Chapter 21: There’s a sex joke here somewhere. You just have to find it.

I don't own Highschool DxD, any of its characters, or any references in this story. If I did, horrible things would happen. Neither do I own any other anime that I reference. I do own all OC's and new abilities in the story as well as every ounce of pure awesome spawned by this.

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Rias sat at the dinner table in front of her peerage plus Raynare, a stern expression on her face. “I believe we all are aware of the purpose of this meeting.”

They all nodded. “Sempai.” Gasper surprisingly was the one to respond first.

“He’s being more of an ass than normal.” Koneko grunted before munching on some of the complimentary snacks.

“It’s to the point where even he’s surprised at how bad it’s getting.” Kiba frowned.

Akeno hummed. “It’s becoming quite vexing. Something’s clearly getting under his skin since we came here.”

It was almost two weeks into their “emergency shounen montage training period” as dubbed by Issei, and truth be told, they were making astounding progress in their respective fields. Kiba’s versatility in his swordcrafting was far ahead of where it had been. Koneko had a solid foot into Ki manipulation, and Akeno had made leaps of progress with her pure elemental magic abilities. Rias’ hold over her power of destruction had reached a level that she had not assumed she’d reach for years. Gasper could use almost all of his abilities without fail or freaking out, and Raynare…

Raynare could dance and twerk on a pole for three hours straight like a gymnast without falling… yeah.

However, despite all of their progress Issei seemed to inversely grow more irate and unstable as the days went on. He’d snap at others more easily, and stomp off on his own faster. What they all noticed though was that whenever they pointed it out to him, he’d freeze as if a deer in headlights, avoid the topic like the plague, sometimes apologize, and quickly wrap things up before isolating himself while ranting about needing more porn.

It had been easy to overlook at first. It was Issei after all. He was prone to doing that from the start. However it soon became apparent that something was off when he was doing it five times a day.

It was hard for him to hold a minor conversation without completely snapping at someone now. Even Gasper, who he actually liked and had patience for.

“What do you think it is?” Gasper asked with mixed confusion and concern. “Did he tell anyone?”

“You’re joking right? Since when does the perv tell anyone anything that isn’t porn related?” Koneko scoffed.

“… *Is* it porn related?” Gasper took a wild guess.

The room was oddly quiet as they contemplated his inquiry. The sad thing was that none of them could outright deny the possibility of it being the case.

“For the sake of rationality, I’m going out on a limb and say no.” Kiba lamented that he had for a moment believed that the source of his current issues was related to porn. “If it was he would have been more open about it.”

“Yeah, it’s usually getting him to shut up about porn that’s the trick that everyone’s having trouble figuring out.” Raynare sighed, lazily leaning her head against a hand. “Not that he does anything else. Lazy useless shut… ah fuck.”

“What is it?” Akeno blinked in confusion. Judging from Raynare’s tone she had just figured something out.

“He’s a shut in.” The Fallen replied in exasperation as if it was the most obvious answer.

“It hasn’t driven him nuts before.” Koneko failed to see the logic. “Gasper’s also a shut in and he’s doing fine here.”

Raynare rolled her eyes. “He’s a *dragon* shut in, you idiot. One that’s kept himself in his room for at least half a decade and hasn’t spent more than half a day outside of his hole at any given time.”

“His *den*.” Rias connected the dots quickly and realized the problem. “He’s spending too long outside of *his* secure territory and its affecting him subconsciously. It wouldn’t be surprising if Issei didn’t catch this issue either. And with how insecure and unstable he is on a normal day…”

“He’s always had trouble sleeping for long, even before we came here.” Gasper slowly sat up straighter. “He’s looked more tired than normal now that I think about it. Has anyone seen him fall asleep at weird times like he normally does?” It wasn’t uncommon to find the Sekiryuutei to be asleep in the middle of meetings, classes, or even when people are talking to him at times.

“I think… actually…” Akeno trailed off before realizing that it had been a while since Issei had properly nodded off in her presence. A quick glance around the room indicated that everyone else was in a similar boat.

“We have to find him. It will only get worse if we don’t do anything.” Gasper grimaced as echoes of his own insecurities began to bubble up again and he reached for a paper lunchbag with eye holes to pull over his head. Surprisingly, Issei had not once mocked him for his new nervous habit.

“And do what? Send him home?” Kiba asked skeptically.

“We help him sleep.” Rias’ answer came so quickly that everyone else in the room was caught off guard.

“That’s it?” Koneko blinked surprised.

“No, it’s not.” Their King shook her head. She had never gone over with anyone other than those that knew Issei intimately about what the inside of his mind was like. “It’s complicated. There’s something inside his psyche that’s constantly tormenting him. Something foreign. The dregs of some sort of magic tied so tightly to his insecurities that nobody is able to get rid of it for good. I’ve been in there once and helped hold it off with Asia. The night of the attack. But I don’t think I can get rid of it for long by myself.”

“And now that he’s outside of his den for so long, this abomination likely has a stronger reign over his subconscious than normal.” Akeno hummed, leaning her head into her hand in a way that a finger played with her lips. “Fufu. How curious. Well, of course I’ll help. How can I turn away a chance to put our adorable dragon into my debt so he can behave?”

“Koneko.” Rias turned to her Rook. “I know you don’t like physically interacting with him, but with your recent Ki training with him you’d know how his internal energy works better than anyone here. You’d be a great help to us.”

“… Fine. If it will make him less of an ass.” Koneko mumbled after a few seconds of reluctance. “He better pay us back with something decent after this.”

“It’s Sempai. He’ll think of something. And then relate it to porn in some way, but he’ll think of something.” Gasper replied with some trepidation.

“You’re supposed to convince me to help, not change my mind.”

“You two just go to my bedroom. I’m likely going to be teleporting the both of us there when I find him. For obvious reasons, I’m unable to warp us into his room. He’ll likely pass out on the spot if he’s as stressed as we think.”

“Wait, why don’t you want me there? Not that I’m complaining.” Raynare asked confused.

“Because we’re trying to make him relaxed and sleep well.” Rias replied factually.

“And?” The fallen was still confused.

“When was the last time you two held a conversation without any underlying threats of some form of assault? Sexual or otherwise?”

“Oh come on! That’s profiling! Virgin tits tries to at least verbally molest him every other hour! Why aren’t you holding her back?” Raynare pointed to Akeno absently.

“Hey!”

“Yes, but unlike you, how often does she actually intent to follow through with her teasing?” Rias skeptically lifted an eyebrow.

“Rias!” Akeno faltered with a blush, not used to being put on the spot like this.

Raynare retreated with a lazy wave. “Right. Forgot. Coward won’t do anything even if she’s given the chance.”

“I’m pretty sure if anyone tried to do anything with Sempai, they’d die. Horrifically.” Gasper interjected absently while sparks started to dance around Akeno. Judging from the looks on the Queen’s face, she was having an internal debate on who she wanted to zap first.

“Everyone knows that already Gaspy.” Koneko blandly chided. “Only an idiot would try otherwise. Which is why Rias-sempai doesn’t trust the old dusty hag.”

“Say that again Furry!”

“Kiba, Gasper, can you two make sure that the cabin remains intact while I go get Issei? It shouldn’t take me too long.” Rias sighed as she got up and ignored the potential disaster unfurling in the room.

“Sure, but how do you figure it won’t take long?” Kiba frowned. “Issei’s loud as hell, but that’s usually when other people are around. If he wants to be alone, it’s a pain to find him.”

“Because I sent out my familiar to look for him earlier, and she’s already found him.” Rias got up and smoothed out her skirt. “Just be ready for me to get back. I don’t mean to brag, but I think I’ve gotten pretty good at getting him to calm down and listen to me lately.”

“I’ve heard homeless people in America say the same thing about their pitbulls.” Raynare deadpanned.

Rias paid the fallen no mind as she walked out the building and made way to the part of the woods where she knew Issei was trying to be alone.

She didn’t know that it was also where he was trying to reshape a boulder with his head.

Thunk.

Crunch.

“Fuck!”

Thunk.

Crunch.

“Fuck!”

Correction. Succeeding in reshaping a boulder with his head. Now he was just trying to imprint his face into it.

“DAMN IT!” The Sekiryuutei swore as the stone broke under the force of his thick skull. He must have hit it particularly hard given the amount of blood that was coming from his cut skin, but it didn’t stop him from holding onto the base of the remains with frustrated infused rage. “What the hell is wrong with me!? I’ve done working binges longer than this at least a dozen times!! Why is it so hard this time!?”

**“That was when you were stable.”** Ddraig’s voice chided. **“Jasmine was around then as well. You’re out of your house isn’t helping matters. It’s affecting you more than either of us thought.”**

“I’m not even doing anything that hard!” The teen snarled. From her angle, Rias could only just make out his bloodshot eyes and the deep bags under them. “I’m just training them! In mostly the basics at that! Why am I going nuts?! I can barely be around any of them without biting someone’s head off!”

Fortunately not literally, though it did take a few hours for Gasper to recover from the brief chewing he got yesterday. It was that incident that actually prompted Rias to take the initiative on the issue.

**“You know why partner. You have trouble getting rest as it is. This extended trip away from familiar territory is picking at something both of us were too negligent to notice.”**

Thunk.

This time Issei didn’t seem to bother attacking the poor rock and merely settled for resting his skull against it while letting his legs collapse and drag him down the side. “Ha. Haha. You’ve got to be joking. It’s bad enough that I’ve been reduced to this pathetic mess, but now I can’t even leave my home for longer than a day without getting *worse*?”

The stone where he gripped it began to shatter in his hands, unable to handle the weight of his frustration.

“What the hell am I even doing anymore?”

That was as much of a cue for Rias to step out into the open as any. “You’re trying.”

“… And now I can’t even notice when the Weeb is stalking me.” Issei bitterly laughed. “Well, at least it’s not the cougar. Might actually have to stick to the no witnesses rule with that one.”

“For my image’s sake, it was my familiar stalking you. I just followed her instructions here.” Rias maintained her usual confident air as she approached him, though a bit slower than she normally would. “You look like you need more help than normal, Issei.”

“And we came here for the opposite. Ironic.” He bitterly mumbled, not bothering to look up at her.

“I’ve learned to expect things to twist in peculiar ways whenever you’re around. This is no different.” She squatted down next to him, not at all bothered that she was giving him a clear view of her underwear and thighs in the process. In fact, if the view did manage to distract him she’d consider it a boon. “When was the last time you got any rest Issei?”

From this angle, she had a good look at his face, and she’d be lying if she said he was as expected. Apparently Issei had managed to scrounge up some spell or porn trick to hide just how terrible he looked when he was with everyone else. He had gone past looking deranged and was now flat out sickly.

“Dunno. Forgot. S’all a blur.” He muttered, avoiding eye contact and focusing on the boulder he had been abusing. “M’tired.”

“Can I try something?” She asked carefully. “I promise, I’m just trying to help. You look terrible.”

“Gee thanks.”

“Give me your hand.” Since he didn’t flat out turn her away, she assumed that he was giving her the benefit of the doubt.

“Sure. Don’t see what you can do though. I’m crap at magic, but I’m pretty resistant tooo…”

Thump.

While Issei was dismissing Rias’ attempts to help, she had taken the initiative and moved his nearest hand to grab her left breast.

Judging from the fact that he had immediately passed out upon contact, she assumed that her suspicions were on point.

That said, it was slightly awkward that despite passing out, Issei had yet to actually let go of said breast.

“Well that was easy.” She laughed nervously, slightly leaning forward so that he wasn’t stretching her chest.

**“Only because Partner is in such a frail state. As peculiar as his disposition is, even he wouldn’t normally pass out with such minor stimulation.”** Ddraig chided, still awake and aware of what was going on.

Fall into a blissful delirium and start rambling nonsense about the glory of oppai, more than likely, but not pass out.

“I’m going to take him back to my room so we can rest more comfortably. I hope you can help keep him calm once he wakes up. I know he doesn’t like having his quirks being taken advantage of, but he really is in a bad state.” Rias turned him over to get a better look at his face and grimaced. It was going to take more than a night of rest to recover from this.

**“So long as you do not take advantage of him more than you already have, Gremory.”** Ddraig’s tone turned slightly malicious.

“Even if Issei isn’t a member of my peerage, I still intend to treat him as if he is one. In case you haven’t noticed yet, I have surrounded myself with problem children that I love all dearly, and I doubt that is going to change anytime soon. I have no intention of taking advantage of anyone I care abooouuut!” The Gremory heiress staunchly held her ground. Or at least she tried to until Issei began to unconsciously grope her chest in a way that sent tingles all over her body. Somehow, most of which were located particularly in her lower body.

Jasmine was right. He was really good at this.

**“Humph. So you claim. Just don’t say I didn’t warn you.”**

“If you thiiiiink that Issei is going to push me away simply because he’s a bit goooood DIFFICULT! I mean difficult, you don’t know me that well.” Below the pair, a sigil with the Gremory mark began to glow, indicating that they were about to teleport. All things considered, it was impressive that Rias could manage to summon up the spell while being stimulated as much as she was.

**“You are mistaking the source of my warning girl.”** Ddraig’s voice echoed in the woods just before the spell took effect. **“It’s not partner you should be keeping an eye out for.”**

Ddraig didn’t speak again after that.

The rest of the day had gone as Rias had planned. She, Koneko, and Akeno had laid Issei down in Rias’ king sized bed and took a nap beside him.

All of them woke up in different locations in his subconscious, and eventually with some effort, they managed to push, blast, and punch away the white specter that was haunting him, if only temporarily. That said, even Rias could tell that it was stronger than the last time she encountered it.

The rest of the night went by peacefully as the three rested against the curled up dragon in the back of the cave. It had taken Akeno and Koneko some time to get comfortable enough to approach it, but eventually they realized that Rias was right. Issei wasn’t going to hurt them, and he was surprisingly warm and comfortable to be around when he was relaxed.

Even better, the girls all felt unusually energized and rested when they came to next to Issei. Even more outstanding was that, outside of a momentary minor moment of alarm where he almost threw all of the girls off of him in a blind panic, Issei was for the most part quiet and docile for almost a full day.

He was even reasonable enough to only blind everyone at most twice with the daggers stolen from Kiba that day instead of the usual half a dozen… though he never explained how he managed to get his hands on them despite the fact that Kiba never made them after the first few days of training.

That said, Rias was still curious about something that had taken place.

In Issei’s subconscious, Koneko appeared at the mouth of the cave, and Rias was near where Issei had been…

But Akeno had been sent somewhere else inside the cave. Although she wouldn’t say where for some reason, it seemed to confuse her as much as everyone else. She would only say that she appeared somewhere that she apparently wasn’t supposed to be.

It was the same for the three other times they managed to sleep with Issei that week. No matter who was there or who wasn’t when they all rested, Akeno was always appearing in that peculiar corner of his mind that she wasn’t supposed to.

It was odd, and they all wanted to know what was going on, but it was not important right now.

They had a rating game to win.

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