine. Please. *Go ahead. ↳*"

.....

For a brief second, my mind went blank, and I was left wondering what Akeno had said to me.

However, before I could fully process the words, our erotic Queen struck another seductive blow. "You can feel them rolling across your back, can't you, Issei? I'm saying that you can hold them in your mouth. Do you understand?"

Akeno's nipples were dancing against my skin! What I understood was that my whole body was aroused. She might have been my senior and I her junior, but if she kept this up...

"I'll let your tongue crawl all over them. I'll let you twirl it around their tips. I'll let you suck on them like a baby. I'll let you go wild as your animal instincts take

over... It will be my first time letting a man have his way with them. I wonder what it will feel like..."

Akeno's rough moans assailed my eardrums! Her words were launching a full-scale assault on me!

Had her sexual sadism come out to play?! It was just too stimulating! My brain was going all fuzzy!

Whoosh! Crack!

An object sped past me, followed by the sound of something shattering into pieces. I fearfully turned around—only to find that one of the pool's diving boards had disappeared!

Turning to the prez, I saw that a powerful aura had enveloped her hand. Had she just tried to blast me?!

"Akeno. Don't you think you're taking this a little too far? You serve me as a member of my Familia, too. Or have you forgotten?" Rias's voice was dark and low.

There was apparent malevolence in her gaze. Let me tell you, I was terrified.

"Oh dear. If you put it like that, then I might find myself in a spot of bother. I won't back down, Rias."

Eeeeeek!

Akeno, still smiling, closed her eyes for a second—but when she opened them again, they were burning with anger! A golden aura enveloped her body, crackling with electricity!

The prez rose to her feet, and Akeno too stood back from me, readying herself!

These two gorgeous beauties, their naked breasts bare for all to see, faced off against each other, the both of them readying their powers! Was this going to end up turning into a war between two women?!

"You can't have him—you debauched Vestal of Thunder!"

"Where's the problem? I'm only playing with him, you Crimson-Haired Virgin

of Annihilation."

"You're a virgin, too!"

"Oh? If you're going to be like that, then maybe I'll have Issei take my virginity here and now?"

"Don't you dare! Issei said he was going to take *my* virginity!"

There was a thundering rush of air as Rias and Akeno launched into the air. They came at each other with blows that went beyond any normal disagreement. Two young women shouldn't have been insulting each other with words like *virgin*!

"I thought you hated men, Akeno! Why are you suddenly so interested in Issei?!"

"You're one to talk, Rias. I remember you saying that they all looked the same to you!"

"Issei is special! He's cute!"

"He's adorable to me, too! I've finally met a boy who I want to get to know! So why won't you let me explore him?!"

Ahhhhh! I had no idea how it had come to this, but they were duking it out for real! They were letting out one explosive bombardment of demonic power after another—seemingly wholly oblivious to the fact that I was still standing right here!

Boom!

Whoa! That last attack was too close for comfort! The side of the pool had been blown to pieces!

If I remained where I was, one of their stray shots was bound to hit me. There was no doubt I'd be struck dead on the spot! I wanted to find some way to stop them, but I couldn't! If I got mixed up in a battle like this, I would be completely obliterated!

"I'm sorry, Prez, Akeno!" Desperate, all I could think to do was apologize from the bottom of my heart before hastily fleeing to the pool equipment room.

“Huff... Huff...”

Having come face-to-face with the possibility of death, I was breathing raggedly, trying to calm my nerves in the storeroom by the pool.

I had been running for my life. Those two lovely girls could get incredibly terrifying! If I had been half the man I wanted to be, I would have fondled both of their chests at the same time while saying something like, *Hey, there's no need to fight over me, my darlings.*

Reality, however, wasn't so rosy. In the end, all I had been able to do was dash off with my tail between my legs.

I suppose that *did* make me the Occult Research Club's pet. Since I was the only one like that in the club, perhaps that explained why Rias and Akeno would wind up competing over me.

Still, the prez's and Akeno's way of showing affection toward a lower member of the Familia was beyond my wildest dreams.

Indeed, the path to becoming a harem king was a steep one. Though maybe it was merely that the girls I knew were unusually scary...

I let out a deep sigh when I suddenly sensed the presence of another person nearby. At that moment, Xenovia stepped out from the shadows.

“Ah, Issei Hyoudou? What's up? It sounds like something is going on outside?”

“You're better off staying in here for now. And what are you doing here anyway?”

“This is my first time wearing a swimsuit, so it took me a while to put it on. What do you think?”

Why had she gone out of her way to change in the storage room when there was a perfectly good girls' locker room...?

It might not have been as erotic as the prez's and Akeno's bikinis, but Xenovia was wearing a lovely two-piece that emphasized her curves.

Ah, as I had surmised, she has a great body, too, I observed silently. It was well toned but full and ripe in all the right places. Her breasts were on the large side as well, and she showed a decent amount of cleavage.

"Ah, yep, it suits you. So this is your first time wearing a bathing suit? I knew the Church was strict, but is that banned, too?"

"Something like that. I suppose I've just never been interested in this kind of thing before. The nuns I worked with and the other female fighters often complained about not being able to try new things like this."

Xenovia was undoubtedly the type to say something akin to *Fighting is more my kind of thing.*

"But now that everything in my life has changed, I *would* like to try a few more feminine pleasures. At least, that's how I've been feeling recently."

That was all well and good, so long as she didn't get any weird ideas.

Suddenly, Xenovia's expression grew grave.

"Issei Hyoudou. I would like to have a word with you."

"Just call me Issei. We're allies now, after all."

"In that case, Issei, let me say this outright. I want you to have a child with me."

...

Huh? Huuuuuh? What did she just say?

Xenovia cocked her head to one side. "Did you not hear me? Issei, I want to make a baby with you."

...

...Huh? Whaaaaat? Were my ears deceiving me? I had just heard a line that would make any man jump for joy... But this was Xenovia we were talking about.

Again, she repeated it. "Issei, come and make a baby with me."

"Whaaaaaaaaaaaaat?! Argh!"

Xenovia hurried to block my mouth as I cried out in shock.

"Shhh. Keep your voice down. Someone might notice us."

Keep my voice down? How was I supposed to do that?! What did she think

she was requesting of me?!

“Y-you can’t just... Out of nowhere like that...,” I murmured, squirming.

“Hmm. I’d best explain from the beginning, then,” Xenovia remarked.

She told me that she had been born and raised in Rome, the heart of the Christian Church, with the impossibly rare natural ability to wield a Holy Sword. As such, she had trained and studied hard to serve God and the Church from an early age.

“Ever since I was a child, my dreams and goals have always been closely connected with my faith. I never doubted that I was fighting demons in the name of the Lord or that the Vatican’s mission was to spread the Gospel. Which is why, now that I’ve become a demon myself, I find myself without any aspirations.”

“Y-yeah, I get that... B-but what does that have to do with m-m-making babies...?” I stuttered. It seemed that Xenovia was thinking a little too hard about this, but she did look troubled.

“While I was serving the Lord, I had to cast aside all the joys of womanhood. I sealed away my wants, all for the sake of my faith. But as you can see, I’m a demon now. At first, I didn’t know what to do. So I asked Rias as my new master, and she said, *‘Demons live to desire, to fulfill their desires, to grant desires, and to yearn for desires. Try existing for yourself.’* And that’s why I thought I should unleash everything that I’ve been bottling up inside me.”

She’s talking about partaking in feminine pleasures...right?

“My new goal, my new dream—is to bear children.”

“Y-you want to be a woman, right? To do the things that only women can do? Because you were supposed to be chaste while you were in the Church or something?”

Xenovia nodded. “Yes, I want to know what it’s like to have offspring. To do that, I also need to know what it’s like to take a man inside me. It seems like a perfect opportunity—two birds, one stone.”

“No, no, hold on. I—I get all that, but why *me*?”

"Do you object? I'm confident in my body. My breasts might not be as large as the president's, but they're certainly larger than Asia's, don't you think? They're worth a look, wouldn't you agree?" Xenovia stroked her chest with her fingers.

I couldn't refute that Xenovia's breasts were on the large side, and I *did* want to grope them! I so badly wished to squeeze them between my fingers!

"L-look, I really want to do that with a girl. To be honest, I'd jump at even the slightest chance! B-but are you really sure? I mean, with me? I'm not your boyfriend or anything, and I've never even thought about having kids!"

Hmm, children of my own, huh?

Not too long ago, I had never had any luck at all with the opposite sex. I had all but given up. But then I had been brought back to life as a demon, and my dreams and aspirations had been reborn, too. That significant change had left me thinking about the future as well.

Xenovia nodded in response to my question. "You're fine, Issei. I don't think you've realized this, but you have the aura of a dragon. Undoubtedly, that's because you have the Red Dragon Emperor inside you. And you have a little more of that energy now than when we first met."

R-really? I wondered. I hadn't noticed.

"If I'm going to make a child, I want them to be strong. I want their father's genes to be powerful. In other words, I desire strength. That's why I think you're the most qualified, Issei. You possess the power of the legendary Red Dragon Emperor. Even if you can't pass on your Sacred Gear, there's a chance your children might inherit that aura of yours, no? This is an excellent opportunity. I'm sure the Lord will—Ugh...! I began to pray for a moment, but I guess that's just how it is for me now. There's no one here but us. Let's try it. The sooner, the better."

Plop!

Without any hesitation at all, Xenovia undid her bikini top, letting her breasts bounce free in front of me! They were springing up and down so delightfully!

H-h-her nipples... They were a beautiful shade of pink. Until recently, Xenovia had been a devotee of God. That meant nobody else had ever touched them,

right...? So she was offering them to *me* now instead of God?!

My mind began to race with all manner of wild fantasies, just as my nose began to start bleeding all over again. How many liters of blood had I lost today?! Xenovia paid that no mind, however. Instead, she continued to explain how she had arrived at her decision.

"I know a little about demons and childbirth. It isn't easy for demons to bear children. I've heard that conception is difficult for pure-blooded demons. Fortunately, though, we both became demons via reincarnation. We're both former humans, and you have a robust sexual appetite. I think it's safe to assume that if we do this every day, we should be able to conceive within ten years. No, with your vigorous libido, perhaps we might even be able to do it several times each day? In that case, having a child within five years might become more than just a dream. Ah, don't worry about the child, though. I'll raise them. All I want from you is to play with them whenever they want their father's affection. After all, a child should have both parents in their life."

Huuuuuuuuuuuh?! She's already outlined an entire plan for the future?!

"I'm afraid I don't have any experience with men. I intend to learn more down the road, but for now, given your wealth of sexual knowledge, I'll let you take the lead."

So she was a virgin! Why was I surrounded by so many charming, inexperienced young women?!

"Hold me. I don't mind what you do to me, so long as it helps us to make a baby."

Xenovia wrapped her arms around me!

Wh-whoooooaaaaa!

Her breasts were pushing against my chest! Damn, they were soft. Was I okay with this?! Could I accept her pushing me down?! Was it really all right for me to go all the way here?! Was my first time going to be with Xenovia instead of the prez?!

There was no one else here! It was only us! Our absence likely wouldn't arouse too much suspicion, but wait—would we have enough time? I mean, I

was a virgin, too!

If I didn't make love to her now, I would forever be unworthy of manhood! It was finally here, my graduation!

Ah, Matsuda, Motohama! I'm leaving you both behind!

As far as I could see, summer made girls go to extremes! Maybe that was why so many high schoolers had their first sexual encounters during summer break?

All right, then. Let's do this! Xenoviaaaaa! I was prepared and ready. I thought an apology to the prez and pushed Xenovia to the ground. No sooner had I done so than...

Click.

All of a sudden, the door to the room swung open.

"...Issei? What exactly is going on here?" The prez stood in the entrance, her face twitching in a forced grin. Her body was glowing with a thin layer of crimson power.

"Oh dear. Not fair, Xenovia. Surely you know that Issei's chastity belongs to me." Akeno was smiling, but she wore a formidable aura around her!

"Ugh, Issei... How awful... If you had just asked me, I would have..." Even Asia looked like she wanted to say something as she fidgeted by the door. She was clearly incensed!

"...You can't let down your guard around him," Koneko said piercingly.

"What's wrong? Come on, Issei—let's make a baby." Xenovia stared up at me, her expression oblivious.

Heeeeey! Xenovia, read the room!

Everyone standing by the doorway underwent a sudden change when they heard those words. The prez and Akeno grabbed me by the arms and began to drag me outside to the pool!

They were putting incredible strength into their grips as they hauled me out!

"Prez! I—I can explain this!"

"I know. This is my fault. Given your hypersexuality, I shouldn't have taken my

eyes off you even for a second. But, Issei, tell me, what exactly did Xenovia mean by ‘Let’s make a baby?’” Rias asked.

I shuddered in fear at the sight of that soft smile! The prez was absolutely terrifying!

“Indeed. I would like to hear a little more about your feelings on that as well. Just how could your conversation have turned to the subject of children, I wonder?” Akeno was wearing a similar expression to Rias, but it hardly masked the intensity that raged beneath it.

Gah! All of a sudden, I felt weightless, only to find Koneko with her superhuman strength raising me into the air by my legs!

“...We’ll take you where you need to go.”

Koneko! What are you planning to do to me?! Huh?! Hold on—am I being hauled away by a group of girls?!

“I see. So first, I will have to defeat the president, the vice president, and Asia, too... This will not be an easy task. But the greater the number of rivals, the more I get fired up.”

Whaaaaaaaaat?! Don’t get encouraged over this, Xenoviaaaaa!

She had always tended to give strange statements, but this—No, I had let myself get carried away this time, too...

“Issei, when we have a chance, I’m going to make a baby with you. Remember that. And be ready!”

“Xenoviaaaaa! Help meeeee!”

Like that, Xenovia had ended up adding more fuel to the fire.

And given my perverted nature, I hadn’t been able to refuse her.

—○●○—

Ah, talk about a stimulating day...

I had left the pool and was strolling through the school grounds on my way home.

Compared to those days back when I didn’t have even a single girl in my life,

this was pure bliss. But why was I so tired?

The naked bodies of the women I craved! The bare forms of these stunning beauties! Boobs! I was utterly spellbound by the image of those plump breasts bouncing in my mind, but for some reason, whenever I dared to do anything more than think of them, my exhaustion seemed to grow.

I closed my eyes and replayed my saved memories of the prez's and Akeno's chests... They were wonderful. Unfortunately, I also recalled the prez and Akeno's ultimate showdown, and I shrank back in fright.

They were both genuinely terrifying when they got angry... Yep, I would have to make sure that I never crossed either.

As if that hadn't been enough, there was also the problem with Xenovia. I would never have expected her to be so bold... She had always been somewhat aloof, but she had become more impulsive ever since joining the Familia. She sure was cute, though.

As I made my way off campus, a silver glint near the gate caught my attention.

"..."

For a moment, I almost mistook it for a scene from a painting.

An incredibly handsome young guy was staring up at the school building. His hair was a glistening, argent shade. Grayfia's hair was silver, too, but the man's was deeper, or rather, had a stronger and darker hint to it.

He was a foreigner, so I was having a hard time working out how old he was from his appearance, but if I had to guess, I would've said around my age or perhaps a little younger?

All he was doing was looking up at the school building, but that simple act seemed curiously dreamy and fantastical.

Suddenly, his gaze shifted to me. His eyes were a clear blue and practically drew me right in. Flashing me an angelic smile, he called out, "Looks like a nice school."

"Ah... Yeah, I guess you could say that," I replied, forcing a grin.

Who is he? There are plenty of exchange students at Kuou Academy, so maybe

he's transferring in? I'd better try to give him a good impression, then, I reasoned.

As I stood there wondering how to answer if he were to ask me about the school, he whispered something so far beyond my expectations that I was dumbfounded.

“I’m Vali. The White Dragon Emperor—the Vanishing Dragon.”

...Huh? What did he just—?

“I guess this is our second meeting, Welsh Dragon—Red Dragon Emperor, Issei Hyoudou.”

H-he’s kidding, right...? Sadly, it sure didn’t look like he was. My left hand felt like it was burning. That had to be Ddraig responding to the presence of his fellow dragon.

Hey, come on, Ddraig! Is this guy for real?!

Was this the moment of that fated final showdown between two eternal rivals? I wasn’t ready for this at all! And if we fought here, it could end up putting the prez and the others in danger!

I didn’t feel any particular sense of dread. Then again, maybe that’s what certainty of your own death felt like.

My whole body was telling me that if we came to blows, there was no way it would end well. Was this feeling coming from Ddraig or my Sacred Gear’s countless past hosts?

Was this guy really supposed to be my destiny?! What a cruel joke! I hadn’t even been able to do anything genuinely perverted with the prez yet! If I was going to die, I at least wanted it to happen after I had slept with Rias!

What am I supposed to do?

The Vanishing Dragon flashed me an indomitable grin as I braced myself.

“That’s right. If, for example, I was to use my powers against you here, Issei Hyoudou—”

At that moment, just as the Vanishing Dragon’s hand approached the tip of

my face—

Whoosh!

Two swords were suddenly thrust toward the Vanishing Dragon's neck, holding him in place.

It was Kiba and Xenovia. Kiba was wielding his Holy Demon Sword, and Xenovia was armed with her Holy Sword the Durendal.

I hadn't sensed either of them approaching. Had they used the incredible speed that Knights possess to rush to my aid?

Both Kiba's and Xenovia's weapons were emitting intense auras. The pair was glaring at the Vanishing Dragon, their eyes razor-sharp.

"I don't know what your intentions are, but don't you think you've taken this joke a little too far?" Kiba spat.

"We can't let you start a duel with the Red Dragon Emperor here, White Dragon Emperor," Xenovia stated threateningly.

Without even flinching, the Vanishing Dragon replied, "You should think twice about that. Your hands are trembling, no?"

As he said, both Kiba and Xenovia were quivering. They may have been carrying mighty blades, but their expressions were fraught with anxiety.

"It's all well and good to boast. The fact that you can recognize the difference between our respective fighting abilities is a testament to your strength. But there is a decisive gulf between you two and I. You can't defeat me, just as you couldn't best the likes of Kokabiel."

Kokabiel...

Even fighting together, we members of Rias Gremory's Familia had failed to stand up against that high-ranking fallen angel. Just thinking back on that battle was enough to make me break out into a cold sweat. I hadn't even been able to tell whether using the Red Dragon Emperor's Scale Mail would have been enough to take him down. And the Vanishing Dragon had just said "the likes of Kokabiel." He was looking down on him.

"Issei Hyoudou, where do you imagine you rank among the most powerful in

this world?" the Vanishing Dragon suddenly inquired.

...In strength? Me? I had no idea. I had heard the Red Dragon Emperor possessed extraordinary, dreaded power, but I didn't know where it stood in practical terms. What's more, even if my Sacred Gear was mighty, I was still an inexperienced individual.

"Counting back from the top, with your incomplete Balance Breaker, you're in the four-digit category—somewhere between one thousand and one thousand five hundred. No, considering the host's specs, a bit lower, maybe?"

I found myself filled with questions and doubts. What was he trying to get at?

"There are a great many powerful figures in this world. Not even the Crimson Satan, your Sirzechs Lucifer, ranks among the top ten."

Are there really that many people stronger than Sirzechs? I could hardly even imagine it.

The Vanishing Dragon held up a finger. "But there's no questioning who sits at the first-place position. That one never changes."

"...? Who do you mean? Are you saying you're the best?"

But the Vanishing Dragon merely shrugged at my question. "You'll find out sooner or later. But it isn't me. Issei Hyoudou is a valuable commodity. Raise him well, Rias Gremory."

The Vanishing Dragon's gaze flitted to something behind me. I turned around, only to find the prez approaching.

Whoa, she looked incredibly pissed. Asia, Akeno, and Koneko stood around her. In stark contrast to Asia, who looked visibly distressed, Akeno and Koneko were ready for action.

"White Dragon Emperor, what is the meaning of this? If you have ties to the fallen angels, you shouldn't seek to contact us without—"

"The Two Heavenly Dragons—the Welsh Dragon and the Vanishing Dragon. In the past, those who involved themselves with these figures didn't live long, happy lives. I wonder what fate has in store for you?" the silver-haired boy interjected.

“—.” The prez looked visibly stunned by the jerk’s threatening outburst.

What’s wrong, Prez? It’s about me, isn’t it...?

“I didn’t come here to fight. I just wanted to take a look at the school that I dropped into the other day. I’m in town with Azazel, but you wouldn’t guess how boring this place is. I won’t fight the Welsh Dragon here. And besides—I’ve got plenty of other things that need doing.”

With those parting words, the Vanishing Dragon turned heel and left.

However, even once he had gone, the tension that hung over us remained. Kiba and Xenovia put away their swords, but their expressions remained tense.

Asia pulled close to me, taking my sweaty hand in her own.

Thanks, Asia. That helps a little.

Azazel and the Vanishing Dragon. Two people I never wanted to meet had now gone out of their way to have encounters with me.

—○●○—

“...”

When I got back to my room, I sat on the floor in silence and rested my head against the side of my bed.

The White Dragon Emperor.

The Vanishing Dragon, the counterpart to the Welsh Dragon that dwelled within my left arm... The two were supposedly destined to be rivals, with my Boosted Gear fated to do battle against his Divine Dividing.

The moment I realized who he was, Ddraig had responded inside me. Anger... Or was it? Perhaps it had been elation at the thought of battle.

Regardless, I had definitely felt *something* flare up in me. If the Vanishing Dragon had chosen to pick a fight then and there, Ddraig may have forced me into battle, my incomplete Balance Breaker notwithstanding.

I had sensed no hostility or anything like that when I first encountered the Vanishing Dragon the other day, but this time was different. He had approached me with interest. Ddraig must have sensed that, too.

To be honest, I couldn't comprehend the notion of destiny. From what Ddraig said, it seemed the Boosted Gear was just randomly passed on from one person to the next, and each of its owners got caught in the middle of some battle between the Welsh Dragon and the Vanishing Dragon.

The people around me seemed to think similarly, that the Vanishing Dragon and I were a pair and would ultimately duke it out with each other one day.

I don't get it. Why? What is with all that?

I was Issei Hyoudou, a mere demon. Why did I have to get wound up in something as messy as all that? It had nothing to do with me! Destiny could go to hell!

Unfortunately, no matter what I thought, I couldn't change the situation. In the end, it seemed I would have to fight him. Hmm. I didn't have anything against that silver-haired guy personally. Heck, I would have liked to thank him for taking down Kokabiel. Ah, but he *was* working for the fallen angels, and if not for him, I might have had a chance to suck the prez's breasts. I couldn't forgive that!

It looked like there would be many obstacles on my path to becoming a high-class demon.

As I saw it, there were three ways to make the climb.

The first was to keep forming pacts with humans and steadily build a reputation. That was what I had been trying to do from the get-go. I had been able to secure some regular clients, but I had recently been made acutely aware that it was difficult to get promoted through fulfilling the kinds of deals that I did. Unless I forged a particularly impressive pact with a noteworthy client—like the president of a country or someone who would leave their mark on history—this would be a tough route. This method was said to depend mainly on luck and the territory that one's master was based in. Sadly, as far as I knew, there weren't any notable potential clients around these parts... And to top things off, the demon business was experiencing a downward trend—the market was shrinking. Even so, the work was a tradition for demons, so we refused to give it up.

The second path was to perform a noteworthy feat of arms. Something like

winning in the battle that we had against Kokabiel and his fallen angels might have done the trick. However, the prez had received most of the credit that time. From what I gathered, her reputation had risen considerably... Kokabiel had been a fallen-angel leader, so that checked out. If I had been able to take him down, I wonder what that might have meant for my social standing?

As you might've expected, very few managed to enter the ranks of high-class demons through achievement in battle. Given the current three-way deadlock between demons, the forces of God, and the fallen angels, it was pretty rare to get the chance to fight such a notable opponent. The odds of another Great War breaking out were practically zero, so most people would never get a chance to go up against anyone famous.

The third method was through the Rating Game. In fact, according to the prez, this was the shortest and surest path to success. Basically, she had said that if I wanted to one day become a high-class demon, I would have to make a name for myself by participating in more Rating Games.

It seemed like the underworld was using the contests as a way to reinvigorate the demon economy. Practically everything was connected to them in one way or another. Even the ranks of all the famous families were directly determined by their performances in Rating Games.

Yep, even the house of that roast chicken bastard Riser Phenex owed much of its success to the Rating Games.

Many reincarnated demons just like me had been able to build a reputation for themselves through the Rating Games, win their independence, and enter the upper echelons of demon society. When that happened, the Demon King would grant them a set of Evil Pieces, allowing them to recruit their own servants to serve in a new Familia, which they would lead as its King.

However, even after stepping out on your own, you still had to aid your original master when called upon. And you kept your old piece when that happened. So, as far as the master was concerned, servant demons were recruited for life. Even if I one day managed to become the King of my own Familia, I would still always be Rias's Pawn whenever she played a Rating Game.

The members of the prez's Familia would be making our official debut soon. If

I remembered correctly, Rias would have to start preparing for the Rating Game in earnest as soon as she graduated from high school, which was less than a year away. It was practically right around the corner.

Basically, even if you were able to rise to the rank of a high-class demon the first way, through making pacts with clients, it wouldn't matter unless you were a capable fighter in the Rating Game. The contest was an essential aspect of societal cultivation and etiquette.

Not only that, but even if I managed to become a harem king, people around me would still laugh if I couldn't hold my own in a fight, and I would end up causing trouble for the prez, too. I had to find some way to get stronger.

Being reborn as a demon had only given me more to worry over... But that would make my happiness all the sweeter once I did build my harem.

The most important thing was the opinions of the bigwigs of demon society—the Four Great Demon Kings, the dukes, and all others like them.

So putting everything together, my goal was to become a high-class demon. To that end, I needed to go all out and do everything I could to build my Rating Game reputation starting next year.

It was a lot of work. I couldn't afford to have this rivalry with the White Dragon Emperor blow up out of control in the middle of it all...

Ah, but if I were able to defeat the White Dragon Emperor, surely that would increase my standing, too, right? Hmm... But I guess that's already expected of the Red Dragon Emperor... That Vanishing Dragon sure is a real pain...

“Still thinking things over?”

All of a sudden, the prez’s face appeared in front of me, upside down.

Rias was lying atop my bed. She’d been reading a magazine but had stopped to peer down at me. Whenever she had a spare moment, she liked to spend it in my room.

“Ah, not exactly. I mean...” I scratched my cheek in embarrassment.

At this, the prez stepped down from my bed and sat by my side. “I trust you, Issei. No matter what. Besides, I’m confident that you can defeat the White

Dragon Emperor,” she added with a warm smile.

“—.”

P-Prez... I was so grateful to hear those words, to see that look of hers. Those kind gestures cleared away all the troubles that clouded my heart! Prez! My eyes were getting wet! I was about to start crying all over again.

Rias tapped her thigh with her hand. I—I knew this signal...!

“Come along now.”

P-Prez!

A lap pillow! My healing space! Tears of gratitude coursing down my cheeks, I placed my head on her sweet thighs and let her pamper me. She gently stroked my head.

“I’m sorry the day ended up the way it did. I wanted to cheer you up, but all I did was scare you.”

Prez, are you worried about what happened earlier?

“N-not at all—I’m the one who wasn’t able to live up to your expectations or Akeno’s... B-but I was able to oil your skin, so I’m more than satisfied!”

That was the truth. I mean, Rias had fulfilled so many of my lifetime goals. I honestly was happy.

“I’ll need you to oil me again, Issei. It’s going to be a long summer.”

“Of course! Leave it to me!”

All right! All riiiiight! The prez is going to let me oil her down again! Does a greater joy exist?!

I had been so stressed since my encounter with the White Dragon Emperor, but all it took to clear my head was surrendering my thoughts to a bit of eroticism.

Perhaps because of that sudden relief, I started nodding off.

The prez’s lap pillow...really is...nice...

And like that, I drifted off into the realm of sleep.

Life.2

Open House Begins!

“Issei, Asia! Your father and I will join you later, okay?”

Mom had been pretty amped up since the start of the day. There'd been no need for her to come to the door and say something like that, but she seemed to be more interested in seeing Asia at school than she was me. My dad had even taken a paid leave from work for the event.

Well, seeing as how they both adored Asia as if she were their own daughter, I suppose it made sense that they wanted to see her.

Asia herself replied with a broad grin and a joyful “Okay!”

She was thrilled to have her “family” visit her in school and had been eagerly looking forward to this event.

And so the day of Open House had arrived.

Despite the name, it was a workshop class for potential students. Parents were allowed to come, too, but the main targets were middle school students. It was a chance for them to see how high school classes at Kuou Academy were conducted. Those middle schoolers' parents and guardians were similarly encouraged to visit, so it was a jam-packed event.

What's more, kids from Kuou Academy's middle school campus were coming to watch us, so we high schoolers were super-nervous. We didn't want to come out with any wrong answers in front of our juniors, that was for sure.

“...I'm just not interested in any of this,” the prez admitted with a sigh.

It looked like nothing would warm her up to Open House. Her father and Sirzechs were both coming to visit, but she mustn't have wanted them watching over her while she was in class. Undoubtedly, the presence of two crimson-haired men would end up being a hot topic of discussion in the halls.

I feel for you, Prez...

My own parents were more interested in Asia than me, so I could just go about class as usual.

After parting ways with the prez at the school gate, Asia and I made our way to our classroom.

No sooner did I take my seat than Matsuda and Motohama approached.

“Are your folks coming, Issei?”

“Yeah. More like they’re coming to see Asia, though.”

Matsuda nodded forcefully at this response. “I understand how they feel. If Asia were my daughter, I’d stop at nothing to see her.”

If I had a younger sister like Asia, I would probably dote on her, too. Well, she practically *was* a sister to me already. And I *did* dote on her.

“I’ve never been to anything like this before. I’m really excited!” Asia exclaimed.

She sure did look to be enjoying herself. Yep, if she was having fun, that was good enough for me.

“Issei.”

Before I knew it, Xenovia was approaching our little gathering. She was also popular with the guys at school. How could she not have been? She was drop-dead gorgeous. On top of that, her athleticism and physical dexterity earned her a number of female fans, too.

“What is it?” I asked.

Xenovia bowed her head. “I’m sorry for blurting out what I did the other day.”

Sh-she’s talking about that...about making a baby. So she wants to apologize?

“I tried to push things along too fast without taking your feelings into account.”

Hearing that Xenovia wanted to have a child with me had unquestionably caught me by surprise. I mean, I did want to make love with her. If it was her, I was totally on board! Still, we had to do things in the proper order.

"I realize now that it must be difficult jumping straight into the deep end."

Yep, yep. My thoughts exactly. For now, we should work on building up our relationship before moving on to any sexual stuff.

"Which is why..." Xenovia paused there, taking something out of her pocket.

Wait, were those—?!

"Let's practice using these first," she said, revealing a handful of small packets—condoms.

Everyone's attention turned suddenly to those things that she was holding up into the air.

"... I-idiooooot! Wh-what are you doing, pulling those out in public?!"

I freaked out. You would've, too! Just think about this situation!

This was the limit! Pulling those things out in front of a bustling classroom was a gutsy move! I mean, if you were caught bringing that kind of thing to school, you were out!

The whole class immediately went wild with speculation.

See! Look what they're doing! Everyone's gossiping about me!

"In my old life, there was some controversy over these, but it seems like it's actually more common here in Japan to use them."

What does it matter?! Read the room! Can't you see how everyone is staring weirdly at us?!

"I guess I don't mind if people see us that way...but think of the time and place!"

Despite my protests, Xenovia merely tilted her head to one side, not understanding.

This was no good! She was just like Asia had been at first. Her brain was totally cut off from socially acceptable practices.

"You should use them, too, Asia. Unplanned pregnancies can end up hurting both parties. Relationships between men and women aren't easy," Xenovia remarked, handing her one of the packets.

Asia stared down in bewilderment at it for a moment, until that bespectacled pervert Kiryuu decided to join in. She wasted no time whispering something in Asia's ear.

All of a sudden, Asia let out a small gasp, her face turning scarlet.

"...Um."

Asia turned the color of a tomato before collapsing to the ground!

"What is it? Tell me. Is Hyoudou about to do something amazing again?" the perverted Kiryuu asked, her glasses gleaming with eager curiosity. "I wonder if this is really for the best? If you sleep with Xenovia, Hyoudou, Asia will—"

"Kiruuuuuuuuuuu! Please stoppppp!"

Whoa! Asia suddenly sprang up out of nowhere and placed a hand over Kiryuu's mouth. She looked to be more embarrassed than ever. What was going on?

"Geez, Asia. I told you, didn't I? If you don't make a move soon, Hyoudou's going to get in a whole lot of trouble. Powerful enemies surround you. If you keep dillydallying, one of them is going to eat him up before you know what's happened. And you don't want a man who smells like another woman, do you?"

"Ahhh! Why do you have to say things like that, Kiryuu?" Asia cried.

"I'm worried about you. You need an ally, right? I can be that person for you. That pure and innocent vibe of yours is all well and good, but sometimes you've got to go all out. You're ripe for the taking, too, you know?"

"A-am I ripe for the taking?" Asia asked me.

Er... Seriously, what are they talking about? I couldn't follow their conversation one bit...

"U-uh, I suppose you might be?" I answered, my head cocked in confusion.

"That's great, Asia! You can let him devour you!" Kiryuu exclaimed with profound delight.

Huh? What? Hey, don't leave me out of the conversation!

“Dammit! He’s going to devour Asia now?!”

“We’ve reached that point already... We’ll have to convene an emergency session of the Committee to Save Asia!”

Matsuda and Motohama sure were acting strangely. They both looked violently upset.

“There’s something wrong with the world if Issei, of all people, is this popular!” Matsuda declared.

Seriously, I was completely lost here.

“Let me see your hand,” Kiryuu demanded, her glasses flashing. “...Good. You trim your nails closely.”

“R-really?” I stammered unevenly.

What did that have to do with anything?

“Men who trim their nails closely are supposedly intense womanizers... Yes, long fingernails can be quite a burden when you want to grope a woman’s body.”

“D-don’t throw around accusations like that! I just—”

I stopped there, remembering. Right, the prez was the one who had trimmed my nails last. She said that she was practicing, and yet...

Perhaps it was a groundless suspicion, but I was suddenly acutely aware that there might have been a deeper meaning behind it.

“Issei, you filthy bastaaaaard!”

“A thousand plagues on you!”

“How dreadful. He really is a lustful sex fiend. Just please refrain from spreading that disease of yours to Asia. That really would taint her.”

Matsuda, Motohama, and Kiryuu were ganging up on me! This was bullying! I didn’t even have a single girlfriend, so what exactly was the meaning of all this?! Popular? Me? Give me a break! I was still a virgin here! And there was nothing to suggest that I had any chance of changing that in the near future! Just what kind of magical disease did they all think I had?!

Hold on. Have I become more popular recently? I didn't know how to tell.

All the guys around me, Matsuda and Motohama included, stared with raw jealousy. And I didn't even have a girlfriend.

Sure, the prez and Akeno liked doting on me, but that was just because I was a junior servant in the Familia. I was pretty sure that they saw me more as a pet than anything else.

I was a new toy, and they were fighting over who got to play with it...

As for Xenovia... That was a unique situation, so it didn't exactly count. She wasn't interested in *me*—only in the dragon that resided within me.

Asia was... Well, we lived together, and out of everyone, she was the person with whom I had the best relationship. We had basically become family. Anyone living under the same roof would've ended up that way. I thought of her like a cute younger sister. I was glad that she would come to me for help when she needed it.

Could you call our shopping trips dates? We often went to discount stores and the like to buy household items, but that was nowhere near as glamorous as a real romantic encounter.

There was also Koneko, but it would've been beyond weird if she was pining for me.

I wasn't a sought-after guy. There were simply more girls in my social circle than had been before. This was entirely different from the kind of harem lifestyle I had always dreamed about, right?

A harem was supposed to be something like what everyone was just talking about, where I could love as many girls as I liked and could devour whoever I wanted. If that was my reality, I should have been enjoying a different beauty every night! And believe me, I wasn't!

Still, it was undeniable that my days were entirely different from how they'd been before becoming a demon. Back then, I hadn't had the slightest whiff of feminine company. Now, I was having fun just talking to girls, and things felt a lot more whole.

No, I scolded myself. With that mindset, I would never accomplish my dream of building a harem! I had to get stronger so that I could lead women around by the nose!

Let's not forget that I had already been in one relationship marked by genuine affection, the trauma from which still made it difficult for me to reach out to other girls. Raynare, my first girlfriend, had been a fallen angel. She'd been playing with me the whole time, eventually murdering me.

Maybe that was why even a guy as lecherous and as perverted as me had ended up like this. It wasn't like I was afraid of women or anything, but maybe somewhere in the back of my mind was a fear that they would reject me at the last minute.

Consciously, I understood that Rias, Asia, and the other girls in the Occult Research Club would never do such a thing. However, the more I started to like them, the more I worried...

The prez and the others won't end up hating me one day, will they?

Sometimes, I ended up asking myself that question, even though I had gotten to know them all so well, even though we were all such good friends. I didn't want them to despise me, which was why I didn't want anything weird to happen at the last moment. Going through something like what happened with Raynare again would be too much...

"Everyone. Issei isn't a bad person. Please don't be mean to him," Asia declared, standing up against Matsuda's and Motohama's shenanigans.

"Asiaaaaa! You're my only ally!"

"I trust you, Issei, and I will forever."

What a kindhearted person she was! *She* believed in me! Asia would stand by my side! I was seriously overjoyed!

"...Asia. Confessing amid all this confusion... Not bad..." Kiryuu murmured something under her breath. She was probably bad-mouthing me again.

"That's right. No matter how indecent he might be, Issei is an honest, up-front man. And his sexual appetites are honest and up front, too," Xenovia added.

...Hold on. That kind of felt like she was mocking, but she probably thought that was a magnanimous follow-up.

"And now," Xenovia continued, "let's plan when to have intercourse..." It looked like she hadn't understood anything that was going on.

"I told you, don't say stuff like that in front of everyone..."

I clutched my head in my hands and slammed my skull down flat on my desk.

—○●○—

Eventually, lessons began, and the parents and middle school students who had come to observe entered the room through the back door.

First up was English class. The teacher was more enthusiastic than usual and handed out a bunch of rectangular objects wrapped in packaging.

Huh? What are these things? What do they have to do with English?

English was the best possible subject for demons to take center stage, given that we could comprehend and be understood in any language. I chuckled to myself. This was the perfect opportunity for me to show off my fluent English skills.

That said, reading and writing were another story. Demon abilities were no help there.

Suddenly, I realized what those things the teacher had handed us were.

Paper clay? My skepticism must have been visible for all to see.

"You can make whatever you like with the clay I've handed out," the teacher said gleefully. "You could make an animal. Or a person. Or a house. Give shape to whatever image you're thinking about. That's what we're doing today for English conversation."

What kind of sense does that make?! Seriously, what's that even supposed to mean?! Come on—let's just do a regular English lesson! Give me a chance to show off how good I am in front of my folks! The clay can go to hell!

"Let's try!" the teacher said in exaggerated, stilted English.

"Let's try," my ass! In what country do people teach English by messing around with paper clay?!

"Th-this is difficult..."

Asia was already hard at work. She was as eager as ever!

"Asia, you can do it!"

"You're so cute, Asia!"

I turned around at the sound of two familiar voices and found my parents cheering her on.

Wh-when did they arrive? Come on, Dad—you've gone and brought a video camera, and you aren't even pointing it at your own son...?

Asia recognized my parents' voices, too, turning to glance happily over her shoulder. They were already like the perfect family. I guessed that was enough for me as well. Asia as my younger sister—what more could I have asked for?

When I glanced around the room, I realized that everyone else was reluctantly getting to work kneading their slabs of clay. Were they all seriously just going to accept this?!

Tch. I guess I had no choice but to join in. I started molding the clay. But what was I supposed to make?

The teacher had said to make whatever image came into my head. I closed my eyes, my fingers pressing and pulling at the clay as I let my imagination tell me what to do. And the first thing that came to mind was—

"Issei... ♪," echoed the prez's soft singsong voice as she smiled back at me nude.

Ahhh, Prez. My beloved elder sister figure. The first thing that came to mind was my undying loyalty to her, my absolute devotion. Hee-hee, I could even remember the shape of her nipples and areolae. Yep, when it came to the prez's breasts, I had a perfect recollection of their softness and tension.

She had said that there was hardly a single area of her body that I hadn't yet touched. That was undoubtedly true. I had succeeded in handling her almost everywhere for one reason or another.

When I pondered the texture of a woman's flesh, it was the prez's skin that sprang to mind. It was soft and smooth and yet with such buoyancy and

elasticity.

As I pictured Rias's naked body, a trickle of red blood began to stream from my nose. Nonetheless, with my eyes firmly closed, I moved my hands to give life to my vision.

Her chest! Her tight lower back! Her lovely hips, ideal for childbearing! Her perfectly proportioned thighs! Each of these incredible qualities had been burned into my memory!

I could see her so vividly in my mind's eye! Naturally! I thought about her every day!

"H-Hyoudou..."

When I came to, someone had placed a hand lightly on my shoulder. I opened my eyes and turned around, coming face-to-face with my teacher.

For some reason, he was wearing an astonished expression, his whole body trembling.

What was going on? He was staring down at my hands in surprise. I looked down and discovered—a magnificent model of the prez.

"Whoa!"

The whole class erupted in jubilation. I, too, let out a soft expression of astonishment. Incredible. A mini prez! Its breasts, its buttocks, its thighs! Everything was perfect.

D-did I make that...? All I had done was move my hands in response to the image burned into my brain, and then this miracle had happened!

"A-amazing... Hyoudou, I never knew you had this kind of talent... I knew I was right to suggest using clay today. I've brought out another student's hidden abilities..." My teacher's eyes were wet with tears as he spoke.

Indeed, I had never realized that I had this kind of latent talent... It seemed that skills related to my perversions came easy for me...

"Th-that's Rias? Damn! I-Issei! That sex fiend! H-has he...? With...?!"

"Impossible! That animal has...with Rias...?!"

The room descended into screams of outrage, until all of a sudden, someone yelled out, "Five thousand yen!"

"No, six thousand!" cried another voice.

"I'll give you seven thousand! I'm going to enjoy Gremory's body!"

"Shut up! I'm buying it for tonight! Eight thousand!"

Like that, my paper clay English class had somehow turned into an auction hall filled with haggling over my model of the prez.

—○●○—

"This is very well put together," Rias appraised with a smile at lunch break as she touched the model I had made.

In the end, I hadn't sold it to any of my classmates. How could I? It was a figure of my prez.

When Asia and I stepped out of the classroom to buy a drink, we bumped into the prez and Akeno by the vending machines.

"Oh dear. I suppose this is to be expected, Issei. Seeing as you ogle and stroke the president's body daily," Akeno remarked, a startled smile rising to her face as she laid eyes on the level of artistry of the figurine.

I hadn't done anything all that extreme with the prez yet. It was just that when you enjoyed the kinds of precious experiences I did, you made damn sure to remember them.

"I'll have to ask you to make one of me sometime. I'll have to show you my naked body so that you can model it. You can touch as well if you like."

"Seriously, Akeno?!"

What more could I ask for?! Of course I would! I would've liked to have agreed outright, but the prez and Asia both pulled on my cheeks.

"I don't think so."

"No!"

The women in my family really could be harsh at times...

"By the way, Prez, did Sirzechs stop by?" I asked.

At this, Rias placed a hand on her forehead and let out a sigh. “Yes, my father as well.”

So her dad had made it, too? I wonder what kind of class visit it was?

“Ah, President. Everyone,” came Kiba’s voice as he joined us.

Huh? Is he here to buy a drink as well?

“Oh, Yuuto? Tea?” the prez asked.

Kiba, however, pointed down the corridor. “No, I heard that a *magical girl* was holding a photo shoot, so I thought I’d take a look.”

The prez and I exchanged glances, tilting our heads at this explanation.

Click! Click!

Camera flashes went off one after the next as a group of guys kept snapping pictures of someone in a corner of the corridor.

A crowd had gathered around, making it impossible for me to see who they were photographing. According to Kiba, it was a magical girl... I managed to work my way through the crowd and finally caught a glimpse.

Hmm. As I edged closer, I recognized a familiar outfit.

It was a young, pretty girl dressed as a character from a popular anime. I was pretty sure that the show was called *Magical Girl Milky Spiral 7 Alternative*. One of my regulars, Mil, a heavyset macho guy with the heart of a maiden, was crazy about this character.

On closer inspection, she did look a lot like Milky. She was even spinning a baton through the air and all that. The camera-toting students were all working themselves into a frenzy as they snapped shot after shot. I found myself wanting to join them, to take a picture myself. Her skirt was so short you could even catch a glimpse of her panties now and then.

Having wormed her way through the crowd, the prez arrived beside me and immediately gaped at the sight of the magical girl.

“Wha—?!”

Her disconcerted expression was enough to worry me. I’d had no idea that

something could shock her to this extent...

“Hey, hey! Who gave you all permission to hold a photo shoot in a public hallway?!” called a familiar voice from the student council as he wrestled through the crowd. It was Saji.

A group of girls who looked like they also belonged to the student council followed behind him.

“Come on—get moving! It’s Open House today! Now’s not the time to make a scene!”

Saji’s really dedicated to his job, huh? The crowd suddenly dispersed, like a nest of baby spiders that someone had disturbed. Even the guys with the cameras reluctantly left the scene.

The only ones remaining were members of the Occult Research Club, the student council, and that cosplaying girl.

“And you, please don’t dress up like that. Hold on—are you here with your parents? But even if that’s the case, you need to learn to dress for the occasion. You’ll wind up in trouble at this rate,” Saji warned her.

“Eeeeeh, but these *are* my formal clothes!” the girl dressed as Milky protested, tilting her head in a cute pose.

Saji ground his teeth in frustration but bowed his head when he realized that the prez was watching.

“Oh, Rias. Excellent timing. I was just in the middle of showing the lord Demon King and your father around the campus,” he said, glancing back down the corridor.

I followed Saji’s eye, only to find two crimson-haired men being led by the student council chairwoman Sona Sitri.

“What’s going on here? Saji, how many times do I have to tell you to take care of these problems quickly and—” The stern chairwoman quickly fell silent when she laid eyes on Milky.

“Sona! I’ve—found—you!” the girl exclaimed happily as she embraced her in a hug.

Whoa. Do they know each other? Even Saji looked taken aback by this development.

...Hmm? Maybe it's just me, but the chairwoman kind of looks like that girl...

Sirzechs, however, appeared unfazed as he called out to the cosplaying girl.
“Ah, Serafall? So you came, too, I see.”

...Serafall...? Wh-where have I heard that name before...?

“That’s Leviathan,” the prez whispered to me.

...



My mind went blank.

“She’s one of the four Demon Kings, Serafall Leviathan,” the prez explained once more. “And she’s Sona’s elder sister.”

“Huuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuh?!”

My scream echoed down the hallway! Was this a joke?! It had to be a trick! This was the super-beautiful Demon King I’d heard about and dreamed of laying eyes on?!

She was definitely an incredible beauty! She might have been the chairwoman’s sister, but she didn’t lose out to the prez in the looks department! Still, I had imagined a more sensual, seductive, older woman! A sexy, glamorous, celebrity-like figure! With huge breasts! Her thighs peeking out between slits in her dress! Sultry, luscious words spoken from behind glossy, luxurious lips!

Never had I dared to guess that she was a cute, young figure in a magical girl outfit... I had been right about her incredible beauty, though...

“Lady Serafall. It’s good to see you again.”

“Oh, little Rias? Howdy there! How are you?!”

What an adorable tone of voice! The prez looked a little taken aback by it.

“I-I’m well—thank you for asking. Are you here to visit Sona’s class today?”

“Yep!” Serafall said with a wink. “You’re so mean, Sona! You didn’t tell me about today! As your big sister, I was so shocked! I almost went and attacked the heavenly realm!”

We nearly went to war with Heaven over something like that?! I couldn’t even tell whether she was kidding!

“Issei. Offer your greetings,” the prez instructed.

I bowed my head. “I-it’s a pleasure to meet you! I’m Issei Hyoudou, a Pawn serving Rias Gremory!”

“Nice to meet you. I’m the Demon King Serafall Leviathan. You can call me Levia for short,” the cosplaying girl—no, the Demon King Leviathan—said with a

wink while holding her hand out in a peace sign.

...Wh-what a strangely frivolous development!

“Hey, little Sirzechs. Is this the new Ddraig everyone’s been talking about?”

Sh-she calls him little Sirzechs?! She can’t do that! Or maybe it’s okay, seeing as they’re both Demon Kings...?

“Yes, this is Issei Hyoudou, the present host of the Welsh Dragon.”

Not even Sirzechs took her up on that whole “little” thing! So he was okay with her addressing him like that?!

“Oh, and Uncle Gemory, too?”

“Hmm. Lady Serafall. That’s an unusual costume, is it not? Perhaps a little much for a Demon King...”

“This? Don’t you know, Uncle Gemory?” Serafall asked with a wink. “This is so, so popular here in this country right now!”

“Oh? I see. I’m afraid I’m a little ignorant of these things.”

“Ha-ha-ha. It *is* hard to believe, isn’t it, Father?”

Sirzechs, his father, and Lady Leviathan began to talk with one another.

“P-Prez, Lady Leviathan is more energetic than I had expected...”

“I’m sorry,” Rias apologized. “I forgot to tell you—No, I guess I didn’t *want* to tell you. Each of the Four Great Demon Kings is rather eccentric. In private, they’re all particularly lighthearted and free-spirited, to the point where they’re embarrassing to be around.” She let out a sigh.

Impossible! Was it really okay for the Demon Kings to be like that?!

I glanced at the chairwoman and saw that she was beet red! Her sister’s speech and conduct must have been mortifying!

Leviathan, noticing the change in her sibling’s complexion, looked into her face with worry. “What’s the matter, little Sona? You’ve turned scarlet, you know? Shouldn’t you be happy to see me again after all this time? You should have welcomed me with a joyful *Sis!* And then I would embrace you and say *Sona!* And then we could embrace each other, in a sort of *yuri* kind of way.”

...What an incredible creature. So this is Leviathan?

The chairwoman's eyes narrowed, her expression one of shame. "...SSister. This is my school, where I've been appointed student council president... Even if you are family, your behavior... Dressing like that isn't appropriate."

"Don't say that, little Sona! You'll make me cry! You know your elder sister loves magical girls! Waving around a glittering baton, wiping out all those angels and fallen angels off the map in one blow!" Serafall winked again.

"Sister, please restrain yourself. If you do that, you could reduce this small island nation to rubble."

She wasn't a magical girl. She was a Demon King girl! The dreadful, fearful Serafall Leviathan!

"Hey, Saji," I whispered. "When that fallen angel attacked the other day, the chairwoman didn't ask her sister to help... Am I right in thinking they don't get along?"

"You've got it backward," Saji responded. "According to rumor, Serafall Leviathan loves her sister so much that we might have been in trouble had we called her. Who knows what she might've done if she thought a fallen angel was about to lay a hand on her sibling. It would be an instant declaration of war. Just calling Lord Sirzechs was the right choice. Still, this is the first time I've actually seen her for myself..."

That made sense. But wait, was Leviathan good with that?! Yeah, Saji looked just as uncertain as I was.

"Urgh, I can't take this anymore!" With that, the usually so calm and reserved student council chairwoman ran away, her eyes glistening with tears.

"Wait! Little Sona! Where are you going without your sister?!" The Demon King girl took off after her.

"Don't follow me!"

"Nooooo! I won't let you! Don't leave me! So-taaaaan!"

"I told you to stop calling me that!"

Please, I prayed. Don't do anything to make this school disappear...

“Hmm. What a peaceful family, the House of Sitri. Don’t you think so, *Ria*?”

“Brother, don’t call me that, please...”

This time, it was the Gremorys’ turn to enter into an embarrassing conversation.

Oh? Is that the prez’s nickname at home?

“Don’t say that, Ria. You used to follow me around everywhere when you were a kid... Maybe this is your rebellious phase...?” Sirzechs muttered, taking her reaction hard.

He was probably teasing her a little.

“That does it! Brother! Why do you have to bring up my childhood in front of —?”

Click!

The prez’s father snapped a photograph of his infuriated daughter. She *did* look very expressive just now.

“You have a nice face, Rias. I’m so pleased to have raised such a splendid girl. Your mother couldn’t make it here today, so perhaps I should make the most of this moment for her sake, too.”

“Father! That’s enough!”

I couldn’t help but wonder whether the families of all the Demon Kings were like this. They weren’t all that different from human parents and children. I don’t think any regular families had arguments that could erase an entire country, though.

“Each of the Demon King families shares some commonalities,” Akeno said with an amused smile.

“Like what?” I asked.

“The Demon Kings all have interesting personalities. And without exception, their siblings are all overly serious. Hee-hee, that seriousness is probably a reaction to the free-spiritedness of the Demon Kings themselves.”

Th—that sounded rough for Rias and Sona. Not only that, but—

“Oh, Issei.”

“Ah, Dad.”

My parents must have been touring the campus as they appeared at one end of the hall, waving once they spotted me.

“Issei Hyoudou, are these your parents?” the prez’s father asked me.

“Y-yes. They are,” I replied formally.

“I see. Hmm...” The prez’s father turned toward my parents, and—

“Greetings. I’m Rias’s father,” he introduced, reaching out to shake my father’s hand.

Realizing who the red-haired gentleman was, my parents’ expressions suddenly changed from joyful to tense. Yep, that was to be expected.

“N-n-n-nice to meet you! Ah...er...I’m Issei Hyoudou’s father! We’re...er... we’re really grateful to Rias for everything she’s done for him, and, uh...”

Dad! This is our home turf! Argh! I couldn’t watch! What was he doing, letting himself get so flustered?!

“Not at all. I should be thanking you for taking care of Rias. I’ve meant to pay you a visit for a while now, but Sirzechs and I have been so busy of late that we haven’t found the time. Fortunately, providence has brought us together today. It’s an honor to meet you both.”

“Th-that’s...! I was just saying to my darling here—er, my husband—that it would be nice to meet you, too.”

Mom! Why are you talking so weirdly?! Is it because you aren’t used to speaking formally?! Ugh, this is so embarrassing!

The prez’s face had turned bright red, and mine was a similar color. This meeting between our parents was too cringey to watch!

“Hmm. I would like to speak somewhere more secluded. It is rather conspicuous here. And I do believe that we’re embarrassing our children.”

Whoa. The prez’s father could read the room just as well as his daughter could! Compared to him, my dad was miles behind!

The next moment, Rias's father extended his hand toward another of us. "Kiba."

"Yes?"

"My apologies, but could you take us somewhere where we can converse in private?"

"Of course. Please follow me," Kiba replied with a bow as he began to guide our parents down the corridor.

"In that case, Rias, Issei Hyoudou. I'll see you both later, after speaking with Issei's parents. Sirzechs, can I leave the rest to you?"

"Of course, Father."

Sirzechs is staying behind? I guess all our parents had done was exchange pleasantries. Their real conversation would be held in private.

"Issei, your mother and I will be back soon."

"Ah. Don't say anything weird, Dad, okay?"

"Leave it to me."

I doubted whether my dad really understood the situation, but he allowed Kiba to lead him, my mom, and the prez's father away.

"Rias?" Sirzechs asked.

"What?"

"Can I borrow you for a minute? Sorry, Issei, I'll bring her back soon. But I suppose Akeno should join us, perhaps?"

"Very well," Akeno responded.

What are they all going to talk about? Probably something important between high-class demons, I guessed. Whatever it was, it wasn't for the ears of a low-class demon like me.

"R-right. Don't mind me, then..." I muttered.

Sirzechs led the prez and Akeno away, leaving just Asia and me standing in the corridor.

We exchanged glances.

“Um, maybe we should go back to class?”

“Yes.”

And so Asia and I decided to make our way back.

—○●○—

“Oh! You look adorable, Asia!” my mom exclaimed, swooning at the video playing on the TV.

“Ha-ha-ha! It’s a parent’s duty to watch over their daughter at her proudest moment!” Rias’s father laughed heartily between sips of his liqueur.

He was like a completely different person once he had a bit to drink... And he had been such a dandy just a short moment ago!

After dinner back at my house, we were having a party to celebrate the end of Open House in the living room.

My parents, the prez’s father, and Sirzechs were all in attendance.

They were each taking turns sharing the videos they had recorded, drinking all the while.

Rias, Asia, and I, the children in question, were sitting at the edge of the room, blushing. *Come on—get it over with! This is killing me!*

There was even footage of me! Why did they have to record me while I was working on the paper clay?! I had no idea what my parents and the prez’s father had spoken about at school, but they must have really hit it off. Seriously, what had happened?

“This is hell...the likes of which I’ve never seen before...,” the prez murmured, her face scarlet, her body trembling in mortification.

“Look! Our Ria is answering the teacher’s question!”

Sirzechs was so overjoyed that he had begun outlining all the positives of his beloved sister!

The prez covered her face with her hands. “I can’t take this anymore! Brother, stop calling me that!”

Unable to bear the humiliation, she fled the room!

Slam!

Sirzechs was knocked to the floor by Grayfia's paper fan.

"Prez!" I called out, worried, chasing after her.

—○●○—

Rias was sitting in front of my bedroom door.

She was in a sour mood, and her cheeks were puffed out. What was the matter?

"P-Prez, do you want to go in?" I asked.

She nodded wordlessly. In her current state, she seemed more like a normal high school girl than her usual confident self.

No sooner did she enter the room than she leaped up onto the bed and flopped down in silence, burying her face in the sheets.

The situation had me at a loss for words. I sat down on the floor in silence, racking my brain for something to say that might lift her spirits.

"My mom and dad sure get along well with your father," I said.

"..."

Ugh, no response. But a silent room was only more uncomfortable, so I continued. "I think it went well, though...this meeting between our parents. My folks look like they're having fun and so does your family... Although they might be taking it a little too far, I guess..."

"...I know. I'm glad that they're all having a good time," Rias finally responded. Thank goodness. "Issei?"

"Yes?"

"Are you happy you met me?"

—.

I hadn't seen that question coming.

"I'm happy I met you. I can't imagine life without you now. You should be

honored. You're pretty much on my mind twenty-four seven, you know?" appended Rias.

Did she like me that much? What more could a servant have asked for?!

"I am honored! And I'm so happy I met you, too! Believe me! There are times when I think about you getting a boyfriend someday...and I get a bit down, though. I don't want you to go anywhere."

The prez looked at me. "Oh? I'm not planning to get a boyfriend or anything. I'm actually pretty surprised to hear you talk like that."

"Huh? B-but won't you have to get married someday?"

"I suppose so. We'll need a man to marry into my family to continue our lineage."

I couldn't see how those two statements made sense together.

"I've decided to train my ideal future husband myself. That should be the easiest and fastest way. Don't you think, Issei?"

"Ah, I see," I replied vacantly. Truthfully, I wasn't following at all.

So she was going to train her spouse? If possible, I would like to be involved somehow, but that might be easier said than done. The prez's husband... What would he be like when she was finished coaching him?

Damn, I really wanted to be a part of all that. Yet that was probably asking for the impossible.

"Actually... I've already been thinking about the wedding. A Japanese-style one would be nice. And we can hold the reception here in Japan, too. Somewhere with beautiful scenery, and—"

So the prez already has that clear of a plan for her future, huh? Argh, I want to marry her!

"__."

All of a sudden, something pressed against my mouth. Arms were wrapping their way around my neck, tightly, firmly... The prez was kissing me! Whoaaaaa! I—I was smooching the prez! Again!

Th-the sensation of her lips against mine! Their sublime taste! Their soft, sensual touch!

My second kiss with the prez! I had done it! She had given me her lips for a second time! What had I done to deserve this exactly? N-no, I didn't need the details! I—I just wanted to enjoy this for as long as possible!

And then, while I was filled with raw emotion, her tongue slid across my lips and then into my mouth!

Gah!

Just when our tongues had begun to intertwine passionately, something pulled hard on my collar, bringing a sudden end to my first deep kiss!

A thread of saliva connected my mouth to Rias's. She wore an expression of regret.

Whoa! To think that a string of spit had connected our mouths! I could die of happiness right now!

No, wait, I couldn't do that! If I was going to perish, I wanted it to happen after I had a chance at more tongue action with her! I mean, I would never forget the feeling of that deep kiss! It was amazing!

“...Ugh.” The one who had pulled me away was Asia. She was ready to cry.

“Hey, Asia. I’m taking care of Issei right now, so don’t interrupt. I was just about to give him the passionate kiss that he’s always dreamed of... Chances like this don’t come up every day, you know?”

P-Prez! Your way of showing affection for your servants is getting more intense by the day! I’m so happy! Thank you! That said, every time you do this, it’s so stimulating that my brain practically goes numb!

“...No fair! Keeping him to yourself!” Asia protested

“Victory goes to the one who makes the first move. I realized that when I fought Akeno earlier.”

What a lesson to learn, Prez! Whoa! She and Asia were glaring at each other with such raw intensity! It felt like another battle between two young women was about to get underway—in my bedroom this time! Why was this becoming

so common?

Thankfully, a silver-haired maid interrupted.

“You two, fighting will do neither of you any good. It’s an especially bad idea to start arguing in front of Issei here,” Grayfia remarked, pulling the two baleful rivals apart.

“That’s right—you shouldn’t scrap,” added Sirzechs as he entered my room.

Was their video viewing party over?

“We need to have another talk, Rias. We didn’t finish our conversation at lunchtime.”

Conversation? About what? Ah, when he had spoken to her and Akeno?

Then, as if in response to my unvoiced questions, Sirzechs said something that I couldn’t possibly have expected. “We need to discuss your other Bishop.”

—.

By that, Sirzechs meant Rias’s mysterious first Bishop from before Asia and I became demons.

—○●○—

After school the following day, I found myself standing in front of the so-called Sealed Classroom in the old school building.

All the members of the Occult Research Club were with me. This room was strictly off-limits from the outside, so none of us could see within. As far as I knew, there’d never been an explanation of what the place was even for... However, based on recent events, it seemed related to the prez’s first Bishop.

Rias’s other Bishop—a club member whose identity had been shrouded in secrecy ever since Asia and I had joined. Apart from Xenovia, who was also new to our ranks, the others seemed to know who this mysterious person was.

Despite having been a part of Rias’s Familia for a while, the Bishop had some kind of unique circumstance that had prevented them from joining our Rating Game against Riser Phenex and our battle against the fallen angel Kokabiel.

From what I had overheard, it sounded like their abilities were particularly hazardous, more than the prez could handle by herself, and so she had been

ordered to seal them away. But who were they? Were they really that dangerous?

Last night in my room, Sirzechs had explained that the prez had received high praise from the Four Great Demon Kings, the princely House of Bael, the ducal House of Agares, and several other big names for her performance in her recent battle successes. Thanks to that, it had been decided to lift the seal placed on her first Bishop. And now, the door to the Sealed Classroom was about to be opened...

A large **KEEP OUT!** sign was taped over the door, along with several layers of magic seals engraved into the wood.

The spooky aura of the place had kept me away until now.

“They’re inside. They stay in the classroom all day long. They’re allowed out at night, so long as they stay inside the old school building, but they refuse even to do that much,” the prez explained.

She reached out to the door, a magic circle expanding from her palm. Was she unlocking the seal?

Being cooped up in a classroom all the time had to be stifling. I would probably go crazy after only half a day. Even if it was only at night, if I could have the old school building for myself, I would jump at the opportunity to savor some degree of freedom.

“A-are they a shut-in?” I asked.

The prez let out a sigh, nodding.

Oh, yikes, they really are.

Kiba pulled the tape back while Akeno assisted Rias in lifting the seal.

“This child is the biggest earner among the members of our Familia,” Akeno said.

Seriously?! How much money do they make...? And how?

Perhaps noticing my doubtful expression, Akeno continued, saying, “Our friend conducts special pacts with clients online—the kind of customers who don’t like to meet in person. We have a special way of negotiating with that sort

of human. That's why we engage with them behind the screen of a computer. The child inside makes as much as the highest-ranking members of any Familia."

Incredible! Negotiating with clients online? And making pacts with humans that way?

"Now then, let's open it."

The magic engravings that had covered the door were gone, leaving it looking like the entrance to any other classroom. The prez turned the handle, when—

"Yarghhhhhhhhhh!"

—! A frenzied scream came from inside! What was in there?!

Without even the slightest hint of surprise, the prez let out another sigh and stepped inside with Akeno.

"It's nice to see you, too. It's good to see you're so spirited today."

"Wh-wh-whyyyyy?!"

An intense exchange echoed from inside. It was hard to tell from their voice alone...but the Bishop sounded like a girl. However, it could've been a young boy. I couldn't be certain. Regardless, the exchange was unnerving.

"Oh dear. We've lifted the seal, you know? You can come out now. Why don't we step outside together?" Akeno asked gently. I could hear the sympathy and kindness in her voice. She was clearly trying hard to connect with the Bishop.

Unfortunately...

"Nooooo! I don't want tooooo! I don't want to go outside! I don't want to meet people!"

Did this person have a severe case of social anxiety or something?

Asia and I glanced at each other in bewilderment. Xenovia wore a similarly bemused expression. Kiba and Koneko must have been the only ones who knew what was going on, as Kiba let out a soft chuckle, while Koneko breathed a deep sigh.

I tried to sneak a nervous peek inside the room. I stepped partway in and cast my gaze over its contents.

The curtains were pulled tightly shut, leaving the room only dimly lit. The space was decorated surprisingly daintily, almost like a young girl's bedroom, filled with stuffed toys and the like.

Hold on—is that a coffin? There was an actual casket in the corner of the room. It was the kind of thing you would've seen in a western funeral.

The prez and Akeno were deeper inside, and beyond them had to be the Bishop.

I stepped closer—and spotted the diminutive form of a gorgeous young girl with a doll-like face, blond hair, and glowing red eyes. She was sitting helplessly on the floor, looking for all the world like she wanted to run. Her trembling betrayed her immense fear.

She was wearing the Kuou Academy girl's uniform. I gotta say, she was ultra-cute!

"Whoa! A girl! And a foreign one at that!"

Awesome! Another beautiful blond to follow after Asia! I was overjoyed! Our Bishop ranks were wholly comprised of golden-haired honeys! I had never known this happiness before.

The prez, however, shook her head. "He may look like a girl, but he's unmistakably a boy."

...*Huh?* For a second, I doubted my ears. Was the prez speaking in a foreign language that I couldn't understand?

C-come on, Prez—don't joke about things like that. I—I mean, she's a real treasure, this girl!

"No, no, no. No matter how you look at this, she's definitely a girl, Prez...! Huh? You're serious?"

"He has a taste for cross-dressing," Akeno stated flatly from beside me.

...Cross-dressing? S-so that isn't the kid's usual uniform but more like...a-a hobby?

"Whaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa—?!" I cried out in disbelief.

"Hyarghhhhh! I'm sorry, I'm sorryyyyy!" the blond girl—no, the blond *boy*—screamed in shocked response.

Seriously?! That was a boy?! No, no, no, he was definitely a girl! I mean, he was head and shoulders more attractive than most girls at school! I would never have guessed! And his voice sounded feminine, too! And he was so short!

"Arghhhhhhhhh!" I doubled over, holding my head in my hands! This was beyond comprehension! How could such a cute boy even exist?! Was God this cruel?! Hold on. God was dead! Oh, the humanity!

He had unquestionably been born the wrong gender! Something must have happened to him while he was in his mother's womb, causing him to develop in places he shouldn't have! Arghhhh, what a shame!

"What a wicked fate... He looks like a perfect young beauty... And he's a male... With a guy's d*ck and everything..."

"...Vulgar words are forbidden."

Ah! Before I realized it, Koneko had entered the room.

I'm sorry, Koneko. But it's just too brutal a blow.

"It's even worse that he's cross-dressing! It suits him so much, but that's simply another twist of the knife! A shut-in who dresses up as a girl for fun?! Who are you trying to impress?!"

"B-b-b-but girls' clothes are so much cuter than boys' ones!"

"Don't say thaaaaat! Dammit! You're a guy! You've gone and shattered my dreams with your cuteness! Argh, here I was, imagining you and Asia, two blond Bishop beauties! Give me my dreams back, dammit!"

"...Dreams are fleeting."

"Konekooooo! That isn't funny!"

It was just too cruel! No wonder I thought he was a girl, with the way he was dressed!

"B-b-b-by the way, who are these people?" the cross-dresser inquired.

The prez pointed toward me, Asia, and Xenovia in turn. "These are the newest

members of our Familia. They joined while you've been holed up in here. This is our Pawn, Issei Hyoudou; our Knight, Xenovia; and our other Bishop, Asia."

We each introduced ourselves formally, but the cross-dresser shrank back in terror, shrieking, "Yargh! So many new members?!"

There was that social phobia again. I could tell this wasn't going to be easy.

"Please, won't you come outside? You don't need to say in here anymore, all right?" the prez said softly, and yet—

"Nooooo! I can't cope out there! I'm scared! It's terrifying! Please, I'll just cause problems for you if you make me go outside!"

This kid was starting to get on my nerves. I couldn't forgive a guy for having a face like that! I walked right up to him and grabbed hold of his arm. "Look, the prez told you to step outside." I tried to pull him toward the door, when—

"Yarghhhhh!" he screamed, and my vision went white.

...Huh...? I had been holding his arm, so he should have been right there, but that cross-dressing kid was gone.

When I glanced around, I found him quivering in the corner of the room. All I had done was tug on his arm, and yet...

"How strange. Did he just...?"

"...Something definitely just happened."

Asia and Xenovia were just as startled by the mysterious phenomenon as I was. However, the other members of the Familia merely breathed resigned sighs. Kiba and the others must have known about this kid's abilities.

"Don't get angry at me! Don't get angry at me! Please don't hit meeeee!" the cross-dressing kid screamed.

What had he just done?

Akeno, sensing our confusion, decided to explain. "This child has a special Sacred Gear that lets him suspend time for all objects in his immediate field of vision when he gets excited."

...Suspend time? Seriously? That cute kid has a Sacred Gear that powerful?

I guess that explained the sense of unease that had washed over me for a brief moment.

So he could freeze us and run away whenever he felt like it, then? But even though he could probably flee whenever he wanted, he refused to leave his room. Talk about a real sociophobe.

“As he can’t control his Sacred Gear, the archduke and Lord Sirzechs ordered that he be sealed in here,” Akeno explained.

The ability to pause time. That was a terrifying weapon. It all made sense now. If he couldn’t control it, he could end up seriously harming his allies.

The prez hugged the boy in a girl’s uniform from behind and said to me, “This is Gasper Vladi, my Bishop. He’s also a first-year student here at Kuou Academy. And before I turned him into a demon, he was half-human, half-vampire.”

Life.3

I Have a Junior (Boy)!

“The Forbidden Balor View?” I asked.

The prez nodded. “Yes, that’s the name of Gasper’s Sacred Gear. It’s a particularly powerful weapon.”

“But isn’t that sort of overpowered ability against the rules or something?”

“Yes, indeed,” Rias responded. “But the same can be said for your power-increasing ability or the White Dragon Emperor’s power-dividing ability, no?”

Right, that was probably true... But still, suspending time sounded like a whole different level of rule breaking.

“The problem is that Gasper can’t handle his ability. That’s why I had to seal him away until now. He can only activate his Sacred Gear involuntarily.”

So it was as I had assumed.

“But how did you end up recruiting someone with something like that? And he only cost you one piece?”

At this question, the prez summoned a book into the air above her before flipping through the pages and pointing to a particular paragraph.

It was an explanation of the rules underlying the Evil Pieces system.

“It’s a mutation piece,” she said.

“...‘A mutation piece?’” I repeated.

Kiba was the one to answer my question. “Unlike regular Evil Pieces, mutation pieces are capable of reincarnating someone who would normally require multiple pieces to recruit.”

“The president had one such piece,” Akeno appended.

“Roughly one in ten high-class demons possess a single mutation piece. They’re said to have started as a bug when the Evil Pieces system was first designed, but people decided to leave it in for a bit of fun. Gasper was recruited using one of those,” Kiba concluded.

Oh, so the prez used that rare item on him?

“The problem is Gasper’s abilities.”

“What do you mean, Prez?”

“He has exceptional talent, and it seems that he can increase the power of his Sacred Gear unconsciously. Because of that, it’s increasing in strength by the day. From our previous conversations, it sounds like there might also be a possibility that it could develop to the level of a Balance Breaker given enough time.”

—!

A B-Balance Breaker?! That would make it even more dangerous, right?! If someone who couldn’t even control his own powers managed to unlock his Balance Breaker, using a time-stopping Sacred Gear no less, then...!

Just as I was overwhelmed by that admission, the prez placed a hand on her forehead in consternation. “Indeed. It’s a critical situation. But now that I’ve earned a reputation with the important decision-makers, they’ve decided I ought to be able to manage him. They must have concluded that I had helped you and Yuuto to control your Balance Breakers.”

I didn’t know about Kiba’s, but my Balance Breaker was incomplete, and using it came with some pretty severe drawbacks. Ah, but I had heard I received substantial credit for bringing that bastard Riser down. That had no doubt contributed to the prez’s higher standing, too.

Even if the Vanishing Dragon’s intervention had resolved our recent trouble, we’d still been able to defend our territory and prevent any large-scale destruction.

So the bigwigs must have decided that if the prez and her Familia could do all that, then there was no reason why we couldn’t restrain Gasper, either.

“...Ugh, I—I—I don’t like it when people talk about me like I’m not here...”

There was a large cardboard box by my side. That was where the voice had just now sounded from.

“Yarghhhhh!”

There was a sudden scream. Unsurprisingly, it had come from Gasper.

He was so frightened of the outside world that he was hiding inside a cardboard box. Seriously... Did he really hate being outside his room that much?

“In terms of ability, I think he’s second only to Akeno. Not only that, but he comes from a venerable vampire family, and thanks to his human half, he possesses a mighty Sacred Gear. He has the natural abilities of a vampire and is skilled in the kind of magic that only humans can cast. He might not be particularly adept, but I doubt I would have been able to recruit him with just one Bishop piece,” the prez stated.

Oh, so he’s that impressive, is he? This cross-dressing sociophobe vampire? Wait, but what about daylight?

“Prez, aren’t vampires supposed to be weak in the sun? Will he be okay?” I asked.

Rias nodded. “That isn’t a problem. He has the blood of a Daywalker—a special kind of vampire that can move around freely during the daylight. That said, he doesn’t exactly like it.”

A Daywalker? I guess there were all kinds of vampires.

“I hate the sun! I haaaaate it! I wish it would disappear foreveeeeer!”

Gasper had a point. Sunlight was a natural enemy to demons, too. Still, we were all students at Kuou Academy, so we had to get used to moving around during the day to attend school.

“You haven’t been going to class, have you?” I asked. “You need to figure out how to overcome your problems and attend lessons. You know that, right?”

My words only drove Gasper to start shrieking, “No! I’m fine in this box! The air and the light outside are bad for meeeee! Just treat me like a sheltered kid!”

This was worse than I had thought. What were we going to do with him?

“One more thing. Doesn’t he drink blood? I mean, he’s a vampire, right?” I questioned.

“He’s only half, so he doesn’t require it that often,” the prez responded. “As long as he has some once every ten days or so, he’s fine. Although he doesn’t particularly like that, either.”

“I haaaaate bloooooooooood! It stinks! And I hate liver, toooooooooooo!”

How could this kid survive as a vampire if he was so picky about blood?!

“...Worthless vampire,” Koneko spat out spitefully. Dang, she was ruthless.

“Waaaaah! Koneko, you’re so mean!”

They were both first-years, so there was no need for her to treat him with the respect she showed her upperclassmen. However, I was older than Koneko, and she told me off all the time.

“In any event, while I’m gone, I’ll leave Gasper’s education and training in your hands, Issei, Asia, Koneko, and Xenovia. Akeno and I will be going to the venue for the Leaders’ Summit. And, Yuuto, my brother wants to know more about your Balance Breaker, so please come with me.”

“Yes, President.”

It looked like the prez had a long day ahead of her. And the Demon King had called Kiba personally. He wanted to know more about his Holy Demon Sword, I guess.

Fusing holy and demonic powers was supposed to be impossible, so it was probably extremely irregular for a Sacred Gear to develop into that kind of Balance Breaker. It was only natural to want to investigate it.

“Sorry, Issei, but I’ll leave Gasper to you.”

“Don’t worry about us, Kiba. Asia, Koneko, and Xenovia are here, too, so we’ll manage. Probably.”

To be honest, I was feeling a little nervous... A sociophobe vampire. I was worried about his future.

“Gasper, isn’t it about time you stepped outside? You need to start getting used to the world, don’t you think?” Akeno asked, speaking into the cardboard box.

“Akenooooo! Please don’t say thaaaaat!”

“Oh dear. How awkward. It seems you have your work cut out for you, Issei.”

“Yep, I won’t let you down, Akeno!”

There was no way I was going to let her and the prez down!

“Yep. All right then, Issei, let’s get this kid into shape. Nobody likes a weak man. And I’ve wanted to fight against a vampire ever since I was a kid. Let me handle him.” And with that, Xenovia pulled at a cord that had been tied to Gasper’s cardboard box.

She wanted to fight against him...? Did she intend to destroy him...?

“Yarghhhhh! N-n-no! I hate you and your Durendal, toooooooooo! Sh-she’s going to kill meeeee!”

“Stop screaming, vampire. If you keep that up, I’ll use a cross and holy water on you and maybe stuff a little garlic down your throat.”

“Yarghhhhh! N-no, not garlic!”

It seemed a stroke of misfortune that Gasper was in the same Familia as Xenovia.

Hold on, she was a demon now, too, so if she tried to exorcise Gasper, it would seriously wound her as well.

I suddenly found myself concerned for Xenovia’s future as well.

—○●○—

“All right then, start running. You’re a Daywalker, so you shouldn’t have any problem moving around in the sun.”

“Yarghhhhh! Don’t chase after me waving around that Durendaaaaal!”



Our Holy Sword wielder was chasing our resident vampire through the grounds outside the old school building during sunset.

To anyone watching, it must have looked like a real-life vampire hunt. The Durendal was letting out a dangerous sound and a ferocious aura.

Gasper was fleeing for his life. Naturally. If Xenovia managed to land a blow with her Durendal, it would mean the end for him.

According to Xenovia, a sound mind started with a well-trained body, so she took his physical training upon herself.

Unsurprisingly, her methods were way over the top. However, she did look to be enjoying herself as she swung her legendary weapon back and forth.

I recalled that Xenovia had mentioned something about enjoying her responsibilities since becoming a demon.

She was probably similar to Asia in that respect. They had both lived simple lives in the service of the Church, and so now that they had come to Japan, a mostly secular country with no overbearing religious institutions, their new lives must have been a breath of fresh air.

"I was looking forward to meeting another Bishop like me, but he wouldn't even look me in the eye..." Asia said with a regretful sniffle. She seemed likely to cry.

At home, she had often mentioned how much she wanted to meet the prez's other Bishop. She must have been eagerly anticipating meeting him. Her disappointment was understandable, but it couldn't be helped. Gasper's social anxiety was off the charts.

Seriously, he hadn't even made eye contact with Asia. Damn him! Who did he think he was? Still, I was going to have to put up with his indiscretions. He might have been my senior as a demon, but he was my junior at school. I had to look after him.

Like Xenovia, Koneko was chasing after Gasper with a handful of garlic.

"...Gaspy. Garlic will make you big and strong."

"Yarghhhhh! Why are you bullying me, Konekooooo?!"

Was it me, or were the two first-years getting along well...? I had heard that Koneko had a bit of a mean streak... But was she teasing him?

Hold up, did she just call him “Gaspy”?

“Oh, I see they’re really getting into it.”

At that moment, Saji, from the student council, appeared beside me.

“Hey, Saji.”

“Yo, Hyoudou. I heard you let your Familia’s shut-in out, so I thought I’d take a look.”

“Yeah, over there. The kid Xenovia’s chasing around with her weapon.”

“W-wait, she’s actually waving her legendary Holy Sword around? Are you sure about that? Ah! It’s a girl! And a blond!” Saji looked truly delighted. I knew how he felt.

“Sorry to break it to you, but he’s a cross-dresser.”

Hearing this, Saji was immediately crestfallen—utterly devastated.

“That fraud. Don’t people normally cross-dress because they want to show off? He’s an indoor kid; who’s he got to impress? That doesn’t make any sense. I don’t get it.”

“That makes two of us. I don’t understand Gasper, either. Feminine attire suits him so well that I don’t even know what to say. Anyway, what’s up?”

Saji was wearing a tracksuit and a pair of work gloves and was carrying a small gardening trowel.

“As you can see, I’m tending to the flower beds. The chairwoman gave me this job a week ago. There’s a lot of events taking place on campus lately, right? And the Demon Kings are holding a conference here, too. So it’s the job of the chairwoman’s Pawn—me—to make sure the grounds are in good shape.” He paused there, puffing his chest out proudly.

Doesn’t that mean he’s just doing odd jobs? I didn’t want to wound his pride, so I kept quiet.

Rustle...

I sensed a presence approaching in our direction. I turned toward the source of that sound—and couldn't believe my eyes.

"Heh. So this is where the servants from the families of the Demon Kings come to play?"

He was a sinister-looking guy dressed in a men's summer *yukata*. I knew his face well.

"Azazel...!"

"Yo, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor. We meet again."

Everyone suddenly turned to look at the fallen angel. Immediately, the atmosphere was tense.

Flash!

Xenovia braced herself with her sword at the ready. Reading the situation, Asia hid behind my back while I activated my Boosted Gear to protect her.

What is the governor of the fallen angels doing here of all places?!

Saji wore a look of utter stupefaction but quickly activated his Sacred Gear, and a lizard-like face appeared on the back of his hand.

"H-Hyoudou, is that really Azazel?!"

"I'm not fooling around here, Saji. I've met him a few times now."

Seeing how serious I was, Saji braced himself for combat, too.

Azazel broke into a mirth-filled chuckle at our battle postures. He didn't seem threatening in the slightest bit.

"I'm not in the mood. Come on—relax, little low-class demon kids. You've gotta know you can't hope to beat me, right? And I'm not interested in shaking down a few low-class demons. I was just taking a stroll and thought I might pay a visit to your demon school. Is your Holy Demon Sword kid here? I'd like to check that thing out."

Though Azazel's words seemed placative, none of us relaxed. No way were we going to trust anything a fallen angel had to say!

"Kiba isn't here! But if it's him you're after, I won't let you have him!" I spat

back.

Now that Kiba had unlocked a super-rare Balance Breaker, was Azazel trying to win him over?

"...Come on—you couldn't even hold your own against Kokabiel. There's no way you could beat me. But the Holy Demon Sword kid really isn't here, then? Color me disappointed," Azazel said, scratching at his head as he approached.

I couldn't sense any hostility in him, but that in itself was terrifying. My hands were trembling with fear.

We hadn't been able to do anything against Kokabiel, another leading member of Azazel's organization. And now we were faced with the head honcho? This was the kind of situation where you might wind up dead if you blinked.

I didn't want to see him unfurl those black wings of his and send me on to the next world... If I was going to die, I wanted to have sex with the prez first!

Azazel pointed toward a nearby tree. "You, the vampire hiding over there."

Gasper, who it turned out had indeed concealed himself behind that tree, suddenly cried out in panic.

Azazel approached him. "You're the one with the Forbidden Balor View, right? That thing will end up hurting everyone around you if you don't learn how to master it. It's a support-type Sacred Gear, so you should be fine if you can compensate for its deficiencies. However, unless I'm mistaken, you demons lag behind when it comes to research on Sacred Gears. A weapon that can be triggered by one of the physical senses is quite perilous. You could end up activating it without meaning to if you put too much energy into it."

Azazel stared into Gasper's face—or rather, into his eyes. Gasper trembled violently as the fallen angel approached him. That was a natural response as far as I was concerned.

Yet, I still couldn't detect any sense of hostility or ill will on the part of Azazel. Instead, he looked merely curious. Perhaps the others had noticed that, too, as no one knew how best to respond.

From where I was standing, it almost looked like the fallen angel was about to attack Gasper...

At that moment, Azazel spun around and pointed toward Saji.

Saji, of course, braced himself, but...

“That’s the Absorption Line, isn’t it? If you’re here to practice, why don’t you try using it? Latch on to the vampire and activate it while draining his power. Do that, and he’ll be less likely to run off.”

Saji’s expression stiffened at the instruction. “...I—I can use it to absorb power from other Sacred Gears? I thought all it did was sap energy from my enemies and weaken them...”

Azazel sighed. “...This is what I mean when I say that people these days don’t have the faintest clue how to properly wield their Sacred Gears,” he bemoaned, dumbfounded. “The Absorption Line has the power of one of the Five Great Dragon Kings, the Prison Dragon, Vritra. Although it was only my research that uncovered that fact. You can connect it to just about anything and siphon off power. You can even detach it temporarily and let it latch on to someone—or *something*—else.”

“S-so I could... I could connect it to Hyoudou, then, for example? And then Hyoudou would get power from it?”

“Indeed. The more you grow, the more lines you can use. Your power output will level up as well.”

“...” Saji fell silent.

If Azazel was telling the truth there, that Sacred Gear was pretty incredible, huh? No, no, this was the governor of the fallen angels we were talking about, right? The boss of our mortal enemies! He was obviously a bad guy...! Or so I thought, but I still couldn’t sense even the slightest bit of hostility from him.

Still, I was worried about what Kokabiel had said: *“He’s quite the collector of Sacred Gears.”* Did his interest in us all have something to do with that?

“The fastest way to level up that Sacred Gear would be to drink the blood of the vessel of the Boosted Gear. Give your vampire some blood to drink, and

you'll increase his power. I'm sure you can figure out the rest on your own." With that, the fallen angel took one last look at us and turned to leave.

Before he departed, however, he paused for a moment, glancing my way. "Sorry about Vali—our White Dragon Emperor. He wasn't supposed to reach out to you without permission. I bet you were pretty surprised, eh? He's a strange one. I don't think he's interested in settling the red and white rivalry just yet."

"What about you, then? Are you going to apologize for summoning me without telling me who you were?" I asked.

He had seriously freaked me out. That wasn't even a good joke, telling the demon you summoned that you were the governor of the fallen angels.

Azazel remained unfazed and simply flashed me a mischievous grin. "That's my hobby. I've got nothing to atone for." And with that, he turned to leave for real this time.

...

We, who had been left behind, exchanged troubled glances.

Saji let out a sigh. "...I guess I could try using my Sacred Gear on the new kid. Then you can try getting him to practice with his Sacred Gear. But in return, you all need to help out with the flower beds next time."

We nodded at Saji's suggestion, and so Gasper's training session got underway.

Saji launched his Absorption Line toward Gasper and began to drain his excess power. Just as Azazel had said, Saji was able to use it to draw energy from Gasper's Sacred Gear... That fallen angel was extraordinarily knowledgeable.

Next, we practiced throwing volleyballs at Gasper and got him to freeze them in place. He could only pause time around his targets for a few minutes at most. Those volleyballs, when targeted, ended up suspended in midair. When he used his ability on a living thing, they were also rendered entirely motionless.

Anyone caught in Gasper's attack was stuck without any awareness of what was going on around them. I knew that from experience. It felt strange to have

your world freeze without any clue what was happening or how much time had passed.

However, Gasper's Sacred Gear could only affect things he could see. Even with that limitation, it was still an unquestionably potent tool. The closer Gasper was to his target, the better he could see them, which made the time-stopping effect stronger.

The trouble was that Gasper couldn't effectively use his Sacred Gear. He had difficulty stopping only one target and often wound up suspending everything within range.

He couldn't consciously activate it, either, and there were a few times when he glanced toward one of us and froze an arm or a leg.

Seriously, the way he activated that thing without even meaning to was a real nuisance.

Every time he did something like that by accident, he would cry, "I'm sorryyyyy!" and run off to hide somewhere. Catching him and bringing him back got old fast.

All I wanted him to do was freeze a volleyball without hitting anything else... But getting Gasper to that level was more difficult than I had expected. Not only was I dealing with the quirks of a powerful Sacred Gear but also those of a strange kid!

Still, the prez had entrusted me with this task, so I had no choice but to stick with him. I was determined to whip Gasper into shape.

"How is it going? Is he making any progress?" the prez asked, bringing us sandwiches.

Since she'd decided to check in on us, she must've been concerned about Gasper.

The boy in question was panting in nervous exhaustion, probably because we had repeatedly been draining his power.

Rias's arrival seemed as good a time as any for a break.

Whoa! The sandwiches are amazing! The spices are superb, the tastes eye-

opening!

“Prez, these are delicious!” I praised.

“Hee-hee, thank you. I didn’t have many ingredients, so they’re very simple, I’m afraid.”

Even if that was true, they were mouthwatering! Even Saji was muttering about how tasty they were!

Akeno and Kiba were still with Sirzechs and hadn’t returned.

The prez was alarmed to hear about Azazel but said, “I’ve heard that he’s knowledgeable about Sacred Gears. As for his advice...I suppose he feels comfortable enough to share that much with us.” With that, she fell deep into thought.

“Now that you’ve returned, Rias, I should get back to work on the flower beds,” Saji stated, taking another two or three bites to finish his sandwich before rising to his feet.

“Saji. Thank you for going out of your way to help my servant today. I appreciate it.”

Saji blushed at the prez’s appreciative remark. “I-it’s fine, really. You’re the chairwoman’s friend, and I learned more about my Sacred Gear today. It’s been a win-win situation for both of us.”

He was an all right guy, that Saji. While he had a nasty tongue at times, he could be good company, too.

“Okay, then. It’s up to you now, Hyoudou,” said Saji.

“Yeah. Thanks,” I replied as he left.

After seeing him off, the prez turned to Gasper, who was resting beneath a nearby tree. “Are you feeling up for a bit more practice, Gasper? Now that Saji has drained your power, your energy level should be just about right. I’ll train you myself for the rest of the day.”

Whoa! The prez was so dependable! Yep, she truly did care about the members of her Familia. More than anything, the prez knew how to train her servants! She had dedicated a great deal of time to me as well.

"I-I'll do my best...." Gasper said in an exhausted tone of voice as he rose to his feet.

If he's actually gonna try, then I'll stick with it, too!

And so Gasper's training session continued right up to nightfall.

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The next evening, I was back to my usual demon work. I was still unable to jump to my clients' locations through the magic circle, but at least I was carrying out my job relatively well.

The Leaders' Summit was fast approaching, but even so, we servants in Rias Gremory's Familia still needed to go about our everyday work. Not only that, but there were two Demon Kings in town, so we couldn't afford to do things half-heartedly.

"Hoh, it's Issei today, huh?" asked my client—a man called Morisawa—his shoulders slumping in obvious disappointment.

He was a regular client for both Koneko and me. Tonight, it was my turn to deal with him.

Morisawa's gaze shifted downward. It looked like his attention was focused on the space beside me—a large cardboard box.

"What's that?" he asked.

"A talking box," I answered.

I lightly nudged the container with my foot. The gesture earned a shrill scream.

"Yarghhhhh!"

Yep, it was my closeted junior, Gasper. I had pedaled him all the way here on the back of my bicycle. The prez had asked me to take him out on a few of my jobs. I felt like weeping.

To be honest, I didn't think that Gasper would be much use, but so long as he didn't get in my way, I was willing to put up with him. So I just set the box down on the floor, when—

"What is it? What's inside?" Morisawa asked, edging closer.

Before I knew it, he had opened the lid, and—

“...”

“...”

—Morisawa’s and Gasper’s gazes met.

“Oh...”

Given Gasper’s fear of social interaction, it wasn’t surprising that this sudden encounter was enough to bring him to tears.

Come on, Gasper—you’ve got to learn to cope with things like this.

“He may look like a cute little girl, but he’s actually a boy. He seems big on cross-dressing,” I explained. It seemed best to make the situation plain to Morisawa right from the start.

Surprisingly, my client grabbed me by the shoulders and bellowed, “No real girl could ever be this cute! Femboys are awesooooome!”

—!

What an emphatic cry! Wait. So he’s okay with Gasper being a guy? Seriously?!

Morisawa’s eyes were positively gleaming!

“Come out now. I’m not going to bite. Let’s have some fun!” Morisawa entreated while taking ragged breaths through his nose. He’d transformed into a total degenerate.

“Urghhhh... No...” Gasper was all but sobbing. He looked terrified. I could hardly blame him. Morisawa’s creepy demeanor was enough even to freak me out!

My client reached toward Gasper, his fingers wriggling lecherously—

“Yarghhhh!” Gasper screamed.

Everything stopped—

...

When I came to, the cardboard box that had been resting beside me had

disappeared.

“...?”

Morisawa clearly couldn’t grasp what had just happened.

Gasper had suspended time around us. He must have panicked and unconsciously activated his Sacred Gear.

Morisawa and I had been frozen in time, but I didn’t know for how long. Quickly, I scanned the room, spotting Gasper’s box in one corner. So that was where he had gone. I walked over.

“Sorry about that, Gasper. Morisawa was a little scary just now, wasn’t he?” I said into the container.

“*Sniff...* Waaaaah!” he cried.

There was no way he would be any use on this job.

“I did it again... Stupid, stupid, stupid... I’m so stupid. I didn’t want to stop them... I don’t want to stop them...”

Gasper... The prez had left him in my care, so I had to do something.

Unfortunately, now that he was all worked up, it would take him a while to recover. There was nothing I could do to fix the situation.

—○●○—

“Gasper, please come out. I’m sorry I made you go with Issei today,” the prez called, apologizing at the door to his room. “I thought it might be good for you to get some experience working with Issei...”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

Gasper had locked himself in his room in the old school building, wailing so loudly that he could be heard even from outside.

He was scared of others, and he was afraid of his inability to control his Sacred Gear causing trouble. As if that hadn’t been enough, Morisawa had scared the living daylights out of him just now. It had been a terrifying encounter, that was for sure.

Earlier, the prez had explained that Gasper’s father belonged to a lineage of

noble vampires, but his mother had been a regular human, so he wasn't pure-blooded. Apparently, vampires despised those of mixed heritage even more than demons did. Such individuals were held in extreme contempt, even by members of their own family. It was genuinely extreme—nothing short of discrimination.

Gasper had been bullied as a child by his half brothers, and even after coming to the human world, he had been treated as a monster with no place to call his own.

Nonetheless, he possessed the distinctive abilities of a vampire along with a gift unique to humans—a very rare Sacred Gear. Like it or not, he had been born with both, and they would only grow stronger as he got older.

Even when Gasper tried to get along with someone, the slightest surprise risked setting off his Sacred Gear, freezing them in place.

"Issei, how would you feel if you were frozen in time?" the prez asked me.

"...I'd be a bit scared, I think," I answered truthfully.

I could only imagine what that would be like, and the images that came to mind weren't pleasant. What *would* I do? What would happen to me during that time? I would definitely be worried.

All those who Gasper had stopped must have felt the same way. Once that sliver of doubt entered their minds, they would fear him, and friendship would be impossible.

Gasper had undoubtedly gone through that more than a few times. It was the kind of misery and misfortune that often befell those born with Sacred Gears.

Asia had been similar. She had been branded a witch.

Sacred Gears were supposed to be gifts from God... God might not have been around anymore, but His Sacred Gears were still alive and kicking. By the look of things, they weren't going anywhere.

No one could deny they were powerful weapons, but that strength brought an equal amount of hardship, too.

"I—I—I wish I didn't have this Sacred Gear! I—I mean, I'm always stopping

everyone! I don't want to! I hate it! I—I don't want to stop my friends... I don't want to have to see everyone's stopped faces... I—I can't do this anymore..." Gasper sobbed.

Driven from his home, unable to live in human or vampire society, he had wandered the streets. Eventually, he'd fallen prey to a vampire hunter. It was then that the prez had found him.

Initially, Rias hadn't been able to control him, so she had been ordered by her superiors to seal him away.

"This is a problem... I can't let him become a shut-in again... I'm a failure as the King of this Familia..." the prez murmured, dejected.

She wasn't in the wrong. Nor was Gasper. No, the one at fault was me. They had both placed their hopes on me to take care of him while he joined me at work, and I hadn't been able to do anything.

"Prez, don't you have to meet with Sirzechs and the others soon?" I asked.

"Yes, but I want to stay here a little while longer. I need to take care of Gasper —"

"Leave him to me. I'll take care of him."

She couldn't reject my offer. Her meeting was crucial.

The Leaders' Summit had to run smoothly, and the setting and venue were paramount. If anything went awry, it risked widening the divisions between the three factions.

"It's all right. I've finally got a junior to mentor! I'll look after him!" I declared proudly.

Let me give it to you straight—I wasn't incredibly confident. Dealing with sensitive personalities wasn't my strong suit, but I had to act assured in front of the prez.

"...Issei. All right. Can I leave him with you?"

"Of course!" I responded, my voice filled with enthusiasm.

Rias flashed me a smile, nodding. She glanced once more toward the door to

Gasper's room, worry plain in her expression, before departing.

After seeing her off, I let out a deep sigh and slumped down to the floor.

"I'm not going anywhere! I'll wait here until you're ready to come out!" I called loud enough so that Gaper would hear.

I racked my brain, but that was all I could come up with! Sit down and wait! Plain and simple!

Wasn't there a famous shut-in a long time ago, and this had been how people had convinced them to come out? I wasn't sure, but I thought that was right.

...

It was a battle of endurance. I must have sat there for an hour or more, waiting impatiently. But there was no sign of change.

Just sitting in silence wasn't getting me anywhere.

Maybe I should try talking to him?

"Are you afraid? Of your Sacred Gear...? Of us?" I asked through the door.

"..."

"My Sacred Gear is overpowered, too, you know? There's a superstrong dragon inside it. But my life wasn't as unusual as yours or Kiba's. I was just a normal high school student."

I didn't know whether or not Gasper was listening. Yet I had to do something. Voicing my thoughts was the best I could muster.

"To tell you the truth...I'm scared, too. Every time I draw on the dragon's power, I feel like part of me is morphing into something else. I still don't know much about demons, and I don't have any idea what a dragon really is. Even so, I've decided to keep moving forward."

What other choice was there?

"...Why? Wh-why do that if you could lose something so important? H-how are you able to keep going so easily...?"

Ah, a response. Good. So he is actually listening. However, Gasper's question put me in a bit of a bind.

“...Hmm... I’m not that bright, so I don’t really know much about tough questions like that, but...”

“But?”

“I don’t want to see the prez cry ever again. We lost our first Rating Game. I was beaten to a pulp, to the point where I can’t even remember what happened at the end. I was pathetic... But I do remember the prez’s tears.”

I clenched my fists. Even now, that memory was painful.

“...It was hard. I can still see it all so clearly. And my allies kept getting eliminated one after the other until only I was left... Sometimes, I relive that battle in my dreams. When I do, it’s always me running around the battlefield alone. When I finally find the prez, she’s sobbing, and there’s nothing I can do...”

Click...

The door cracked open slightly.

“...I—I wasn’t there...” Gasper peeked from the gap. It looked like his eyes were wet.

“Yeah, I know. I’m not blaming you or anything. But it’ll be different from now on, right?” I asked.

“...I-I’ll just cause trouble for you... I’m a shut-in... I’m afraid of everyone... And I can’t even use my Sacred Gear properly...”

I placed a hand on Gasper’s head, peering into his eyes. *So that’s where his Sacred Gear is, huh? The ability to stop time...*

“I don’t hate you. You’re my junior, so I’ll always look after you... Well, I guess you’re my senior as a demon. But I’m older than you in real life, so I’ll look out for you.”

“—.” Gasper blinked in surprise.

“Fight with us,” I continued. “Let’s support the prez together. If anything scares you, tell me, and I’ll send it flying. I’ve got legendary dragon power, so it’ll be easy,” I said with a grin.

Gasper, however, looked troubled by my attempt to encourage him.

“Do you want to try drinking my blood?” I offered. “If that bastard Azazel was telling the truth, then it might help you control your Sacred Gear.”

If that was really all it took, then it was a small price to pay... Would that turn me into a vampire, too, though? I recalled something about virgins becoming vampires when bitten...

Gasper shook his head. “...I’m afraid to suck a living person’s blood. I’m scared of my powers... If they get any stronger... I... I...”

“Hmm. You don’t want to be at the mercy of your Sacred Gear, right? But you know, I kind of wish I had your abilities.”

“—.”

Gasper looked truly surprised by what I had just said. His reaction similarly caught me off guard.

“Did I say something weird? I mean, wouldn’t it be awesome to be able to stop time? I’d get into so much trouble if I had that power. I’d probably be getting up to all kinds of dodgy stuff with every girl in class—the whole school, maybe. I guarantee it. I could sneak down the hall and catch a peek at everyone’s panties. Ah, if I had that Sacred Gear of yours, I—I could stop the prez and check out her b-b-b-breasts...! Just thinking about having those glorious boobs to myself is too much to handle! See, I’m drooling! Right! I—I could use it to get to Akeno’s chest, too! I—I could catch a glimpse of her panties! The possibilities are endless!”

That might have been true, but I made sure to stop myself there. This wasn’t the time or place to be drooling over lecherous thoughts like that! No doubt I had disgusted Gasper.

However, much to my surprise, he was smiling joyfully. “...You’re really kind, Issei,” he said.

Ugh... Gasper had me feeling sentimental. I had to be careful going forward.

“No one’s ever said anything like that to me before. That they’re jealous of me, I mean. And really explaining why... Issei, you’re an interesting person.”

That was one way to put it. There were times I felt bad for being such a pervert.

"All right then, listen up, Gasper. I'm going to transfer the power of the Red Dragon Emperor to the prez's breasts," I declared.

Gasper looked up at me with surprise, but his eyes soon glistened with sympathy.

"...Y-you're amazing, Issei. The fact that you can even think about using such a powerful Sacred Gear in such an obscene way... I—I would never have thought of that. But I feel like I've caught a glimpse of your wishes and dreams. Issei, you're fearless, telling people about those desires."

It kind of felt like Gasper was making fun of me, but that was probably just my imagination!

"Right, right! It's a superpowerful Sacred Gear! What matters is how you use it! I've been using mine to satisfy my lust! I even said as much to the dragon in my gauntlet! I'm going to suck the prez's breasts! And then I'll carry out my second goal—I'll transfer my power into her breasts! No, not just hers—Akeno's as well! Whoa! There are so many possibilities!"

Before I knew it, I had broken out into a fervor without meaning to and was drooling all over the place. I had gone more than a little overboard...

"I—I feel a little more confident, too. Just a little, though..."

"Good, good. Here, look at my right hand. I've already squeezed the prez's breasts with this, you know?"

Gasper stared at it in astonishment.

Hee-hee-hee. I was pretty proud of myself on that count.

That story had inspired Saji before, and now it was helping to motivate Gasper. So he *was* a guy, after all.

"R-really? Th-that's... T-touching the breasts of your master, a high-class demon... Issei, you really are amazing..."

"Just so you know, transferring my power into the prez's breasts was the Demon King's idea. I've been thinking of hanging around Lord Sirzechs more.

He's incredible! You wouldn't believe the ideas he has!"

"T-transferring power into breasts... What a way to use a Longinus's capabilities... Th-the Demon King sounds incredible, too..."

Before I knew it, Gasper had let me inside his room, and we were chatting.

"Impressive, Issei. I wouldn't have expected you two to hit it off so quickly."

By the time Kiba peeked in, Gasper and I were having a full-blown conversation. Had he been worried about us? I knew he was a good dude.

Oh, this is perfect! I realized. Now that all the Occult Research Club male members were in one place, I could finally bring up an important topic.

"Kiba, there's something we need to discuss."

"What is it, Issei?"

"We're all guys here, all three of us."

"Indeed. But that's an odd thing to confirm all of a sudden..."

"I thought we men in Rias Gremory's Familia should team up to coordinate our efforts."

"That's...an intriguing thought. What did you have in mind?"

Yes! Kiba's willing to hear me out! All right, time to reveal my master plan!

"First, I'll boost my power. Then I'll transfer it to Gasper and get him to pause time. While everything's stopped, I'll be free to touch the girls as much as I want."

"...Entertaining dirty fantasies again, are you? Putting that aside, what do you need me for?" Kiba was practically left speechless by my suggestion...

"Yeah, you're essential here," I continued calmly. "I need you to use your Balance Breaker to protect me. The enemy might attack while I'm playing around. We need to work as a team to do this. I boost my power, Gasper uses it, I feel the girls up, and you protect me. It's a perfect formation."

"Issei, I'd do anything to help. But this... Let's have a serious discussion about the future for once. The way you use your powers is too lecherous. You'll make Ddraig cry."

“Kiba understands...,” came a sorrowful voice from my Sacred Gear.

Don’t you start complaining, too, Ddraig! I’m your host, so if I want to fulfill my fantasies, I’ll use you however I want!

“Kiba! Don’t look at me like that! Don’t you pity me! You damn pretty boy! Fine, you stay out of it, then! But I’m going to feast on the girls as much as I want! I haven’t even had a single one of them yet!”

“...Knowing you, you’ll probably get addicted. The president and the others are already indulging you, so I think it’s better not to rock the boat... This must be what they mean when they say that discoveries can be terrifying.”

Kiba’s words had an important weight to them. Unfortunately, their profoundness went right over my head.

“Okay, fellow men, let’s be open with one another. We should play a game: *This is what I love about girls!* I’ll start! I love looking at their breasts and legs!”

Kiba and Gasper exchanged embarrassed grins, but they didn’t look put off by this discussion topic. Still, I didn’t miss the fact that Gasper was trembling the whole time.

No doubt he was still worried about stopping time around us.

His Sacred Gear could be activated inadvertently at any moment. For him, it was a source of endless anxiety. He was practically frightened to death of what it might do to us, that if he stopped us in time, we would hate him for it.

But for now, all we needed to do was have a bit of fun. No, I wanted to make sure that he did.

“Sorry, can I go back inside my box...? I won’t close the lid. But I feel more comfortable when I’m talking to people in there,” Gasper admitted apologetically.

I was disappointed, but I let him. We were still only starting out. I couldn’t push him too hard. I had to coax him forward inch by inch.

“Ah, this is better. This cardboard box is like my own private oasis...”

As if! How can a cardboard box be that comfortable?!

Still, it did kind of suit him... He must have been used to going in and out of that thing. A cardboard box vampire. This whole situation was still a little too much for me...

"If you don't want to make eye contact with people, how about this?" I asked, pulling out a paper bag and punching two holes in it before putting it over his head.

"Th-this..."

A cross-dressing kid sitting in a dimly lit room with a paper bag over his head. There was a red glint shining out of that bag through the eyeholes that I had made in it!

"H-how does it look? Does it suit me?"

Gasper edged across the room sluggishly, like a zombie! Whoa! He looked like a total degenerate! It was downright terrifying!

"Ah, but it's...it's nice... Maybe it does suit me...?"

"Gasper, you're amazing. I really think so," I said.

"R-really...? If I wear this, would that make me a better vampire, too...?"

He looked more like a pervert than a vampire. But that didn't matter. Maybe it was my lot in life to be surrounded by strange and unique individuals.

The three of us spent all night engaged in dirty conversations.

I had already suspected as much, but it turned out Kiba was quite the lecher as well.

—○●○—

On my next day off, Akeno called me out to meet her.

She said that the prez would be joining us later, once she finished something important.

I wonder what Akeno wants with me? My mind kept going to dirty places, but if Rias was going to join us, then there was little possibility of that.

I was happy the prez and Akeno were so fond of me, but it sure made for a complicated situation. One spark, and they'd break into a massive fight over

who would get to keep me as their dog or cat or whatever. As a pet, I was blessed! As a man, I was in limbo.

I made my way to the outskirts of town as Akeno had asked.

Hold on—isn't there only one place of note this way? Before long, the stone steps that I had been expecting came into sight, and at the end of those stairs was a red torii gate. Yep, I had arrived at a Shinto shrine.

Uh-oh...

Shrines were no place for demons! I hadn't tried setting foot in one by myself yet, but I had heard that, like other sacred grounds, they weren't exactly easy for creatures like me to enter. And I was pretty sure the prez had warned us not to go near places like this...

There was a figure waiting at the foot of the stone steps. Squinting, I recognized a familiar face.

"Welcome, Issei."

"A-Akeno?!"

She was standing there in a shrine maiden outfit.

I made my way up the steps.

"I'm sorry for calling you out here so suddenly," Akeno apologized, walking along beside me.



“Ah no, it’s fine. I was only killing time. What do you need? The prez is coming later, though, right...?”

“Yes. Rias had to go to a final meeting with Lord Sirzechs before the conference.”

Her shrine maiden outfit really was magnificent. It looked great on her. She truly was a classical Japanese beauty!

Could this be where her nickname the Vestal of Thunder came from? And was it really okay for a demon to stroll into a shrine? I had a lot of questions. The biggest mystery was why Akeno had asked to meet me way out here in the first place.

“Doesn’t the prez normally ask you to join her for meetings? She might need her Queen, after all...”

“Grayfia will take care of her, so she should be fine. I have a more important task—to welcome the individual waiting for us here.” She glanced up to the top of the stairs.

Huh? We’re meeting someone?

We approached the torii gate. Demons were supposed to receive considerable damage if we went past this point. We had always been warned not to enter sacred places...

“We’ll be fine here. We’ve come to a special agreement so that even demons can enter this area,” Akeno explained before passing under the gate as if it were nothing.

Bracing myself for the unexpected, I nervously inched through. Nothing happened.

In front of me stood the shrine’s resplendent main hall. It felt like a rather old and ancient building, but I couldn’t spot any signs of damage or wear.

“Akeno, is this where you live?” I asked.

“Yes. It was left vacant when the last priest who operated it passed away, so Rias secured it for my use.”

“Is that the Red Dragon Emperor?”

I spun around at the sound of that new voice.

A pair of golden wings, brilliant to the point of being blinding, appeared before me. A young man with a handsome countenance was staring at me.

He was dressed in luxurious, white robes and had a golden ring hovering above his head.

Hold on, a halo?!

He smiled my way gingerly and extended his hand. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Red Dragon Emperor, Issei Hyoudou.”

He knows my name. Just who is this guy?

As if in response to my unasked questions, a further ten golden wings unfolded from his back, for a total of twelve.

“I’m Michael. The leader of the angels. I see—I recognize your aura, Ddraig. It’s been a long time.”

This guy’s a major big shot!

—○●○—

With Akeno leading us, Michael—the archangel—and I approached the shrine’s main hall.

Michael’s halo was proof he was an angel. According to the prez, the identifying features of angels were their halos and white feathers. Fallen angels, on the other hand, lacked those golden rings, and their wings were black. Michael’s were golden. I could literally feel his aura of grandeur and majesty!

The building’s interior was unexpectedly large and surrounded by several huge pillars. I could feel my skin tingling in the presence of some unknown surge of power.

What is this power? Something was giving off an energy that raised a red flag in my brain.

“I thought to give you this, actually,” the archangel said.

Huh? Give me something? I cast my gaze where Michael was pointing and laid

eyes on a sword. It hovered in the air and emanated a holy aura.

Uh-oh..., I thought. That thing looked like a Holy Sword! As ignorant as I was, I recognized this foreboding feeling! I had felt it enough already from the Excaliburs and the Durendal.

“This is the dragon-slaying Holy Sword Ascalon, formerly belonging to Georgius—although you may perhaps know him better as Saint George.”

No, I don’t know the first thing about Geor-whatever-his-name-is or this Saint George!

“He’s a famous dragon slayer. You should study a bit more,” Ddraig explained.

Shut up! A-a dragon slayer?! Even the word alone sounded dangerous!

“They are a group whose sole purpose is to destroy dragons. The term is also applied to the weapons they use.”

...So they were assassins who specialized in dragons? That was terrifying. Did that make me a target, too? Did everyone have to hate me...?

“We have performed a special rite to allow even a demon like you to draw on the dragon’s power to wield it. Or rather, to allow you to assimilate it into the Boosted Gear,” explained the archangel.

Is that even possible? I wondered, dubious.

“That’s up to you. Sacred Gears respond to the thoughts of their owners. If your desire is there, it will probably work.”

Right. Well, I still have my doubts.

“Why are you giving me this?” I couldn’t help but ask.

Why would Michael give such a precious artifact to someone like me? Not only was I a demon, an enemy to all angels, but I was also the vessel of the dragon that had caused everyone such trouble during the Great War. From his perspective, I was pretty much the worst of the worst.

Michael, however, responded with a smile. “I see our upcoming conference as an opportunity for collaboration between the three great powers. I’m comfortable telling you this, as you already know, but our creator—the Lord—

died in the last Great War. Our opponents, the former Demon Kings, likewise perished. The fallen angels' leaders say nothing on the matter, but even Azazel has admitted that he doesn't want to be involved in another war. As such, this is a chance for us all. If we continue getting into spats with one another, our three factions will one day dwindle to extinction. Even if we escape that fate, a separate force may attack and overwhelm us if we don't learn to work together. As such, this Holy Sword is a personal gift to your demon faction. Of course, I have offered a similar show of goodwill to the fallen angels, too. Your superiors returned our missing swords as well, for which we are all particularly grateful."

The archangel was talking about some complicated stuff there. So basically, he was saying this conference was important and he wanted to make peace with us demons and the fallen angels?

But what was that about *a separate force*? Who else was there outside the three factions?

"Oh yes. There are other mythological systems outside those of the Bible."

Huh? Ddraig, this is the first I've heard of that...

"They don't normally cross over from their territory. They've entered into an explicit nonaggression pact with these three. But now, with the biblical God gone, there's no telling what they might do. That's part of the reason why none of the three factions will publicly admit to His death."

I didn't have the faintest clue what he was talking about.

My mind kept turning over one question after the next. I didn't even properly understand the power structures and relationships that governed demons, angels, and fallen angels yet!

My questions still unanswered, Michael continued. "We've heard that the Welsh Dragon who opposed us in the past had become a demon. As a greeting to you and to your group, we present this sword as a gift. You will no doubt find yourself targeted by King-class dragons and your rival the Vanishing Dragon, so we thought that you, as the rumored weakest ever host to the Red Dragon Emperor, would benefit from an additional weapon."

Well, sorry about being such a disappointment! I'm doing my best!

There was still so much that I didn't understand, but I at least recognized that Michael was offering the weapon in good faith.

"Are you sure you want to give it to *me*? Why?" I pressed.

"Only once have the three great powers banded together—to defeat the Red and White Dragons. After all, those two creatures intruded on our war and threw the whole battlefield into chaos."

Ddraig had told me this story once before.

Anything to add, Ddraig?

"...Nope," he replied.

"In the hope of joining forces with our former enemies once more, I am placing my hopes in you—the Red Dragon Emperor. That's a particularly Japanese way of thinking, wouldn't you say?"

Michael kind of sounded sarcastic. But if the angels' leader could say that with a smile and a straight face, then I would believe that he was telling the truth.

I turned toward the sword. Could I touch it? Holy Swords were meant to be lethal against demons, right? The last thing I needed was for one of these dragon slayers to get their hands on one of them!

Watching me hesitate, Akeno spoke up. "We've performed some final adjustments to it here at this shrine. The Demon King, Azazel, and Michael have each performed the necessary rites to allow even a demon to wield it so long as they possess the power of a dragon."

Seriously? If Akeno was the one saying it, then it had to be true.

I cautiously reached out to the Holy Sword suspended in the air... Nothing. I could feel its holy aura, but no pain, no damage assailed my body. Was I seriously going to be okay, then?

"Focus on the Boosted Gear, kid. I'll take care of the rest. Synchronize that blade with the energy of your Sacred Gear."

That was easy enough to say but actually doing it...?

For the time being, I focused on activating my Sacred Gear and manifesting

my red gauntlet. Then I concentrated on making the energy stored within me align with the Holy Sword.

...The weapon's holy aura flowed into my Sacred Gear, through it, and into my body... A feeling of trepidation washed over me, but that sense of danger soon morphed into familiarity as Ddraig's power rose to meet it.

Flash!

There was a red burst of light, and the next thing I knew, a long blade was protruding from the gauntlet covering my left hand.

“...They merged.”

Amazing. My Sacred Gear and the Holy Sword had combined. Now the holy weapon was a part of my Boosted Gear!

Having confirmed my success, Michael clapped his hands in congratulations. “In that case, I’d best be going.”

Huh? He’s leaving already? There was something that I had wanted to say if I ever met an angel.

“U-um, I want to talk to you about something.”

“Come to the conference. You can tell me afterward. I assure you, I’ll hear you out.”

Making those his final words, Michael’s body erupted in light. When the flash died down, the archangel was gone.

—○●○—

“Some tea.”

“Th-thank you.”

With Michael gone, I was left alone with Akeno in the shrine that she called home. We had gone to a Japanese-style room that looked to be laid out for holding tea ceremonies.

If I remember correctly, I’m supposed to turn the bowl around three times before drinking, right? One, two, three.

Gulp.

Ugh, that's bitter.

Akeno watched my reaction with a light chuckle.

"Did you work with Michael...the archangel...on the sword here?" I asked.

"Yes," Akeno replied. "This was where we made the modifications to the Ascalon."

Arranging the conference between the three great powers and organizing a ceremony to prepare a Holy Sword, too? Akeno and the prez sure had a lot on their plate lately... Was this the kind of work that Kings and Queens were always called on to do?

I would have to try to keep out of their way and to keep Gasper occupied, at least for a while.

However, for the moment, Akeno and I were alone. I surmised it was as good a time as any to inquire about something that had been bugging me.

I braced myself to bring up a topic that had been troubling me since our battle against Kokabiel.

"Do you mind if I ask you something?"

"Please, go ahead."

"...Akeno, is your father...?"

Her expression clouded over at my unfinished question. "...That's right. My father is Baraqiel, one of the leaders of the fallen angels. And my mother was a human."

So it was true. Kokabiel had said that Akeno possessed Baraqiel's abilities and powers.

"My mother was the daughter of a priest at a shrine here in Japan," Akeno explained while meeting my gaze. "I was told that one day she came to the aid of my father, who had been badly wounded. That was how they met. I was the result of their union."

Akeno certainly had some complicated circumstances. She and Gasper were alike in that way, I guess. Suddenly, I was struck by the feeling that my own

family was too ordinary.

Hmm. Despite being the one who broached the subject, I wasn't sure how to respond.

I racked my brain trying to think of something to say, when Akeno's wings shot out of her back.

—.

Unlike the usual pair of matching demon wings, only one of them was bat-like, while the other was that of a fallen angel.

"I possess demon and fallen-angel wings alike." Akeno all but spat the words out in loathing as she grabbed on to the black fallen-angel wing with her hand. "I hate these feathers. So when I met Rias, I chose to become a demon. But the creature I became was something in the middle. Heh, perhaps this suits one like me, whose blood is tainted with corruption."

Akeno's every word dripped with self-derision. It hurt to see her talk about herself in such a way.

"...How do you feel now, Issei, to learn the truth? You hate fallen angels, don't you? They killed you once and Asia, too, and then they tried to destroy your hometown. How can you *not* despise them?"

Given the gravity of this conversation, I certainly wasn't about to lie. "Yes. I hate them."

At this, Akeno's expression turned sorrowful.

"I like you, though, Akeno," I appended

"—." She said nothing but looked a little surprised.

"I won't ask anything else about your birth. I only wanted to know whether it was true... Actually, even inquiring about that was pretty rude of me, and I kind of regret having done it in the first place. I'm sorry, really. I can be a bit insensitive sometimes."

"Not at all. Can you truly forgive me for having the blood of a fallen angel running through my veins? I may have been reborn as a demon, but I'm still part fallen angel... Maybe I got close to you because I wanted you to hate me..."

I'm despicable."

"That's got nothing to do with it. Ah, how should I put this? You're kind, Akeno. You're nice. Er, I definitely don't like fallen angels, but you're different, okay? Even if your father is a fallen angel, you're Akeno, the Occult Research Club's vice president, and I've never once thought poorly of you. I'm not going to despise you just because you've got a little fallen-angel blood in you. I still like you just as much as I did before, so there's nothing to worry about, right? Huh? Yeesh, what am I saying? Sorry, this is all coming out really clumsily..."

As I trailed off, I realized that Akeno was crying.

Uh-oh... Did I hurt her feelings? Wh-what am I supposed to do?! I brought her to tears!

As I floundered, Akeno broke out into a smile and wiped her eyes. "...That's not fair, Issei... If you keep talking like that...I really will fall in love with you..."

Huh? I didn't get the last part, but she said something wasn't fair, right? Did I upset her?

She stood up, brought her face near mine, and embraced me.

"A-Akeno...?" I stammered, not knowing what to do.

"I've decided," she whispered in my ear. "I've decided. Issei, do you like Rias?"

"Huh?! E-er, y-yes, of course I do!"

"...I thought so. She's serious, too, so I guess my becoming your lawful wife is out of the question. Asia still has a good shot at that, though... So first and second places are already taken..."

First place? Second place? Just what is she ranking?

My confusion must have been readily apparent. Akeno edged closer still, her mouth approaching my ear.

Hold on, Akeno! I won't be able to take it if you do something too stimulating!

"You know, Issei..."

"Wh-what?"

"I don't mind being your number three."

“...My number three?”

Wh-what does she mean? Does it have to do with the first and second places that she mentioned? I—I don’t get it!

“Yes, your number three. That might actually be a rather good position. There’s a certain danger to it, a bit like having an affair, wouldn’t you say? Hee-hee, Issei. You can play with me as much as you like. You can even rest your head on my thighs when the president isn’t around.”

I didn’t really follow everything, but I knew what a lap pillow was!

“Huh?! R-really?!”

Seriously?! Akeno’s lap pillow! I was getting excited at the mere thought of it.

“There’s no need to be formal with me, Issei.”

“Huh? B-but you’re my senior! It’d feel strange if we were too familiar.”

“...Just once will be enough. Whisper my name. Just my name, with passion. Please.”

Akeno’s glistening eyes were all but begging me. I swallowed deeply, steadied my heart, and whispered, “A-Akeno...”

“...I’m so happy. Issei...” Her voice wasn’t its usual dignified tone. For those four words, she was a normal high school girl.

Squeeze.

She hugged me again, tightly.

“Issei, please say my name like that whenever we’re alone,” Akeno cooed sweetly.

This was no longer Akeno Himejima, the vice president of the Occult Research Club. In that moment, she was a regular teenage girl. The sudden change had my brain doing cartwheels.

Sh-she really is cute! Hold on. I can feel her breasts pushing against me! Damn, they’re soft!

Seemingly effortlessly, Akeno guided me down to her legs, offering me the chance to rest my head on them! My third ever lap pillow! I was overflowing

with unspeakable emotion at this development!

Akeno patted my head. It felt different compared to when the prez did it.

“Hee-hee, I’ve robbed the president of one of her privileges. We’re up to no good, aren’t we? How does it feel, Issei?”

“A-awesome!”

Ah, her thighs are so soft. I could doze off to sleep here...

“Oh dear, this won’t do... If the president were to see us like this—”

“If the president were to see what? Issei?”

...

That voice...

My body went cold. I lifted myself to my feet and craned my neck toward the source of that sound. There, surrounded by the most threatening crimson aura imaginable, like a guardian deity at the gate of a Buddhist temple, stood my master.

I was done for!

My gut told me that she was going to murder me! I mean, no matter how you looked at her, she was clearly ready to wreak destruction!

“P-P-P-Prez?! Th-this isn’t...!”

Rias rested a hand on her forehead and let out a deep sigh. “I can’t let my guard down even for a moment... To think that you would accept a lap pillow from someone other than me...!”

Thump! Thud!

I could hear the anger in Rias’s footsteps as she drew close!

Squeeze!

Argh! It felt like she was pulling my cheek as hard as she possibly could!

Then, in a low, menacing tone, the prez asked, “The sword?”

“I-I’ve got it!”

"And Michael?"

"H-he left!"

"Then we're finished here. We're going home. Now!" The prez spun on her heels, turning to leave.

I wasted no time following suit, bowing my head in apology to Akeno. I was genuinely sorry.

"I wish *I* were the number one candidate, Rias. You don't know how jealous I am..."

I thought I heard Akeno whisper something behind me. She had returned to her usual manner of speaking.

I hadn't been able to make out all the words correctly, but the prez stopped for a split second, yanking my arm toward her as if to pull me away as quickly as possible.

—○●○—

Thump! Thud!

The prez marched down the steps leading into the shrine grounds, seething with rage.

I said nothing as I followed meekly behind her, trying only to make sure that she didn't leave me behind.

She absolutely hated it when another woman touched her servants. From what I could tell, she would tolerate Asia and Koneko doing so, but anyone else—Akeno included—was out of the question. Or maybe she couldn't stand Akeno touching her servants because she was her closest confidant? I couldn't put my finger on what exactly she was thinking.

Regardless, it was clear that from her point of view, what I had just done may have been tantamount to betrayal! What should I do?! I had to apologize! But how?! I had no idea! If the prez ended up hating me, I would die of shame!

I racked my brain, trying to come up with a solution, when she came to a sudden stop.

"...You know, Issei...," the prez began, without turning around.

What was she about to ask?! I was terrified! How should I respond?! I couldn't think of a proper response!

"Y-yes...," I answered nervously.

But I couldn't have expected what she said next: "Akeno... Well, Akeno, you see..."

"Yes?"

"Akeno is the club's vice president. But she's still Akeno..... And me?"

Huh...? What did she mean? Of course I thought of Akeno as Akeno, but what did that have to do with anything?

"You're the prez... Right?"

Is it just my imagination or did her shoulders slump when I said the word prez? I wondered.

"...That's right. I'm the club president. But I'm also Rias."

What's going on? Her tone is incredibly bleak. D-did I say something wrong?

I clearly hadn't given the prez the answer she had been hoping for. As such, in as normal a voice as I could muster, I stated, "Yes, you're the prez, my master, the high-class demon Rias Gremory... And, um, Prez?"

At this, she turned around to face me, her expression despondent. "...What was all that about your *number one candidate*...? Am I the only one who can't get close to you...?" she questioned.

The prez's voice wasn't filled with her usual elegant and graceful intonations but sounded more like that of a regular girl—the kind you might've found in any city or town.

Grigori.1

"Azazel, do I really have to go to the Leaders' Summit tomorrow?"

"Of course you do, Vali. You're the White Dragon Emperor."

"...Hey, Azazel. Will there really be no more wars after this?"

"You're always looking to fight. You're a classic case of someone whose soul

has been possessed by a dragon, aren't you? You won't live long like that."

"That's fine. I'm not interested in a long life. I just wish I hadn't been born in this dreary era. A world without God. I wanted to defeat Him myself."

"As expected of the White Dragon Emperor. What will you do then, once you've defeated all the strong opponents out there?"

"I'll die. I don't want to live in such a boring world."

Life.4

The Leaders' Summit Begins!

It was early morning. I was training with Gasper behind the old school building, trying to help him get a level of control over his time-stopping ability.

“Guh... I-Issei... I-I’m tired...,” he moaned, rubbing his eyes.

“Don’t give up now! We have to accomplish our dreams!” I cried back, hurling another ball his way.

“Issei, here’s another,” Asia said, handing me the next one. She had been keeping us company today.

It was our usual practice, in which I threw a ball up into the air, and Gasper was supposed to suspend it in time.

We had reached the point where he could successfully pull it off once every twenty throws. It didn’t sound like much, but that was a huge improvement over when we had first started. Persistence was key.

Somehow, I was managing to help him get the hang of his Sacred Gear. I had to. Otherwise, I would never be able to accomplish my own goal!

I wanted to have his time-stopping ability at my beck and call as soon as possible so that I could touch the girls’ bodies for as long as I pleased!

I had already made an inventory of all the young ladies at school. I had worked out the precise locations and times of day where we should stop time, and I’d formed a detailed schedule! It outlined when every captivating beauty would be all alone! Now all I needed was Gasper’s ability!

Incidentally, the girls I had set my sights on were all glamorous and famous idols here at Kuou Academy. If I was going to freeze someone in time, I wanted to choose the ones with the biggest breasts.

Ever since I had started training with Gasper, I found myself unable to sleep at

night. I couldn't stop fantasizing over the potential.

Asia and the prez sleeping with me every night was a separate matter, okay?

In truth, what I wanted most was to hug Rias from behind and squeeze her chest... But if I did that, Asia would get angry with me...

Since that incident with Akeno, the prez had ignored me until it was time for our club activities. She seemed to be brooding over something.

I was incredibly saddened at the notion that she might genuinely hate me now. The prez had seemingly returned to her usual self, but there was no denying that I had wounded her deeply.

Huh? I felt a sudden discomfort in my arm. It had stopped moving. By the look of it, Gasper had suspended it by mistake.

"Y-yelp! I-I'm so sorryyyyy!" he cried, collapsing down to the ground.

I let out a soft chuckle. "I told you not to worry about stuff like this, didn't I? It's okay—we're training here, and you still need to get a lot more experience. It's not like I love getting frozen, but you've been doing it less recently, so keep it up." I purposefully kept from reprimanding Gasper, to keep him from withdrawing again.

Gasper, however, wore a conflicted expression. "...I-I'm a failure...as a user of a Sacred Gear...and as a vampire... I'm always causing trouble for everyone... I—I wish I could control myself better... I-I'm just so useless..."

Ah, he's crying again.

He and Akeno were kind of alike. Both were born of two different species yet belonged to neither. It must have been an endless source of anxiety. Perhaps they even hated themselves...

Their shame was so deep-rooted that it was difficult to grasp fully, but I knew enough to understand that it was a constant burden that lurked in the backs of their minds.

"Gasper! I like you! Don't worry about it! Come at me! If you stop to think, you've already lost! It's easier for everyone, including me, to look at it that way!"

That was the best I could come up with, but it wasn't a lie. That was how I really thought. No matter what Akeno or Gasper were, I had no reason to dislike either of them.

Well, Gasper could be a bit fainthearted and indecisive sometimes, but I didn't hate him.

"We're members of the same club, and we all belong to the prez's Familia! So show me what you've got!" I declared proudly.

Admittedly, I couldn't think up any fancy words or witty speeches, but I would stand tall and have confidence in who I was. If I showed any sense of unease, Gasper would lose heart, too. I was his senior. I had to take the lead!

Seeing this display, Gasper wiped away his tears and rose to his feet. "Issei... I'll do my best...!"

"That's the spirit! Let's do a hundred more balls before class starts!"

"Okay. Th-then I'll just put my paper bag over my head to calm down—"

"Stop! Asia will cry if she sees you like that!"

Asia and Gasper both stared back at me with question marks practically floating above their heads.

Yep, there was no way that I was letting sweet Asia see Gasper wearing a paper bag! Maybe that was overprotective of me, but I didn't care.

"Do your best! Issei, Gasper!"

"Gasper! Your beautiful senior is cheering you on, so you've got to give it your all!"

"R-right! Thank you, Asiaaaaa!"

Thus, our practice session resumed.

Gasper! You can do this! I'll make sure of it! And then we can freeze girls together!

Yet I couldn't help but wonder. We needed a teacher. Someone who was an expert in Sacred Gears and knowledgeable about dragons, too...

An image of a black-winged man came to mind... But I shook my head,

clearing my thoughts.

No way! I chided myself. *He's the leader of our mortal enemies...* Still, I did believe him when he claimed to be an expert in both areas.

And we *would* be able to grow stronger if we had a teacher...

—○●○—

Every member of the Occult Research Club had assembled in the clubroom.

"Let's go, then," the prez said to us all.

The day of the Leaders' Summit had finally arrived.

The venue was the staff conference room in Kuou Academy's new school building. It was a holiday today, and the meeting was to be held late at night to prevent any disruptions.

It sounded like each of the three factions' representatives was already waiting in the new school building's lounge.

The academy and its surroundings were currently protected by a powerful barrier on the off chance that anyone tried to interrupt. However, that meant no one could leave until the conference was finished.

Outside the barrier, the forces of Heaven, the fallen angels, and the Demon King had each assembled a large number of troops around the school. According to Kiba, tensions were running high.

If something was to go wrong during the summit, or if the talks were to break down, this could become the opening battlefield in a new war...

I was terrified! What had we found ourselves caught in? The weight of reality still hadn't quite sunk in for me, but this was undoubtedly an important day. I had to make sure that I didn't slip up!

We all followed the prez out of the clubroom, when—

"P-President! E-everyooooone!"

—a voice came from the cardboard box that we had left behind in the room. Naturally, it was our shut-in vampire.

"Gasper, today's an important conference. We can't afford to risk you

freezing anyone with Sacred Gear, understand? You'll have to stay here," Rias said to him gently.

Indeed, if he suspended someone important, the shock could throw the tenuous situation into chaos.

"Gasper, be good, okay?" I instructed.

"Y-yes, Issei..."

"I've left my portable game console in the room, so you can have a go on that if you want or eat some of the snacks that I left. I've also left a paper bag inside, so if you get sad, you can use that, too."

"O-okaaaaay!"

I nodded to Gasper one last time and followed the prez outside.

"Issei, you're pretty good at taking care of people, huh?" Kiba whispered to me with a slight grin.

"Leave it to me. I know how to handle one junior," I declared confidently in a show of courage. Truthfully, though, I wasn't sure how long I could keep this up.

Regardless, I wanted to do everything that I could to help Gasper out.

—○●○—

Knock-knock!

The prez tapped at the door to the venue of the Leaders' Summit.

"Excuse me," she said, moving to turn the handle.

Inside was an elegant, luxurious table specially assembled for the meeting. A number of mostly familiar faces were seated around it, each of them stern and severe. The atmosphere was tense, the room deathly silent.

Gulp. I found myself swallowing involuntarily at the sight. Asia grabbed on to the hem of my shirt. I gave her hand a slight squeeze, hoping to reassure her.

On the demon side were Sirzechs and Leviathan. Oh, and Grayfia was waiting on them, standing beside a tea trolley.

On the angels' side were Michael and a girl I'd never seen before. Unlike Michael, she had brilliant, pure-white wings. She was an incredible beauty, too!

This was my first experience with the radiance of a hot angel!

On the fallen angels' side was Azazel, with his twelve black wings fully spread—and the Vanishing Dragon, Vali.

Azazel caught my gaze, his lips curling in an amused grin. He wasn't wearing his loose-fitting summer *yukata* today. Instead, he was wrapped in an elaborate black robe. That made sense—a *yukata* would hardly have been appropriate.

Sirzechs and Leviathan were both dressed in fancy attire, too.

"My sister and her *Familia*," Sirzechs announced, introducing us to the other leaders.

The prez offered her greetings.

"It was she and her *Familia* who took an active stand against Kokabiel when he attacked the other day," Sirzechs exposited.

"I've read the report. Let me express my thanks once more," Michael said.

The prez bowed her head again, entirely composed.

"Sorry about that. Our Kokabiel caused you a fair bit of trouble, huh?" Azazel remarked without a touch of guilt. Talk about an attitude.

The prez's mouth twitched at this comment.

"Please take a seat."

At Sirzechs's urging, Grayfia guided us to a set of chairs near the wall. The chairwoman was already there waiting.

Rias sat beside Sona. I was to take the next seat, followed by Akeno, Kiba, Asia, Xenovia, and Koneko.

When we were all ready, Sirzechs continued. "Now that we're all here, let's lay out the groundwork for the summit. Everyone here is aware, I assume, of that forbidden topic, the matter of the utmost concern to us all—the fact that God no longer exists?"

Huh? Does the chairwoman know that? I glanced her way, but she didn't seem particularly surprised. Had the prez, or perhaps her sister Leviathan, filled her in beforehand?

Grayfia also appeared unruffled.

“In that case, let us continue.”

With those words from Sirzechs, the Leaders’ Summit got underway.

The conference was proceeding smoothly.

“As such, we angels—” Michael began.

“Indeed, that might be a better alternative. At this rate, each of our three factions is on a path to destruction—” Sirzechs added.

“Well, there’s no need to really worry about it,” Azazel added. He would occasionally interject, causing a chill to fall over the room, but the governor of the fallen angels seemed to relish making things awkward.

The bigwigs sure liked to talk about complicated stuff. It was all a whole lot of mumbo jumbo to me. I hadn’t been a demon for long, and my knowledge was limited, so I couldn’t work out what they were all talking about.

Demons, angels, fallen angels—this kind of conversation might have been interesting to them, but I couldn’t follow it. Sure, I understood that it would probably be best to try to learn as much from listening to their discussions as I could, but my brain just couldn’t process it all...

Hmm... Seeing no other option, I glanced over at the prez’s breasts.

Ah, wonderful... They were so big. I already knew how they felt, and I was dying to learn of their taste... Unfortunately, taking that next step was pretty tough.

Having realized that I was staring at her chest, the prez broke out into a faint smile. She took my hand, gripping it tightly. She was trembling. Was it her nerves?

Given the magnitude of this meeting, that seemed the proper response. Even someone as strong and sure-footed as Rias would get tense in a room like this. Her brother was watching, and she was standing before representatives from each of the three factions. She couldn’t risk saying anything untoward. This was the kind of conference you read about in history books.

I squeezed Rias’s hand back.

Prez, if this will help you, then I'm happy to do it. I'll always be at your side.

"Oh dear, aren't we acting all lovey-dovey with the president, Issei?" Akeno whispered from my other side.

"Issei's hands fill me with courage. There's nothing more effective," Rias replied softly.

Prez! I'm honored! If it's courage you want, please take as much you need!

It was a relief to see that Rias and Akeno were getting along again. I patted my chest, relieved.

Things proceeded without incident until it was the prez's turn to speak.

"Well then, Rias. I think it's about time you told us about the incident the other day."

"As you wish, Lord Lucifer."

At Sirzechs's urging, the prez and Akeno rose to their feet and began to recount our battle against Kokabiel from beginning to end. The representatives from each of the three factions listened on.

Calmly and without embellishment, Rias provided an overview of the events in question. Her hands were still trembling slightly as she spoke, betraying her apprehension.

There was no telling what any of the three factions might do upon hearing what she had to say. No matter how fearless she might be, this situation had to be incredibly trying for her. After all, she was practically the same age as me—just a girl.

At the end of her report, the leaders of the three factions each responded differently. Some let out resigned sighs, others broke into troubled frowns, and a few erupted in laughter.

"That is everything that I, Rias Gremory, and my Familia are aware of," the prez concluded.

"Good work. Please take your seat," Sirzechs instructed.

Rias was quick to do just that.

You did it, Prez!

“Thanks, Rias!” Leviathan added cheerfully with a wink.

“Well then, Azazel. Now that we have the whole story, I would like to hear the governor of the fallen angels’ opinion.”

At Sirzechs’s inquiry, all eyes fell to Azazel.

The fallen angel’s lips twisted in a dauntless grin as he responded, “This incident was wholly the result of the actions of Kokabiel, an executive in our central organization, Grigori. He acted independently of the other leaders. As such, I had the White Dragon Emperor here take care of him. Our organization has since court-martialed him and delivered his sentence. He’s to be frozen in Cocytus, the lowest strata of hell, for all eternity. He’s never coming out again. But you already know all that from the reports we delivered, yes? That’s all there is to it.”

Michael let out a sigh. “That’s one of the least convincing explanations I’ve ever heard... Am I correct in thinking that you do not seek to cause any major upset between our groups?”

“Yeah, I’m not interested in any more wars. That demon girl just told you what he said about me.”

Indeed, as Azazel had pointed out, Kokabiel had no end of complaints about his boss. He thought Azazel was too passive and disinterested in battle, that all he cared about were Sacred Gears.

Next, it was Sirzechs’s turn to ask Azazel a question. “I would like to ask you one thing: Why have you been gathering Sacred Gear users these past decades? At first, I assumed you were amassing humans to bolster your forces. I expected them to be your soldiers in a new war on Heaven and Hell.”

“Indeed. No matter how much time passed, there was never any sign that you were preparing for hostilities. To be frank, I was quite alarmed when I heard that you had the Vanishing Dragon at your beck and call,” Michael added. It seemed that he shared Sirzechs’s concerns.

Hearing what the other two leaders thought of him, Azazel flashed them both a cheeky grin. “It’s all for my Sacred Gear research. If you’re worried about it,

how about I send you some of my materials? I assure you my studies aren't for warfare. I'm not interested in fighting anymore. I'm content with the world as it is. I've even urged my people not to get involved in human politics. We aren't planning to meddle in religious stuff or demon businesses... But I guess I'm still the least trustworthy of all of us, eh?"

"Indeed."

"I'm afraid so."

"Exactly."

Sirzechs, Michael, and Leviathan (winking) were all in agreement there. What had he done to be considered so dubious?

Azazel picked at his ears with a finger, seemingly unconcerned. "Tch. I thought you two would be easier to deal with than God and your old Lucifer, but you're no better. I don't wanna have to sneak around just to get a little research done, got it? Hmm, all right, then. How about we make peace? That's all you've ever wanted, right? Angels and demons alike?"

—.

Peace. Hold on. That is what the other two factions were after, right?

Azazel's offer left the room in astonished silence for a while.

The prez and the chairwoman looked legitimately surprised. Azazel's words must have been wholly unexpected. I doubt anyone had thought a fallen angel would suggest such a thing.

I didn't get all the nitty-gritty of it, but if one of the big bosses was willing to propose some kind of nonaggression agreement, then I was all for it.

Am I witnessing history in the making here?

Michael, though startled, smiled. "Yes, I had intended to make the same offer to our demon and Grigori friends. If relations between our three groups continue as they have been, the world will suffer. This may sound strange coming from me, the leader of Heaven, but those responsible for the Great War—God and the original Demon Kings—are long gone. It is time we moved on."

Azazel burst out into laughter at the archangel's comments. "Ha! That's rich!"

And from the mouth of stubborn old Michael no less! I remember when you were all ‘God this, God that!’”

“...It’s true—we’ve suffered a terrible loss, but there is nothing to be gained by chasing after things that no longer exist. It is our duty to guide humanity. All members of the seraphim agree on this: The most important thing to us now is to watch over the children of God, to protect them, and to guide them.”

“Hey, hey, you’ll become a fallen angel, too, if you keep saying stuff like that! But I guess you’ve taken over the whole system, huh? Things sound pretty lenient—way better than when we fell.”

Much of their conversation was still beyond me, but Azazel’s remark had the cadence of a higher-dimension joke.

“The same applies for us,” Sirzechs admitted. “For demons to survive without our original Demon Kings, we must continue to adapt. We don’t desire war. If we were to find ourselves embroiled in another conflict, it would mean the end of demonkind.”

Azazel nodded. “Yeah. Another long battle would be the end of all three of us. Not to mention the effect it would have on the human world. We could end up obliterating it. No, we can’t afford another war.” His attitude had been flippant and lighthearted just a moment ago, but now his tone was grave. “Did you all think life would lack meaning without God? Did you think it would be doomed to decline? Sorry to break it to you, but it hasn’t. I’m alive and well right now, and so are you all.” He spread his arms out wide before adding, “The world keeps on spinning even without God.”

Although they left a vague, indescribable feeling, those words resonated with me.

Even if God was gone, I was still alive. Most other people didn’t seem affected by the absence, either. Out of all those confusing discussions that I had overheard today, it was Azazel’s words that resonated with me the most powerfully.

After that, the meeting moved on to what each faction was to do with their fighting forces. They covered their current military potential, how each group would respond to the others, and the future power dynamics.

There was less tension than there had been during the earlier topics.

“I suppose that’s about it,” Sirzechs stated.

All seated around the table let out tired sighs. The most critical portions of the summit were seemingly at an end.

While only an hour had passed, it had felt like forever. I was no good at this kind of thing. I much preferred to stay active.

Grayfia began to serve tea, when Michael turned to me and said, “Now that our deliberations are proceeding favorably and we are all on an even footing, perhaps it’s time we talked about the matter of the Red Dragon Emperor?”

Everyone turned to me. It sure got me feeling nervous fast!

Ah, I guess he remembers my request from back at the shrine.

I had wanted to ask him something... I glanced at Asia, reaffirming my resolve. Before we had come here today, I had checked with her in advance to make sure she was comfortable.

“Asia. Can I ask the archangel Michael about you?” I had inquired.

She had initially been surprised by this but agreed nonetheless. “If you want to, I don’t mind. I trust you, Issei,” Asia had answered with a broad smile.

“Why did you banish Asia?” I demanded.

All present were bewildered. Evidently, no one had expected me to ask something like that now.

Sorry, everyone. But I’ve wanted to put this to an angel for a while.

Asia had been such a faithful servant of God, so why had the Church thrown her out?

More than the fallen angels who murdered her, I felt the blame lay with the angels who had set it all in motion.

“I can only offer my deepest apologies...,” Michael responded, his tone sincere. “With the Lord gone, only the system that governs divine protection, mercy, and miracles remains. It was a network designed to perform acts of God on His behalf. The Lord created the system and used it to bestow miracles

throughout the world. Every exorcism and holy object taps into that creation.”

That made sense. It was that system that hurt demons whenever we touched a cross or the like.

Michael’s explanation prompted another question from me. “So what you’re saying...is that once God died...something went wrong with the network...?”

Michael nodded. “To tell you the truth, the system is extremely difficult for anyone other than the Lord to control. I have been leading all the other seraphim in keeping it operating, and yet...compared to when God was alive and well, we aren’t able to provide as many blessings and acts of mercy as He could. Regrettably, there are only so many people whom we can save.”

Come to think of it, Kokabiel had said something similar—that with God dead, a great many people crying out for salvation were left behind.

“Due to that, we need to ensure that individuals who may exert too strong an influence over the system are not involved with the Church. For example, some Sacred Gears can affect the system—such as Asia Argento’s Twilight Healing. Your Boosted Gear and the Divine Dividing are similar in that respect.”

“So the problem with Asia’s Sacred Gear is that it can heal demons and fallen angels?” I asked.

Michael nodded again. “Yes. If someone in the Church were to possess a Sacred Gear capable of healing demons and fallen angels, it would risk influencing the faith of those around them. That faith is the wellspring of life for those of us who dwell in Heaven. The Twilight Healing can influence the system, so it was vilified. As for other individuals who might upset things—”

“You mean people who know the truth about God, right?” Xenovia interrupted.

“Yes, that is correct, Xenovia. Losing you was a great blow, but if knowledge of the Lord’s demise were to spread beyond the top seraphim, that would also adversely affect the system. I’m terribly sorry. We had no option but to banish you and Asia Argento as heretics.” Michael stopped there, bowing his head to the two of them.

Whoa, the big boss of the angels is apologizing directly to Asia and Xenovia!

The two of them stared back at Michael in surprise. I wouldn't have known how to react in this situation, either.

Xenovia, however, quickly regained her composure and, with a smile, shook her head. "No, Lord Michael, please don't apologize. Despite what happened, the Church raised me since I was a child. I did think it was unreasonable at the time, but it helps now that I know the motive."

"The fact that you have been made a demon is our sin as well."

"It's fine... I admit I have some regrets, but my time with the Church denied me many things that now fill my life with color. The other members of the congregation might be offended to hear this...but I'm happy."

Xenovia... I never knew you felt that way about joining us...

She might have been a bit too forward and ignorant of the ways of the world, but she had a good heart.

Asia raised a hand to speak. "Lord Michael, I'm happy, too, now. I've met so many people who mean a great deal to me. And I'm honored to have met and spoken with you. I've always admired you!"

Michael appeared relieved. "I'm sorry—you honor me with your forgiveness. I will leave the Durendal with you, Xenovia. Since you now belong to the Familia of Sirzechs's sister, I can rest confident that it won't be used for ill."

Asia jumped when she realized that Azazel was staring right at her.

"I've also heard that one of my people tricked this girl and then killed her."

"That's right; she's already died once," I said flatly. "Not only did a fallen angel slay me but Asia, too! You might not have known what was going on, but that fallen angel who admired you so much killed her in *your* name!"



I knew I had no right to call out Azazel at the summit. I had only been allowed to speak because of Michael's intervention. However, this was an incredibly sore subject for me.

"Calm down, Issei," Rias urged from the seat beside me.

Sorry, Prez. When it comes to this particular issue, I can't hold back.

"It's true. We fallen angels have been eliminating Sacred Gear users who could pose a danger to us. But wouldn't any other group do the same? If you know someone's gonna be a threat in the future, you eliminate them beforehand, no? That's why you got killed. A talentless human could end up running wild with the power of the Red Dragon Emperor, and that would affect everyone—not just fallen angels."

"It's because of one of your followers that I'm a demon," I stated.

"Is that a problem? At least you can say that those around you are happy about it."

Azazel had a point. The prez, Sirzechs, and the members of my Familia were undoubtedly glad that I had become a demon. And as Azazel said, there was no telling what I might have done with Ddraig's power had I remained human. Even now that I was a demon, I still couldn't control it properly, so it wasn't hard to imagine some huge disaster if I tried to use my Sacred Gear as a human.

"Su-sure, *that* part's not so bad! Everyone's been so nice to me, and I know they treat me well. But still!"

"Even if I apologized, it's too late to change anything," Azazel remarked. "So how about I give you something to satisfy your cravings?"

Huh? What is that supposed to mean?

"Let's see what the others have to say? We're not the only ones with the power to influence the world, Mr. Invincible Dragon. Vali, let's start with you. What do you desire?" Azazel inquired.

Vali broke into a wide grin. "So long as I can fight strong opponents, I'm good."

What kind of response is that? Does this guy seriously live to battle? He

sounded like he would be a real nuisance to those around him.

Azazel returned his attention to me. “What about you, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor?”

That was a good question... I scratched my cheek before answering. “To be honest, I don’t really know. This is all pretty confusing for me. I’m just doing everything I can to look after my junior, another demon, so I don’t really have many feelings about the wider world right now.”

“That may be so, but you *are* one of those with the power to shape the future. A refusal to choose makes things difficult for the other leaders and me to determine courses of action,” Azazel replied, troubled. “Issei Hyoudou, I’ll break this down for you in frightening detail. If we all go to war again, you’ll be forced to take part. And if that happens, you won’t be able to sleep with Rias Gremory.”

“—!”

Wh-what...did he just say...?

“If we all make peace, then you won’t have to fight. Your only concerns will be continuing your bloodline and working out how to pass the time in your prosperity. You could spend it making babies with Rias Gremory every single day if you want. How’s that? You follow me now? If we go to war, you won’t be getting any sex. If we have peace, you can do it as you want. Which are you gonna choose?”

For the first time, Azazel was speaking my language! At last, I understood! Peace would let me sleep with the prez for as long as I wanted!

Wait, am I even in a position to do that in the first place? Bah, it doesn’t matter. So long as there’s no war, I’ll have the time to work up to it!

“Let’s give peace a chance! Yeah! Peace! Nothing beats it! Except maybe sleeping with the prez!”

I laid my desire bare. It didn’t bother me that the prez was sitting right next to me. Her face was so red that it was practically giving off steam.

“Oh boy. Issei, you realize that Sirzechs is here, too, right?” Kiba said.

Ah... Right.

The Demon King let out a light chuckle.

This wasn't good. I had to hurry and come up with an excuse! Something serious!

"Er... I'm pretty stupid, and like ninety percent of what you've all been saying has gone right over my head. But what I mean is, if the power I possess is really that strong, then I'll use it to help my friends. The prez, Asia, Akeno, and the other members, too—whenever they're in trouble, I'll protect them...! I mean, I'm pretty weak, but I'll still do everything I can! Even if it means risking my own life, I'll stick by their sides until—"

As I was giving voice to my feelings, a familiar sensation struck me.

My whole body stopped.

Yep, this was what happened whenever Gasper used his time-stopping ability.

—○●○—

"...Huh?"

When I returned to my senses, the staff meeting room was ever so slightly different.

Michael was staring out the window, and Sirzechs and Grayfia looked to be discussing something serious.

"Ah, the Red Dragon Emperor's back," Azazel observed.

"Wh-what happened?" I asked.

Glancing around, I realized that the room was divided into those still frozen and others who weren't. Sirzechs, Leviathan, Grayfia, Michael, Azazel, and the Vanishing Dragon looked okay.

As for our club members...

"The only members of my Familia able to move are myself, Issei, Yuuto, and Xenovia."

Prez! Thank goodness she's all right!

On the other hand, Asia, Koneko, and the chairwoman were all frozen. Even

Akeno had been suspended.

“It would appear that you recovered quickly thanks to the power of the Red Dragon Emperor. Yuuto has his Holy Demon Sword, and Xenovia invoked her Durendal just before it happened.”

Just as the prez explained, Xenovia was wielding her Holy Sword, complete with its incredibly dangerous aura. It looked like she was in the middle of deactivating the weapon and returning it to the alternate dimension where she stowed it.

“My body has learned to recognize the approach of time freezing. Something told me I might be able to use the Durendal as a shield to protect myself, and I was right,” Xenovia stated.

Hold on—she can instinctively recognize that time-stopping ability?! Her physical specs are terrifying...

“Fine, fine. But, Prez, what happened?”

“It looks like—”

“A terrorist attack,” Azazel interjected.

A what?! I thought, dumbfounded. In the middle of this important summit, on which the future of the whole world is at stake?!

“Why don’t you look outside?” Azazel gestured to the window with his chin.

I stepped toward the glass and saw—

Wha—?! Sudden flashes of light were spreading out before my eyes! Huh?! What was going on?! The school building felt like it was shaking, too...

“We’re under fire. No matter when or where, there are always those opposed to peace, those who will do anything to interfere with progress.” Azazel pointed outside.

Peering around, I spied many humanoid figures floating through the air over the school grounds. On closer inspection, they were dressed in black, sorcerer-like robes, firing magic bullet-like attacks our way.

Fortunately, their attacks didn’t seem to be reaching the new school building.

That said, their barrage showed no sign of stopping. So *they* were the terrorists? And their target...had to be this Leaders' Summit.

Before I realized it, Azazel was standing beside me, his lips twisted in a wry grin. "They must be those so-called magicians. They use a kind of magic developed by the sorcerer Merlin Ambrosius, who studied demonic powers... Based on their show of strength, I'm guessing they're each on the level of a mid-ranking demon."

So every single one of those guys is stronger than me?! How is that fair?!

"Basically, they're humans armed with skills similar to you demons. Of course, they also have a few tricks that would be impossible for your kind, too. There's nothing worse than a human armed with a Sacred Gear who picks up a bit of magic. Thankfully, they've no hope of reaching us in here. Sirzechs, Michael, and I erected the strongest barrier imaginable around this school. Unfortunately, it's also something of a prison at this point."

The governor of the fallen angels sure was a wellspring of information. That was probably to be expected of the guy at the top, but he also had a way of breaking it down into easily digestible chunks for people like me.

"Th-then why did a time-stopping attack hit us just now?"

"Most likely, they used a Sacred Gear or some magic trick to transfer power to your half-breed vampire kid and make his Sacred Gear go into its Balance Breaker mode. It's likely temporary, but to think that it can reach us in here, where he can't even see us... What remarkable potential. Still, it wasn't enough to stop those of us at the top of the ladder."

Seriously?! So those magician freaks kidnapped Gasper from his room in the old school building and are using his ability?!

"But how did they transfer power to him? Are there things like my Boosted Gear that can do that?"

"The Boosted Gear combines an almost inexhaustible doubling ability with the function to transfer power. There are other stand-alone strength-boosting and power-swapping Sacred Gears out there, too. Longinuses are unique in that they combine two functions. It's that fusion of abilities that don't normally mix

that makes them so powerful. One of the pet theories among the Grigori is that they're the result of a bug in God's Sacred Gear program, that your Longinuses are all the product of a series of errors. Ah, but I'm rambling. To answer your question, yes, there are other ways to transfer energy as you do."

Thanks for the easy-to-follow explanation! Wait, that's not important! They're using Gasper for their attack!

The prez sidled up to me. "To think that they've turned Gasper into a weapon and that they've activated him from within the old school building... Just where did they get that information...? And to do something like this during such an important conference...?! I've never been this insulted in my life!"

Whoa! Rias's body is exuding a raging crimson aura! S-scary stuff!

"In case you hadn't realized, the forces massed outside the school—fallen angels, angels, demons—all appear to be frozen, too. My word, Rias Gremory, your Familia is far too overpowered." Azazel placed a hand on the prez's shoulder, only for her to roughly brush it off. His gesture rejected, Azazel sighed before extending a hand toward the window.

At his command, countless spears of light appeared outside and rained down on the magicians!

The terrorists deployed a defensive barrier, but the luminous shafts tore right through it, obliterating them in a flash!

Whoa! Awesooooome!

In an instant, the courtyard was filled with corpses! It was utter carnage! I mean, the governor was seriously strong! What kind of monster was he to wipe them all out in a single blow?! It didn't even look like he put any real effort into it!

"A barrier surrounds this school, and yet they've managed to teleport inside. That can only mean someone has opened a magic circle within, one connected to the outside. Anyway, if they increase the Forbidden Balor View's effect, they might even be able to stop one of us. They're trying to keep us pinned down with this onslaught, likely to buy time while they prepare to stop time again and destroy the building. They're clearly willing to gamble a huge number of their

troops on this.”

Outside, more magic circles appeared from every direction, each glowing ominously. More magicians almost identical to the group that Azazel had just mowed down poured forth.

How are there that many of them?!

“They’re just repeating the same old trick. We knock them down, and more pop up. Still, they’ve got pretty good timing for a bunch of terrorists, to say nothing of their strategy. I wouldn’t be surprised if they’ve got someone on the inside. I guess we’ve been betrayed, eh?” Azazel suggested casually.

A traitor? Please don’t scare me like that! I thought, stunned.

“Is there any way out of here?” I asked.

Azazel shook his head. “We can’t run, not unless we lower the barrier around the school. But if we do, there’s no telling the level of destruction that will cause the human world. I’m gonna wait for their top dog to show his face. If we stay here long enough, they might wear themselves thin and force his hand. I’d do anything to know who’s pulling the strings here, but if we throw caution to the wind, we might be giving them exactly what they want.”

H-he seems so relaxed. Right, so we just need to bide our time until the real opponent shows up!

“In other words, we leaders can’t move until we’ve made the necessary preparations. Nonetheless, our first objective must be to retrieve Gasper from the old school building, which the terrorists seem to be using as their base of operations,” Sirzechs stated.

Gasper was back to being our greatest liability. If any of the faction leaders got stopped in time, we might not be able to defend against this attack!

“Brother, I’ll go. Gasper is my servant. He’s my responsibility, so I’ll be the one to retrieve him,” the prez declared, her eyes unwavering.

Sirzechs chuckled. “I thought you would say that. I know you too well. But how will you even get close to the building? The schoolyard is overflowing with magicians, and they’re blocking us from using any transportation magic of our

own."

"I've been keeping my last Rook piece safe in the old school building—in the clubroom," the prez replied.

"I see. Castling? They're no doubt expecting us to try to retrieve your Bishop, but that could catch them by surprise. It may put you a few moves ahead of them."

Rias had told me about this once before. Castling was a technique that allowed a King and a Rook to swap places at a moment's notice. It was one of the special moves available to pieces in a Rating Game.

In other words, the prez could instantly teleport right into the clubroom!

If she jumped there instantaneously, she wouldn't have to go outside! She would be able to penetrate the enemy's defenses and catch them by surprise! We might even force whoever was behind this to show their face!

"All right. But it will be dangerous to go alone. Grayfia, can you use my power to transfer my sister's Castling technique to anyone else?"

"Hmm... I won't be able to use anything more than a simple ritual here, but it should be possible to send one other person with her."

"Rias, who do you want to—?"

"Sirzechs, I'll go!" I declared, raising my hand.

Gasper was my junior. I wanted to help the prez bring him back!

Sirzechs eyed me for a second before shifting to the governor of the fallen angels. "Azazel, rumor has it that you've been researching how to freely manipulate Sacred Gears for a certain length of time, no?"

"Ah, yeah. What of it?"

"I wonder whether you can use that to control the Red Dragon Emperor?"

"..." Azazel fell silent at this question. Nonetheless, the governor of the fallen angels reached into his pocket and retrieved—

"Hey, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor," he called out to me.

"M-my name's Issei Hyoudou!"

“Fine, Issei Hyoudou. Take this,” Azazel said, throwing something my way.

I caught them in my hand—a pair of large rings. There were several layers of strange, unfamiliar characters engraved into them.

Accessories?

Azazel, no doubt recognizing my confusion, explained, “Those bracelets have the power to control a Sacred Gear, at least to a degree. Slap one of them on your half-breed vampire. That’ll help get his abilities under control.”

“But there are two of them...?”

If one was for Gasper, then the other one—

“The other’s for you. You haven’t mastered the power of the Welsh Dragon yet, right? In that case, stick it on. So long as you don’t overdo it, you should be able to use your Balance Breaker without suffering any unpleasant side effects. The bracelet will be consumed instead.”

S-seriously?! If I put this accessory on, I can use my Balance Breaker?

“However, it will also temporarily break any seal placed over you. You did have one placed over your Pawn powers, correct?”

Why does he know that?! It was true that Rias had used all eight of her Pawn pieces to recruit me, but as I wasn’t strong enough to cope with that level of power, she had placed a seal over me to keep those abilities in check.

“This is just speculation on my part, but in terms of the distribution of your pieces, I’m guessing Ddraig needed seven of them and you one? No, maybe seven-point-nine to zero-point-one? Oh, and you’ll need to use your Promotion ability to harness Ddraig’s true strength. Either way, breaking the seal means unleashing his full potential. Are you okay with that, Rias Gremory?” Azazel asked.

The prez merely narrowed her eyes without responding.

“Use the ring as a last resort. You can’t control how much of your strength it uses, so you’ll just exhaust yourself if you use it before you need to. Your Scale Mail will drain you extremely quickly,” Azazel appended.

Right. Given that I didn’t know what might happen, it was best to be ready to

transform at a moment's notice, if necessary.

"Listen up," Azazel continued as if to reinforce his point. "You might be a demon, but at your current level, you aren't much better than a human. It doesn't matter how powerful a Sacred Gear is if its vessel is so unremarkable. You might be able to wave Ddraig's powers around against an inexperienced opponent, but against anyone who knows how your abilities work, you're a pushover at best. *You* are the greatest weakness of your Sacred Gear. That is the source of your problems. If you don't learn to get a handle on that power, it will be the death of you."

"I—I get it."

Yep, I understood what Azazel was saying painfully well. Still, hearing it aloud stung... I knew that I wasn't the amazing one. That was Ddraig.

Azazel had driven that home in an incredibly easy to understand way. That was the mark of a good teacher, right?

"Azazel, just how much research have you done on Sacred Gears?" Michael asked with a sigh.

The governor flashed the archangel a dauntless grin. "Do you have a problem with my hobbies? It isn't like God's still here to explain anything to us. It's best we have someone who knows what they're talking about, no? Rumor has it there are things you don't know, too."

"The problem is that *you're* the one who is studying them..."

As the two of them bickered with each other, I quietly rejoiced over the bracelets.

...With this, I can help the prez...!

Grayfia had placed her fingers on Rias's forehead, transmitting the knowledge of how to use the necessary special ritual. "This will only take a moment, Lady Rias."

"Please be quick, Grayfia."

As we got ready to go, Azazel and the White Dragon Emperor were discussing something.

“Vali.”

“What, Azazel?”

“Go outside and draw the enemy’s attention. We might be able to disrupt their strategy if the White Dragon Emperor enters the fray—perhaps even draw them out.”

“Surely they already know I’m here.”

“Even so, they doubtlessly aren’t expecting the Red Dragon Emperor to use a Castling move to slip behind their lines. At the very least, you should be able to distract them.”

“Wouldn’t it be faster just to obliterate the old school building while the terrorists and that half-breed vampire who caused all this are still inside?” Vali inquired as though it was painfully obvious.

How can that bastard even suggest something so excessive?!

“Don’t. Not when we’re trying to secure peace. For now, let’s call that our plan B. Keep in mind that saving someone close to the Demon King could prove useful to us in the future.”

“Understood,” Vali assented with a drawn-out breath. A pair of wings of light unfolded from his back.

Gah! Are those his Sacred Gear?

“Balance Break.”

“Vanishing Dragon: Balance Breaker!” a voice cried out. Not a moment later, Vali’s whole body was enveloped in a brilliant white aura!

When the glow subsided, he was encased in a full-body set of white armor, a mask closing around his head with a click.

So this is his Balance Breaker...? He activated it so easily... Why can’t I?

Whenever I used my Balance Breaker, I had to offer Ddraig something of my own in return.

Vali glanced my way, then opened the window to the meeting room and leaped outside.

No sooner had he done so than—

Boooooooooom!

—there was a blast of air! When I glanced across the schoolyard, I saw that the armored White Dragon Emperor had tramped down a swarm of magicians.

Vali plunged straight into the enemy forces like a one-man army.

He was strong. Incredibly strong. Even I could see that. He all but danced through the air, paying no heed to the projectiles that the magicians were firing at him in a massive wave that coursed across the school grounds.

Unable to do anything to stop him, the magicians fell one after another. However, it wasn't long until a new wave of magic circles formed, summoning up reinforcements. Seriously, there was no end in sight!

"Azazel, I'd like to pick up on what you said a moment ago," Sirzechs stated.

"Yeah, what?"

"What are you trying to accomplish, gathering so many Sacred Gears? You've been recruiting Longinus users, too, I hear. What need is there for god-killing weapons when there is no God?"

Azazel shook his head at this question. "I'm getting ready."

"That has an ominous ring to it, especially given that you claim to disavow war," Michael remarked.

"It is the honest truth that I seek no conflict with either of you. No, I'm not about to start anything... But we fallen angels have to be able to defend ourselves. Not that I'm expecting either of you to attack us."

"Then who?" Michael pressed.

"The Khaos Brigade."

"...The Khaos Brigade?" Sirzechs raised an eyebrow. It looked like he was as unfamiliar with the name as I was.

"I've only learned their name and background recently, but their suspicious activities caught the attention of my lieutenant governor Shemhazai a while back. They're apparently gathering a whole army of dangerous members from

the three main factions. Some of them are even armed with Sacred Gears capable of going into Balance Breaker mode. I've even identified a few who have Longinuses."

"And their goal?" Michael asked.

"Destruction and disarray. Simple, right? They despise peace above all else. They're terrorists. The most extreme kind of evil."

So are they the ones responsible for this attack? I wondered.

"They've got a dragon leading them. One mightier and more vicious than the Welsh Dragon and Vanishing Dragon."

"—!"

The room fell into mute shock at this revelation.

Huh? Seriously?

"...I see. So he's finally making a move. The Ouroboros Dragon, Ophis. The Infinite Dragon God. Even God Himself feared that one and for good reason... The being who has reigned supreme since the beginning of the world..." Sirzechs murmured, his expression grim.

Who? I thought. Everyone's faces looked hopeless. Were they really that terrible? What was so special about that Ouroboros-whatever-their-name-was? Were they the one Vali had said was the strongest?

As I stared at everyone's unsettled reactions, an unfamiliar voice echoed in my ears. "Yes, Ophis is the leader of the Khaos Brigade."

Huh? Before I had a chance to realize what was happening, a magic circle formed on the conference room floor. *Another demon?!*

I had never even seen the design of that array before! Admittedly, I didn't know a whole lot about demon society, but still!

"I see. So he's made his move. The puppet master behind all this..." Sirzechs clicked his tongue in frustration.

I really feel like I'm the only one out of the loop here!

"Grayfia, send Rias and Issei on their way!"

“Understood!”

Grayfia urged the prez and me into a corner and conjured a small magic circle just large enough for two people.

“Good luck, Lady Rias.”

“W-wait! Grayfia?! Brother?!”

Rias’s protests fell on deaf ears, and the two of us were enveloped in a burst of light.

The Khaos Brigade

As soon as the president and Issei disappeared into the magic circle, I—Yuuto Kiba—witnessed an unbelievable development.

The array that had appeared in the center of the conference room took even the three factions’ leaders by surprise.

More specifically, Azazel was laughing, while Sirzechs looked as if he had just bitten down on something rotten.

“That’s Leviathan’s insignia,” the Demon King murmured.

What...? I couldn’t believe my ears. At the very least, the circle wasn’t Serafall Leviathan’s.

Then whose is it? I wondered.

“I’ve seen this in the Vatican Library... That’s the insignia of the original Leviathan,” Xenovia whispered, pointing at the magic circle.

...So the rumors were true. She really did survive.

A woman, garbed in a dress complete with a revealing neckline and a deep slit down its side, emerged from the magic circle.

“Greetings, Lord Sirzechs, present Demon King,” she greeted boldly.

“You are a descendant of the original Leviathan. Katerea Leviathan. What is the meaning of this?”

I knew it. Her forbearer is one of the original Demon Kings!

Everyone had heard the story. When the original Four Great Demon Kings had been destroyed, it became necessary to elect a new generation to succeed them. However, the offspring of the vanquished leaders had pushed to continue the war to the bitter end.

The pro-peace forces, realizing that their fighting potential was all but exhausted, had used the last of their power to drive those hard-liner holdouts and their remaining followers to a lonely corner of the underworld.

Shortly after that, a new system of governance had been established. And it had taken the form of the present Four Great Demon Kings.

“Most of us loyal to the old ways have decided to join forces with the Khaos Brigade,” declared Katerea Leviathan. Her words were condescending, as though she were trying to pick a fight.

How could they? So they've come here to—

“So basically, a feud between demons has ballooned into an all-out battle? Seems like everyone's dealing with rebels these days,” Azazel scoffed, as if this had nothing at all to do with him.

“Katerea, am I to interpret those words literally?”

“Of course, Sirzechs. This is us taking the fight to you.”

“So it's a coup d'état?”

It certainly looked that way. A rebellion led by the descendants of the old regime rising up against the present leaders. Declaring hostilities at such a critical moment was terrible enough, but that Leviathan's direct descendant had joined forces with a terrorist group was almost unthinkable.

“...Why, Katerea?”

“Sirzechs, we've arrived at the opposite conclusion to your so-called Leaders' Summit today. In our view, if God and the previous Demon Kings are dead, then it is time for this world to similarly make a break with the past.”

They had embarked on this rebellion in full knowledge of God's death and the intentions of the three major powers to make peace.

“Don't tell me that monster Ophis saw that far into the future? I find that

hard to believe, even for one such as them.”

Katerea let out a long sigh at Azazel’s question. “Ophis serves merely as a symbol of our strength, a beacon to gather our forces. With their power, we will destroy the world and remake it anew. But we will be the ones to rule it.”

Such an extreme endgame almost felt absurd. The magicians causing havoc outside must have been supporting Katerea’s cause, too.

If Azazel was telling the truth, her supporters consisted of demons who believed in the old regime and rebellious angels and fallen angels.

...Do they really hate the prospect of peace that much?

Sirzechs flashed Katerea a sardonic smile. “...So you’re building an army out of rebellious angels, fallen angels, and demons and expect to use that to conquer a new world. And the Ouroboros Ophis is the one that’s united you all.”

The most powerful of dragons, feared even by God Himself...

According to legend, they were stronger than both the Welsh Dragon and the Vanishing Dragon; a deity-like entity possessed of unlimited power.

“Katerea! Why are you doing this?” Serafall pleaded.

Katerea fixed her with a hateful glare. “Serafall, how dare *you*, who robbed me of my birthright, speak to *me*! I am the true heir to the Leviathan name! I am Leviathan’s blood! I am the one who deserved to be crowned Demon King!”

“Katerea... I—I...!”

“You needn’t fret, Serafall. I’m going to kill you right here and take the Demon King Leviathan title for myself. Ophis will become the God of our new world. We will design a new system, new laws, a new ideal. Michael, Azazel, Sirzechs—your time is at an end.”

Sirzechs’s, Serafall’s, and Michael’s expressions all clouded at this declaration.

Azazel, however, found it quite amusing. His face contorted in a wicked grin.

“Bah...! Bwa-ha-ha!”

“What’s so funny, Azazel?” Katerea demanded, furious.

“Ha-ha-ha! You and all your followers...honestly believe that you can change

the world?"

"Of course. It's the noblest thing to do, Azazel. This planet—"

"Is corrupt? Filled with idiot humans? Decaying? Open your eyes. I'd say we're doing pretty well—flourishing even!" The fallen angel couldn't contain his mirth.

Katerea's brow furrowed. "I see the years have done little to change you, Azazel. You possess so much power, and yet you're satisfied with this imperfect world..."

"Look, I'm just gonna come out and say it. What you think you're trying to do is pretty much beyond cliché at this point. Why is it always people like you that build up their strength? Talk about a pain in the ass. Spawn of Leviathan, even you have to realize that you're talking like a manga villain that's about to get axed, right?"

"Enough with your taunts!" Katerea dismissed. Incensed, she began to burn with an aura of powerful magic as she floated up into the air.

"Sirzechs, Michael, I'll take care of this. Don't butt in, got it?"

Azazel rose to his feet—and began to emit a dim aura of his own, filled with fighting fervor.

"...I don't suppose you have any intention of surrendering, Katerea?" Sirzechs asked, giving her one last chance.

She shook her head. "Not at all, Sirzechs. You were a good Demon King but not the best. That's why we need to replace you."

"I see. I'm sorry to hear that."

That being all the confirmation Azazel needed, he pointed his hand to the window.

Boom!

The whole area exploded outward in a brilliant burst of light! What an attack!

Azazel unfolded his twelve wings, their feathers blacker than night.

"A spawn of the former Demon King Leviathan, Beast of the Apocalypse. Not a

bad opponent. Katerea Leviathan, how about we have ourselves a little mock Armageddon?”

Katerea met Azazel’s challenge with a sneer. “My thoughts exactly, Governor!”

Boom!

The two of them launched themselves out of the room with explosive force, soaring up into the distant sky above the school grounds.

They were both making full use of their tremendous power. I wasn’t even close to being in the same league.

It was my job to offer support in situations like this, but what was I supposed to do? *Should I protect the Demon King? Or go after the president?*

While I was lost in thought, Sirzechs turned to me. “Yuuto Kiba. Michael and I will continue to strengthen the barrier that protects the school. With Azazel and Katerea rampaging out there, the damage could be quite extreme. We want to refrain from disturbing the outside world as much as possible. I’m sorry to ask this of you, but can you take care of the magicians outside until Grayfia finishes analyzing their magic teleportation circles?”

Defeat the magicians. Those were our orders—a direct command from the Demon King no less. This was the height of honor!

“Yes, sir.”

“Thank you. My sister is lucky to have you as her Knight. Wield that Balance Breaker for her and your friends.”

“I will! Xenovia, let’s go!”

“Yeah, I’m Rias Gremory’s Knight, too. Two blades are better than one, right? Let’s do this.”

The two of us exchanged nods before dashing into the schoolyard, swords at the ready.

—○●○—

“Hyargh!”

My Holy Demon Sword slashed clean through the magician’s defensive

barrier, felling one more opponent.

How many does this make? I had already taken down a good number of them, but there was always another would-be assassin appearing from a magic circle.

“There’s no end to this.”

Shiiiiing!

Waves of energy sped forth with each slash of Xenovia’s Durendal, gouging large swathes through the schoolyard left and right. The strokes of her blade sent enemies flying.

Xenovia, please be more careful around the school buildings! Is the Durendal that hard to control?

Bang! Burst! Boooooooooom!

A deafening roar and a blinding burst of light filled the sky. I glanced up and saw that Azazel and Katerea Leviathan were still engaged in a fierce duel.

Azazel was sending volleys of spears of light, each longer than he was tall, hurling toward Katerea. She, meanwhile, activated several layers of defensive barriers, blocking his attacks.

Their back-and-forth had ravaged the school grounds. If Sirzechs and the others hadn’t been defending the new school building, it doubtlessly would have been rubble already.

We were lucky that such a strong defensive barrier surrounded the academy. Without it, the surrounding homes would have been eradicated.

A cold chill ran down my spine every time Azazel’s or Katerea’s superpowered attacks made contact with that barrier.

It looked to me like Azazel had the advantage in terms of raw strength, but Katerea was holding her own better than I would have expected.

Typically, she would’ve had a Familia of servants fighting alongside her, but she and the other followers of the old regime rejected the modern Evil Pieces system.

She probably didn’t have a Queen to advise her or a Knight to guard against

enemies.

As I watched, she pulled a small vial from her pocket and gulped down its contents.

A small black serpent?

Boom!

Immediately, the air shook violently, sending waves of raw energy coursing over Kuou Academy.

The power emanating from Katerea's body swelled, producing an eerie, ominous aura. She launched a foreboding mass toward Sirzechs and Serafall... Just what was that snake thing she had imbibed...?

Azazel hurled another volley of spears of light at Katerea, but she brushed them all aside with an effortless sweep of her arm. This was unbelievable! Azazel, the governor of the fallen angels, was supposed to be one of the most powerful individuals at the conference—possibly even the strongest!

And yet an even more astonishing development soon unfolded before my eyes.

In the air, Azazel, still fighting Katerea, was struck down by an unexpected blow from his flank...

Life.5

The Welsh Dragon and the Vanishing Dragon!

When I opened my eyes, we were in the clubroom.

It had been a rushed, haphazard jump, but we'd made it. And yet—

“—! How did you teleport in here?!”

“Demon scum!”

The room was filled with a group of magicians dressed in spooky robes!

Come onnnnn! We seriously teleported right in the middle of the enemy camp!

“P-President! I-Issei!”

It was Gasper! I spun around—and there he was, my cross-dressing junior! He was tied to a chair, and his head was covered in a paper bag! Or had he put that there himself...?

The prez let out a sigh of relief to see that he was safe. “Gasper! Thank goodness. I was so worried.”

“President... I—I don’t want to do this anymore...,” he managed before breaking down into tears. “I...I’d rather be dead. Please, President, Issei... Kill me... All because of these eyes... I’ll never make any friends... All I ever do...is cause problems... I’m a coward...”

He bawled his eyes out. Having been captured and used by the enemy, he was convinced that he had brought us nothing but trouble.

The prez flashed him a warm smile. “Don’t be silly. I won’t abandon you. Do you remember what I said, when I reincarnated you as a member of my Familia? That now that you were reborn, I expected you to live for me—and also to find your own happiness, too.”

Gasper, however, shook his head at those words. “...I couldn’t find anything.

All I ever do is make a nuisance of myself... I don't deserve to live..."

"You're a member of my Familia, Gasper. You're my servant. I won't abandon you so easily. Especially not now that I've finally been permitted to let you go outside!"

"That's right, Gasper! The prez and I aren't going to quit on you!"

Even if he couldn't use his Sacred Gear properly, he was just going to have to accept it!

Slam!

Directly in front of me, a female magician viciously struck Gasper and removed his bag before yanking his head back by his hair and flashing me a cold grin.

Now that I had time to look carefully, I noticed all the magicians here were women. Did that make them witches? I had a thing for witches, too!

"Fools. Talk about ridiculous, treating such a dangerous half-breed vampire as if he were a normal person. Your old guard had it right: You Gremorys might be strong, but you're beyond stupid for letting your compassion get the better of you." The witch stared across at Rias with contempt. "Maybe this wretch would have been worth more to you if you had bothered to wipe his mind and use him as the tool he is? If you had thrown him into the den of the fallen angels and overloaded his Sacred Gear, you might have been able to take them all out, their leaders included, in one blow. But you didn't. Why not? Don't tell me you actually expect to *befriend* a creature like this?"

"Why you—" I moved to strike the magician down for that remark, but the prez restrained me.

Why hold me back, Prez?! Th-that damn magician doesn't know a thing about you, but she's standing there spewing insult after insult! I can't let that slide! I don't care if she's a girl. There are things you can get away with saying and others you can't, dammit!

"I...treasure my servants," Rias responded calmly.

Come on, Prez—it's okay to get angry in a situation like this! There's no point

trying to be civil with this kind of fanatic!

Whoosh! Bang!

The magician fired a small mass of energy straight at the prez, partly blowing away her uniform and revealing a small patch of pure-white skin... I could make out the edge of her breast.

"You're an impudent one, aren't you? I don't like you, Gremory. What gives you the right to be so beautiful? You're a *demon*." The magician's tone was rife with jealousy. She pressed a knife up against Gasper's neck. "Move, and the kid dies. Let's have some fun, shall we?"

The magician lifted her free hand and loosed another blast of magic! The prez made no move to dodge!

Dammit! I threw myself in front of her!

Bang!

The projectile hit me just below my neck. It hurt like hell, but I withstood it. Still, what gave that crazy woman the right to launch an attack aimed straight for the prez's face?! No way was I going to let that slide. The prez's face was off-limits!

I was seething with rage, but Rias stepped out from behind me and said, "Gasper, I want you to keep causing me trouble. Lots and lots of trouble. I'm going to scold you again and again. And then I'll comfort you! Because I'll never abandon you!"

P-Prez! Ugh, I know that wasn't meant for me, but I'm still touched! Ah, we really do have the best master in the world! All right, Gasper! You heard her! So what do you have to say now?

"P-President... I... I...!" Yet again, he started crying his eyes out. But this time, I realized, they weren't tears of fear or sadness—but joy.

Now it was my turn to lift his spirits!

"Gaspeeeeer!" I called out, my voice echoing across the room.

Gasper! I'm going to put my feelings into words and hurl them your way!

“Don’t run away! Don’t be afraid! Don’t cry! We’re all your friends! That goes for me! And the prez! And Akeno! And Asia! And Kiba and Koneko and Xenovia! None of us will ever abandon you! And we’ll never leave you! Gaspeeeeer!”

I raised my left arm into the air.

“Boosted Gear!”

“*Boost!*”

A red gauntlet enveloped my forearm.

Now it was time for a Promotion!

“Prez! I’m Promoting to a Queen!”

Rias nodded, and with that, my energy level surged! There was only one thing left to do!

“Ascalon!”

“*Blade!*”

A new voice echoed through the room, and the tip of my latest weapon burst out from the end of my Sacred Gear—Ascalon!

The witches stood on guard, ready to defend against me. However, I aimed the point of my blade not at them but my other hand.

Slice.

I temporarily suppressed the sword’s power and slashed the palm of my right hand with its blade. *Ouch.* Blood seeped from the cut.

“Issei...?” Rias watched on in apparent confusion.

Don’t worry, Prez. This is for Gasper!

“But you know what, Gasper? You won’t get anywhere if you don’t walk on your own two feet! A super-beautiful girl just encouraged you, so stand! Gaspeeeeer!”

With that, I thrust my left arm and the blood-soaked Ascalon toward him!

Before the magicians could react, blood flew from the edge of the blade onto his cheek.

“Drink up! That’s my blood, filled with ultimate dragon strength! So show us what kind of man you are!”

Gasper nodded, his eyes filled with determination. He licked at the blood dripping down his face. The second his tongue made contact with it, the atmosphere in the room underwent a sudden shift.

An eerie, inexplicable chill ran through my body. I glanced across at the chair where my junior was tied down, and yet—

He’s gone! Why isn’t he in the chair?! Did he disappear?!

—all that was left were the ropes that had bound him. The witches stood in stupefied shock, scanning around the room in panic, when—

Tch-tch-tch.

—there came a strange noise. I glanced up at the ceiling, only to see more bats than I could possibly count gathering above. The red-eyed creatures quickly descended on the witches in a fell swarm.

“Argh! He’s transformed, that damn vampire!”

“Die!”

Spouting insults all the while, the women hurled magic through the room. However, something reached out from the floor, knocking them off-balance and pulling them to the ground.

Black arms had appeared out of the magicians’ shadows!

“Could vampires always do that?!”

“Take this!”

Boom!

The witches fired another volley of projectiles at the ebony limbs, but the things didn’t seem affected, merely dispersing and re-forming. At that moment, however, the bats up above descended upon the women, clawing and biting at their bodies.

“—?! Are they trying to suck our blood?!”

“No! They’re absorbing our magic, too!”

The magicians were clearly struggling. They were entirely at the mercy of the bats and shadow arms.

Is that...Gasper? One of his vampire powers?

“Issei, this is one of Gasper’s latent abilities. Drinking your blood must have unleashed it,” the prez explained.

So it really *was* him!

“Gah! You’re not leaving us much choice!”

The magicians pointed their arms this way! They were aiming for Rias and me!

Whoosh!

A wide wave of magic projectiles came flying toward us, when—

—they stopped in midair. Every one of them.

“It’s no use. I can see your every move,” Gasper said from some unseen place.

The bats’ eyes were all glowing crimson. Ah, so that was how he was using his Sacred Gear!

Every single one of those magic projectiles had been suspended in the air! So my blood had given him the ability to control his powers!

“I’ll stop you all!”

All at once, the eyes of the bats flashed, freezing all the witches.

“Issei, now! You’re up!”

“Leave it to me!”

I dashed around, tapping each of the magicians on the shoulder! Then, striking a cool pose in the center of the room, I cried out: “Dress Break!”

Bwa-ha-ha! The clothes of those magicians frozen in time, even their underwear, came flying right off! A feast of naked feminine flesh unfolded before my eyes! I could see and touch as much as I wanted!

I could feel a nosebleed coming on as I smiled triumphantly.

“Gasper, we’re invincible when we work as a team!”

“You’re right!”

My junior would freeze our enemies, and I would strip their clothes from their bodies. We were all-powerful! We were undefeatable!

With this, I can finally make my dream come—

Slam.

“I don’t think so,” the prez scolded, whapping me on the back of the head.

—○●○—

“By the way, Ddraig, what exactly *is* Ophis?” I asked of the dragon inside me as we tied the magicians up and shoved them into the magic circle in the center of the room.

“*Ophis. I haven’t heard that name in a long time.*”

Yeah, so who are they? I thought back.

“*The most powerful of dragons.*”

Does that mean they’re stronger than you and the Vanishing Dragon?

“*Yeah. Stronger and mightier than God. Ophis was the only being that even God wouldn’t dare cross. A true monster, possessed of unlimited power.*”

“Seriously?! I had no idea there were dragons stronger than you and Albion!”

“*He’s the only one who exceeds us. In this world, that is.*”

Ah, well, that’s... I didn’t know quite how to put it. Something that ridiculously overpowered was the terrorist mastermind?

The prez activated the magic circle, sending the magicians straight to the authorities in the underworld. She had explained that they would be arrested and imprisoned. She had also taken a moment to change into a fresh uniform.

We wanted to keep those witches alive as witnesses to use against the terrorist organization. That said, while we were tying those women up with the ropes... Well, I couldn’t help but imagine all kinds of dirty things. Heh...

“Issei, is your hand okay?” Gasper asked.

He had already returned to his normal form. Now that he was wearing the ring-shaped item that Azazel had given us, his Sacred Gear hopefully wouldn’t

go out of control on us.

"Ah, I'm used to scrapes like this. I've been impaled through the stomach a few times by fallen angels, after all."

"Whaaaaat?! R-really...? I-Issei, that's so violent..." Gasper replied, his voice trembling.

R-really? Looking back, I suppose I had been caught up in some pretty gruesome stuff since becoming a demon. I got to enjoy a happy life together with Rias, though, so I didn't mind that much. However, some part of me wondered if I was careening toward an early death.

Nah, that's just my imagination talking. No use thinking all negative like that.

"Anyway, how do you feel now that you've drunk my blood?" I asked.

"Good. My powers increased for a bit...but they're back to normal now."

So there was a time limit? Regardless, it sounded like he would be able to put up a good fight so long as I offered him a little blood whenever he needed it.

"All right. That's all of them dispatched! Now then, Issei, Gasper! Let's go back and help the Demon Kings!" the prez declared.

Our mission had been a success.

"Okay!" Gasper and I responded in unison, following behind her.

We left the room and began making our way to the main entrance of the old school building. Gasper clung to my back the whole time.

First Asia, now him.

It felt like a lot of people had been holding on to me recently. I would need to do something to help improve Gasper's reclusive nature.

No sooner had I thought up an idea than we reached the entrance.

Boooooooooom!

Something crashed hard into the ground in front of us! Once the dust settled, we saw—

"...Tch. So it's betrayal, is it, Vali?"

—it was the governor of the fallen angels. He was visibly injured.

“That’s right, Azazel.”

Amid dazzling radiance, the White Emperor Dragon descended. He was with a woman I didn’t recognize.

“The second you decided to make peace, we took steps to abduct your half-vampire and initiate our attack. The plan had always been for the White Dragon Emperor to join me when the time was right. Even eliminating a single leader of one of the three factions should be enough to bring an end to these peace talks.”

Whoa! Talk about a sexy outfit! Her clothes all but exposed her breasts for all to see! Through the slit in her dress, I could practically see all the way up her legs! She was so wonderfully erotic!

“What is this indecent gaze I feel? Don’t tell me this child is the Red Dragon Emperor. Vali?” the woman asked.

“Yeah, I’m afraid so. Pathetic, huh?” answered the White Dragon Emperor.

“Who are you calling pathetic?! I’m doing my best to live a decent life! Anyway, why are you attacking Azazel?! And who’s that woman?!” I replied.

The woman stared at me with pity, as if I was a blithering idiot. “I see. Truly a sorry wretch. Vali. Kill him.”

“I’ll be honest, I’m not sure if I should. I wasn’t expecting him to be here.”

Huh? What’s going on? I didn’t understand.

“...I must be losing my touch, letting someone so close turn on me like this...,” Azazel said in self-derision.

S-so, the White Dragon Emperor is working with the terrorists? And this woman is one of them? Vali retracted his mask into his helmet, revealing his face.

“How long, Vali? What pushed you over the edge?” Azazel questioned.

“They reached out to me while I was taking Kokabiel back to headquarters. Sorry, Azazel. Their vision of the future sounds more interesting.”

“So does the Vanishing Dragon now serve Ophis?”

“No, it’s more like a collaboration. They offered me an enticing proposal—fighting against Asgard. I’ve been looking for new ways to test my power. How could I refuse? Azazel, you would never wage war against Valhalla, against the Aesir, would you? You don’t like conflict.”

“I may have told you to become strong, but I also warned you to refrain from putting the world in jeopardy.”

“That has nothing to do with this. I just want to keep fighting until the end of time.”

“...I see. Perhaps I always knew that you would one day leave my side. Ever since we first met, you’ve always wanted to prove yourself against the strong.”

The woman sneered. “We have the White Dragon Emperor to thank for laying the groundwork and gathering the necessary information for this attack. It wasn’t like you, letting him run loose despite knowing his true nature. You’ve sown the seeds of your own destruction.”

With a backward glance at Azazel, Vali slammed his fist against his chest and declared, “My real name is Vali Lucifer.”

...Wh-what...? Lucifer?

“I am a descendant of the deceased, original Demon King Lucifer, through my father, the grandson of the old Demon King, and my human mother. Although a circumstance of birth, I owe my Sacred Gear to my human side. Or perhaps it was fate for the Vanishing Dragon to wind up in the hands of a true heir to the Lucifer name? Heh, as if.”

With that, a pair of demon wings burst out of Vali’s back along with his suit’s wings of light.

H-he’s a demon? The White Dragon Emperor...? A-and a Lucifer no less...? The original Demon King?!

“Impossible... It can’t be...” The prez’s expression betrayed her disbelief.

Azazel, however, confirmed it. “It sounds like a joke, but it’s true. He’ll likely become the strongest White Dragon Emperor ever—past, present, and future.”

I could hardly believe my ears... He was going to be the most powerful...?

Keeping track of all these incomprehensible developments was starting to get tricky!

I mean, I already had two individuals of mixed blood close by—Akeno and Gasper. And now Vali, too?

“Prepare yourself, Azazel,” the woman jeered once more.

Just who was this person? She wasn’t even looking my way, but I could still sense her ferocity.

“...Tch. That massive aura—a gift from Ophis?”

The woman chuckled at Azazel’s question. “Oh yes, the dragon of unlimited power. They granted me this small sample for the sake of our mission. Thanks to Ophis, I’m strong enough to fight you now. I’ll also have a chance to destroy Sirzechs and Michael as well. They were foolish leaders. Just like you.”

“...Yeah, I’ll take that. Maybe I am a fool. I wouldn’t be able to do a damn thing without Shemhazai. I’m just a Sacred Gear fanatic. But you don’t really think Sirzechs and Michael are that foolish, do you? At the very least, they’re head and shoulders better than you.”

The woman’s face contorted in rage. “The ramblings of a doddering old fool! Fine then, I’ll finish you here and now! The governor of the fallen angels’ death will be the first step toward building a better world!”

Though the woman’s voice was ripe with conviction, Azazel looked curiously pleased.

He reached into his pocket, retrieving what looked like a small dagger.

The woman stared back dubiously. “That’s—”

“...I’m more than just obsessed with Sacred Gears,” he said, pointing the tip of the blade toward her. “I’ve even been known to forge a few replicas myself. Well, most of them are junk, but there’s no helping that. Really, making these Sacred Gears is about the only praiseworthy thing God ever did. Unfortunately, He didn’t think them through very well. He had to go and kick the bucket without fixing those bugs that we call Longinuses and Balance Breakers, never

mind how they upset any sense of fair play. But then again, that's part of what makes them so interesting."

"Don't worry, there's no way Sacred Gears will survive our new world. Society will still function without them. We'll wake that old Norse god Odin sooner or later, and then the world will be changed forever!" the woman boasted with a self-assured grin.

"The more I hear, the more I want to puke," Azazel spat back. "Valhalla?! The Aesir?! As if I'm going to let Odin snatch everything! But more importantly, if you're thinking of taking away my life's pleasure, I'll *erase* you."

Azazel's dagger began to change shape! Small pieces separated from either side, and a brilliant light spilled from within.

"—! I-impossible! Azazel, you can't...?!" the woman exclaimed, only now realizing what was happening.

Then the voice of the governor of the fallen angels echoed forcefully. "Balance Breaker...!"

The area around him was engulfed in a sudden flash. When the light faded, a figure garbed in a full-body suit of golden armor was hovering in his place.

The radiant figure resembled a dragon. Twelve ebony wings unfolded from its back, black features spiraling around him.

The metallic dragon flapped its wings.

Whoa, talk about cool!

Azazel had outfitted himself with something like my Scale Mail! Not only that, but he was grasping a spear of light in his hands!

"This is my masterpiece, the Downfall Dragon Spear, an artificial Sacred Gear born from my research into the Vanishing Dragon and similar weapons. In its pseudo-Balance Breaker state, I call it the Downfall Dragon: Another Armor."

I could sense the presence of a dragon in that armor. It was no ordinary weapon! Azazel was now emanating one of the most intense auras I had ever felt. Kokabiel hadn't even come close!

Whoaaaaa! Was there some bargain sale on Balance Breakers recently? I

thought these things were supposed to be rare?!

“No, that isn’t a true Balance Breaker.”

What’s that supposed to mean, Ddraig?

“My guess is that he’s pushed the Sacred Gear into a burst mode and has forced it to activate. He’s basically overloading it. It will probably fall apart by the time this battle is over. Maybe his artificial Sacred Gears are supposed to be disposable?”

A disposable Sacred Gear?!

Even if Ddraig was right, that didn’t explain how it was emitting such amazing power. Still, Azazel’s research into Sacred Gears must have been much more comprehensive than I had thought if he could pull this kind of thing off.

So long as its user didn’t die, a real Sacred Gear would regenerate no matter how many times it was broken in battle.

On the other hand, if a Sacred Gear was ripped away from its host via a special ritual, that could prove fatal.

The jewel embedded in the back of my gauntlet, along with the other gems built into my Balance Breaker armor, served various functions and could be restored if destroyed. No doubt the White Dragon Emperor’s were the same.

“Ha-ha-ha! Impressive, Azazel! Yep, incredible!” Vali chuckled.

How could he laugh in the face of such an opponent?! Was he completely fearless?! Or insane?!

Azazel turned his attention to the White Dragon Emperor. “Vali, I’d love to fight you, too... But why don’t you go play along with the Red Dragon Emperor?”

He’s kidding...right? Entertaining him is the last thing I want!

“It will be more fun fighting you, Azazel,” Vali said.

Then do that! I’m not interested in settling our rivalry right now!

“...You based that on a dragon’s powers, no?” the woman asked Azazel.

“Oh yes, I’ve sealed the Gigantis Dragon, the Golden Dragon Lord Fafnir,

inside this artificial Sacred Gear. I based the design on the Welsh Dragon and the Vanishing Dragon. It's been a success so far."

He modeled that on the Boosted Gear? And who was that dragon he mentioned supposed to be...?

"One of the Five Great Dragon Kings. Azazel mentioned another one of them, Vritra, the other day, right? The others are the Chaos Karma Dragon Tiamat, the Mischievous Dragon Yulong, and the Sleeping Dragon Midgardsormr. But Vritra was defeated long ago and sealed away somewhere. From what Azazel just said, it sounds like Fafnir met a similar fate. There were originally six Dragon Kings."

Ddraig's explanation was helpful but a bit too much for me. There was no way I could wrap my head around that much all at once.

I had heard the name Tiamat somewhere once before. I didn't have the faintest clue who the others were.

"You might get to meet them one day. Tiamat doesn't like me very much, just so you know."

That sure sounded foreboding. I was getting pretty tired of all these damn dragons!

Ah, I guess that must be why Michael gave me a dragon-slaying sword?

"Azazel! Even though you already have that much power, you're still relying on a Sacred Gear?!"

"Katerea, you said yourself that you had made a pact with the Ouroboros Dragon."

"...Our reports suggested your research hadn't reached this level yet..."

"Oh? I'm guessing your people got their hands on some of my findings, then? But that won't help you. Only Shemhazai and I have come close to realizing the truth."

The woman clicked her tongue as a blue-black aura flared to life around her. *"I am of the blood of the great Leviathan—the true Leviathan! I am Katerea Leviathan! And I will not be defeated by an accursed fallen angel like you!"* she

howled.

Hold on—she's Leviathan? Well, there was no doubting that she was closer to what I had imagined than Serafall.

Azazel beckoned to the woman—to Katerea. “Come on, then.”

“Don’t you dare mock me!” she cried, leaping toward him at breakneck speed, her aura raging.

Slash!

It only took a split second. She jumped within Azazel’s reach, and he struck back with his spear.

Splat!

Crimson blood gushed from Katerea’s body. She fell to her knees, her strength drained.

Looking around carefully, I spied a fissure extending from where she had fallen into the distance. The aftershock of Azazel’s attack had left a deep cleft in the earth. Talk about power! The whole thing had only taken a moment.

“I won’t be defeated!” Katerea’s hand transformed into a long tentacle and wrapped itself around Azazel’s left arm.

Then a strange pattern took shape along her body!

“A self-destruct technique!” the prez exclaimed.

Seriously?! Does that woman want to die that badly?!

Azazel tried to pull himself free, but the tentacle showed no sign of loosening.

“Azazel! There’s no point trying to kill me now! If I die now that we’re connected, you’ll activate a spell so powerful it will take you with me!”

“—. You’re willing to sacrifice yourself to take me down? That’s a cheap tactic, but I’ll admit it’s effective.”

“Issei, Gasper! Fall back! You don’t want to get caught in that blast!”

“But, Prez! What about Azazel?”

“If he’s worth anything as the leader of his group, he’ll think of something!”

There's no use in any of us dying!"

This was bad! I wouldn't mind dying with the prez—heck, that would be a beautiful way to go—but I didn't want to perish *here*, and I certainly didn't want it to happen because I got caught up in the cross fire of someone else's fight!

We put some distance between ourselves and Azazel and Katerea. Even so, the prez still deployed several layers of defensive barriers to meet the explosion.

"Argh!" Gasper screamed.

I turned his way, only to find some sort of spell-like pattern etched into his eyes.

"Sorry, but I'm sealing that one away. I don't want you being a problem."

Vali!

"But you know, if an opponent knows about that ability and how it's activated, it isn't all that special. There are more ways than you can imagine to disable a person's vision. It's quite an exploitable power. A few illusions could turn his Sacred Gear against his allies."

The White Dragon bastard was hovering in the air! But he was right. Gasper, like me, had a considerable number of weaknesses. Our Sacred Gears were incredible, but we sure weren't!

Azazel, you were right. It doesn't matter how strong a Sacred Gear is if its host isn't good enough!

Heck, I couldn't even fly through the air yet! Dammit! I wasn't too confident in Gasper, either. We both lacked sufficient training!

We watched Azazel from a distance. He still hadn't been able to break free from Katerea's self-destruction tentacle. From the look of it, no matter how he tried to attack it with his spear, he couldn't do any damage.

"That tentacle is fueled by my own life force. You can't break it," Katerea explained with a confident smirk.

At that, Azazel gave up on trying to cut through it, shrugging his shoulders. Instead—

Slash!

—the tentacle, along with Azazel’s left arm, came flying right off!

Whoa! Seriously?!

Blood spurted from the stub of the severed limb. The arm that Azazel had sliced off crumbled into dust.

“—?! Your own arm?!” Katerea exclaimed in disbelief but not before Azazel threw his spear of light clean through her stomach.

“An arm’s nothing.”

Whoosh.

Katerea’s body exploded into a cloud of ash that blew away with the breeze. Such tremendous force must have eradicated her in one blow. After all, light was poison to demons. By the look of it, there were no exceptions to that rule.

Cling!

Azazel’s armor deactivated. He didn’t seem to have any regrets about having lost a limb.

“Tsk. Is this the limit of an artificial Sacred Gear? I suppose there’s still room for improvement... But so long as the jewel at its heart is still intact, I can rebuild it. You’re going to have to stick around with me a while longer, Gigantis Dragon Fafnir,” Azazel said, lightly kissing the small gleaming object that he was holding in his hand.

That was the end of the woman who called herself Leviathan. All that was left now was—

Vali descended from the night sky.

“Impressive, Azazel. I expected no less. But your armor’s gone now. I guess you’ve still got a few things left to research.”

The fallen angel turned to the White Dragon Emperor. “Now then, Vali. How do you want to do this? Are you still raring to fight me? Even without my armor, one arm is all I need to take care of you.” Azazel summoned another spear of light, pointing it to the Vanishing Dragon.

Even injured, he's still going to fight? He's definitely got guts. I'll give him that!

After a glance toward the fallen angel, Vali lobbed a question to me. "Fate can be cruel at times, don't you think?"

What's he getting at now?

"On the one hand, I, a descendant from the original Demon King, have a legendary dragon inside me. And then there's you, a mere human, but also possessed of a legendary dragon. Such a thing can only be called a dark twist of destiny. Our dragons may be bitter rivals of close to equal standing, but the gulf between their hosts is immense."

D-does he mean me? I pointed to myself.

Vali nodded. "I've looked into you. Your father is just an average businessman. Your mother is a regular housewife with a part-time job. Your parents' bloodlines are perfectly ordinary. None of your ancestors seem to have had any dealings with magicians or any other powerful entities, let alone angels or demons. You're about as unremarkable as they come. You yourself were just an ordinary high schooler up until you got reborn as a demon. You're nothing without your Boosted Gear." Vali scoffed condescendingly. "You're so boring that when I learned what you are, I was more amused than disappointed. *Ah, so this is my competition? I give up,* I thought. Even if your parents had been lowly magicians, it would've been something... That's it! How does a quest for revenge sound?"

I honestly didn't have a clue what he was blabbering about. None of it made any sense.

What I understood was that Vali, unlike Akeno or Gasper, didn't despise his heritage.

If anything, it was probably a source of pride for him. Some suffered due to the circumstances of their birth, and others found reasons to rejoice. The world was a whole lot more complicated than my brain could process.

However, his next statement was unmistakably clear.

"How about I kill your parents? That will make things a bit more interesting for you, no? If they were to die at my hand, maybe then you'll be able to devote

yourself to your solemn destiny? Yeah, that sounds good. At this rate, they'll just have average lives; they'll grow old just like everyone else does, and then they'll kick the bucket. Going out with a purpose will be a lot better than some wasted existence, right? What do you think?"

...

I had no words for what I was feeling, no way to express these emotions that I had never felt before. Something inexpressible was building up inside me, about to overflow. There was a lot of uncertainty churning within my mind, but one confident phrase rose from the doubt.

"I'm going to kill you, you son of a bitch," I whispered under my breath. At that moment, I finally understood—so this was what bloodlust felt like. "... You're right, my dad is an everyday salaryman who works from morning to night to provide for his family. And my mom is a common housewife who cooks for us all three times a day... But they've made me into the person I am now. As far as I'm concerned, they're the best parents in the world."

Why the hell would I let this bastard kill them? And for such a stupid reason? They had nothing at all to do with him!

"...Kill them? My mom and dad? Why do they have to die for your purposes? You think you're important? You think you've got a grand destiny? Get real!"

I couldn't forgive this man, Vali Lucifer.

"I won't let you."

I would never forgive him!

"I'll be damned if I let you hurt them!"

"Welsh Dragon: Overbooster!"

Responding to my rage, my Sacred Gear exploded with a powerful, fiery red aura.

Thanks to Azazel's ring, I had no trouble activating the Boosted Gear's Scale Mail.

A symbol that looked like a countdown appeared on the gemstone embedded in my left arm. If it was a timer, then I had less than fifteen minutes. Still, it was

better than the last time, when I'd only had ten seconds.

"Look, Albion. Issei Hyoudou's power has increased exponentially. It looks like anger is his trigger... Heh, that's some impressive dragon power."

The simpler and stronger an emotion, the better it is for fueling a Sacred Gear. Issei Hyoudou's anger is absolute and directed at you. Only a straightforward user can draw out a dragon's power with this level of efficiency.

"I see. So I guess in that respect, at least, he's more akin to a dragon than I am?"

As if I cared about what that bastard and his dragon were talking about! The only thing that mattered was that he would bring pain and misery to those around me if I didn't act now!

"But you aren't half as clever as you think you are, Issei Hyoudou! You don't have the intelligence to control Ddraig! The fact that you've been matched with him is practically a crime!"

"Quit blabbering! No one cares or understands!"

"Ha! Your inability to comprehend is what makes you so stupid!"

Venting my aura from the exhaust outlets on the back of my armor, I launched myself full throttle toward Vali! He immediately covered his face with his mask. Looks like he was going to get the fight he wanted. This was only my second time using my Balance Breaker, but I couldn't afford to screw up like I had in my fight against Riser!

Unfortunately, Vali deftly dodged my oncoming tackle, but I was hardly finished!

I corrected my stance in midair and dived toward him once again. Then I lashed out with the embedded Ascalon and launched into repeated sword strikes!

However, no matter how many times I swung with the blade, I couldn't land a single blow. Vali simply kept dodging them in one flash after another.

"Vali, that sword is a dragon slayer. Even a single blow will deal considerable

damage.”

“Oh? Is that right, Albion? It hardly matters if he can’t hit me!”

Just as my damned opponent said, I wasn’t even good enough to graze him. I should have spent more timing training with Kiba! I would have to get serious about learning how to fight when I had the chance!

In my current Balance Breaker state, I was temporarily capable of doubling my strength whenever and as frequently as I liked.

“However, each time you use it, it will drain both your stamina and demon power. The more you boost, the more you’ll lose. That is the nature of my Balance Breaker ability. Even in a temporary state, you’re wasting your strength just by maintaining your armor. And no matter how impressive it is, that bracelet Azazel gave you has its limits, too. With every use, the length of time you can spend in your Balance Breaker state decreases.”

Even if all I do is hold my ground, I’m still losing stamina? Vali looks fine!

“Your counterpart seems to have tremendous demon power. The White Dragon Emperor similarly eats into his host’s energy after every activation, but if his host has a large capacity to begin with, he’ll have more time than you.”

Tch...! True as it was, that was the last thing I wanted to hear! The difference between us could end up being the deciding factor in our fight! Yep, I was far and away the weaker one! That was obvious. He had a complete Balance Breaker, whereas I needed outside help, and even then, I was severely limited. Heck, more to the point, Vali’s natural specs completely eclipsed mine!

Thud!

“Gah...!” I choked, winded. Vali had delivered a heavy punch into my chest! And it had been so fast I hadn’t even seen it coming! What a blow! My legs were trembling! A-and a crack had wound its way down my armor! Too many strikes like this, and I would be done for!

“So this is all my rival is capable of! Ha-ha-ha! Ah, what a shame! You’re pathetically weak!” Vali laughed mockingly.

“Issei!”

The prez was watching, visibly worried. I couldn't stand the thought of making a fool of myself in front of this woman who I so adored!

Yes, I came from two ordinary parents, until by chance, I was one day reborn as a demon and discovered that I possessed the power of a dragon.

Vali was born to a lineage of old Demon Kings, complete with a legendary dragon's abilities.

I was devoid of talent. He was overflowing with it.

Vali was the greatest Sacred Gear host—the ideal user.

"Divide!" echoed a voice from the jewel in the White Dragon Emperor's armor. In response, my power noticeably dipped.

Did he just halve my energy?! Was that why he hit me a moment ago?!

"Boost!"

Nonetheless, I activated my own Sacred Gear in response, returning back to my original state.

"You may have just restored my power, partner—but the Vanishing Dragon's other abilities are where we're going to run into trouble."

What's that supposed to mean, Ddraig?

"Whenever he halves your power, he adds what he takes from you to himself. And boosting can't restore your stamina, only your dragon powers."

S-so even if I manage to bounce back, he just keeps on getting stronger?!

"Exactly. But no matter how impressive the host, there is always a limit. When his accumulated power goes beyond that level, he remains at his limit and releases the excess from the wings on his back."

Did that mean he could always stay at his peak without overloading and destroying himself?

"Come on!" Vali, looking like he was having fun, unleashed a seemingly endless volley of projectiles my way.

There was no hope of dodging them. Any one of those blasts would mean a major wound. At best, one hit would leave me with bruises all over.

Augh...

I needed to strike back at him somehow. I couldn't let him get away with threatening my parents!

Vali continued to rail against me. "Your attacks are so dull. All you do is keep plunging in. There's no point to them. Talk about wasted potential. You don't have a clue how to use your abilities."

Oh, is that right? I'm clueless, am I? I already knew that.

"At this rate, the rivalry between the White Dragon Emperor and the Red Dragon Emperor will—"

Roooooaaaaarrrrr!

But before Vali could even finish talking, I activated the propulsion unit in my armor and accelerated at full speed straight into his barrage of shots.

His projectiles ricocheted off my body. Believe me, they hurt! But that was fine! All I needed was one hit!

I clenched my left hand, focusing my power on Ascalon. That was all I needed.

Defending was pointless, so I discarded that!

Vali's energy blasts buffeted my Scale Mail, cracking and chipping it here and there. The helmet protecting my face took a hit as well, smashing a hole in my mask.

"Trying to ram me? You're a fool. What do you expect that to—?"

Vali deployed what looked like a light-based shield in an attempt to protect himself, however—

"Ddraiiig! Transfer my power to Ascalon!"

"Understood!"

"Transfer!"

Boom!

A wave of incredible force surged down my arm. That was fine. I didn't know how to use a sword properly anyway. Instead of anything clever, I simply threw

everything I had into the gauntlet that now housed my new weapon!

Even I knew how to punch a guy!

Slam!

My fist punched clean through Vali's shield and crashed with a powerful blow into his face.

"...—?!"

He must not have been expecting the attack to make contact, as the impact sent him bending over backward.

Crack...

Fissures erupted all over the mask part of White Dragon Emperor's helmet. Vali's face peeked through as the visor fell away.

Now's my chance!

I reached around to the back of Vali's armored suit, to the area below his light wings, where he vented his excess power.

"I hear that your Sacred Gear needs this part to work. So how's this?!"

"Transfer!"

I poured my power in excess into the White Dragon Emperor's armor. Instantly, my body felt like lead. I must have exhausted my physical strength and demon powers! But that didn't matter!

"Let's see you absorb this much energy! I'm guessing you won't be able to get rid of it all!"

"Wha—?!"

Screeeeeeeeech!

The jewels embedded into the White Dragon Emperor's armor lit up in a chaotic mix of white, red, blue, and yellow. All at once, the dragon power that had been fueling him dissipated.

I had succeeded in using Vali's own Sacred Gear against him. Its ability allowed Vali to absorb his opponent's power and repurpose it for himself.

However, there was a limit to how much he could steal, and anything beyond that limit was automatically ejected through those wings of light.

After Ddraig had explained as much to me, I'd wondered what would happen if I channeled my power through his input and output vents at the same time?

He would not only be absorbing more energy than he could handle, but he would also be unable to discard the excess. The result was that his armor would undergo a forced shutdown!

“—! How could they...?! Vali, ready yourself!”

Vali crossed his arms in response to Albion's warning, but not before—

Bang!

—I hurled my left fist and the power of Ascalon forward, effortlessly breaking through Vali's guard and delivering a heavy blow straight into his abdomen. The White Dragon Emperor's armor shattered with a glittering flash!

Is this what a dragon-slaying weapon is capable of?! Vali's suit got shredded like paper!

“Hck...” Vali spat out blood. He staggered backward, grasping his stomach, before letting out a joyful laugh, yet more blood trickled down the corner of his mouth.

“...Ha-ha-ha, awesome! You destroyed my Sacred Gear! So you *can* fight! In that case, rival of mine—”

Slam!

I drove another punch straight into his face.

“...You're about the only person I don't feel bad about hitting.”

All right! I had struck back at him for making fun of my parents. Ddraig, however, made a disapproving noise. My unnecessary lashing out had allowed Vali the time to restore his armor.

Seriously, it literally reassembled itself! How many times was I going to have to destroy this thing?!

“This contest won't end until one host or the other is incapable of fighting. You

can't keep going on like this. You won't get anywhere. You won't have an easy time bringing him down before your Balance Breaker runs out of time. Your best bet would be to run, but I'm guessing that's not an option for you."

Of course not! I wasn't about to abandon the prez! Besides, there was no way out of the barrier that surrounded the school!

"Then what are you going to do? There still remains a considerable gulf between your potential and his. Thanks to that control unit Azazel gave you, you've been able to close the distance a fraction, but that time limit ensures your defeat."

Ddraig was right. What could I do? At that moment, I spied a certain something from the corner of my eye.

An unusual idea sprang to mind. It was a weird one, but it was worth a try. In any event, I would lose if I ran out of time! So I had to do something before then!

"Hey, Ddraig. Sacred Gears respond to their user's thoughts, right?"

"Yeah, I've explained that... What of it?"

I picked up the object that was rolling toward my feet—one of the jewels from the White Dragon Emperor's armor. It had come flying out when I had damaged him earlier.

The destroyed section of the armor, jewel included, looked like it had self-repaired. This jewel would just disintegrate into ash before too long. That was why, as Vali was concerned, it wasn't of any consequence. However, it should, I reasoned, still possess at least a small amount of the White Dragon Emperor's power.

"I'm going to picture a visual image of something. Make it real, Ddraig!"

I channeled the vision in my mind's eye to the dragon, as detailed and as strong as I could render it.

If I could pull this off, then—

"...Those are some dangerous thoughts, partner. But interesting ones! This might kill you, but are you ready to try?"

“I’m not going to die. I still haven’t taken the prez’s virginity. It may hurt, but if this is what it takes to overcome that bastard, I’ll manage!”

“Bwa-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! I like your determination! In that case, let’s give it a shot! This may be madness—but I am the Red Dragon Emperor, a mighty force to be reckoned with! We’ll beat this guy together, partner! No, Issei Hyoudou!”

“Yeah!”

“What are you planning?” Vali demanded with genuine curiosity.

“White Dragon Emperor! Albion! Vali! I’m taking your power!”

With that, I cracked open the gemstone of the Red Dragon Emperor on the back of my hand and then crushed into it the jewel from the Vanishing Dragon that I had picked up a moment ago!

I’ll absorb your power right into my Sacred Gear!

While slugging Vali, I had remembered something from the battle with Kokabiel the other day. Kiba had managed to create a stable fusion between holy and demonic powers.

A silvery-white aura emanated from my right hand, enveloping my body. Was this the result of the gemstones? Had it worked?

Thump.

I felt a sudden pulse within me as an indescribably intense pain swept from my right hand into my whole body...

Guh... Ugh...

“Auuuuuggggghhhh!”

Damn, that hurts! What the hell is this?!



“Nnnnngggghhhh! Aaaaauuuuuggggghhhh!”

Intense agony gripped every inch of me.

Ow, ow, ow, ow, ow! Even being skewered by those spears of light had been nothing compared to this!

“Guh, ugh, gaaaaahhhhhh!”

“—! You’re trying to absorb my abilities?” Vali looked truly astonished by my course of action.

“How reckless. We are opposites, Ddraig, in every sense. Do you intend to annihilate yourself?” Albion asked with apparent indifference.

“Auuuuuggggghhhh!” Ddraig roared in agony.

So the Dragon Emperor who dwelled in my Sacred Gear is sharing in this suffering, too?

Surprisingly, there was also mirth and laughter mixed into that anguished cry.

“Albion! You’re as thickheaded as ever! We’ve dwelled in human vessels for an eternity. We’ve used them to fight our war time and time again! And it’s always the same thing!”

“Indeed, Ddraig. That is our destiny. We may change hosts, but our means of battle is eternal. You increase your host’s power, and I give it to mine. The host with the greatest level of control over their Sacred Gear delivers the finishing blow. That is how it always has been and how it always will be.”

Though I couldn’t see him, I could feel Ddraig breaking into a wry grin at Albion’s response. *“I’ve learned something since meeting this one—since meeting Issei Hyoudou! Anything is possible if you’re foolish enough to push through!”*

I was okay with foolishness! If I couldn’t win through talent or ability, I would make it to the end through raw, thickheaded stupidity!

“Answer my call, Ddraiiiiig!”

“Vanishing Dragon Power, taken!”

My right hand exploded in a brilliant burst of light, a pure-white aura that

enveloped my arm!

And then—

—a white gauntlet surrounded my right arm.

“...Heh-heh, so this is the Dividing Gear?”

Cool as it was, being garbed in a suit of red armor with a single snow-white gauntlet looked pretty awkward.

“*Impossible! That can’t be done!*” Albion’s voice exclaimed.

“No, it *is* possible, just unlikely. A friend of mine managed to fuse holy and demon powers to make a Holy Demon Sword, apparently thanks to the fact that the equilibrium between the two forces came to an end with God’s death. Anyway, to borrow some higher-ups’ words, it’s basically just a programming bug or a system error, right? I took advantage of that.”

“*...Are you saying that you used flaws in the Sacred Gear system itself to pull that off? But that shouldn’t be... It’s one thing to imagine it, but actually trying to do it is beyond foolhardy... There’s no telling what might happen when you fuse two opposing energies. And dragon powers no less... You realize you could have killed yourself? That had to have been the most likely outcome by far?*”

Albion clearly found what I had just done hard to swallow.

Admittedly, even I understood it was reckless.

“Yeah, it was a crazy thing to do. But I’m still alive.”

Ddraig let out a resigned sigh. “*Yet you have certainly shortened your life span. No matter how long-lived demons might be, now that you’ve done that, you’ll—*”

“I’m not interested in living for ten thousand years or whatever’s normal for demons. But I’ve got a lot to do, so I *would* like to hang around for at least one thousand...,” I answered.

Clap-clap.

Vali was applauding me.

“Interesting! In that case, I’m going to get serious, too! If I win, how about I

use my White Dragon Emperor power to halve you and everything around you?" he said, floating up into the air and spreading his arms wide. His glowing wings likewise ballooned in size.

"Halve? What's that supposed to mean? You're not talking about my powers, are you?" I asked.

"Isn't ignorance terrifying? You might meet your end without ever learning the answer!" He laughed.

The way he kept treating me like an absolute idiot was really getting on my nerves!

"Half Dimension!" echoed the voice from the gemstone in the White Dragon Emperor's armor as a dazzling aura enveloped him.

Vali pointed his arm at the trees below.

Crunch!

They instantly shrank to half their original size! Whoa! So he was being literal when he meant he would halve everything?!

Cr-cr-cr-cr-crunch!

Not only that, but the space beyond the trees looked like it was being compressed to half its original size as well.

Quit ruining the scenery around the old school building!

"Red Dragon Emperor, Issei Hyoudou. Let me put this in a way that even you will comprehend," Azazel began, appearing beside me.

Whoa! The governor of the fallen angels. Please keep it simple!

"That power divides things around him in half. Meaning that if he's serious, Rias Gremory's bustline could also be reduced."

...

—.

...

What? My mind was racing, turning over one wordless question after

another.

Azazel's words may as well have been in another language. They were antithetical to my entire worldview. I didn't *want* to comprehend them. But suddenly, a seething, violent rage exploded from the depths of my chest.

Her breasts could be halved.

The prez's breasts could be halved.

I craned my neck mechanically toward Rias. Seeing my expression, she shuddered in fear.

Ah, the prez's chest. Those wonderful, fantastic breasts that I so adored. *They're my world, my—And he's going to shrink them? The prez's boobs?*

...

"Don't—"

Yep. That settled it.

"Don't you even daaaaarrre!"

I was going to crush Vali. Absolutely demolish him!

"You bastard! I won't let yooooouuuuuu! You're not touching the prez's breasts, Vaaaaaliiii!"

"Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost!"

The gemstones embedded in my armor started echoing the same word repeatedly.

"I won't let you! You're pure evil! I'll never forgive this! I'm going to destroy you! I'm going to make you wish you were never born! Vaaaaaliiii!"

"Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost! Boost!"

My surroundings exploded around me! The ground that I was standing on burst upward into a massive crater!

All the windows in the old school building suddenly shattered, the walls crumbling!

My entire body was at the center of a roaring vortex of unprecedented

energy.

“Ah-ha-ha-ha! You’ve got to be kidding me! This fight’s hilarious! His power increases this much just to keep his master’s chest from getting smaller?” Azazel exploded into guffaws.

Quit it! This is no laughing matter! To me, this was more important than the balance between Heaven and earth! This was a crisis, the most urgent in the world!

What that bastard was trying to do was unforgivable! Halve the prez’s breasts? Never! Those tits were mine! I still hadn’t rubbed them to my heart’s content! I still hadn’t sucked them! I still hadn’t grasped them between my fingers!

Don’t rob me of my dreams, you asshole!

I knew now that Vali and I would never see eye to eye. My most heartfelt desire was to double the prez’s bust size, while all he wanted to do was reduce it!

I pointed my finger directly at Vali, the momentum of the gesture mowing down the trees behind him.

“Don’t you dare lay a hand on Rias Gremory! I’ll destroy you so hard you won’t even have a chance at reincarnation, you dividing psychopath! Prepare to diiiiieeeeee!”

My cry was enough to rend the clouds up above, exposing the full moon behind them.

“Today is just full of surprises, but at least it isn’t boring. The idea that a woman’s breasts could unleash such explosive power!”

The White Dragon Emperor soared toward me—but not fast enough!

Yargh! I moved out of the way and delivered a powerful kick into his side as he flew past.

“You’re fast! Has your speed surpassed mine?!”

How would I know?! Maybe I wasn’t swifter, and it was all psychological—it didn’t matter. I was going to win. Vali’s success meant the loss of both the

prez's and Akeno's chests!

Just thinking about it made me shudder in terror! Not even God would forgive anyone for defiling such wonderful breasts! Though Vali tried to escape at high speed, I effortlessly grabbed hold of him and—

“This is for the prez’s boobs!”

—delivered a powerful punch right into his gut! In the back of my mind, those breasts were bouncing up and down!

“*Divide!*”

At the same moment, I activated my newly transplanted White Dragon Emperor ability and reduced Vali’s strength considerably.

“Ghk!” He coughed blood!

Yet I wasn’t finished!

“And this is for Akeno’s breasts!”

A second punch straight to the face! Now his helmet was completely broken! This time, it had been Akeno’s breasts that flashed before my eyes.

“And this one’s for Asia’s still-maturing ones!”

Next, as I imagined how large Asia’s breasts had yet to grow, I crushed the exhaust nozzles on the back of Vali’s suit, things that projected his wings!

“And Xenovia’s, too!”

Then I kicked him up into the air with titanic force as I rejoiced in Xenovia’s bust!

“And lastly, this is for Koneko’s petite chest, which would be completely erased if you dared to halve it!”

I tackled Vali at breakneck speed as I wept over what he might do to Koneko!

“Gah!” Vali spewed up a mouthful of blood. Served him right!

Thud!

He slammed hard into the ground. My anger not yet abated, I walked over to the bastard.

"Koneko already has a complex about the size of her chest, you monster! And you're thinking of cutting it in half?! Unforgivable! Don't you dare take her breasts away from her! Do you understand what you'd be doing to her, you halving lunatic?!"

Nothing would soothe my rage! I felt like hitting him all over again! Faced with my indignation, Vali curiously broke into a joyful grin.

"...Interesting. This is incredible!"

Damn this guy!

"Vali, I've finished analyzing his dividing ability. If you adjust your own limiting ability, you should be able to defend against it."

"I see. That doesn't sound so bad."

"Seriously? So that attack won't work anymore?! After all the pain unlocking was?!"

"Albion, do you think Issei Hyoudou is worth using the Juggernaut Drive against in his present state?"

"Vali, that would be unwise at this time. If you activate that without the proper precautions, you might lift the curse placed upon Ddraig."

"It will be fine, Albion. It is time for I, who has awakened, to embrace the supreme law—"

What on earth is that bastard muttering about now?

"Restrain yourself, Vali! Do you really want to find yourself at the mercy of my power?!"

Was Albion angry? I didn't know what was going on, but I would have to take my rival down before he could launch whatever that new attack was! I readied myself to deliver the finishing blow, when—

A shadow swooped down from the night sky with the moon to its back, swiftly putting itself between Vali and I... It was another figure in armor, though this suit looked like something a commander in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* video game series would don.

The young man sporting the armor had a handsome face. "Vali, I've come for you," he stated.

My rival rose to his feet, wiping the blood from his mouth with the back of his hand. "Bikou? What are you doing here?"

"Don't be mean. When I heard that my valued partner was in a pinch, I came all the way to this lonely island country. Everyone over at HQ is all up in arms, you know? We'll be fighting those northern bumpkin gods soon, so why didn't you come back once your mission failed? Katerea failed in her plan to assassinate Michael, Azazel, and Lucifer, didn't she? Your job as an observer is over. So how about we go home?"

"...I see. So it's already time."

Just what were those two talking about?

"Who are you?!" I demanded, pointing straight at the newcomer.

Azazel was the one to answer me. "That's Bikou, a descendant of the Victorious Fighting Buddha."

Say what now? I had never heard either of those names before!

"He's the damned monkey from the *Journey to the West*. But I guess I should explain more simply. He's Sun Wukong."

...Huh? Huuuuuuuuuh?!

"S-S-Sun Wukoooong?!"

I was so taken aback that I completely forgot just how enraged I had been a second ago! I mean, this was a famous hero from an ancient tale!

"Strictly speaking, he's a monkey spirit who has inherited Sun Wukong's powers. Regardless, I never would have assumed him to ally with the Khaos Brigade. The Vanishing Dragon and Sun Wukong. The pair must make for an excellent team."

The monkey guy snickered at Azazel's explanation. "I'm not like my ancestor, the one who was elevated to Buddhahood! My life is my own—I'll live it however I like! Call me Bikou. Nice to meet ya, Red Dragon Emperor!" he said lightly.

A long pole appeared in his hand. He spun it around his head a few times before stabbing it downward.

In response, a black wave of darkness spread over the ground, seizing Bikou and Vali and dragging them in. They were trying to escape!

Dammit! I'm not finished beating Vali's lesson into him!

"Wait! Stop!" I moved to prevent them from fleeing, but—

Gah! My Sacred Gear deactivated! My armor dissipated, and the bracelet I had been wearing crumbled away. My Balance Breaker was sealed all over again!

"Azazel! Don't you have another one of those bracelets?! I can't let him escape!" I insisted.

"Do you realize how much work creating just one required? I can't mass-produce them. And even if I could, the more you use them, the harder it will be to unlock your true Balance Breaker later. They should only be used in emergencies."

Wasn't this an emergency?! That bastard had made an absolute fool of me, not to mention his threats! As if I would just let him off!

All of a sudden, I was seized by an intense weariness... I couldn't even feel my legs or clench my fists...

"Unleashing that much power, even for just a moment, was bound to leave you enervated. You didn't have much of a reserve to begin with, so you aren't capable of fighting for an extended period of time," Azazel explained.

But Vali was in his armor the whole time...

I supposed that just demonstrated how considerable the distance between our skills was. Even if I could temporarily surpass him, it meant nothing if I couldn't maintain that lead until I won.

"I'm not just the White Dragon Emperor—I also possess the blood of the former Demon King. I'm a busy man. I have far more enemies than just the angels, fallen angels, and demons. We'll fight again one day, rival of mine. Let's both get stronger—"

Then, in mid-sentence, Vali disappeared into the darkness with Sun Wukong.

The Festival Ends

By the time we returned to the school grounds, the three factions' armies had already passed through the barrier. They were dealing with the aftermath of the battle—disposing of the dead magicians' corpses and restoring the campus from damage.

In the center of the schoolyard, Sirzechs, Serafall Leviathan, and Michael were each giving orders to their subordinates.

When Sirzechs caught sight of us, he raised his hand in greeting. "Thank goodness you're all right... What happened to you, Azazel?" he asked, pointing to the stump where his left arm had been, before gesturing to Asia.

Asia quickly activated her Sacred Gear, moving to heal him. Her Twilight Healing's pale-green light engulfed the wound, yet she couldn't restore the lost limb.

"Katerea caught me in a self-destruction snare. I had to cut it off to get away."

"I see. Her grievance was with us demons, not you. And that wound..." Sirzechs looked like he wanted to say something to make amends, but Azazel waved the other man's concern away.

"I'm at fault here, too... For Vali."

"...He betrayed you?"

"He was only ever interested in power. With hindsight, it's easy to see that it would have always wound up like this... But it's my fault I didn't stop him sooner." Azazel's gaze looked somehow forlorn. Had he perhaps looked fondly on Vali?

Michael approached the other two leaders. "Now then, I need to return to Heaven to prepare countermeasures against this Khaos Brigade."

"I'm sorry things turned out the way they did. I and my people were responsible for the venue of these talks..."

"There's no need to feel responsible for any of this, Sirzechs. I'm just glad our

three factions have started on the road to peace. This should help to reduce the number of fruitless quarrels between our people, wouldn't you say?"

"Well, we'll probably all lose more than a few underlings who refuse to accept the new status quo," Azazel remarked cynically.

"That was always going to be inevitable. We've despised each other for so long over the years. But from now on, that will change—if gradually. Our next challenge seems likely to be the Khaos Brigade," Michael said.

"Then let's deal with them together," Sirzechs suggested, and Azazel and Michael nodded in agreement.

"I'd best be off, then," Michael stated. "I will be back as soon as possible so that we can settle on a formal treaty." The archangel moved to leave.

"E-er, Michael!" I called out, knowing full well that I was addressing someone beyond my station.

"What is it, Red Dragon Emperor?"

"There's something I wanted to ask you."

"Very well. We are short of time, so make this quick."

I had a wish, something that I needed to put to him no matter the cost.

"It's because of God's system that Asia and Xenovia suffer damage when they pray, right?"

The two of them were true believers. Every now and then, they would fall back into their old habits and pray to God, only to be hurt for their efforts.

"Yes. Whenever a demon or a fallen angel prays to the Lord, the system deals them light damage to dissuade them. That is built into how the system works, and it continues to apply even without the Lord to manage it. Why do you ask?"

"Can you change it so that Asia and Xenovia don't get hurt when they pray?"

That was my wish. I had always found it somewhat amusing whenever they tried to invoke the Lord's name, but I still wanted to let them pray in safety. They might have been demons, but they were still free to believe in God if they wanted to, right?

“—.” Michael wore a look of surprise at this request. I guess he hadn’t been expecting that.

Asia and Xenovia, standing on either side of me, were startled as well.

Michael, however, gave us all a small smile, nodding. “I understand. We might be able to manage it for two people. You’re both already demons, and I don’t suppose you two intend to have dealings with the Church again. I’ll see what I can do. However, I have questions of my own. Asia, Xenovia, you are both aware that the Lord is no longer with us? And yet you still wish to pray to Him?”

The pair nodded.

“Yes, I still want to pray to Him, even if He isn’t there,” Asia replied.

“I feel the same. I’ll give thanks to the Lord—and to you, Michael, as well,” added Xenovia.

Michael smiled at these responses. “Very well. I will see to it as soon as I return to headquarters. Hmm, it would be nice to have at least two demons who can pray without receiving damage. It would certainly be an interesting development.”

“Now Asia can pray to God without any problems...! Even if He isn’t listening...”

Asia embraced me in a warm hug, her eyes glistening. “Issei!”

I squeezed her back. I was happy for her. Silently, I promised that I would keep doing everything I could to help her.

“Thank you, Issei,” Xenovia said.

I patted her and Asia on the head. “You’re welcome. Now you can pray as much as you like.”

Was it my imagination or did Xenovia just blush?

“Lord Michael, thank you for hearing me out,” Kiba called.

Had he made a request of the archangel as well?

“After hearing your account, I swear on the Holy Demon Sword that you presented us with that the Church will no longer abuse any children in its

research on Holy Swords. It was a gross mistake to disregard such valuable members of our congregation.”

Whoa, Michael! The archangel was willing to take care of that, too? And when did Kiba have the chance to talk to him about it?

“That’s great, Kiba!”

“Yes. Thank you, Issei.”

Watching our exchange, Azazel suddenly turned to Michael and said, “I’ll let you be the one to explain all this to the Valhalla guys. Odin might not like it if I try to reach out to him. You’ll have to let those at Mount Meru know as well.”

“Yes, I don’t suppose it would be particularly persuasive coming from the governor of the fallen angels or from one of the Demon Kings now, would it? I’ll convey the news. I’m used to delivering reports to the Lord, so this won’t be much different.” His business concluded, Michael took off into the heavens with his forces.

Azazel turned to address his own army. “I’ve chosen peace. We fallen angels aren’t fighting the forces of Heaven or the underworld anymore. Any of you who are dissatisfied with my decision may leave now. But remember this—I’ll kill you without hesitation if I ever see you again. Those who will obey can follow me!”

“We offer ourselves to you until the hour of our demise, Governor Azazel!” his subordinates roared in loyalty.

Seeing this display of devotion, the governor looked grateful. Talk about a charismatic leader!

Having received their orders, Azazel’s troops deployed a myriad of magic circles and promptly departed.

The demon army was similarly preparing to return home.

The school grounds—which had been crowded with demons, angels, and fallen angels alike just a moment ago—gradually emptied. Before long, only a small number of us remained.

Azazel, the only fallen angel still with us, let out a deep sigh and turned to the

school gate. "I'll leave the rest to you, Sirzechs. I'm going home. I'm exhausted."

He waved his hand—and stopped, pointing to me. "Right, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor. I'll be in the neighborhood for a while, so I'll help you take care of Rias Gremory's Bishop, got it? If there's one thing I can't stand to see, it's a Sacred Gear being put to waste."

"Huh?" I answered blankly.

What was that just now?

"For the Red, it's women. For the White, power. You're both shockingly single-minded," Azazel said before taking his leave, whistling.

At the time, I had assumed that he had been joking.

July 20XX.

The archangel Michael representing Heaven, Governor Azazel of the head fallen-angel organization Grigori, and the Demon King Sirzechs Lucifer representing the underworld, as emissaries for the three great powers, each put their names to the peace accord.

From that point on, violent conflict between the three powers was outlawed, and a framework for cooperation was established.

The agreement took the name of the school where it was adopted, becoming known as the Kuou Treaty.

New Life

"I'll be advising the Occult Research Club starting today. Call me Mr. Azazel. Or maybe Governor would be better?"

The fallen angel in question was standing in the clubroom dressed in a worn-out suit.

"...But why are you here?" the prez asked, perplexed, resting one hand on her forehead.

"Ha! Serafall's little sister gave me the job! Well, who can blame her? A supersmart, super-handsome guy like me? Looks like I'll be able to have my fill of all the lovely lady students here, too!"

“You can’t do that! Er, I mean, why would Sona allow that?”

“You’re a stubborn one, Rias Gremory. Well... I asked Sirzechs, and he told me to bring it up with Serafall’s sister. And so here I am.”

That’s why he’s our adviser?! What is the chairwoman thinking?!

“What about your arm? I thought you lost it?” I inquired. As I recalled, he’d cut it off during the battle.

“Ah, this? It’s a prosthetic I made with knowledge from my Sacred Gear research. Looks just like the original, huh? It’s got all kinds of functions—laser beams, miniature missiles, you name it. I’ve always wanted to try one of these things. I decided to set myself up with one to commemorate my lost arm.

Whoosh! Azazel’s—our adviser’s—left arm suddenly detached from his body and started spiraling through the air.

Whoa, so it’s fully mechanical?!

“The only condition on my staying here is that I’m supposed to help the members of Rias Gremory’s Familia properly develop their Sacred Gears. I guess it helps to have a healthy obsession, eh? Anyway, you all know about the Khaos Brigade now. The Welsh Dragon and the rest of you have earned a name for yourselves as future deterrents against them. And I’ve got specialist knowledge about the Vanishing Dragon. Based on the information I’ve gleaned, I know that Vali’s got his own team. We’re calling it the White Dragon Emperor Familia for now. Unfortunately, the only members we know about at present are Vali and Sun Wukong.”

“So Vali and his people are going to attack us again?” I asked.

The governor shook his head. “I doubt it. It isn’t every day you get a chance to knock off the leaders of all three factions at a major conference, and they failed. They’ll have their hands full with Heaven and the underworld for a while. I’ve ordered all the fallen angels under my command to join forces with you demons, so the underworld won’t fall easily. Those seraphs up in Heaven won’t sit by idly, either. Plus, there’s all those monsters and who-knows-whats lurking up in Heaven, too.”

“...So it’s war?” I questioned, almost too afraid to hear Azazel’s answer.

“Nah, these are just skirmishes. They’re basically still getting ready, probing our weaknesses. At the earliest, I’d say the real conflict won’t break out until you’ve all graduated from college, so enjoy your lives as students. However, remember that you’ll all be having to get ready for what’s coming, too.”

“Yeah...” I tilted my head, trying to think of something to say, but nothing came to mind.

“Don’t think too hard about it, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor. You don’t have the brains for it, so it won’t get you anywhere. Just remember that your enemy is Vali, the White Dragon Emperor.”

Right. My enemy. I would have to keep that in mind.

He had made fools out of us all, and the way he kept belittling me...! I swore to beat the daylights out of him the next time we met!

“You were only able to hold him off because you combined that dragon-slaying sword you got from Michael with your Boosted Gear. And Vali didn’t go all out, either. If he had, you would have most assuredly lost. Basically, you got lucky. If you had faced someone of his strength who wasn’t a dragon, you’d be dead.”

Much as it pained me to admit it, Azazel was right. It was only because of the dragon-slaying sword that I had been able to do anything at all against Vali.

“So can you still use the White Dragon Emperor’s abilities?” he asked.

“No. Not at all,” I replied.

Though it had been a horrible ordeal to acquire it, I couldn’t get the Vanishing Dragon’s power to work anymore. Maybe it was a one and done?

“I thought so. You can’t handle something that mighty without practice. Having another dragon’s abilities at your disposal would be unquestionably useful, but whether you can successfully call upon that strength is another question entirely. If you don’t know what you’re doing, it might be even harder than summoning your Balance Breaker. Make no mistake, though, now that you’ve absorbed that power, it should be engraved into Ddraig’s soul. The rest all depends on your training. I’m going to put you through hell, and it won’t be quick, either. If you try to rush it, you’ll end up killing yourself.”

Sorry I'm so pathetic, Governor! Even after everything I went through to steal Albion's abilities, they still weren't any good to me. I guess it wasn't surprising. I couldn't even use Ddraig's skills properly yet.

"Your Red Dragon Emperor power is too unstable. It has enormous destructive potential but only for a limited duration. If you're fighting a low-ranking opponent, maybe you can take them out before your time's up, but a more skilled enemy will wipe the floor with you. If you're going to be playing the Rating Game, you'll need to work out how to manage it. The first step would be unlocking your Balance Breaker. That said, Rating Games aren't straightforward affairs. Sometimes a Pawn that needed only one piece to reincarnate can take down a King. It all depends on how you fight. So I'll school you in that as well."

"Sounds like you know a lot about the Rating Game."

"Demons aren't its only fans. With peace settling in, I'm guessing a lot of angels and fallen angels will take an interest in it."

If that was true, it seemed like only a matter of time until some of them wanted to join in.

"Anyway, we've got to build your strength so you can stay on your feet for the long haul."

"...Yeah."

Azazel was right. In their current state, my powers were only temporary. If I was going to be worth anything in future Rating Games, I would need to be able to fight for more than a few minutes. I would need to be able to hold on to my power for as long as possible.

Yet would I really be able to unlock my Balance Breaker? Maybe it was because both times I'd used it had been via methods other than the proper one, but I couldn't imagine myself reaching it alone. I was just too weak.

I was a former human. Vali had the blood of a Demon King... And our natural skills reflected our respective backgrounds.

"Can I really get stronger?" I asked.

It was a straightforward question. Did I have any hope of reaching that point?

“I’ll make sure you do,” Azazel answered with a mischievous grin. “I’m a fallen angel with too much free time.”

I guess I would just have to trust him.

Well, it would all depend on my training from here on out.

I pointed to Gasper. “If we’re attacked again, can’t we do something with Gasper’s time-stopping ability?”

“I-I-I-I-Issei! Wh-wh-wh-wh-what are you doing?! Yarghhhhh!” Gasper wailed at my suggestion.

“It’s a mistake to rely solely on him. We don’t know the kind of people the Khaos Brigade has at their disposal.”

Oh. That stung. I suppose Vali *had* said that Gasper’s Sacred Gear was riddled with weaknesses, too.

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry I can’t do anything! I’m never any help! I’m garbage! Pig feed! I’m a failure, a shadow on the bottom of the ocean trying to reach up to Mount Everest! Don’t forget about training meeeee!” Gasper cried as he crept back into his cardboard box.

Hey, hey, I thought we had grown out of that?!

“Right, you with the Holy Demon Sword. How long can you keep your Balance Breaker up?” Azazel asked Kiba.

“In my current state, my limit is around an hour.”

“That’s no good. At the very least, you’ll want to aim for around three days.”

Whoa, that sounds rough. Kiba looked undaunted, however.

“E-er, I can only last around ten seconds, with a few other conditions...,” I admitted timidly.

The governor closed his eyes. “We’ll have to start over from scratch with you. The White Dragon Emperor can maintain his Balance Breaker for a month. That’s how different you two are.”

A month... Vali had never seemed so far beyond me. Still, the clearer the

target, the better.

Next, Azazel's gaze turned to Akeno. "And you, do you still hate us? Or Baraqiel, I guess?"

That's her father's name... Right, he would have been Azazel's subordinate.

Akeno's expression was stern. "I have no intention of forgiving him. It's his fault my mother died."

"Akeno, he said nothing when you became a demon," Azazel remarked.

"Of course not. He's in no position to say anything to me."

"That isn't what I meant. But I guess it isn't my place to get between a father and his kid."

"I don't see him as my father!" Akeno clarified.

"I see. Well, it's not like I think there's anything wrong with joining Rias Gremory's Familia here. But I wonder what he thinks?"

"..."

Akeno had nothing to say in response to this, simply falling silent, her expression conflicted.

Azazel glanced back to me. "Hey, Mr. Red Dragon Emperor—or is Issei okay? Issei, your dream is to build a harem, right?"

"Ah, yeah..."

Indeed, a harem was my ultimate goal! My lifelong dream...! Unfortunately, that vision seemed to be growing further and further away from me lately. I mean, I had discovered that I was utterly incompetent when it came to girls.

"Maybe I'll give you a few pointers? You could learn a thing or two from someone who's had hundreds of harems of his own. It won't hurt to listen."

Governor?!

"S-s-s-seriously?! You're not kidding?!"

"Yeah, seriously. You're a virgin, right?"

"Y-yes!"

“All right, I’ll teach you about women, too, then. You’d better find some sexy beauty to hook up with and earn your manhood. So that you know, the reason I fell from grace up in Heaven was that I’d been fondling the breasts of too many human women. I don’t compromise when it comes to sex.”

“Y-you can fall from Heaven for something like that?! Huh?! Seriously?!”

The prez flashed me a disgusted look, nodding. “It’s true. According to legend, the Grigori leaders were tempted by human women and were cast out of Heaven for giving them knowledge that they shouldn’t have.”

Azazel broke out into a hearty laugh. “Ah, we were young then! Proudly flouting our virginity, blindly proclaiming God’s greatness to the world! Ha-ha-ha, we lost ourselves to temptation and, in the end, pleasured ourselves with more women than you can count and were punished for it.”

Incredible! So the fallen-angel leaders were all sex-obsessed perverts!

“Ah... I’m starting to think I had the wrong idea about you all...,” I said.

“Yeah, you know what I’m talking about. If you’re a man, you’ve got to follow your desires. Devour as many women as you can! The more, the better! That’s the path to boosting your confidence and strength! I’ll make sure you leave your virginity behind. How about I introduce you to a few fallen-angel girls from my subordinates? I’m sure they’d be happy to sleep with a legendary dragon.”

Fallen-angel beauties?! Suddenly, the image of Raynare came to mind. *N-no, things are different now. There’s a treaty!* At least that’s what I wanted to think! But was I really willing to risk going through all that again?

“Whoooooaaaaa! Seriously?! You’ll help me graduate?! I’m ready to learn, Mr. Azazel!”

Right! He was my teacher now! Mr. Azazel! The greatest of all teachers, who would school me in Sacred Gears and women! This was the instructor I had been waiting for all my life!

“Heh, got it. Then we’ll start with your virginity graduation tour.”

What about a miraculous excursion? It sounds awesome! A whole lot more appetizing than those all-you-can-eat crab tours you sometimes see in fancy

restaurants! I don't mind if there's an annual fee—I'll pay for it all! So please let me join that tour for all time!

At seeing my eyes light up, the prez immediately grew flustered. “H-hold on a minute, Azazel! Don't fill his head with strange ideas!”

Wha—?! The prez embraced me, as if to keep me away from the fallen angel.

“What's the problem? It's perfectly healthy for a kid his age to learn the ropes with one or two women. Or don't you want your servant learning how to please a lady?”

“Issei's chastity is mine! I'll decide who takes it! Issei, what are you thinking, promising to protect someone else's virginity while throwing your own away?!”

Seriously?! The prez is in charge of my virginity?!

“Issei, are you going to leave me behind...?”

“Asia?! Had she misunderstood what this kind of “tour” was? I would always be with her!

“Oh dear. I'll be lonely if you go off without me, Issei.”

Akeno! Please don't look so depressed! You'll make me feel guilty!

“...You're the worst, Issei.”

Augh! Sorry, Koneko! Actually, she wasn't angry. She was laughing!

“If the president is in charge of his chastity, it won't be easy to make a child... Hmm...”

Xenovia looked legitimately perplexed!

“You're so popular, Issei! I-if I weren't a shut-in, I'd wish I could be like you!” Gasper admitted.

“Ah, looks like you won't be able to complain about me anymore, Issei,” Kiba remarked.

Gasper, it's time for you to grow out of that cardboard box! And pretty boys should shut their mouths!

“Ha-ha! What's this? I see, I see. I should have known. Dragons naturally

develop polygamous relationships. Looks like you don't need me to teach you anything. In a way, I suppose this makes for a good representation of our three-way alliance. The governor of the fallen angels, the sister of the Demon King, backup from Heaven, and a legendary dragon. Let's all get along now, got it? Our first objective is to properly unlock the Red Dragon Emperor's Balance Breaker and get the rest of you up to scratch. That's how you should spend your summer break—training."

Summer break... Now that I thought about it, I realized that the first semester was nearly finished.

In any event, it was frightening to think how easily the governor of the fallen angels had joined us. Up until just recently, he had been the leader of an enemy organization. I guess the future wasn't looking too bad.

"We all have to get stronger," the prez said.

"It never hurts." Azazel nodded in agreement. "So I hear there's going to be a meetup between a whole bunch of young demons in a few days? And that Rias Gremory is one of the promising debutantes."

"Yes, it's a gathering of old and noble families. There should be several young demons attending. It's a tradition of sorts," confirmed the prez.

"Is it really okay to be thinking about Rating Games so soon after a terrorist attack?" I asked. I mean, we *were* in the middle of a large-scale operation.

"On the contrary, I recommend it," Azazel answered. "A few Rating Games will be a good way for you to do something about your lack of experience. There are all sorts of reincarnated demons—former humans, fallen angels, beasts, and who knows what else. I'm sure you won't have any trouble dealing with them, though. There's a huge variety of battlefields and more fighting styles than you can imagine. What better practice could there be? And this may come as a surprise to you, but Sirzechs came up with the Rating Games concept with the current situation in mind. By having demons compete against one another, they're continuously polishing their skills and abilities. You were all so eager to prove yourselves that every one of you fell for it. Pretty clever of your Demon King, eh?"

I didn't really get it all, but Azazel was essentially saying that duking it out in

Rating Games was a good way to train before having to fight the terrorists again. I had to agree that being thrown into a battle without any real practice wasn't incredibly appealing.

"Don't worry. I'll make sure you know the tools of the trade. I'll drill how to use that Sacred Gear into you if I have to. I'm planning on running some matches during your training camp as well, Rating Game style. I've already talked to Sirzechs about it."

Azazel was raring to go. His anticipation was undeniable

"Hee-hee. The Boosted Gear on the verge of an unknown evolution. And the Holy Demon Sword. Not to mention the Forbidden Balor View. I'll teach you all everything I've learned and see how far we can push those Sacred Gears. Bwa-ha-ha!"

Whoa! Azazel suddenly broke into a scary laugh! Were we all just guinea pigs to him?!

The future looked challenging and uncertain... Just what was to become of Kuou Academy and the Occult Research Club?

Kuou Academy: End of First Semester

Kuou Academy High School: Occult Research Club

Advising Teacher:

Azazel (fallen angel governor)

President:

Rias Gremory (King), Third-year, Remaining Pieces: 1 Rook

Vice President:

Akeno Himejima (Queen), Third-year

Club members:

Koneko Toujou (Rook), First-year

Yuuto Kiba (Knight), Second-year

Xenovia (Knight), Second-year

Asia Argento (Bishop), Second-year

Gasper Vladi (Bishop), First-year

Issei Hyoudou (Pawn), Second-year

Grigori.2

“Sorry we couldn’t meet face-to-face, Shemhazai. Anyway, that’s why I’ll be hanging around here for a while.”

“Understood. But, Azazel... Some of our subordinates don’t look kindly upon this peace agreement—”

“Yeah. But it doesn’t matter. Besides, it’s you I’m worried about. Your kid’s due soon, right?”

“...Azazel. I... I...!”

“Take care of that wife of yours. She’s a good woman. She’s followed you this far, even though she might end up getting killed for it. Your child will be the bridge between fallen angels and demons.”

“I was prepared to shoulder their hatred... But I never meant for you to take the blame, too!”

“Don’t cry, old friend. I’m used to being hated. Leave the issue with Akeno to me. These twelve wings of mine can bear it. So just shut up and follow my lead, Shemhazai!”

“—! Yes, my master!”

Valhalla

“And that concludes Lord Michael’s report, Lord Odin.”

“Those striplings sure are running amok. Pretending to be God, Michael? The gall of it.”

“How shall we respond? I would never have expected the biblical God to have met his demise.”

“To think that imposter, Michael, the false Lucifer, and that upstart Azazel are

all playing tea party.”

“Shall we, Aesir, show those miscreants what a true god looks like?”

“I’m too old to get involved in a world-spanning war, Freyr. But I am intrigued by the dedication of these youngsters. Perhaps we should observe this Rating Game that the demons are running?”

“It does sound like fun.”

“Continuing without their creator... I’m curious to see what they’ll do next.”

Special Life

It was the day before summer vacation—meaning closing ceremonies for the semester had just concluded.

“Hello.”

“Yo, thanks for letting us stay here.”

Akeno and Xenovia had arrived at my house with a large load of luggage.

No sooner did Akeno spot me than she caught me in a wide-armed embrace.
“Issei!”

Whoa! Too sudden!

“I can finally be at your side now, Issei...”

D-don’t stare at me with those glistening eyes, Akeno...

My heart was racing!

“...A-Akeno and Xenovia are going to be living here from now on... I-it was my brother’s suggestion. I’ll call Koneko later...,” the prez murmured, as if vaguely displeased by the situation.

Apparently, Sirzechs had proposed that we all live under the same roof to foster closeness in our Familia. “Skinship,” he had called it...

The prez had resisted the suggestion as strongly as she could, but in the end, my parents had agreed to it readily, and so here we were.

And now, Akeno was clinging to me like glue, unwilling to let go.

Ugh... I was happy, but the prez and Asia were staring at me with pained—or rather, frightening—gazes...

Akeno, you're enjoying this, aren't you? Your breasts feel lovely pressing against me... But still!

“Issei! I’ll sleep with you tonight. Hee-hee! There are a lot of things I want to do with you in bed.”

“Seriously?! Whoooooaaaaa! A-ah, my nose is bleeding!”

“Asia, you don’t mind if I sleep in your room, do you?” Xenovia asked.

Asia, however, continued to stare at Akeno and me with watery eyes.

It looked like she was going to be angry with me later!



The prez pinched me on the cheek, letting out a sigh. "This house is getting rather crowded, don't you think? It'll have to be remodeled during summer break. I'll see what my brother can do."

Whaaaaat?! What's going to happen to the Hyoudou residence now?

Regardless, the school semester had ended, which meant summer break! I could enjoy myself all day long! That said, now that I was living with the prez and everyone else, there was no telling what kind of perverted situations might befall me. It was all going according to plan. Actually, it seemed more likely that *nothing* was following any sort of plan now that I thought about it...

After all, I was the prez's servant, Akeno's pet junior, and Asia's protective brother.

Summer was supposed to be the most important time of the year for high schoolers like me. It was the perfect occasion to lose my virginity!

Just thinking about having to endure my classmates bragging about their conquests when school resumed was too much! Although unlikely, if Matsuda or Motohama were to beat me to the punch, I would lose all hope.

Ah, that long-awaited life of earthly pleasure... Because of my training schedule, it was further away than ever!

I couldn't overlook the fact that I had to get stronger, however. Catching up to Vali was crucial, even if I only moved closer inches at a time. If I was going to survive as a demon, I needed to level up. Not to mention that if I was going to rule a harem, I would need physical prowess.

Yet what I wanted most was to have sex with the prez during summer break!

AFTERWORD

“Breasts come in all shapes and sizes, each with their own lovers and aficionados!”

That right there is an example sentence you can use if you have to write a book report during your fall break! It might lead to you getting called into the staff room, though.

Good to see you again. Ishibumi here.

The shut-in vampire Gasper has finally made his entrance! Yep, Rias's mysterious second Bishop, mentioned all the way back in the first volume, is here. Being a cross-dresser, a shut-in, and a vampire, he's full of potential.

And Azazel, the governor of the fallen angels, has become an adviser of sorts for the Occult Research Club! I brought him into the main plotline because I thought it would be good to have a strong mentor character who could provide colorful explanations when required. He's basically a coach, which means he doesn't participate in any Rating Games or anything himself. Think of him like Kakashi in *Naruto*. Like Kiba, he's here for my small number of female readers.

Then we have Vali, Issei's rival. He has a mean streak and basically blows the setting out of the water, but that's what makes him such a foil for average high schooler Issei. He got beaten up this time because he threatened the ultimate object of our protagonist's desires (breasts). Then again, he was definitely in the wrong on that one.

In this fourth volume, Akeno has become a full-fledged participant in the battle over Issei. Rias can't afford to be careless now. Just what are these two beautiful older women going to do as they compete over him?! And Xenovia, too?! It looks like Asia will have her work cut out for her. Their dreams of cohabitation will face all kinds of stormy drama.

We've reached the end of the first semester, and the next book will take place

during summer break, with the next semester getting underway in the sixth volume.

From here on out, Issei will be fighting against his rival Vali, and Rias will be competing against other young demons in the Rating Game. I'm looking forward to showing how they both grow together.

As I mentioned in the afterword of the first volume, I've been planning on introducing Norse mythology from the very beginning, and we're finally starting to get into that now. The Khaos Brigade and Rias's Familia won't come into direct contact with one another too much, but you can be sure that we'll be seeing more of the White Dragon Emperor Vali and his Familia.

What other legendary beings will join his ranks besides Sun Wukong?! Get ready for a crazy lineup!

Now for my thanks. I'm so pleased we completed the fourth entry in the series. My sincerest appreciation to Miyama-Zero and my editor H for all their continued support!

The fifth volume is going to be about Koneko, training, hot springs, and Rating Games. Yep, first Akeno offered herself to Issei and now the petite Koneko! There weren't a whole lot of battles this time around, so the next book is going to be full of them. We're planning to release it just before the winter holiday, but you should still get excited for some hot, steamy, summer entertainment!

Until then,

Ichiei Ishibumi

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