

I don't own high School DxD or HP.

I would like to announce a small correction in chapter 29. One rather stupid in my opinion. I mentioned Sirzechs wanting to use his two Knight pieces to help contain/transform Typhon into a devil. That was wrong, as I had already mentioned previously that Souji was still alive. The line is meant to read "Better make it two mutated Knight pieces on your part, to pair with all my pawn pieces."

There was an even sillier mistake later in the chapter, which physically pained me when I found it. Onee-sama. UGH.

Sorry for the mistake, guys and girls.

This has been edited by me, with Grammarly, Nad Destroyer, and HP-DG-AP-PN-RG-NR. Yet even so, there may well be mistakes. This is a very large chapter, after all.

Chapter 32: One Problem Solved(?), Another Found

As she watched the gathered leaders of the Wizarding World pass through the Floo to Egypt, Rias kept a somewhat wooden smile on her face, although only those closest to her, who numbered only Koneko at present, would see the smile as wooden at all thanks to the years of courtly and political training she had been given by her family. Rias's demand to speak directly to the ministers of every ICW country had not gone smoothly from the start. Even having the Mugwumps create portkeys to the Wumpus Chamber hadn't been easy, as there was a continual Anti-portkey ward on the Ivory Tower. At first, she simply thought it made more sense to do it that way rather than using the single Floo connection out in the garden. But it didn't.

So, Rias had to shift her plans and meet each of the Ministers as they came through. Deciding that she wanted to make things seem as normal and peaceful as possible, she demanded the Ivory Tower's wards return to their normal setting, then had the locals repair the damage done to the gardens. The Floo entrance was set back to its normal place nearer the tower, and the bodies of the two Greek Chimeras were taken away.

Well, in a way. The Nundu was still munching on them somewhere, happy to not attack anyone so long as it had food. Rias did have to deal with Koneko's patented pleading kitty eyes when it came time to shoo the giant, normally extremely dangerous animal back into its pen. Rias knew she would have trouble convincing Koneko not to take the giant critter as a new familiar but thankfully could pass off that problem on future-Rias for now.

Eventually, they were ready, and with the Wumpus brought down to the now -peaceful-seeming gardens, the first of the Ministers was called in. Alas, it had turned out that Rias's hope to start with an easy one, Harry's acquaintance Kingsley Shacklebolt, had been in error.

Striding out of the Floo, Shacklebolt had taken in everything within a split second, then locked his gaze on Rias. Whether it was her presence or the fact the Wumpus was there in the gardens around the Floo waiting for him, Kingsley knew something was wrong.

Two wands suddenly fell into his hands from very carefully concealed wand holsters and on his wrists and suddenly, Rias had not been facing a head of state. Rather, Rias had been facing a Special Forces operative who had twice survived wars against Voldemort and his Death Eaters. "I do not like being called here under false pretenses! You have precisely three seconds to start explaining!"

The fact that he didn't add an additional threat to that simply gave his countdown more weight, but Rias was not one to be so cowed. Nor was Cú, and the Irish demigod nearly started an incident when he suddenly blurted forward towards the man. "Finally, someone with a spine! Hours of fecking talkin', I've gotten bored!"

Shacklebolt surprised all of them by seemingly tapping 1 foot on the ground, and suddenly, he was covered by a Protego. His shoe immediately began to sizzle, the runic array set on a stone layer within burning off the surrounding leather and rubber. But it lasted for just a second, slowing Cú's first strike down to where he could be seen by normal people, and then his wands were up, pointing at the wildly grinning Cú.

Things would've gone sideways quickly if not for Rias teleporting Cú's charge back to where he had begun, with barely a flicker of one of their teleportation tunnels. Indeed, her shout of, "Dammit, Cú, bad dog! We don't want to fight here anymore!"

Cú snorted yet backed away, and slowly, Shacklebolt lowered his wands. He couldn't dual cast like Harry or Tonks, but he could cast very quickly from one hand then the other, so the difference was minuscule. Yet he wasn't about to start throwing spells without knowing what was going on here. "The fact that you don't want to fight me is one thing, but it looks as if you seemingly have decided to try to take over the Wizarding World by removing the ICW. I hate to inform you that won't stop us from fighting back! And if you kill me, you'll have..."

"The Hit Wizards and Auror of magical Britain coming through in numbers, yes, that's obvious. But, Minister Shacklebolt, how much would that help against someone who could make Tom Riddle her bitch?" Rias growled, hamming it up a bit, but not really. In terms of raw power, she dwarfed Harry's old enemy, after all, even if his insane number of spells and the three Unforgivables would have allowed him to fight back. Besides, after the day she'd had talking to these old men, Rias had felt that she was allowed a bit of sass.

Shack's eyes narrowed, and he finally looked at her, taking Rias in as an individual rather than as a threat. "You look like the rumored Mrs. Potter; would that be correct? I don't see Harry around anywhere."

"He's still recovering from his latest bout of people saving, and I tend to take the lead on political matters anyway. Now, are you willing to set your wands back into their holsters and listen to why I am wielding the hammer, or would you like a further demonstration of said hammer at the moment? The Wizarding World's recent assault on the non-magicals of Egypt still has me quite annoyed despite several hours of discussion, and I have been trying to be diplomatic up to this point."

"I'm sorry, what?" Shacklebolt looks to the British representative to the ICW, his brows furrowing. "What do you mean by assault on the nonmagicals of Egypt?"

Rias turns to look at the ICW, then the chief mugwump. "So, you all unilaterally made that decision without even telling the heads of your constituent nations?"

"This body has the responsibility and power to act in any manner we see fit to defend the Wizarding World as a whole and does not need to consult with the presidents, Ministers or Merlings out there. Further, this was a crisis..."

"We actually did not call it that, legally speaking," Roberto had interjected, cutting across his German replacement, his tone dust dry. "We called it a disaster. But my colleague is correct. Shacklebolt has no legal leg to stand on for his anger towards us. In fact, since Egypt was a part of Magical Britain, and we had to step in, he should be grateful for the help we gave... prior to the latest tragedy, of course."

Shacklebolt grumbled a bit but nodded. The ICW did really have a lot more power in the Wizarding World than the United Nations did in the non-magical realm. While he didn't really know a lot about the United Nations, that was the comparison that practically every Muggle-born made, along with jokes about how much fewer nations the Wizarding World had in comparison, which made everything run far more smoothly. "Sorry, I suppose that was my internal Auror's response instead of my response as a minister. To know that my former colleagues were used in such a manner is..."

"Then you will be happy to know that many of them did not go along with things. Proudfoot and the majority of his people refused the order to join the Hit Wizards that made up the majority of the assault into Alexandria, and he and a large portion of the Aurors, Kshatriya and Shinsengumi already on hand helped to fight them off," Rias answered quickly hoping to move things along.

“Which mitigated the utter cockup that attack was,” Mittelt stated dryly from where she was leaning against a wall nearby. “Unlike the people the ICW sent to their deaths, they understood entirely all too well what kind of powers they were fucking with.”

Shacklebolt looked over at the young girl, who he had at first simply ignored due to how young she looked, only to now do a doubletake realizing with a start that the wings behind her were not from some strange creature standing directly behind her or a mural of some kind, but were flapping lazily as she leaned there, her arms crossed and looking back at him with a very... **direct** look.

“Why do I get the impression that my wife would not like me to be talking to that young girl?” He murmured, feeling very uncomfortable and wary at the same time.

“Probably because the term ‘aggressive jailbait’ just went through your mind,” Rias drawled. “Don’t let her young looks for you. Mittelt is a fallen angel, and she is a good deal older than any of us here.”

“Rub it in why don’t you, Devil Tits,” Mittelt grumbled. Regardless of how much she had grown in terms of learning wizarding-type spells, tactics, and being given an outlet for her love of creating costumes and so forth, the original reason why she fell in the first place, Envy, was still quite strong in Mittel. It probably would be with the childish-looking blonde forever unless someone figured out a way to somehow give her the body that aging should have been were she a human girl.

Shacklebolt blinked, staring at the girl, specifically her wings, then over to where Koneko stood. She hadn’t moved, simply staring at him, a large red gauntlet that was setting off all his survival instincts, instincts that had seen him survive some of the sharpest battles against Riddle in his first rising and more than a few in his second to tingling, on her arm. “She’s got cat ears. Cat ears, wings that look like those of a crow on one woman, and a man that moved so fast that I could barely track him beyond the first twitching muscles and then you... Mrs. Potter,” He turned back to Rias.

With a faint smirk on her face, Rias allowed her devil wings to appear again. She’d put them away a few moments before having no need to continue to remind the people she was speaking to of her inhuman status at the time.

Shacklebolt found himself staring again, this time at Rias’s leather-looking wings, which flapped behind her lazily. “I am getting the impression there’s far more going on here than just someone trying to take over the ICW. And can I ask whether or not your husband would approve of that action?”

“I think he would, considering the ICW’s own actions of late. But the why of my actions or my own background isn’t so interesting a story that I wish to explain each time a Wizarding World leader comes through the Floo,” Rias stated. If you wish to get more background, you can ask your Mugwump or read the packet Hermione prepared.”

Hermione was only just now coming out of the Ivory Tower. She had stepped out to speak to several of the Ivory Tower’s defenders, explaining much of the same thing to them that Rias had been explaining to the Wumpus, only perhaps with smacks upside the head added in.

“Now, please sit,” Rias instructed, gesturing to the prepared chairs nearby. “You’re but the first of many ministers that are going to be coming through. Eventually, all of you will be.”

That stunned Shackbolt almost as much as the rest. The ICW did not summon ministers to the Ivory Tower lightly. But to have completely overawed the Wumpus to the point that they went along with that, that was saying something. Shackbolt reevaluated everything again, deciding that Rias was not just some kind of Asian heiress with an inhuman lineage who had allied with others of similar ilk. No, there was something deeper going on here.

What he had seen so far from her wasn’t altogether beyond what Wizarding World magic could do, but... There were his instincts again. Instincts that were telling him this woman was dangerous, that red gauntlet on the young cat girl’s arm was dangerous. Indeed, all of them were dangerous, especially the spear-wielding man who had moved so fast a moment ago. *And are his wode tattoos glowing? Potter, what didn’t you tell us about that issue in Ireland? I hate being blindsided like this... but I need to go along with things for now.*

“Very well. I will sit and wait for that explanation,” the large black man stated before bending a little bit. “But realize that if I do not send back a message to my people in Britain within fifteen minutes, they will assume that something has gone wrong here and will send a protection detail through to try and rescue me or at least discover what is going on.”

“In that case, please do so now. Meanwhile, Hermione has a packet of information for you...” Rias drawled, to which Shackbolt chuckled. His chuckle turned into a loud bark of laughter a moment later when Hermione used a copy spell on the news article she had prepped previously, handing him the new copy.

In contrast to Shackbolt, dealing with some of the other leaders was easy. Most of them were annoyed at being summoned in the first place and already shouting when they came through, glaring around to try to find their Mugwumps. But then they understood that she was the one calling the shots, they became willing to listen to what Rias had to say. Her takeover of the Ivory Tower cowed most, although more than a few needed further examples of her power before they lost their automatic bombast at being so summoned.

The minister for Portugal was by far the easiest to deal with. He was another elderly gentleman, very much like Roberto, and instead of posturing or threatening, he merely bowed grandly from the waist towards her, stating that he “had heard of Mrs. Potter’s beauty, but to see it in person is another matter entirely.”

Rias had smiled at him, then when the man asked what exactly was going on here, Hermione handed the man a packet to read while they waited for all the other ministers to arrive. The packet and the news he wasn’t the only one coming through to speak to the Wumpus startled the man, but a look towards Roberto had seemingly calmed him down. Since then, the two men had moved to the back of the crowd, sitting in some of the chairs the wizards and witches had already transfigured into being, talking quietly, joined by several other ministers and their Mugwumps in groups.

It appeared as if Roberto was doing something, helping to ease things along, which Rias was more than thankful for. What that was eluded her, but she was willing to let the man wheel-and-deal for now.

There were only two other issues, and amusing to Rias, only two women among the various heads of state. One was the minister for France, a middle-aged, energetic-seeming woman who cursed in French for several moments at everyone there, but when Cú took her wand from her, she subsided. When she finally listened and heard that Rias was Harry’s wife, she simply sighed, muttered something about Potter under her breath, and was willing to wait along with the others for the last stragglers to arrive before demanding an explanation. Whereas the leader of Magical Poland (which included a large segment of the Baltic) was a stooped, wrinkled Valkyrie of a woman, who even in her old age had wider shoulders than most women Rias had met and was one of few in the room who could match Shackbolt for height.

As for the two problems, Getting the President of MACUSA to come through had been somewhat annoying. The man had almost completely refused to do so until a series of forms was sent back and forth through the Floo. And when he arrived, the American tried to intimidate her, although, unlike Shackbolt, not personally. Instead, he had tried to bluff about the sheer numbers of Auror, the second largest magical community in the world could call on if anything happened to him.

But that faded when she finally got a word in and was able to introduce herself as Mrs. Rias Gremory-Potter, much to her amusement. His eyes had lit up instead, and he had gone along with things from then on, looking almost chipper, as if more than happy to talk to Potter for some reason. That made all of Rias’ political instincts stand up and take notice, but she didn’t follow up on it just yet.

Similarly, Germany had come off as quite pompous and was not so easily cowed. The German Magischer Regisseur (Magic Director) was one of the younger leaders, and he, like Shackbolt, had Auror training. He started a fight almost the second he saw he was being greeted not just by his nation's Mugwump but by dozens of others who looked like foreign combatants.

After blocking a few spells sent her way with her version of a Protego, Rias dealt with this easily and abruptly. When he rolled into what he thought was cover, the German man found himself rolling over and into a teleportation tunnel. The end of which dropped him out into the sky above the Ivory Tower several hundred meters up. The man's screams were distant but coming closer, as everyone there looked at Rias in shock.

"What? The man was annoying me. And I won't let him go splat. Blood is one of those annoying stains," Rias quipped, smirking. "Mittelt, could you retrieve him for me? And confiscate his wand."

Snickering, Mittelt flapped her wings and rose through the air smoothly. She was still visible when he grabbed the man out of the sky before dumping him on the ground a moment later. "Huh. Downy Oak, I've seen trees with that bark before. Neat pattern, too," Mittelt hummed tauntingly, holding the man's wand up. "I think I'll keep this until you can learn to behave."

In contrast to the two problem children, the other leaders of the Wizarding World ranged from pompous to exhausted. For the leader of Magical Sweden, which incorporated a lot more of Northern Europe than the nonmagical nation did, this seemed to be a relatively recent development, a man just exhausted from the sudden surge of work the recent dragon attacks had caused. The Greek leadership was simply **tired** like he just wanted to curl up and will the world away, which, from what Hermione had told Rias of the trouble that had engulfed Greece, was fair enough.

The Bulgarian representative needed a brief show of the power of destruction when he suddenly tried to whip out a wand and bring it up to point at her face after playing nice at first. Ready this time, his movements had seemed slow to Rias. Before the wand had been halfway out of its sheath, a pinpoint accurate Power of Destruction had sliced the wand in half, destroying both wand and holster along with a portion of his robe.

The Sorcerous Margrave of Spain and Маг Диктатор (Magi Director) of Magical Austria and Bulgaria were easy. The Spaniard looked almost as tired as the Greek leader did and as uninterested in making waves. The Magi Director of Magical Austria and Bulgaria, which was a fairly large territory, although one with a very small number of magicals in comparison, was simply willing to listen.

And yes, Rias wondered why the nation was called that, rather than a single name if they shared the same government. No, she didn't ask. Honestly, Rias felt it would be something silly enough she would lose brain cells if she tried to understand it.

The various countries for magical Africa were similar, although they quickly formed into a clique to one side, watching Rias and everyone else along with their Mugwumps and Wumpies. Africa had several nonvoting representatives to the Wumpus like Japan, although most of them didn't normally bother showing up to meetings at all.

After having gathered all of the ministers, of course, Rias had to pretty much redo the original presentation that she had given to the Wumpus. Luckily, most of the listeners had read the pamphlet Hermione had prepared by that point, so she didn't have to go through everything in terms of the Three Factions and so forth. Essentially, she pointed out how badly the ICW had attempted to handle the catastrophe in Egypt, the scale of the emergency in Egypt, and then how they would need to pay reparations for what they had nearly caused in their latest debacle.

All of that had been in keeping with what, by that point, the ministers had begun to suspect. However, when she demanded that they go through and meet with the nonmagicals in Egypt personally, not through the ICW, but themselves, to understand what was going on personally, she got some pushback. Which ended abruptly when she released her aura and stated that anyone who disagreed with Cú would simply drag along. His cackling enthusiasm for that idea simply added to the threat.

There was a reason for this, several, in fact. If Rias had just wanted to make it clear how huge the problem in Egypt was, how big a mistake the ICW had made, she wouldn't have even needed to call in the various Ministers. If she hadn't needed to start the process to bring together the Three Factions and the Wizarding World in peace, she would not have needed to go so far as to bring the Ministers through to Egypt all at once. A few weeks of small meetings would have been enough.

No, there were other reasons for this issue, and Rias very coolly dealt with all the protests as she thought of those reasons. One, she needed to deal with what she thought of as the societal lack of interest and empathy that the Wizarding World evoked in those who never left it to the nonmagical world. Even during the waiting for various Ministers, Rias had heard of a few of the other natural disasters going on being described as a nonmagical problem, although... oddly not by the MACUSA President. That was something she had noted but hadn't commented on. Rias knew they had to start fighting against that in order to force the Wizarding World to join their efforts to try and aid the world as a whole.

Second, Rias wanted to force the ICW to actually talk to the various leaders on the nonmagical side in Egypt. Bringing them to Egypt put some offsetting power in the local's hands, evening the playing field with the magicals.

And third, somewhat tied into the second, Rias needed to make it very clear from the outset where the power lay now and where it would remain going into the future. Rias and her people's takeover of the Ivory Tower wasn't a fluke or something that could be ignored. The balance of power as the leaders of the Wizarding World knew it had changed and was not going to change back anytime soon. The Wizarding World might have the numbers, but they did **not** have the power, even when it came to dealing with the Kuoh Group rather than the expanded mystical realm. At best, they were equals, something the ICW as a political body and the WW as a society were not going to enjoy realizing.

The leaders of the ICW needed to realize that now and start to create the means with which to interact with the Three Factions. While their wards might protect the WW, knowledge of its existence would continue to spread, and with it, demons and fallen at least would seek out means to interact with them. Official lines of communication needed to be created to make certain that groups like the Khaos Brigade could not continue to take advantage of the differences between the various magical worlds.

Getting the large crowd of delegates and aged leaders from Proudfoot's office in Lighthouse Lane to the exit out into Alexandria proper didn't take much time. The glares and silent scowls from the few locals around who recognized the politicians following Rias were telling, although several of the Mugwumps and ministers glared back. As if the local magicals were at fault for not towing the party line, Rias had mused at the time.

Luckily, there weren't enough people out and about at the moment to cause a scene, and after a few moments of shock at the sight of the two golems on guard there, she was able to get them out into Alexandria. There, they found two more golems, one at either end of the street, marching back and forth. At both ends of the street the opening led out into was a row of transfigured stone and sandbags, blocking off the street. Egyptian soldiers stood there, watching the newcomers with gimlet gazes, while above, Shinsengumi floated on magic carpets. Lining the rooftops were Aurors, who also gazed down at the leaders of their world with unwelcome stares, only calming down slightly when Hermione, Loup and Suzaku waved at them.

Rias and the last of the group came through the warded entrance into Lighthouse Lane just in time to hear Harry Potter's words, the booming thunder of his voice from above as the sense of some massive magical release washed over them from a distance. "...men and women alike, to consider it. I urge you to take it. So that we, you, my clan, and the people of Egypt will

stand together going forward. We have survived. We will continue to survive. Now is the time to think of the future and imagine how bright it can be working together!”

While many of the leaders had come out of Lighthouse Lane in time to hear more of Harry’s speech. Those who had listened to his words had either winced, frowned or scowled. His words hadn’t been very complimentary to the ICW or the Wizarding World. Further, the idea of a single individual, no matter how powerful, offering some kind of deal to get around the Statute of Secrecy was horrifying. It struck at the very concept of governmental control and the ICW’s society, making many of the leaders and Wumpus alike think of the bad old days before the Statute of Secrecy. When powerful wizards and witches had been able to carve out their own fiefdoms. Others were more thoughtful or were smiling, as Kingsley and Roberto were, although why was anyone’s guess.

Yet any such thinking, positive or negative, was wiped away as a feeling of powerful magic going on nearby rolled over them all. Very, very few wizards or witches could sense magic normally. It took something monumental for most to feel a magical spell or effect. But it happened now, even though the magic involved had nothing to do with wizard-type magic. All of the magicals looked around wildly, wondering where that spell had come from.

Rias was stunned, too, while Koneko was staring around, Ddraig talking into her head at what he was able to sense. *He said something about the Nile. Given what Yasaka and I could figure out about what was going on there, that makes sense, but... Harry, what have you been up to!?* She thought, fighting back the urge to cackle.

“Whatever’s going on is making my hair stand on end,” Shacklebolt murmured. “What is Harry up to?”

“A lot, it seems, and... hair? Really? That must be uncomfortable considering where exactly that hair is located in your case.” the young German quipped, staring up at the taller man’s bald pate. The young German had bounced back from his attempt to take up skydiving without a parachute quite well.

Before the rest of the group could fall into mutters, Rias clapped her hands loudly, bringing their attention to her, fighting hard not to laugh like a loon at the fact her husband was indeed recovered. “Well, that was nice. But as I don’t know where my husband is currently, I’m not going to lead you lot all over the city trying to find him. Instead, I think we will take a simple walk through the city to where the Alexandrian government and military are currently headquartered.”

The German man and Shacklebolt both nodded and, along with a few others, including the MACUSA president, instantly tapped themselves. A moment later, their clothing transfigured into more normal attire for the non-magical world. A suit and tie in one case, and

jeans and button-up shirts in many. Not quite good for the weather here, but normal enough to pass. Shorts and T-shirts also made a few appearances and would fit in even better.

Everyone else attempted to do the same, and Rias spent a few silent moments simply smiling in enjoyment at both their attempts and Harry's words, while Mittelt seemed to become more and more affronted, and Suzaku and Cú both snickered. Even Cú understood that none of these oldsters would be able to blend in, but their attempts to come up with what they thought of as non-magical clothing were hilarious, only ending when Hermione, bless her, took charge, barking out suggestions and orders quickly.

Setting aside her amusement at that, Rias went over the words she had heard, and thinking about their meaning, she was more than pleased. Evidently, despite the two of them not having seen one another since before the crisis in Egypt began, they had been on pretty much the same page.

Heck yes! It will take years, maybe even decades, but the upside of that deal is too good to ignore. An entire new society in Danan built both on magic and technology. The best of both worlds, with Harry as the door warden to halt any attempt at bringing in the bad. I know it won't be a perfect system, and I imagine that when we demand there are no attempts to convert dwarves or even one another to Christianity or Islam that might cause an issue. But that will be well down the line, I think, and I believe Harry and the rest of us will be able to nip that kind of thing in the bud.

Although, I do wonder what the splash of magic I felt was. It felt almost like a Blessing, but I have no idea what the actual spell was, and even being able to discern what kind of spell it is is possibly down to the spirit of Aine Fand's effect on me. That, and it has to do with the Nile.

Once all of the wizards and witches with her were properly clothed so as to not stand out with help from Mittelt and Hermione, Rias got them moving once more. Luckily, the fumbling and mumbling when it came to transfiguring clothing that would let them blend in, and perhaps how old most of the Mugwumps and leaders were, had worked to take some of the anger out of the defenders. The magicals still watched them warily, but the rest did not.

Pushing past the defensive bulwark around Lighthouse Lane, Rias directed the large group into the greater city beyond. There were at least fifty delegates and leaders there, and keeping the whole lot moving was somewhat akin to herding cats. Thankfully for Rias, aid soon arrived in the form of some of the Himejima clan and a few Kshatriya under Rama. He, the Indian Mugwump and the Maarg Khojane Vaala (Seeker of Paths) instantly fell into a side conversation in their own language. After a few seconds, they even put up a Mufflatio, which blocked Rias and the other Devils from being able to follow the conversation. Still, Rias wasn't worried about the Indians.

Rather, she was somewhat appalled at the reactions the other delegates were showing because within a few blocks, it was obvious that the first point she had wanted to make by dragging the Mugwumps and the ministers out into the non-magical world was going home. Only Kingsley and about four, maybe five others, were not staring around agog at the size of the buildings and the number of people who were out and about.

It was quite telling that of these men and women, the leaders of the International Confederation of Wizardry, only ten of them seemed to be semi-at home with how much larger, denser, and so forth the nonmagical world was.

And if that was something, moments later, the sight of the huge and rapidly growing garden around the Nile River was something else entirely. *Well, if I had wanted to make certain they knew where the power lay in this new relationship, I think Harry just showed them, Rias thought, schooling her own expression with difficulty as she took in the dozens of bushes and fruit trees growing within seconds from what had been mainly regular roads or tiles around the river Nile.*

Around her, the wizards and witches did likewise. Even those who knew a lot about herbology had never seen anything like this, a whole garden erupting from concrete, tile and dirt from where they stood out and out along the Nile. Rias somehow knew that the growing green garden spread not just through Alexandria but all the way down the Nile. *A Blessing indeed. My brother and Ajuka could have provided the power for a spell like that. Hell, I might be able to now. But to craft and guide it? No. No Devil could have. No Fallen or Angel, either. And my husband, **my** Harry, did this!*

Pride and joy nearly had her grinning, but Rias kept control of her emotions for now. She stood there, smiling faintly instead of the bright grin she wanted, watching as the Mugwumps and leaders moved forward. She even smiled when one of the Africans started to argue with a local over a specific orange from a tree, only for another orange to appear on the tree a second later.

Rias let them all gawk or grab some fruit along with the nonmagicals, then coughed delicately and gestured. "Ladies and gentlemen, we still have several blocks to go before we arrive at the command center. Could we please start moving again?"

Kiba's arrival, along with several Shinsengumi, was enough to get the gawkers going.

By the time they reached the command center, though, Rias realized she had somewhat overestimated how much time the journey would take and how quickly the wizards and witches' habitual arrogance would come back to them. Rias could even hear a few of them mutter about how numbers didn't matter. Surely the nonmagicals would consent to have their

memories altered if they knew the alternative, the horror of what the world knowing about magic would mean?

She didn't squash them just yet. They would have time for that if the locals didn't do it for her. Thankfully, most of those mutters were in English or in some other foreign language, and only a few they passed by seemed to understand English at first.

Amusingly, the next moment to smack the ICW members down didn't come from a local nonmagical or Rias. Instead, it happened after the large group was passed into the command center. Soon after leaving the glowering guards at the entrance behind, Rias found Sona. Her friend was heading to the door, possibly on a mission of some kind.

Sona stopped and smiled at her Rias, but before she could say anything, one of the oldest magical leaders, an African Head Head Shrinker (which was the weirdest name Rias had heard for a head of state that day) and one of the ones who was most out of shape barged his way forward, glaring at what he thought was a non-magical menial of some kind.

This might be because Sona, for some reason, was still dressed in her school uniform. Rias wondered if it was a fetish at this point because Sona always wore it even on days off if she got the chance and it was appropriate.

"You, there! I demand a glass of cold water!" the old man barked. "Or at least a glass of some kind to put water in. I suppose I can do the spell work myself or wate--"

He couldn't, as his wand had been confiscated when he tried to make trouble back at the Ivory Tower at one point when Hermione gave him the information packet.

Now, the African man's words ended in a gargle as, without even a gesture, Sona summoned up a bolt of ice-cold water from her finger, which shot into the man's face. It was so cold that it was almost turning into ice before it hit the man, showing that Sona was starting to develop the magical skills that had made her big sister into a Maou.

The fat man stumbled back, crying out in surprise and not a little bit of pain at the bits of ice mixed in with the water. "Normally, I would be far more even-tempered. But do not order me about like I am some kind of serf. I am an heiress to a proud devil clan, just like Rias. Anger me, and I will not be so gentle the next time." Sona then smiled, a thin, glowering thing. "Although I trust that you are now cool enough?"

Stepping forward from the group of delegates, Roberto cleared his throat and asked politely for Sona's name, bowing from the waist and apologizing for his companion. "Some of us have not been out and about as much as we should, and the heat here is quite beastly for those not used to it." That many of the Mediterranean representatives had dealt with the heat easily wasn't something commented on, although their sudden smug smirks at their fellows were

amusing, as was the fact Kingsley and the Swedish man had changed their pants to shorts at some point.

Nor was the fact that they had done so the reason why none of the others who were used to colder climates had thought to use spells to keep cool. One-upmanship was a game played on many levels, even among the elderly, who really should know better.

“My name is Sona Sitri, sir, and I will reply with courtesy to those who are courteous,” Sona said, smiling slightly at the old man before turning to Rias. “You no doubt saw what your husband’s been up to. He should hopefully be stopping in here soon. From what I heard a few moments ago, I don’t think that he and the local leaders talked about dropping that bombshell on the public. Not that I disapprove of the move. But I am off to hopefully make certain that that new garden isn’t abused in any way.”

“I don’t think you’ll need to worry about that here in Alexandria. I saw dozens of police and soldiers already setting up a watch. But you’re right, someone should make certain that none of the locals try to chord or try to take over the garden segments elsewhere,” Rias sighed, shaking her head then smiled and set aside that very minor issue. “But if you could return here in about an hour or so? We might need someone of your analytical frame of mind in future discussions. Or to hurl at other problems.”

“Yes, indeed, I will tackle the problems of the world with a battle cry on my lips and a calculator in hand,” Sona drawled before smiling a bit more brightly than a moment ago as she nodded her head over at Rias and the others. “I would also be interested to know if any of these ladies and gentlemen have ever been teachers in the past or, when everything else is done, would be willing to get me in touch with some. Harry is one thing but given all the duties he’s probably going to need to assume, I doubt that he will have time to teach in the future. We might need to think about recruitment for the school we had proposed to build in Kuoh.”

Rias blinked, then nodded, inwardly surprised and amused. The fact that work had begun on the foundations for that school occurred to her then, reminding Rias of their earlier goals before everything had begun to get bigger and then bigger again and again after leaving Japan. Yet several of those around her looked interested, and she smiled faintly, hoping that Sona would be able to see her dream of opening up her own school fulfilled in the future.

Unfortunately, they did truly have other things to deal with now, and after a few moments of conversation on that score, Rias looked up as two military officers came towards her from deeper in the command center.

“Miss Potter, we were wondering what was keeping you. We’ve set aside a large conference room if you would mind coming with us, ladies and gentlemen.” The fact that the officer’s tones went from warm and respectful to cold and demanding as they looked over the

crowd was not lost on any of the wizards. Several of them got their backs up at being talked down to like that by nonmagicals, yet with Cú, Kunou, Kiba, Mittelt, and several of their own Aurors there, none of the Wumpus or the ministers made trouble.

Shacklebolt once more impressed Rias then. Straightening his shoulders a little, he saluted the man in a very military fashion, thanking him for his time before gathering British Mugwump with a gesture and moving down the hallway. The German Magic Director followed this example, and soon they had helped Rias and her people to chivvy along the rest once more.

Within the amphitheater they were led to, the ministers found several of the local politicians waiting for them. But other than warm greetings for Rias, they did not say anything. Evidently, they were willing to wait instead of speaking to the wizards and witches, glaring at them hotly.

Rias spent the next few moments speaking to the locals. They were soon joined by the military officers she was much more familiar with, General Sala and Abraxas, who both greeted her in their own ways. For Abraxas, this meant a firm nod. For Sala, a laughing reminder that his wife wanted Rias and Harry over for a meal at some point when this was all over. Rias laughed at that, then smiled widely when Yasaka came in, followed by a currently human-form Tiamat. Yasaka was in her kitsune form, complete with eight tails wagging behind her and long foxlike ears, while Tiamat still had a multi-colored tail sticking out the bottom of her skirt.

The two of them filled Rias in on everything Harry had done since coming through the portal. Yasaka told them that he would be there soon but had wanted to send Kunou and Lily back to Danan for a bit. Asia had also wanted to be dropped off at one of the hospitals before Harry came to talk to the leaders again after his announcement to the public. "We also thought that taking some time to come and meet with them would let Sala and the others get a sense for what their officers were thinking."

"Good idea. I was busy with this lot as we walked through the city, but I think most of the people were intrigued and happy. Happy about the garden, or rather ecstatic. And a lot of talk about the deal he was thinking of." Rias's lips quirked into a smirk. "That certainly threw a fox into the coop when it came to the WW lot."

"Ugh," Yasaka boomed before brightening. "Good. Maybe we can get out of this without still more conflict somehow. Keep them off balance, and this might go smoothly."

Rias nodded at that, her eyes flicking over to Roberto and the people he had gathered to him. They were mostly among the older members of the Wumpus, but there were a few leaders there, too. She wondered what the man was planning but didn't say anything.

And a moment later, Harry finally arrived.

As he entered the room, Harry made no effort whatsoever at first to control his aura, and only a few of the delegates were able to stay on their feet longer than the second after his arrival. Then he started to rein it in as he smiled at Rias. The love in his eyes was returned wholeheartedly by Rias's own, and Rias knew she was smiling at the man, at her **husband** like a schoolgirl with a crush.

She didn't care. It hadn't honestly been that long, barely a few weeks in subjective time since the last time the two of them had seen one another. But there had been so much crammed into that time it felt much longer to both of them.

That, and the pallid, utterly exhausted state Rias had seen Harry in last had not been pleasant. Seeing him up, brimming with energy and vitality, made Rias very happy... and think of ways to put that energy to good use, which had nothing to do with politics. Glancing at Akeno, Yasaka and the others told her she wasn't the only one, and the look in Harry's eyes as they flashed down her body told Rias that Harry would make no objection to those plans.

But as with Sona's dreams of a future school for magic of all kinds, now was not the time for personal things. Rias shook her head and instead moved to lean against the wall behind Harry as he moved towards the podium at the front of the auditorium-like conference room, sending smiles to Akeno and Yube, who had arrived with Harry. The pair of them moved to either side of her, with Kiba, Loup, and Rama surprisingly joining them along the back wall behind Harry. Bill Weasley also hurried in a second later, standing with them with a slightly wind-swept Tonks hurrying in as well, the Metamorph's hair flashing bright pink and purple in delight at seeing Harry.

Looking at the assembled leaders of the Wizarding World, Harry could only sigh very faintly, girding his loins for further political BS. That done, Harry placed his hands at the small of his back, standing at almost parade rest as he gazed around him. "Ladies and gentlemen. Can I trust that my wife has informed you of the depths of your stupidity in sending forth wizards and Hit Wizards to attack the people of Alexandria?"

"We were not attacking! We were attempting to instill proper order and authority so that the Statute of Secrecy..." The New Chief Mugwump began.

"By killing people and adding to the death toll? Your Hit Wizards didn't pull any punches, and I am proud to say our defenders responded in—" the Alexandrian Mayor began.

"They wouldn't have died if you nonmagicals knew what was best for you and..." one of the African leaders jumped in.

"Enough!" Harry growled, allowing his aura out, silencing those in the room before arguments could continue. "You were in the wrong. Only arrogance and stupidity can excuse

that act, especially when you knew we were already working with the local nonmagicals to try and mitigate the disaster that has occurred here in Egypt. Hermione, Kalawarner and Padma told Chief Mugwump Lyle about what was going on here. Instead of attempting to work with the locals, you, Mr. Kingler, forced a change of government and attacked the Egyptian people out of fear!”

Harry glared at Christian Kingler, who fought back a flinch, not knowing that Harry had gotten his name prior to coming here from a few of the Shinsengumi who had questioned the prisoners. Those prisoners had all been returned to the Ivory Tower by this point, but the information they had gleaned was still helpful.

“You didn’t even bother to coordinate with the Aurors, Shinsengumi and Kshatriya that were already here. You simply thought that they would fall in line the moment your glorious conquering army came through, not caring that they knew more about what was going on here than you did. Thus you, sir,” Harry made the word a sneer which finally Kingler’s courage broke, and he looked down, terrified. “are directly responsible for the deaths of five hundred men here in Egypt and almost as many on your own side. If I had my way, I would be offering your head to the Egyptians right now.”

Even Sala looked pleased at that idea, while Mayor Abas looked as if he would be willing to wield the blade himself. Thankfully for everyone there, the one political leader who was dumb enough to mumble, “But they’re just mugg—” had his voice silenced by his neighbor before the words could carry far.

Harry glared around the room, and none of the magicals bar Shackbolt and the young German minister would meet his eyes for more than a moment. The American President and several others tried but looked away after a moment. “But in the interest of making certain that relations between the nonmagicals and Wizarding World don’t get any worse, I won’t demand your head. I will, however...” and here, Harry looked over his shoulder at Rias, his gaze warming for a second before he turned back, “probably reiterate a position Rias has told you. Reparations for the dead must be made. And agreed on now before we deal with this disaster and the greater crisis all of Earth is currently facing.”

Those words brought many a frown to several of his listeners, but the Swedish Minister held up his hand. Harry nodded his way, his glare disappearing at how exhausted the man looked. “While I cannot condone the way your wife and your... forces? Group? Whatever you wish to call them. While I cannot...” the man yawned before going on, “condone the way they launched an attack on the Ivory Tower, I understand we were in the wrong. But I have to ask, why are we here? Me and my fellow leaders?”

Those words made many of the Egyptians in the room blink, not having heard of that. Some, Sala and Abraxas chief among them, had heard the Wizarding World was dealing with other attacks, but not anything specific.

“I agree with my fellow Minister,” The Italian rep stated. “If your problem with the ICW is with this latest act, then they should be here, yes. And perhaps Minister Shacklebolt, as Egypt is a part of Magical Britain. You mentioned a greater threat. What is it? Is it tied to the people behind the dragons that attacked cities in my country and others, and is that why your wife demanded we come here?”

“It is indeed.” And here, Harry explained about the real problem facing the world: that there was too much magic in the world, that the physical framework of the Earth could not stand it. He didn’t explain everything, figuring that the idea of Ophis (or gods still being around) was a bit too much, even to those who already knew about Tiamat. Although he did explain it away as part of a plan from the terrorist group, the Khaos Brigade. *Better to bring up a clear threat, a clear target than the fact the issue facing the world is being created by a single, out-of-this-world dragon-turned-little girl.*

Even shortened like this, it... did not go over well. The nonmagicals instantly began to point fingers, even Sala losing his cool, shouting and pointing at the wizards and witches and even Harry’s group, pointing out how it was their fault. Similarly, many of the ministers and Mugwumps shouted at Harry, declaring him a liar, shouting how there was no way that was what was happening. Even France and a few other countries who had dealt with natural disasters because of it could not believe that too much background magic could be responsible or at all a bad thing.

The only one who did not was the MACUSA president, and after a few seconds, he released a Firecracker spell into the air, causing everyone to flinch and stare at him. The middle-aged man stood up, straightened his suit and nodded firmly towards Harry. “Mr. Potter is right. While I have no idea how Mr. Potter realized this, my own wizantists have proven the dangers facing the world beyond a shadow of a doubt. The Background Magical Index has risen to the point where it is impacting the physical world. All the disasters were seen across the world, all of it is stemming from magic flowing back into the world, a world that simply can’t handle it. We were hoping to speak to you on that score, Mr. Potter. We feared something similar had been happening in Ireland, and we knew that you had been able to deal with it there.”

“We did. And because of that, we... might have a solution.” Harry didn’t look over at Cú or Akeno, who would be involved in figuring out that solution, even if they didn’t know it yet. “Given how we, Rias and I, have brought together so many different magical disciplines, we might be almost uniquely positioned to come up with a solution.”

Roberto had sat silently throughout this discussion and the arguments. Now, as the rest of the world fell silent in shock at having heard someone unaffiliated back up Harry's claim, he glanced over at his minister. Receiving a small nod, Roberto held up a hand, standing up when he was recognized and moving forward through the chairs between him and the front of the room. That wasn't necessary, but no one stopped him, as he asked Harry, "Harry Potter, in your words, when you say that you are in a unique position to tackle this crisis?"

Rias frowned, her eyes suddenly narrowing as she looked at Roberto, wondering what the old politician was planning. Harry just nodded. "Yes. I think we are the experts on it. We were perhaps the first to realize there is a problem at all, and we are, as I said, able to bring together so many magical schools, that we can attack the problem far better than anyone else.

"Then you are indeed an expert in this field and bring to the effort a power base that none in the Wizarding World can match. And in your opinion, is this crisis an emergency that is a clear danger to the very survival of the Wizarding World?" Roberto asked, again enunciating each word carefully. "And further that you believe you are the best chance to solve this crisis?"

Wondering about why he stated it like that, Harry frowned, then shrugged his shoulders. "Again, I cannot imagine anyone else could solve this problem without the various magical schools my clan and I have brought together."

"But you would say that you are the best individual to lead that effort?" Roberto persisted.

"... Yes," Harry answered, still frowning, while Rias's eyes narrowed, thinking this had all the markings of a trap about to spring, while the nature of the trap eluded her.

"In that case, Mr. Potter, you leave us no choice." Roberto suddenly smirked and knelt down in front of Harry as if he were some kind of ancient knight before his lord. Ignoring the grunt of pain from his knees, anyway. "Ave Imperator! To save the Wizarding World, the nations of the Wizarding World must speak with one voice. I declare Harry Potter our temporary Emperor to lead us through this crisis as set down by the statutes of the International Confederacy of Wizardry's initial Senate, back in the days of the Roman Republic."

For a moment, everyone stared at Roberto, and then the American Mugwump laughed, hopping to his feet and then kneeling next to his chair. "Excellent! Someone who can actually solve the problem needs to lead us, and this rather neatly sidesteps the whole issue of whether or not Mr. Potter is the head of a new state that merges the magical and non-magical worlds!"

"I hadn't even thought of that. But yes, this works!" the MACUSA president was quick to follow suit, exceedingly happy that this would now be someone else's problem.

“I remember there being quite a bit of pushback at the idea of using that clause during the rise of Grindelwald, but I agree. There needs to be a single leader. Only one cook in the kitchen often makes a far better plate,” the previous chief mugwump, the German who had bungled so badly when he went to his knees as well. If part of that was done in the hope that the full weight of that fiasco wouldn’t fall on his head on a political level, no one brought it up at the moment.

Seeing Harry’s confused expression, Kingsley smiled, and stepped forward explaining before going to his own knee. “In ancient times, back when magic was used more freely, and the Wizarding World was just starting out, there were a dozen statutes set into law. Most have faded, but some, like the Statute of Secrecy, are still in place today. This Statute allows the various magical communities to elect a single leader to lead them in war or to deal with some specific crisis. That is why Roberto harped on that singular term. That term is a legal label, and this is a legal precedent, one that is as old as the Statute of Secrecy. With it, we basically state that there’s not going to be any more political maneuvering amongst us, there’s not going to be any backlash or anything else. You order, and we obey, Harry. Until this problem is solved, until things go back to normal across the entire world, Harry Potter, you are now our leader. Our Emperor for a day, as it were.”

Hearing this, Harry could only stare at them, never having thought that was a possibility. Then he looked over at the doorway, where Luna stood with Padma and Hermione. Hermione stared back, just as surprised, but after a second, she seemed to think deeply for a moment, going through her mental library before nodding in shock. That meant this was indeed a law buried within the ICW charter.

As for Luna... well, she was grinning like a loon. As if everything that day had been building up to this moment. *Well... when she said I would be a captain to the entire Wizarding World, she wasn’t kidding,* Harry thought, allowing his lips to twitch into a wry smile.

Then he turned back to the crowd, looking at the Egyptians. They all looked either pensive or accepting. Most seemed to think this a good idea or had nothing to do with their problems and were simply watching, waiting.

Looking over at all the old men and women who were now arguing amongst themselves at Roberto’s declaration, Harry sighed but stiffened his shoulders. The past day had been good for him to get over his responses to the idea of having such responsibility, such authority. And he could feel Rias stepping up beside him, then reaching over to take his hand in hers, squeezing it. He could look back over at the doorway and see Akeno, Yubelluna and even Yasaka there. All of them would support him, and he knew it.

So he simply nodded his head and then transfigured a set of chairs for himself and Rias, settling into them and stapling his fingers as he stared at the Wumpus and the various other politicians, magical and not. "Very well. I accept this authority. We have a lot of things to do to set even Egypt right, let alone everything else. Is there some kind of ceremony? And is there a reason why you all are kneeling?"

"Not a ceremony, but an exchange of oaths, and the kneeling is a part of it. We, and through us, our constituents, agree to follow your commands and orders during the crisis. In turn, you agree to set aside your powers once the crisis is past, as decided by yourself and a group of our making. At that point, we will hopefully have already set in place a means with which to deal with you and your ideas for this Danan place, and Egypt in general, to say nothing about open lines of communication between us and these Three Factions that won't create too much disruption for any of our cultures," Roberto stated.

Harry and Rias exchanged a glance, both of them wondering how long Roberto had been thinking about this.

It actually hadn't been all that long. Rias's words to the Wumpus hours ago had brought it to his mind at first, but it'd taken some time for the idea to percolate and a consultation with his own minister before he remembered the exact wording. But the former Chief Mugwump couldn't be happier as he watched Harry nod and hold out his hand, gold and white light beginning to gleam in long tendrils from it as he prepared to both receive and give his oath.

"In that case, let's get this over with. We've got a lot of work to do."

Scene break

Harry had not just left Asia and Lily with Yasaka and moved to talk to the local leaders again. He had been very worried about what the influx of deific-based power would do to his two demigod daughters, and he, Yubelluna and Yasaka had examined them as best they could before giving them pair a clean bill of health. Asia's strange etherealness was still present, but beneath that, she seemed the height of health. Yubelluna was astonished and gratified to notice that Asia also seemed to have a limited sense of plants. She was able to tell beforehand when several of the Nile Garden's bushes were about to bloom and eventually began to help Yubelluna in organizing the area around them with her accompanying troopers so that this sudden bounty would not cause fighting or other issues.

The changes in Lily were much more obvious and a bit more worrisome. She was at least an inch taller, and she was way stronger physically than before. This seemingly carried over into tests on how strong the pair's magic was. Lily's Stupefy was stronger than most Hogwarts seventh years, and Asia's was only marginally less so. The worrisome part was how much energy and emotional control Lily had. She was far more animal-like in her phoenix

werewolf form and even acted on a brief spurt of anger, trying to bite Harry's hand when he stroked her the wrong way like a wild wolf would. But Harry hoped that with time, training and maturity, those problems would fade away. Thankfully, the issue only seemed to affect her in werewolf form, and Lily also seemed put off by it.

With that in mind, Harry had no issue with sending the two kids back to play and hang out with the children at the orphanage for the rest of the day with Yubelluna to guide them there. That was a hard sell, as both girls wanted to stay with him. To them it felt like weeks since Harry had been up and about. But that faded when they learned he'd need to discuss things with "Smelly old people who really should know better. And this time, there won't be a nearby forest for you two to get lost in, luvvies."

At that point, both girls were more than happy to go and have fun with Sala's youngest and the others working or being looked after by the orphanage.

As for Asia, she had Ironsides and the platoon assigned to her by Sala still. Even with Kala in no state to fight (or, in his opinion, walk around, but he wasn't about to try to force her to leave Asia's side at this point) Harry felt comfortable enough with letting his oldest daughter travel around the city when she asked for permission. With the garden garnering so much interest and the overall reconstruction efforts, it was highly doubtful she would be mobbed, even if Asia attracted attention wherever she went.

Although, Harry had neglected to realize that there would be thousands of people wondering about the 'deal' he had mentioned who might want answers. This, along with her own fame, gathered more than one crowd as Asia walked through the ancient city.

Thankfully, Ironsides proved to be as good at dispersing crowds as he did at being a very visible defender. "Users Asia and Kalawarner *FZZZZKK* do not know what kind of deal King Potter *FZZZZKKK* has offered to your political or military leaders. Please step *FZZZZKKK* aside!"

Lowering her hands from where she had covered her ears a moment ago, Asia smiled as the crowd pressing into her platoon of guards finally began to disperse. "Thank you, Ironsides. That seems to have done the trick." *He's louder than I am with a Sonorous!*

Turning to Kala, Asia gestured to her throat, and Kala obliged by using the Sonorous spell on her for the third time since they left Harry and the Nile behind them. With that, Asia stepped forward between two of the guards, her voice loud enough to carry through the noise of the city and the crowd around them but not nearly to the extent of Ironside's voice a moment before. "If you have specific questions for me or Kalawarner-san, we will be happy to answer them. But as Ironsides has said several times, I am not involved in the political side of things at all."

A goodly portion of the crowd around them began to fade at that, and Asia hoped that rumor would carry her words forward.

But there were still a few dozen who pushed forward. They shouted questions about Harry in general, Asia, the miracle, and Asia's background. Many of the questions had to deal with magic too, and Asia's thoughts on whether or not there was any truth to the fact that magic would corrupt the soul. That was new, but Asia supposed she shouldn't have been surprised. Both Islam and Christianity spoke of how magic corrupted the spirit after all.

Still, that hadn't been Asia's experience, and she spoke now on that score. "Magic is mainly just another tool," she said more than once in the next forty minutes, "One that allows us to see more of the user's soul than most as it can be so easily abused. But that is down to the user, not the tool. There is dark, corrupting magic out there, but only if you look for it. And really, again, it comes down to the user. Using magic will not force you down that dark path. You must choose. If there is already darkness in your soul, or you wish to abuse magic for your own gain, then that is what you will do."

Meanwhile, Kala was answering questions of her own. A few were deep and interesting, such as how she had become involved with Asia and why they had become so close, or what Kala thought of faith, the Church, Islam and even Judaism. While that was the most thought-provoking, she preferred the questions about cooking that began to be tossed her way the moment she spoke of how many centuries she had enjoyed that activity.

Finally, though, Kala decided enough was enough, and she nodded to the platoon leader. At that, and with a quiet word to the golem, the group began to move once more, pushing them through the still existing if far more polite crowd. Asia was still of two minds about needing such guards but decided once more to go with things for now, seeing as the crowd had started to disperse.

Near the hospital that was their target, another crowd accumulated around them, but this one dispersed more easily. A few shouted questions about Harry were answered by Ironside's imitation of a malfunctioning bullhorn, and a few minor questions directed their way about magic, and the crowd started to part to the point where Asia caught a side of blue hair and paused in her efforts toward the hospital's entrance, waving.

The two exorcists, Irina and Xenovia both waved back at her, although Asia rather guiltily admitted to herself she had only seen Xenovia. *Irina might be, well, prettier than her friend, but she doesn't stand out nearly as much in a crowd.* Seeing the pair move through the dispersing crowd towards them, Asia smiled and looked over at the guard detail's commanding officer. "If you could let those two through, please? They are acquaintances of ours."

The officer nodded, and when the two exorcists reached the cordon his men had formed around Kala and Asia, with Ironsides at the back, Irina and Xenovia were let through without any trouble.

Xenovia spoke up the moment the pair were close enough to hear one another whisper, asking bluntly, "Is it true what they're saying? Is it true that you, you lost God's gift?"

Sighing, Irina raised a hand to high-five Asia in greeting. Honestly, she would have preferred a welcoming hug, given how horribly drained the former Holy Maiden had looked the last time she had seen the younger girl, but they weren't close enough for that. *And honestly despite how happy and energetic she seems, Asia also looks like a good strong hug would break her in half, somehow. Or cause her to just sort of pop out of existence like a ghost,* Irina thought, staring at the younger girl.

Where before Asia had seemed a young girl full of energy and vigor, her skin glowing with health and her one blonde streak in her black hair vibrant with life, now she looked... odd. The blonde streak was gone now, the hair shifting into silver. Her black hair had lost some luster as well, and her skin looked pale, almost parchment thin. Yet for all that she looked happy and seemed to still have a lot of energy and strength to her. It was a very odd dichotomy.

Shaking those observations away, Irina spoke up in apology for her friend. "Please excuse my companion's attitude. I truly believe that God forgot to include the area of the brain that includes tact with He made Xenovia. But that is the rumor going around the city. That you, that in bringing the two of us and so many others back, you lost God's gift, your Sacred Gear."

Her friend's words brought Xenovia up short, and she looked ashamed of herself for a moment. "Er, yes. Thank you, Asia. Without you, both Irina and I, and our companions, would all be dead, our body's energy drained away by those cursed pillars."

Yet even as Asia smiled in a somewhat shy way at that, she continued on. "We owe you a lot for that. And even more so if in bringing us back as you did so many others, you lost God's gift to you."

"You are welcome, but I do not think of it as losing God's gift. That implies I laid it aside or had it stolen from me," Asia mused, not backing away from the topic even as her habitual smile turned a little sad for a second. "I believe that I used Dawn Healing appropriately. But, like in anything, there is always a limit. I pushed past even the limit of a Sacred Gear to the point where even my own soul could not survive without damage. Dawn Healing is gone, but I am still here, partaking in God's greatest gift, that of life itself."

Asia had nearly an entire day by this point to get over the loss of Dawn Healing. Although there was a part of her that would always miss Dawn Healing, and her body would

never fully return to what it once had been, Asia had decided to move on from that loss. "God's true gift is simply that of life itself and the ability to choose. Anything else is simply greater joy added to that."

For a moment, the simple happiness, the humble way Asia spoke those words took Iris and Rachel's breath away, causing them to look at one another. "Well, that is an amazing attitude to have, Asia! I am happy you are happy then," Irina said with a smile, even though she wondered if she would have the strength of faith to think so if she had lost a Sacred Gear, a part of her very soul, as Asia had.

Xenovia had moved on to other matters. She'd already had her crisis of Faith and come out the other side and was also always more practical than Irina anyway. Leaning in closely, she whispered, "We had a third member from the church. But while the two of us didn't have a Sacred Gear, he did. And he has yet to recover as you have. Do you think he might be suffering as you were? And if so, will he ever recover?"

Asia blinked in shock, looking over at Kalawarner. Kala leaned in, and after being brought up to speed, she nodded. "Yes, Dulio, right? I remember him. I don't know much about him, Asia."

"Sir Potter stopped in to speak with us but couldn't tell us anything at the time," Irina interjected. "But it certainly feels like Dulio may be facing the same thing you were. If you recovered..."

Asia shook her head regretfully. "I am afraid my recovery has more to do with my blood as a Potter than anything else. I believe Dulio may recover, but it will probably be months or years rather than weeks, as in my case." Given how long she and Harry had been in Danan and the time difference Lily had set the Undertaking to, that time frame made sense to her.

Kala was much less positive. "I remember seeing how Issei looked when he had Boosted Gear torn out of him. I remember how you looked like when Issei first returned you to Alexandria. I don't think that normal people can survive the damage done by losing their Sacred Gear, girls. If Dulio's Sacred Gear is truly gone, then he might never recover. I'm sorry, but it's best to realize what you might be dealing with."

Both exorcists winced at that, as did Asia, looking apologetic at the twosome. The two exorcists both looked at one another, the thought passing between them as to what the Church would do with Dulio. Even setting aside the fact they might not be able to tell the Church any real details about what went on here in Egypt, the loss of the Sacred Gear would... well, it would cause issues. Issues that might stop the Church from looking after Dulio as he should.

Before they could say anything, Ironsides suddenly shifted, leaning down and putting both forearms down in front of Asia as two loud cracks cut through the noise of the city and the slowly dispersing crowd. A pair of bullets slammed into the golem's armor instead of Asia, and the platoon dropped, grabbing Kala, Irina and Xenovia and dragging them to the ground to provide smaller targets.

"Snipers, two of them! Top of that four-story building. Second and third, five shots rapid fire!" the platoon officer shouted.

His men obeyed quickly, firing up at the top of the building, uncaring of the shrieking and fleeing civilians all around them. They were followed by a series of Light Lances from Kala, who pushed to her feet, glaring up at the building, unafraid. "Those were Light bullets, the weapon of exorcists," Kala remarked even as she hurled her Light Lances forward. She grunted then as several of them faded out quickly, showing how weak she still was from her experience with Crucio, and then grunted as a bullet found her side. But Kala was a fallen and far tougher than any human. The bullet's impact smacked her off her feet thanks to her general weakness, but couldn't penetrate, and the Light blessing on the bullets did nothing to her, as they would have if she were a devil.

"There is no will but that of Allah!" several voices shouted, and three Aza'imi leaped out from another building.

But if they expected the locals to be fully focused on the two shooters, they were wrong. Even as Asia stared between two of Ironside's fingers, one of the platoon's other fire teams fired at the incoming attackers. And while Aza'imi, like most exorcists, were tougher and faster than most humans, they couldn't dodge bullets. One went down to a shot through his open mouth while the others faltered, the impacts of several dozen bullets apiece halting them in place even though they did little harm.

By that time, Irina and Xenovia were also moving. Before Ironsides could raise a hand to fire one of his energy weapons at them, both Aza'imi were tackled to the ground, where the quartet began to wrestle around, shouts of, "What the hell are you doing?!" and "Down with the False Saint!" abounding.

Hearing that, Asia winced. *It looks as if there will always be those who attempt to label me as such and others who outright reject the very idea. I should have seen something like this coming, I suppose, given the differences between my personal faith and that of Islam, but even so...*

Above her, Ironsides flicked one hand away from her body, the armor covering his outer forearm shifting. One of the crystals that Rias had experimented with storing Power of Destruction in appeared there, and with a *FZOOM* sound, a thin beam of energy flashed out,

cutting through the wall the platoon had been firing at on the roof from where the first two shots had come from.

“Second breach, third cover fire!” the platoon commander ordered.

Grumbling, Kala pushed herself to her feet and moved over to the fighting quartet. None of the regular troops were willing to fire or close with the exorcists. But as Irina found herself pinned under the larger and stronger man she had tackled. Kala slammed a chop into the back of his neck that just barely avoided breaking bone, sending him collapsing on top of Irina, his body spasming in aftershocks. Pushing through her exhaustion and now the pain coming from her body at her recent hasty movements, Kala kicked the other Aza’imi in the side, breaking ribs and letting Xenovia gain the upper hand. Within seconds, she had the second Aza’imi in a headlock, choking him into unconsciousness despite his broken ribs.

“What in the name of Father was that about!?” Kala growled, hauling both girls to their feet before swaying unsteadily, a gasp of pain going through her. If not for Asia racing to her side and putting an arm around her waist, Kala might have collapsed.

“I, I don’t know,” Xenovia muttered, staring down at the man she had been wrestling with. “These are members of the Aza’imi, the Islamic exorcists we’ve been working with since arriving in Egypt! I knew they were even more prone than I am to using violence as a first option, but even so...”

Ignoring that moment of startling introspection, Kala shook her head. “Well, I expect you lot to clean this up, whatever it is. If the Aza’imi have decided Asia is some kind of threat to Islam or whatever...” she gestured around them at the crowd. The angrily muttering crowd. “Then not only will the locals have issues with that, but Harry and the rest of us will, too. That isn’t a war they want to fight.”

“I will try to figure out why they thought this was necessary,” Irina answered before looking over to the building, where the fire team that had entered had just sent a runner back out to signal the all-clear. It appeared as if Ironside’s attack had dealt with both of the shooters. “And try to explain to them... in small words if need be... why it was necessary.”

“Good.” Kala nodded and, surreptitiously leaning against Asia, directed the girl back to Ironside, who led the way forward, his dome-shaped head on a swivel now as he gazed around them for possible danger.

Thankfully, they reached the hospital without any further incident. The hospital had its own small team of defenders, a squad of regular troops and several Aurors on the lookout for trouble on the first floor, with a few police roaming the interior.

There Asia stayed for the next few hours, helping as best she could, fetching and carrying and learning from everyone. Both magical and not. Just because Asia no longer had Dawn Healing did not mean she had lost her desire to heal others. As evening began to fade, she approached one of the Healers she had worked with before this. "Excuse me, but how do you go about becoming an apprentice Healer?"

Scene break

Although Asia had come face-to-face with the fact she might have stirred up a tiny bit of religious crisis among the Egyptians, the actual threat to her life passed so quickly it wasn't even brought to Harry's attention until well after the fact, by which point, Harry knew that they already had defenses in place to deal with this issue. Any more would be overkill and pull him or Rias from the much-needed political talks. Nor would Asia have thanked him for hovering over her so protectively when she already had defenders.

This proved to be quite accurate. With Ironsides protecting her along with Kala, neither he nor any of the others had to step in to defend Asia, even later that night when a single Aza'imi attempted to assassinate the former holy maiden.

Ironsides didn't need to sleep and stayed in the same room Asia did. When the Aza'imi attempted to open her window, he found himself in an iron grip and then quickly choked into unconsciousness before being handed over to Irina and Xenovia. On top of that, several far less coordinated attempts to get near Asia by various religious fanatics were halted in place by the local Alexandrian population itself well before anything could happen.

Harry was a bit concerned about possible backlash in the future when Egypt began to once more interact with the rest of the world, and the shift in tone of the faithful here, both Coptic and Sunni Islam, became widely known. Harry also doubted that Egypt itself would stay the same, specifically the idea of making certain any new law matched Islamic Law.

But at present, there just weren't enough religious fanatics any longer who would dare to strike at Asia or any of the others to bother him, Rias or the rest as they deal with a laundry list of meetings. Thankfully, after only a few more hours of discussion and oath-taking with the various ministers and Mugwumps, most of them had returned home. And with the return of Tonks from her little hunt, Harry was able to delegate things.

First of all, Hermione became his main spokeswoman for the magical side of things. Harry gave her the equivalent of plenipotentiary powers after the initial round of oath-taking and discussion. It would be Hermione who would draft and ratify the reparation between the Wizarding World and Egypt, overall nonaggression treaties, trade treaties between the Three Factions (or at least two out of three) the Kuoh Group and the Wizarding World, and further information pamphlets for the Factions about the Wizarding World and vice versa. It wasn't the

kind of research that she enjoyed most, but Hermione, with Fleur, Bill (they both had written contracts for the goblins occasionally) and Yubelluna for her expertise on the devil law side of things, felt that she would have a preliminary round of information packets and treaties within a few weeks.

Meanwhile, Tonks, Husukai, Charlie and Proudfoot, and, to Harry's surprise, Issei and Irina volunteered to help with another very particular project. Their job was to create a rapid reaction force for the international Confederacy of Wizards and the other magical societies. Eventually, they would bring in youkai, devils, exorcists and so forth to make it a truly international (if magical) force, to say nothing about nonmagical troops.

Their task would be to help across the world, dealing with the natural disasters occurring due to the buildup of background magic and especially any animal breakout. None of them were under any illusion that they would be able to stop any such disaster from occurring, but they might be able to get on the scene fast enough to cut down on the death toll with the various means of magical transportation available to them. This would be a somewhat long-term project, and it would take a good deal of training, but luckily for everyone involved, Harry had access to Danan and could open it up to allow them some training time.

It fell to Harry and Rias, the two who, along with Asia, were most loved by the Egyptian people, to hammer out the magical binding spell that he would use on Egypt as a whole at that point in order to keep the secret as to what happened in Egypt in the first place. First, they had to figure out how to do it, which, with Harry's access to the Nile River, was immensely easy in comparison to anyone else attempting the same thing. He also had power to spare now, given all the faith-based energy he had taken in recently from the river.

(That had obviously been a revelation to Rias, and not because it made Harry stronger. She had seen Harry taking energy into himself from the Undertaking before this and knew that he had become more than human then or when he conquered the Hallows, so becoming stronger through taking on the faith of others was within the realm of possibility. What wasn't was the fact that Lily and Asia had both partaken of the same power-up. When she first heard that Rias had raced off, she worried about how that had affected both girls, ignoring Harry's reports on that score.

With evening well upon them, Rias had taken a few hours to examine Lily and Asia to make certain that the two of them hadn't been hurt or changed in any way from taking in so much deific energy. Luckily, Harry's first thoughts on that score had been correct for both. Although the sight of Lily wrestling Koneko on an almost even footing, at least in terms of pure strength, in her phoenix werewolf form was a bit of a surprise.

With there being no impediment in terms of ability to put the magically binding spell in place, all that was really left was the wording of the spell, something Rias returned to help with. That, and getting the Egyptian people to willingly agree to be put under the Geis in the first place. The Egyptian politicians were still debating that point, but Samuel and Abraxas had both stated that they felt it was a done deal. It was only arguing for argument's sake at this point. The knowledge of the greater danger to the Earth coupled with what Harry was offering them in terms of Danan, it was simply too good for Egypt as a whole to ignore going forward. But they wanted to understand how their people felt about it and head off as many problems as possible in the future before finally agreeing.

Meanwhile, a few of Harry's first Emperor-style orders had already gone into effect. First, the ICW ordered hundreds of magical engineers and architects from MACUSA to help in the reconstruction efforts. With the rest of the Aurors, Shinsengumi and Khstraya on hand to make certain the magical engineers worked with the locals rather than look down their noses at them, and Rias's network of dimensional tunnels, Sona's peerage (those on hand, anyway) and Harry's extended clan were no longer needed to help with any of the actual reconstruction efforts. The only one still on basic security duty to keep the peace between the nonmagicals and magicals was Kiba, with his Balance Breaker, Glory Drag Trooper. Situated in Cairo, he provided added security and a bulwark between the more obdurate members of both the locals and the magicals in a way that the local political leader was somewhat loathed to do.

Because of this, by the time evening fell on the second day after Harry had become 'Emperor' of the wizard and world, Rias and Harry had decided to fully pull their clan and their devil-type allies out of Egypt. With Luna and several dozen fairies, dwarves, and the fal stone, they would still be connected to Egypt, but they didn't need to be here on hand to deal with any of the smaller issues any longer.

While Rias was organizing this withdrawal, Harry had a few small discussions with Yubelluna, who would be joining them later, Hermione, Tonks, Bill Weasley and Luna before having the first of two, more much more important meetings. Well, one was a real meeting. The other was more of a discussion, one that had to happen before the group pulled out of Egypt.

Harry walked into the hotel room where Kuroka was still being kept, cocking his head thoughtfully as he looked at the woman lounging on the sofa. He ignored the fact that she was barely wearing a loose set of boyish shorts and a white T-shirt, somewhat startled at how accurate Rias and the others had been when they said that Kuroka had lost a good deal of her looks when her powers had been stolen from her by Nefertiti. Gone was the vitality, sensual energy and body that was a mix between sexy older sister and tomboy. Now, she was just somewhat plain.

Not just her magical energy, not just her soul, but her very being, her Ba, her spirit and spiritual abilities, had been stolen from Kuroka, and her body showed this deprivation. *It might be slowly recovering, but it will be a long road of recovery for her I fear.*

Shaking that thought off, he knocked on the door frame, announcing his presence, although Kuroka had already begun to look in his direction before he had done so. “MMm... Well, well, Harry Potter, nice to see you again, nya. I don’t suppose you’re here to interrogate me, are you? With someone as handsome as you, that sounds kind of fun, nyaa.”

“I don’t think so. For one thing, I don’t go into that kind of play except with Akeno. For another, I have more than enough women in my life already, thank you,” Harry stated dryly, moving to sit in a chair facing Kuroka, idly noting she had been reading some Egyptian children’s book about a magical animal of some kind befriending a boy. “I’m here to examine you, to see if my deific powers will allow me to see and do something about the binding placed on you. I’m not going to promise anything, but I want to try.”

“OOOh.... So, instead of playing captor and captive, we’re going to play nurse and patient? Fine by me, nyaa!” Kuroka exclaimed.

“Sorry, didn’t bring a nurse’s outfit. Dressing up like that is more Rias’s thing than mine. Also, I’m sorry that Koneko isn’t with me right now. She decided to spend time with Lily and Kunou, as she knows that you will be transferring with us to Kuoh. Once there, I highly recommend that you do not do anything that can in any way be construed as a threat or danger to anyone who lives there. The wards we have around Kuoh are not kind to strangers, and unless you’re near me or one of the others who were part of emplacing them, I doubt anyone would be able to stop them from doing something... precipitous.”

While Kuroka was nodding her head, Harry frowned, staring at her. Looking at Kuroka, he could sense her slowly, incrementally restoring magical reserves, her Ba slowly repairing itself. Harry could also sense foreign magic situated around her throat and up her esophagus to her mouth. “I think that is my being able to see the geis on you,” he explained aloud. “Unfortunately, I don’t think I’ll be able to do anything about it. I could try to overwhelm the magical matrix I see with my own magic, but that would undoubtedly be **incredibly** painful for you and might not even work, considering what Rias said about the oath draining your magical reserves in order to empower itself. Waking the curse up and dealing with it won’t help, either. That’s what the others tried. No, I’m very much afraid that the only way to remove that from you is to get the individual who put it on you in the first place to remove it.”

Kuroka shrugged as that was more or less what she had expected. “Well, we know how to settle it down, at least, if we accidentally activated when you ask a question and I try to answer, nyaa. So I’m okay with that, so long as there’s no sign that Ophis or someone else could

reach through the oath and..." She drew a long nail across her throat to indicate what she meant, although even as she did so, Kuroka's eyes sparkled mischievously. As if she knew that wasn't on the cards.

"But with that out of the way, if there isn't anything specific we can ask you about the Khaos Brigade or its organization, tell me more about Ophis. How did you two meet? What is your opinion on her, and who among the Khaos Brigade do you think is most devoted to her, and who is strongest among you all?"

Kuroka opened her mouth, closed it, then shook her head, stating firmly that that last one probably skirted too close to oath territory. "But I wager I can tell you at least how me and Ophis met, nyaa."

The next second, Kuroka gagged as green and black Ororoboros tattoos appeared all around her neck, making it very clear that she had been wrong on that score. But like Kuroka had said, they knew how to cause the oath to subside, and Harry quickly asked her a few questions, mostly about food and fashion.

As Kuroka recovered, Harry stepped out, bringing back a bottle of wine and a tray of snacks. Pouring her some wine before apologizing. "Unfortunately, it seems as if asking questions about something that could be termed recruitment also falls under the heading of information about the Khaos Brigade as a whole."

Ignoring the glass, Kuroka snatched up the wine bottle and took a long swig, smiling as the wine went down her sore throat. "Now that is the stuff. I shouldn't say this as a Japanese national, but sake sucks, nyaa. Give me wine or peach schnapps any day of the week."

"Those are two very different things. Still, I take your point." Harry waited until she had grabbed up several of the munchies on the small plate before asking her a few questions. "I met Cao-Cao, and I could tell that he was arrogant, and very self-assured. Who do you think among the Khaos Brigade has just as big an ego?"

"Lots of people have that big an ego. Hercules, for one, Arthur might come off as modest and self-contained, but in a way, he is also very arrogant, like he doesn't need to act arrogant because he's so good, nyaa," Kuroka answered between bites, blinking as she realized that this could be a way for her to tell Harry about some of the others who were part of the Khaos Brigade without triggering her oath. "Vali is also really arrogant and combative, to boot. He and Cao-Cao're always locking heads. If I had to say anything, I think that there the two alpha males in the group, nyaa. I know I made plays for both of them, nyaa~~."

Ignoring that last with a shiver, Harry nodded. Rias had passed on at one point a rumor that Vali, Azazel's adopted son, had broken away from him and the Grigori. Why hadn't reached

them, but to know that Vali, the wielder of Divine Dividing, was part of the Khaos Brigade was worrisome. *Still, there are ways to handle him if need be.* “And, is there anyone else among the Khaos Brigade that struck you as ambitious as those two? Are there any women prettier than you are there?”

“Nyaaa, you flatter me. I know I’m not exactly a prize right now.” She then smirked, leaning forward to allow Harry to look down her shirt, practically prowling across the table between them towards him like the cat that had bequeathed Kuroka her ears and tail. “But I’ll be better eventually. And when I am, I wonder if you’d be willing to bring another girl into your family, but not as a daughter this time, nyaa~.”

“I’ve told you already, I’ve already got more than enough women in my life. I am not looking to add anymore anytime soon.” Harry chuckled at her attempt, gently pushing her way with a finger to the forehead, watching her go cross-eyed as she tried to look at the finger even as she backed away back of the table to where she’d been sitting originally. Once there, she grabbed up the wine bottle again, taking another swig.

Seeing that, Harry shook his head. That was no way to treat fine wine, but frankly, he was willing to allow Kuroka her little comforts.

“As to your questions, Le Fay’s a little cutie, but she’s no great beauty, not yet. Give her six or seven more years, though, and I bet she would knock your socks off, nyaa!” Kuroka giggled. “Well, six years and somewhat more worldly experience. With Arthur hovering around her, though, she’s not likely to get anything of the sort. Although it would be funny to see his face if she ever decided to wear some of the clothing I bought her, nyaa.”

Chuckling at that, Harry quickly diverted the subject away from Arthur and his sister. He had met the pair and gotten their measure already. Neither was particularly loyal to Ophis, far more loyal to one another and while Harry had no doubt that the pair of them were working with Ophis now to the best of their abilities, they would just as likely jump ship at an opportune moment.

But after a few more moments, he realized that this line of questioning wasn’t getting him anywhere. With the curse in place to stop Kuroka from giving them any information on how the Khaos Brigade was organized, numbers or what have you, there was a limit to how well he could get around that. He learned a lot of other names of Sacred Gear users and some devils they worked with, but Harry didn’t have the background necessary to know who they were or why they were important.

“And what do you think of Ophis? Her personality, I mean,” He asked at last.

“You know how some kids can be real assholes?” Kuroka asked, to which Harry nodded his head firmly. He knew that from sad experience and had made it one of his life’s goals to protect his daughter from such, with limited success. There would always be children who were not empathic towards their fellow kids, and that didn’t even count those kids who enjoyed bullying others.

“Ophis is kind of like those kids. She doesn’t quite understand or care that other people have feelings or lives at all. All that matters to Ophis is her goal, and that’s it, nyaa. Sometimes, you can see flashes of actual interest in other things or even kindness, but they are incidental. The vicious child will return all too quickly, and if she doesn’t like what’s going on, Ophis is all too likely to just break her toys and go home, nyaa.”

“Do you think she could learn?”

“... Maybe? Le Fay sometimes gets her to learn new things or at least try out new foods. But I don’t know. She is so obsessed with entering the dimensional, that anything that gets in her way of doing that is going to be run over. And even if she could learn from her mistakes now, would that really offset the number of people she’s killed in the past?”

Having linked the events in Mexico to Ophis before this, thanks to the MACUSA reports on that particular catastrophe and knowing the severe death toll around the museum Ophis had attacked, Harry had to shake his head with the side. “No, it wouldn’t. Still, I’m worried about how much it would cost us to put her down permanently. She’s the strongest creature on the planet by a wide margin at the moment, and now...” *And now, according to Shiva, she has other Dragon Gods working with her. Dragon Gods that are at least stronger than Sirzechs and the other Maou.*

Seeing that Harry was falling silent, Kuroka asked a question of her own. “Is... I’ve talked to my sister a lot. About her place in your little family, about how happy she is. What do you think... What do you think will happen to me, nyaa?”

“Personally, I think that you were punished enough when your Ba was drained away from you by Nefertiti. The pain that must’ve caused you and the fact that it will probably take you decades, if not longer, to build up your magical reserves once more is more than I would ever do to anyone. We also know that your murder of your former king and the rest of your peerage when you were younger was to defend Koneko from his experiments. So if you remain in our custody, we’ll probably formally release you from any kind of incarceration like this,” Harry gestured around at the hotel room and the guards outside the door, “once the Khaos Brigade is defeated.”

He then leaned forward, took the wine bottle from her unresisting hand and put a cork in it, standing up a second later. “If you’re asking me what will happen between you and

Koneko or if you will be free to rebuild your relationship with her, my answer would be yes. It will be up to you what you do with that opportunity.”

Kuroka smiled at that, nodded her head, and then, with a sultry smirk, lay back down on the sofa on her side facing Harry. “Nyaaa... Well, if that’s the case, then I really do need to look into how I would fit into your family don’t I, nyaa? And you’ve already proven twice over that you’re good with kids...”

Rolling his eyes at what he now knew to be a kind of defense mechanism from the woman, Harry stood up and headed towards the door. “Yubelluna will be by to collect you in an hour or so for the transfer to Kuoh. I suggest finishing off that plate of munchies. Given how much of this wine you downed in so short a time, you might not find even fal stone transportation to be kind to your stomach.”

Kuroka scoffed behind him, but Harry had already left, heading to a small smoke room here in the hotel. Where normally it would be filled with people using hookas or smoking cigars while talking, now he found Cú, Kala, Momo and Tsubaki waiting for him, along with Padma. The group was talking quietly, or rather, Momo, Padma and Tsubaki were talking quietly. Kala was frowning pensively, looking at the far wall while Cú was drinking.

Smirking, Harry shook the wine bottle at him and watched as the Irish man’s lips twisted into a sneer. “Will you want another bottle Cú, or is only one going to be enough?”

“You keep that fecking weak sauce away from me! Wine’s far too tasteless for me, to say nothing about how much I’d have to drink to let me get high. This bourbon though, that’s got possibilities. I’m happy that as everything else has changed, mankind’s ability to brew expanded to boot, the real important things, you know? I might take a few years, travel the world ta try every drink under the sun. Could be fun.”

Rolling his eyes, Harry slumped onto one of the sofas. It had been a long, very talk-infested series of days, and he hadn’t really sat down since waking up back in Danan. He smiled faintly as Kala sat next to him, laying her head against his shoulder, her blue hair falling in a wave down her front and his chest. There really hadn’t been much time over the past two days to just sit down and cuddle, and Harry knew that Rias and Yasaka had plans to rectify that once the youngsters and everyone else were situated back in Kuoh.

Right now, just putting his arms around one of his ladies was nice, although not so nice that he was going to put off this conversation. *After all, it might well be the most important one I’ve had since waking up in Danan... we really do need to figure out a name for that island, don’t we?* Snorting at that, Harry addressed the room in general. “Ladies and Cú, I asked all of you to join me here rather than be transported back to Kuoh by Rias to lay out a new project all of you are going to need to make your top priority, and I wanted to make certain you had everything

you needed from Egypt going forward. You all will be my think tank on reworking the Undertaking.”

All of them were aware of what the Undertaking was but still looked confused as to what he could mean. Cú took a swig from his flask of bourbon, humming thoughtfully. “Feh, and just as I was getting that little box-wearer to the point where he might just be able to start using his Sacred Gear consciously. Still, this sounds more serious. You’re not talking about changing the Undertaking itself. You’re talking about something else. Re-creating it? No, there would be no point, would there?”

“No. Not re-creating it. Changing some of its parameters,” Harry stated simply. “I think there has to be a way to somehow drain the magic away from Earth and into Danan through the use of the Undertaking.”

Cu paused, his lips thinning, letting Tsubaki speak up, asking why that was necessary. She and Momo had been somewhat out of the loop, having been sent out on various organizational duties elsewhere in Egypt, and Sona had only just learned of the greater danger to the world herself a few hours past. Harry took a moment to fill them both in before stating, “But unlike Earth, Danan is a young planet and already a vastly magical one. If we can somehow rework the Undertaking to not only connect the two worlds but drain magic away from the Earth, we might be able to remove enough background magic that Earth will be able to recover.”

And further, all that magic added to the already existing background magic on Danan won't matter. It's already got a lot of magic and has an entire magical ecosystem, rather than the mere remnants Earth has.

“... I can understand the goal, but you realize, Harry, that this is not going to be easy,” Kalawarner warned. “Something that will take a long time. The Undertaking was the work of the Unseeli, the Seelie and the Tuatha De Danan all working together.” She looked over at Cú. “Even if Cú can help us achieve mastery in terms of ancient Celtic runes, the mix of deific magic, runic magic, and Fae might well be impossible to duplicate.”

“When I transfer from Danan to Earth, I can feel some of the magic flowing between dimensions. Not a lot, but enough to be noticeable both ways,” Harry answered. “Something about the Undertaking allows for the transfer of magic. Whether or not it is part of the Undertaking or entirely separate, I don’t know. That will be up to you guys to discover, as well as ways to enhance and control that transfer.”

In fact, Harry didn’t think it was very likely to be part of the Undertaking itself. He didn’t feel any rush of magic flowing into him, and as he was connected to the Undertaking whenever he used it, he, or Lily, probably would have if the transfer of magic was part of what was going on there rather than a byproduct. But he wasn’t certain.

“Considering that only one of us is a guy, I feel as if you should call us ladies,” Momo mumbled, thinking more about the problem than anything else.

“Fleck that, frail,” Cú stated, reaching over and ruffling Momo’s hair a little too roughly, causing her to twitch away and glare at him, which did nothing, bouncing off Cú’s normal insouciance. “I’m not like that Greek boyo who tried to hide as a woman to get out of being drafted into a war. I’m all man, me.”

The rest of the room turned to look at Cú, cocking their heads as Harry asked, “How the heck do you know about that myth?”

“Feh, I had a group of boys come up to me while I was training Gasper the other day, trying to compare the two heroes they already knew about. They had a book with that story in it and asked me if I ever dressed up as a woman.” Cú posed, making his wode tattoos glow for a brief moment. “As if that would even work in my case!”

Snorting at that, Harry turned the conversation back to the point. “But what do you think? Is it possible?”

“Transferring magic isn’t something that Celtic runes ever did. Storage yes. Transfer from one place to another, no. It was always sort of assumed that magic would be in the background or supplied by the person using the runes,” Cú stated, his tone becoming more thoughtful, more analytical than any of the others had ever heard from him.

It was very easy to forget that Cú, the hound of Ireland, the shining sun of Lugh, was not just a battle maniac but a master of runes. Like his spear work, he had learned runes at the feet... and in the bed chamber... of one of the greatest sorceresses in Irish mythology, Scáthach. “But you’re asking for something that will gather ambient magic from a wide area and then release it someplace else. There are ways I think we could use runes to maybe gather magic from an immediate zone around them, but those would be **severely** limited in range.”

“To say nothing of the transfer concept,” Padma agreed. “I’m not a master of runecraft either. I’m a spell crafter. If you want to have more...”

“Actually, that is why I am speaking to you all now. Don’t worry about having another rune master around Padma. Yasaka will be getting us in touch with Master Dutugamunu, the resident Rune Master among the Youkai Association, and Akeno will join you all as well with her mastery of Ankhsera.”

Padma started, leaning forward in shock. “Wait a minute! I know that name. An ancient rune master from India, one of the most revered Brahmins to ever live. He’s dead, though otherwise, he would be older than Dumbledore was by several centuries.”

“He is very much not. He’s incredibly ancient, even for his species, but Dutugamunu isn’t dead. Trust me, I’ve had some conversations, both good ones and annoying ones with him.” Harry snorted ruefully. “He is an elephant youkai, and apparently, he and many others traveled from India to Japan when we began to be persecuted in India.”

Padma opened her mouth to argue about that, then shut it, looking down at her lap angrily. It was true that magical India had changed dramatically after the ICW, and magical Britain in particular, forced it to start to conform to ICW ways. One of those ways was low-key or extremely pointed persecution of nonhumans. She also had to admit that there were a lot of Indian magical leaders who had been fully behind that idea, either through simple distaste for nonhumans or for more personal or monetary reasons.

“In any event, to build on the aid coming from that score, I recently had a talk with Shiva and...” Harry deliberately stated this as casually as possible, hoping that his listeners would ignore it, oh but that was not to be. Even Cú shouted at that simple declaration, and Harry was forced to explain everything that happened in his meeting with Parvati and Shiva for the umpteenth time that day. That it had been Parvati who had given him the form of the Blessing he later used along the Nile River, and that Shiva and Harry had agreed to be basically allies going forward. Distant ones, to be sure, but still pointing in the same general direction. And that Shiva had given him two new runes to use.

Padma nearly tore the paper out of Harry’s hands as she stared at the runes he had written down, biting her lip thoughtfully, While Cú chuckled, leaning back in his chair, sipping at his bourbon as he stared up at the ceiling in thought. Momo shifted to look over Padma’s shoulder while Tsubaki began to write down some notes, an organizational diagram starting from a few upper headings leading down to other squares. “If we assume that once more, Wizarding World style Arithmantic formulas will apply, then...”

She broke off suddenly, smacking herself lightly in the face with one hand. “Wait! Myself, Momo and... you said you’re also going to bring in Akeno at some point?”

“I hope to, yes. Akeno and Suzaku are busy right now, creating more talismans to leave behind with the other Shinsengumi. But eventually, she’ll join this think tank too.” *Or at least, that’s what Akeno said she was doing. I have no idea if that is actually true, given the look that she and the other girls were sharing at the time,* Harry added mentally. He wasn’t going to question it, though.

“Well, the three of us are students. Our being sick can only cover so much. And while Rias might allow Akeno to miss large segments of school, Sitri-sama won’t. She takes that kind of thing seriously. Even if we use simulacrums to cover our absences, it won’t matter to Sitri-sama,” Tsubaki warned

“I rather think that generally speaking, the destruction of the world via magical overload is a little more important than going to school,” Harry stated while Cú and Kalawarner exchanged laughs at Tsubaki’s concerns. “When I was a student, I always prioritized defeating Riddle’s plots first, and as one of your teachers, I can say I fully agree with that prioritization.”

“That just means that you’re not a good example to follow, then. And it isn’t so much missing school that I’m worried about as I am concerned about how Sitri-sama will react to us doing so. I don’t know if you cleared Momo and my part of this working group with her,” Tsubaki argued, pushing her glasses up her nose primly.

“I haven’t, but you’re also forgetting that I have access to Danan. Danan, the Undertaking, **and** the time difference between. You can go to school, go back to your normal life for a while, and still work on this at night while also getting a full night’s sleep.” Harry snickered, causing Kalawarner and Cú, both of whom had realized that very thing, to laugh even louder.

Tsubaki blinked, then sighed, bowing her head in acknowledgment that she had indeed forgotten that point. “Then I think that myself and Akeno should be able to basically outline the proposed project within a day or so. Achieving results is going to take much longer. That is without even thinking about how exactly we are going to test some of the hypotheses we’ll need to be building as we go along.”

“True. But I have faith in you and Akeno,” Harry stated, turning to the door to the hotel room just as Akeno entered.

She blinked at his words, smiled brightly, then moved forward, exchanging a kiss with him before asking, “While a nice sentiment, what exactly do you have faith in me to do, lover mine?”

When it was explained to her, Akeno nodded and instantly began to huddle with Tsubaki, breaking down the different parts of the overall objective into different aspects. The pair pulled Padma in after a few seconds, who began to write down books they might need access to, both among her and Hermione’s personal library and ones that they hadn’t found on the market yet. She also began to write down a few magical items and potions they might need, which they would need to buy here in Egypt before leaving, as well as a few notes on things they had seen in the underground tomb. While her lover had been busy over the past few days, she and Akeno had gone to examine the former hideout, coming away with copious notes.

Cu watched them in some amusement while Kalawarner also began to write out a few ideas, including some notes on what she had seen of the Undertaking itself in action, the problems that had arisen over time with the fal stones and other things of that nature. Looking at him, Harry knew that Cú had something to say and gestured with a finger, indicating he should speak up now.

“I’m fine with joining this little think tank, even if I don’t think it’s going to get my blood pumping. That is unless these ladies would like to take a few breaks with an Irishman a few hours a day?” He looked over at the ladies, wagging his eyebrows.

He really wasn’t serious. Beyond Kalawarner, all of these girls were a little too young for Cú’s preference, even if Akeno had a figure to make any woman he’d met in his past life weep with envy, including several goddesses. *And if we’re going to be in Danan, well...*

When he received the headshakes or eyerolls he had expected, Cú turned back to Harry, becoming more serious. “But I agreed to help you and yours, Harry Potter, to serve you and Rias, the little queen, during the battles here in Egypt. Those battles are done, and while I’m more than willing to sign up for the next round of fighting, you promised me something. I think it’s high time you deliver.”

“You wanted to leave to explore Danan. That’s fine. You can have all the time you want. I’ll transfer you to Danan before we head back to Kuoh,” Harry answered. Tiamat already went through the planet by the time you get there. Will you want a ship or anything similar?”

Cu snorted, tapping the spear next to him. “No, just access to Danan, and, if I’m to be a part of this think tank, a way to travel back to where I’ve been, perhaps.”

Harry nodded, seeing as Padma could make a portkey. As he nodded, Harry watched some tension that had been in Cú leave his body. It had been subtle, but the man had been poised for betrayal just then.

Harry simply shrugged it off. A lot of ancient heroes had dealt with duplicity, and Cú was no stranger to that kind of thing.

Tsubaki asked Harry a question then, pulling both men into the greater conversation, asking questions about the Undertaking. This segued into a series of questions directed at Cú about the basic underlying structure of the Celtic runic language, with both Padma and Momo taking notes and Akeno comparing those notes along with Kalawarner to what they knew about Japanese runes and typical Wizarding World runes. It was very clear already that what they needed would take every single runic language they had access to, including the two runes that Harry had been given by Shiva. That didn’t even mention the fact that an enchantment or ritual that would encompass the entire world would take months to set up. And frankly, Harry didn’t think the Earth had months. A month or maybe seven weeks at best.

Some of Harry’s observations about the Undertaking were also fascinating. Not just what he felt when he interacted with it but in terms of how they had figured out what was going on in Ireland and the bandrui-style ritual they had used to activate the Undertaking the first time.

Harry had just promised to provide them all memories of that as well as his impressions of the Undertaking when the door opened and Rias came in. She was alone, having dropped off the majority of their group back in Kuoh. Bar Tonks and Kiba.

Or at least, at first, Harry thought Rias was alone. Then, she moved aside, smiling faintly as she gestured into the room with one hand, beckoning the green-haired man with her into the smoke room. "Harry, I'd like to introduce you to someone."

Scene break

"Hmm... we are quite an eclectic crowd, aren't we?" Rias murmured, her arm resting around Lily's shoulders as she looked at the group of people waiting to be taken through to Danan and then from there to Kuoh. There were enough people in the hotel suite to nearly crowd the pair of redheads, but there were even more people waiting outside in the hallway and the other suites on this floor of the hotel.

"You betcha," Lily chirped, leaning into Rias's side happily. She had yet to truly get used to Rias as her mother but had long loved how huggy the older redhead was. "Still, that's what makes it fun. I'm going to miss Mihal and Nadal. They were fun, even if they were utter pants at football."

Snickering, Rias rolled her eyes, looking around at the crowd. This included Kuroka, her hands bound behind her back but standing freely next to Koneko. Yasaka and all the family bar Akeno, Kiba, Cú and Tonks were there, talking quietly amongst themselves, and Rias had to bite back a wicked smirk at the looks Yasaka was giving her, the faint blush on Yubelluna's face as she talked to Kala. The ladies of the clan had decided to have a bit of a party that night, or rather, that night in Kuoh. Considering the time difference, they would have six hours to play in Kuoh before the night caught up with them. *Which might allow us to wear Lily and Kunou out before sending them to bed.*

The initial group to go through to Kuoh was easily the most varied. The rest were a few Magical engineers who would be working with Sona on the magical school and two-thirds of the remaining Shinsengumi, who were being transferred back to Japan by Husukai. They weren't needed here any longer, as Onmyouji-style repair spells weren't nearly as good as the European variety. Suzaku and the Himejima clan warriors were also there, giving away the lie that Akeno had told Harry about what she was up to at present. *Ooh, I really hope she was right about finding a store that could get our outfits ready. I am very much looking forward to Harry's response to them. And I especially want the night to be perfect for Yubelluna.*

"And you don't have any issue leaving Momo and Tsubaki behind for a few more hours?" Rias asked, looking over at Sona.

"Given the fact that as nonhumans we're still going to be hit by the Interdict the moment we step out of your teleportation tunnel, it just makes a good deal of sense for them to start on that rather large project Harry is going to put to them," Sona said, shaking her head.

“Knowing what they are working on is even more daunting than the knowledge of how the Interdict will interfere with our thought processes going forward.”

Even though Sona sounded annoyed, Rias knew she was actually in a somewhat good mood. Sona was not someone who liked to think about issues that impacted the whole world when she could not grapple with them herself, and had, like Rias and the rest set any concerns or fears on that score aside. On a more personal level, Sona had returned in time to help Harry and Rias during some of the initial diplomatic meetings and then had been able to gather quite a lot of interest from the Wizarding World about the new magical school in Kuoh Sona had mentioned earlier that day. Already, she had several people come up to her asking when they would be hiring, including Charlie Weasley and Fleur.

In particular, the idea of Charlie coming to work at the school was something Sona was extremely happy about. With his background in the monsters of the Wizarding World, Charlie would hopefully be able to handle the monsters of the underworld just as easily. This would mean that the Kuoh School of Magic (name pending), a project that Sona had begun to think of as hers more and more since Harry had thought it up, would be able to offer a lesson on familiars. And not have to deal with the familiar master, who Sona detested.

“True. I’m not looking forward to my mind going sideways whenever I think about what happened here in Egypt,” Yasaka grumbled, kneeling beside her daughter and letting her scamper up onto her shoulders.

Rias nodded at that, wondering privately if the power-up the pair of them had been given by the enneagram of Aine Fand meant that they wouldn’t be as susceptible to it. But considering that even Gods apparently could not get through the Interdict, she doubted it. Still, they had done everything they needed to do here and were leaving behind Kiba and Tonks, who would probably be able to keep the peace.

“Lily, are you ready to take us through?” she asked, looking down at her fellow redhead, fighting back a smile as she thought about whether or not a year or so from now, Lily wouldn’t be the only redheaded child in the clan. *No, don’t think of that yet, six hours at the least. That’s how long you have to last before you and the rest can have some adult-type fun.*

Unaware of how her mother’s thoughts had suddenly taken a ninety-degree turn, Lily nodded and touched the Fal stone. With Rias’s hand on her shoulder, she activated the Undertaking. Her eyes closed for a moment, and then the group in the hotel room disappeared.

More people began to file in from outside in the hallway, and a moment later, Lily and Rias returned. Soon, they, too, were teleported through. Most of the dwarves were brought directly home to Tir Na Nog, along with many of the fairies and all but six of the leprechauns. They were going to be staying in Egypt to open talks with the leprechaun clans of Europe. Apparently, that was going to be a very convoluted discussion and had only just barely begun.

The humans and youkai going through to Kuoh were initially deposited on the large Australia-like island that Harry had used when speaking with the Egyptian politicians. While many of these people were friends and allies, a lot of them weren’t, and Lily remembered very

clearly her father's injunction. The island, the island where they had made a second home for themselves, was for family and trusted friends only. Moments later, Rias Lily and Sona, along with those present from their peerages and a few of the Shinsengumi, came through into Kuoh in the first wave with Yasaka and her youkai.

The fal stone, like the dimensional tunnel down to the Underworld, was situated in the Occult Research Club room. That building was the center of the wards around Kuoh and the location of both the training area and the magical laboratories. It had just made sense at the time to set it there, although Rias wondered if they would move it in the future to the clan compound.

However, as she looked around, Rias was astonished to find someone sitting in her chair behind her desk. Nor was it her brother, as Rias had first thought it might be. "Beelzebub-sama!?"

She and the other devils there instantly bowed their heads in respect to one of the four Maou while the Onmyouji looked on before being waved towards the door. Seeing that, Lily curtsied a little, then twisted around, pointing officiously towards the door, leaving her hands to force Sona and the others to follow the Shinsengumi. "Come on, get out of the way! I got other people I need to bring in you know."

"And remember, don't try to use any magic until you are out of Kuoh," Sona advised. "Only those who live here are read into the runes, and that's only a few of you."

Ajuka Beelzebub frowned at first at the young redhead ignoring him but now smiled, shaking his head, a fond smile on his face. "If I hadn't already seen Lily and Harry Potter together, I'd been making a joke about how time flies. She's just as officious and bossy as you were at that age, Rias."

Rias blushed a little but gamely pushed on, trying to ignore the fact that Beelzebub had indeed seen her grow up. Ajuka was Sirzech's best friend and had been around numerous times when she was younger. "Beelzebub-sama, might I ask why you are here. And ... how? As far as I know, you were not read into the wards on the dimensional teleportation circle."

"I had your brother bring me through, as I wasn't read into the wards here, obviously. I had hoped to study them, but..." As Sona and Rias watched, Ajuka attempted to create a magical circle around one hand, only to twitch and stop the attempt with a wry snort as the wards all around them began to coalesce, energy practically poised to strike.

To Rias and Sona, both of whom were read into the wards and were, in fact, two of their primary controllers, it felt almost like an animal. An animal exacerbated by someone who had been teasing it, eager to rend the offender asunder but holding back because the offender wasn't doing quite enough to instigate that response.

"I've got some notes, but few are detailed as I really didn't want to deal with your wards attempting to slay me," Ajuka snorted. "These wards of yours are insanely sentient. I don't think they are sentient enough to be able to think or feel, but they are very close..." Beelzebub's eyes

widened as the last group, which included Asia and her protector, the golem Ironsides, came through.

Ironsides towered so much that several of the wizards had to work together to shrink him a little to fit inside the occult research clubroom, but they had expected that, as they had talked about wanting to have at least one golem around the clan compound, just in case. That, and both Rias and Harry wanted to just talk to the golem, get a feel for what Kalawarner and the dwarves had created.

But the sight of the golem was not something Ajuka had expected, and the foremost devil scientist stared at the giant, armored, magically animated being in fascination. "What exactly have you all been up to?" Ajuka whispered, looking back over at Rias and Sona. *And are those two fairies in their hair?*

Beyond that, looking closer, Ajuka could see more differences in Rias, things that were different from the last time he had seen her, when she had decimated Riser in their Rating Game. Rias seemed more energetic, more mature, and Ajuka could also detect her magical reserves had increased multiple times over. *She feels stronger than Grayfia or Roygun maybe almost as strong as Serafall!* The biggest physical change though was the golden flecks visible in Rias's eyes. They were tiny, but sparkled like little, tiny stars scattered across both the iris and the whites of her eyes. *What does that signify?*

"A lot," Lily stated before popping back out to Danan and returning an instant later with the next group of Shinsengumi.

Ajuka fell silent, watching Rias and Sona thank the Shinsengumi, human magic practitioners he knew barely anything about beyond the Himejima and Shinra clans. He watched as they marched out the door followed by still more, as the golem followed, fading out of sight thanks to a spell from a young black-haired girl with a silver streak in her hair. One whose presence rang to him almost like he was in the presence of an angel or demigod. *And who is that? Why do I think that what has been going on here with the Kuoh group in the past few weeks could fill a book, let alone a simple report?*

As the last group of allies left, Koneko headed out the door with a prisoner between her and Yubelluna, Riser's former Queen. The prisoner had the features of a nekomata, but Ajuka didn't recognize her. Nor did he know why the devils were keeping her prisoner instead of Yasaka, the Kyuubi no Kitsune, who stood by, watching as her people left before following after them with a hug and a whisper into Rias's ear that had both women laughing.

As the last youkai left, Lily looked up at Rias. "Should we just head home, Mom?"

Wondering when she would get used to Lily calling her Mom and not fight back a wide grin at the feelings it evoked, Rias nodded. "Since it looks like a nice day, and you all did a fantastic job dealing with er, with..." She paused, trying to think of specifics before the fairy in her hair whispered in her ear. "Er, everything. You all deserve some of Harry's special cookies."

She watched as Lily and Kunou both grinned at the idea of the cookies, each of which was as large as their heads, before going on, looking over at Koneko, who had come back after

showing Kuroka her temporary jail cell. “Koneko, you and Asia can both have one as well, so long as you make certain all of you drink some milk with it. Okay?”

Koneko purred in response, leaning down and tapping Lily on the top of the head. “Tag. Last one there gets a bite taken out of their cookie.”

Yelping, Kunou leaped up and over Koneko, racing away as Lily stood there a brief second before charging after them, a laughing Rias watching them go. After a second, though, she turned around, smiling as Yubelluna moved to stand with her, Sona and her friend's peerage, along with Mittelt, who was already moving into the kitchen. While she was no Akeno, Mittelt could at least make a good cup of tea.

With the last of their guests and the youngsters seen too, Rias and Sona turned to Ajuka. “As Lily stated, we have been up to quite a bit. Some of which we won’t be able to tell you about, primarily because even as we stand here, a wizard-type Enchantment is messing with our minds,” Sona stated, grimacing as she felt her conscious mind sloughing off the memories of what they had been doing in Egypt, as if her very mind was rebelling at the very idea that anything there could be worth her time to think about. “Even now, a lot of the details are fading from my mind, although much of what we were actually discussing is not. It is creating a very strange jumble.”

The Maou’s eyes narrowed at that. “I don’t like the sound of that.”

“We rather don’t like the effect, my Lord,” Sona answered tartly, frowning in growing confusion at the war going on in her mind.

“But, if you would be willing to come with us through to Danan, we will be able to explain far more there than we can here. I have a few tasks I need to see to there, mostly family things, but there are a few things that, as Harry’s wife, I need to see to there,” Rias stated. She was not having a good time of it, but like Sona, she had a fairy in her hair whispering into her ear. The magic of the Fae worked to offset some of the way their thoughts simply skittered away from Egypt, helping them to remember what had occurred there, removed from the land itself.

“So, that presupposes several things,” Ajuka mused. “One, that once in Danan, whatever is affecting your minds will fade. Two, the danger itself that you faced recently is not in Danan. And further, wherever this Danan place is, this pocket dimension of Harry Potter’s, I presume? At least, that is the way it was described to me.”

“Not a pocket dimension, Ajuka-sama, an **alternate** dimension,” Rias stated firmly, causing Ajuka even more surprise than the golem had. “And I think you’ll find Danan fascinating. The problems we’ve faced recently are nothing really major to talk about, but Danan itself is a tremendous resource, and one that might make the difference between life or death for Earth in the long run.”

The strange way she spoke and the sight of the fairy hissing into Rias’s ear made Ajuka frown a moment, but he put that down to what Sona had said a moment ago: that they were operating under some kind of mental conditioning or enchantment that was trying to make

them either forget what had been going on or make it so none of them could concentrate on it. Looking around, it looked as if it affected all the girls in front of him, along with the large college-aged youth in the bandana. Interesting. “Well, can we go there now?”

“I am afraid not. I will have to go get Lily for a moment, which is somewhat annoying.” Rias frowned, but sending off Lily as if they wouldn’t be returning to Danan or had anything important to tell Ajuka had been a casualty of the Interdict’s impact on her mind. “I would like to give her an hour or so to have her cookie, at least. For now, there are a few things we can talk to you about. And is there anything important going on in the Underworld? We’ve been out of touch... dealing with a lot of minor issues...”

Again, Ajuka fought back a scowl at how much whatever enchantment these youngsters were under impacted their ability to think. But he just nodded, understanding that they had a solution, and he didn’t. Ajuka could try to use his Kankara Formula to figure out a solution, but without a starting place, trying to figure out what was impacting their minds would be a long process. *No, best to play along with things for now.* “Well, I suppose I can fill you in on what’s been going on. First, I assume that Sona has mentioned how your brother and his peerage were on a mission recently?”

Rias nodded, while Sona answered in the affirmative. “Well, for your information, that mission was to deal with the God Hades. He had been able to hide from Yahweh when he went to war against the Greek Gods, and remained hidden from the rest of the world in his pocket dimension. He was backing the Khaos Brigade to a certain degree.”

“And was involved in things going on in Egypt and the Wizarding World. In fact, I think I heard of his demise from that angle,” Rias mused.

“Exactly. The fight was... it was hard. You might wish to head down to the Gremory estate when you can. Sirzechs lost several of his peerage, and Grayfia was sorely wounded.” Ajuka watched as a series of emotions played across Rias’s face, while Sona expressed her condolences. Grayfia and Rias’s relationship had faded over time as Grayfia backed up her parents’ demand to marry Riser Phenex. Grayfia had tried to make up for it more recently, but they had not returned to the closeness that the pair had when Rias was younger and saw Grayfia as a role model.

Still, Ajuka would let Rias think about it on her own time. For now, he wanted to move the conversation along before it got too awkward. “Beyond that, you know about how we had been hoping to set up some permanent peace talks between the Factions here in Kuoh?”

“We do. We both and Harry agreed to host them here, although I think we also warned you that all the various groups would need to keep the number of attendees down, correct?” Rias asked, her eyes narrowing.

“I heard that, but you know I am not in charge of diplomacy. That would be a disaster, unless you think me and Azazel meeting up to talk shop counts as a diplomatic meeting,” Ajuka joked. “But regardless, all of the Church’s stonewalling on this score disappeared four days ago. Instead, they are demanding we move up the time of the meeting. Sirzechs and the rest of us

agreed when Serafall came to us with that request, and now the meetings going to happen in two weeks.”

If either Sona or Rias had heard that the various powerful men and women of the Three Factions would be coming to Kuoh to participate in peace talks as little as half a year ago, they would both have panicked if each in their own individual ways. As it was, the pair of friends simply looked at one another and then nodded. “That sounds doable. We can use a room here in the school, transfigure what we need at the last minute or create a permanent space in one of the unused rooms here in the ORC building,” Sona mused. “The first would be my preference as the second puts the meeting too close to the heart of our own organization here in Kuoh.”

Rias smiled faintly at that, hearing Sona essentially throwing her lot in with Rias, Harry and their Kuoh Group. Sona and her peerage were not part of the clan, but thanks to how much they had benefited from the various moves by the clan, Sona was more than willing to stand with them, to be a bridge between them and the rest of Devil kind. “That is a major point, as is the fact we, the Kuoh Group, and Harry will need to have our own seats at that table. That is nonnegotiable, and I think once you see Danan you will agree, setting aside my brother’s plans to perhaps reach out to the Wizarding World to join in. A process that you will find we have superseded.”

That caused Ajuka to blink in surprise, and Rias smiled. “That is a very long explanation, a goodly portion of it I won’t be able to tell you because it is too boring and bothersome to talk about. But suffice it to say that until we have some agreements from the Grigori, the Church and the Maou Council, we will not be hosting these peace talks. Trust me when I say though that you will want us to, though. We in the Kuoh Group will be bringing a lot to the party...”

Scene break

“Setting yourself up for failure like this isn’t like you, Cao-Cao. Nor is being so open about your failures. It’s almost enough to make me wonder what you might really be up to.”

Cao-Cao turned, glaring at Vali Lucifer, a faint sneer on his face even as he thought about how alike Vali and Rivezem looked flickered across his mind. He kept that observation from showing on his face with ease, though, as he looked back at the other young man, his shoulders subtly tensing as his hands clenched at his side. Cao Cao hated and loathed most nonhumans for being what they were, aberrations and parasites. For Vali though, he had a more personal reason for his dislike: the two simply had been butting heads from the moment Vali joined the Khaos Brigade.

They each had their visions for how the Khaos Brigade should act for the future in general. And they were not compatible. As such, Vali and Cao-Cao had been locked in frequently bitter conflict for the leadership of the Brigade such is was. Or rather, the steering of the Brigade, as there was only so much they could do with Ophis leading them.

Of late, their conflict had fallen by the wayside. Both had suffered severe losses to their personal ‘teams’ and Ophis had been acting more on her own cognizance, something that had

made their positions even weaker. And now that she had three Evil Dragon Gods to follow her commands, both their power blocs were but minor players in the Brigade, only able to suggest rather than outright manipulate Ophis.

Yet that had done nothing to take away from their personal dislike for one another. “And that is supposed to mean something to me? You know as well as I do how badly our information network in the nonmagical world has been hampered of late. Is it any wonder the information about a Sacred Gear user with Thunderbolt of Heaven was wrong? Bad intel happens,” Cao-Cao said, his tone that of one explaining something to a simpleton.

“Not so often, considering how Ophis likes to kill the messenger if our spies and agents don’t report accurately,” Vali disagreed. He marched forward until the two men were practically chest to chest, glaring at Cao-Cao. “No. You were not out recruiting. What were you doing? I can almost smell the Underworld on you, Cao-Cao.”

“As I told Ophis, I was acting on bad information. And how exactly are you in any position to make demands of me?” Cao-Cao retorted, not backing down. “In fact, given your own setbacks, the loss of not only Bikou but Kuroka as well on your watch, I have to wonder how you can have the wherewithal to question me on my failures?”

Kuroka had been one of the strongest members of the Khaos Brigade, but who she was allied with in the Brigade’s power structure had shifted with her mood. At the time she had been sent into Egypt with the duplicitous Titi Varai, she had been ostensibly working for the greater Khaos Brigade rather than either party, although Cao-Cao had been the one sent to discover what had happened to her because of his greater number of former Wizarding World followers. He got along quite well with them, because he was the reason any of the wizards and witches had lived through Ophis’s purge. Whereas Vali hadn’t bothered to even try to reach out to them, to say nothing about the Shinra Clan, which Cao-Cao had brought into the Khaos Brigade to begin with.

“On top of not freeing Bikou as you should have, you lost your position within the Grigori which would’ve been very useful to funnel us information. Then, not content with the magnitude of your failure, you led a force of Grigori straight to one of our largest recruitment bases before we were able to discover the homing beacon on you,” Cao-Cao went on, counting out the failures that could be laid at Vali’s feet. “While I might be facing setbacks in the loss of Jeanne and many of my plans going awry due to lack of or false information, I can at least call on my allies among the Youkai, the Shinra and several dozen witches and wizards. You only have yourself and Arthur. If he’s allowed to act on his own while Le Fay is stuck here working on penetrating the Dimensional Wall.”

“And you think my lack of allies matters? Stack all of your allies, including Hercules, up against me. See what happens. Allies don’t matter at all, only strength,” Vali retorted. “You have done nothing to aid the Khaos Brigade, or even yourself, really.”

“Hah! Is that what it comes down to, strength for you? Are you still thinking that when we have had ample proof cunning and planning can lay even the strongest low? Or are you still trying to ignore how Potter and his ilk dealt with Kokabiel before you could get to him? How you were forced to back away from a fight, not with your ‘destined rival’ but a group of devils and a wizard who had found out how to play to their strengths? And now, what will you do?” Cao-Cao taunted. “Pick a fight with Potter in Kuoh or Kuroka’s little sister when they wield the Boosted Gear? I would pay to see you try anything like that, watch as you are forced to stoop to some underhanded threat to get them to fight you one-on-one, something neither would be willing to do, as they understand that winning is the only thing that matters, not proving yourself like a child in a sandbox.”

“All I have to do is catch one of them away from Kuoh. Then we’ll have a clean match. Until then, I work to become stronger, faster, better. That is my goal,” Vali stated firmly. “What is your goal, Cao-Cao? Why do you scamper around like a rat looking for cheese?”

Cao-Cao rolled his eyes, ignoring Vali’s question with ease, knowing he was getting to the other man. “Get stronger, is that all that is in your head? I have been training. I, too, have been growing stronger. But that strength is not a goal in and of itself. It is simply what occurs as you pursue a loftier ambition. If all you are is a pursuit of getting stronger, then that is truly pathetic.”

“And you are truly pathetic believing that anything but strength matters in the end!” Vali snarled, starting to lose his cool at the disdain Cao-Cao was showing him. “Now tell me what you have been up to!?”

Cao-Cao snorted, and shifting his body, he moved sideways around Vali, slamming his shoulder into the silver-haired man’s as he moved down the hallway, dismissing the argument and Vali all in one. “Now I know what your problem is. You are simply envious. I have been allowed out and about while Ophis keeps you close. Like the pathetic little boy you are, she knows you are a hammer and thus only fit to pound nails, which we lack at present. In a way, you are just like your namesake, always delighting in destruction, **Lucifer**. Just like everyone else in your line.”

The descendant of Mengde was already moving the next second as a blast of magical energy came from behind him. He twisted around it, bringing out his Sacred Gear, The True Longinus, slamming it into a second follow-on attack, battering it aside as Vali charged forward.

The True Longinus was a spear with a dark blue finish to the shaft, with decorations in the shape of arrow tips spiraling in a double helix pattern around the top of the shaft back from the blade which, although thin, were impervious to damage. Behind the blade they merged into a circle with a cross in the center which met the shaft. The metal of the top and the butt at the bottom looked silver, but was much stronger than any silver could be, as impervious to harm as the golden double helix. The blade, shaped for stabbing, was about as long from tip to base as the cross beneath it, while the butt had four protrusions that allowed it to act almost like a mace.

The silver-haired youth's face had completely closed down, a snarl on his lips as first one arm, then the other, then his entire body was covered in the balance breaker form of Divine Dividing, Juggernaut Drive. "I will cut your heart out for comparing me to him!"

Smirking inwardly, Cao-Cao had to acknowledge that had been a bit of a gamble. He well understood that the other youth's ability to read people's body language and expressions was almost as good as his own. Vali had also shown some knowledge of Cao-Cao's recent movements when he mentioned the Underworld and how Cao-Cao had been there. How Vali knew that, Cao-Cao could but guess at present, but this close to his goals, he could not afford to give anything away, particularly to someone who was something of a secondary target in his plans. No, it was best to enrage him, to get Vali too angry to think for a bit.

In the enclosed space of the hallway of the underground base, there was no way that Cao-Cao could dodge the incoming missile that was Vali at present. Although honestly, looking at him, Cao-Cao could only be reminded of a kind of powered armor from an anime he had seen Le Fay watching that morning.

With True Longinus in hand, Cao-Cao did not need to dodge. With a single thought, a blast of energy came from the tip of the spear, slamming into and slowing Vali down, even as a voice intoned from his armor, "Divide, Divide!" As Albion's power went to work.

While he kept that attack going, Cao-Cao kicked up off the ground, flinging himself sideways into a wall and off it in turn, closing with Vali, whirling his spear to come in from the side cut into Vali's armored head. Vali twisted around, bringing up an arm to block, and then the two were moving, trading blows so hard and so fast that they created shockwaves, which began to shatter the solid rock of the tunnel all around them, causing earthquakes felt throughout the base, even down in Ophis's personal quarters or those set aside for Níðhöggr, Aži Dahāka and Ladon.

In many ways, Vali was Cao-Cao's superior in a fight. Speed, strength, magic, all these he had more of than Cao-Cao, lacking only in skill, in martial style. But Cao-Cao's Sacred Gear made the difference nonexistent and could even turn the battle against Vali. For the True Longinus

was a weapon baptized in the blood of Jesus Christ, the son of Yahweh. This made it strong enough to kill gods or buddhas and made it especially deadly to devils and fallen. A blaze of light flashed out from the spear, starting first from the golden chains around it, then glowing ever brighter, covering both spear and man. And when next a blow struck Vali's forearm, he howled in pain, despite the best efforts of Divine Dividing and the Juggernaut Drive's armor.

He struck back, nearly catching Cao-Cao in the chest with a blow from his other hand, then twitched around, flinging himself into a full circle, bringing up his foot. Cao-Cao barely blocked it in time, the shaft of his spear creaking as he was hurled back down the hallway. But before Vali could charge after the man, Cao-Cao got his feet under him and lashed out again with a blast of holy energy from the True Longinus. Even as he used one of Divine Dividing's attacks in turn, Vali had to grit his teeth at the pain simply being near such a blast caused him. Then, the remnants of the attack struck, and he was hurled off his feet.

Like Cao-Cao, he rolled with the impact, and when Cao-Cao closed once more, he lashed out with further energy beams, only for a body to slam into him from behind, bearing him to the ground even as he turned and tried to bring an armored elbow into the second attacker's head. At the same time, a blade superimposed itself between Cao-Cao and Vali, slamming the true spear up into the air. Before Cao-Cao could recover, Arthur was under his guard, the pommel of his blade smacking into the side of Cao-Cao's head. Cao-Cao reeled and would've attacked Arthur at the same time if not for the wave of power and authority suddenly making itself known, pressing down on everyone in the hallway.

Or rather, power created by the arrival of several presences. For with Ophis were three others, and although her presence dwarfed all three, it was the combination that neither Vali nor Cao-Cao could overcome. It drove them, Arthur and Hercules, the man who had tackled Vali from behind, to their knees. To the point where Vali could barely turn his head to stare up and over Hercules's shoulder, let alone try to push him off.

There stood three individuals, the evil dragons that Ophis had freed from their prisons, and Vali could feel Albion growling within his mind at the very sight of them. He had clashed with each of them in the past, particularly Níðhöggr, defeating them numerous times, but never easily. Vali too fought an urge to charge at them, wanting to fight each and every one of them, to prove himself against real dragons, whatever their current bodies might look like. Similarly, all three were staring almost excitedly at Vali and Cao-Cao, giving the impression of blood-maddened attack dogs barely being kept on their leash.

Although this was not the first time he had been in their conjoined presence like it was Vali's, Cao-Cao found it no easier now than he had then to keep from attacking the evil dragons

on sight. And looking across at his former opponent, he could see that, to his surprise, Vali also felt something of that reaction.

To Vali, Ophis was one thing. Her raw power and strange thought processes were frightening to behold. Yet her presence never grated on Vali's nerves. Her being on Earth was an oddity, not an attack on the natural order of things.

But there was something fundamentally **wrong** about these three deep down which emanated from them like a visible miasma. It was not like they were simply broken mentally. Rather, their very existence was fundamentally at odds with the rest of the world around them. They did not belong, on a far greater degree than any devil, god or fallen that Vali had ever seen, let alone been in the presence of before.

Almost lost amongst the dragons, young Le Fay stood, staring between her brother, Cao-Cao and Vali. Behind Cao-Cao, the dark-haired man could hear others leaning out around the corner leading up to the rest of the base, muttering among themselves, wondering what was going on.

As he felt those eyes on him from behind and facing Ophis and her fellows, Cao-Cao fought to keep a grimace on his face as the urge to smirk rose within him. *This is quite good. Vali will not be able to get in my face or follow me after this. But... I have to wonder if any of the evil dragons or Ophis will think to have us both watched to make certain we do stay away from one another. That might cut into my plans.*

"Enough. There is a sparring area for fighting if you have so much energy. You will not bring down this space upon our heads with your foolishness," Ophis ordered, her aura of power pressing down on both combatants, even as Divine Dividing tried to divide it. "I will not allow your desire to prove yourselves to cost us valuable resources."

Despite Albion's best efforts, Divine Dividing could not absorb enough of the pressure on Vali, and a second later, Juggernaut Drive faded, leaving Vali still pressed down into the floor by the pressure exuding from the dragons and Hercule's bulk. He growled and wrenched sideways until he could push to his feet, standing up and glaring over at Cao-Cao. "I will not apologize. But I will not do so again."

"Good. You are useful, Vali, as are you, Cao-Cao. That does not mean you can act here without consequences. Your contests of strength will have no place here in the greater scheme of things."

The cool, almost condescending way that Ophis delivered that threat made Cao-Cao's hands clench, but he nodded his head, making True Longinus disappear. "As you say, Ophis. The

two of us have been getting frustrated by how things have been going on our own missions of late, and heated words were said. We will be more careful in the future.”

Vali simply grunted in acknowledgment, nodding to Ophis as he locked eyes with each of the evil dragons in turn. All of them stared right back, hatred and a desire to kill visible in each of their faces. But so long as Vali was useful to Ophis, he was safe from their wrath, even Nidhogr, who Albion had fought in the past.

Seeing the two of them agree, Ophis turned back to Le Fay, who had been speaking to her earlier when the reverberations of Vali and Cao-Cao’s clash reached them. Uncaring of the fact that they had a dozen witnesses still looking at the scene from further down the hallway, Ophis asked, “You were saying?”

“I’ve worked out the equations finally. I think my plan, the ritual to breach the Dimensional Gap, er, it will work, but um... I need an expert on Futhaark runes and Ankhsera runes. And we will need a lot of power. Like... Well I haven’t worked that part out just yet. But I’m close. Maybe another week or so? I’m not an expert with devil-style runes and building a bridge to nowhere isn’t really anything like what I saw and...” Morgan began, her voice turning almost into a ramble until Ophis held up her hand.

“Your research is far and away the most important thing that the Khaos Brigade is doing. If you need books on devil magic, we will send some devils to you, and you will explain what you need for them. If you need other experts on runework, we will find them.”

“Thank you, Lady Ophis!” Le Fay replied with a bright smile on her face, causing all three of the evil dragons to scowl and look away. It was as if the sight of someone so happy offended them somehow. “But it isn’t just power we will need. We will need seven, or better yet, nine powerful individuals to send energy into the matrix from different angles... or, er, maybe a better way to put it would be on different frequencies? That might just be as important as everything else.”

“Will Sacred Gear users using their Sacred Gears work?” Vali asked, his earlier anger forgotten as he leaned forward with interest. “That would mean we would just need one or three more powerful beings to take part in this ritual of yours.”

“Three would be better. It wouldn’t be nearly as draining. With seven, you run the risk of all seven being too tired maybe to be able to fight Great Red when we open the portal into the Dimensional Gap,” Le Fay warned. “Seven is a habitually magical number, but nine is more stable and lends itself to both compartmentalization and disparate magical disciplines.”

“Then we will need to gather more powerful followers. We were already planning to do so,” Ophis said, looking over at Ladon. The breaker and creator of barriers smiled, almost

cackling for a second but clamping his jaws shut to keep any noise from escaping as Ophis kept staring at him. "We will have our nine."

Meanwhile, Cao-Cao and Vali had gone back to glaring at one another. The information that Le Fay had just explained was important but not nearly as important as what both of them had learned from the fight just now. There could only be one of them going into the future, attempting to direct Ophis's actions, and now all that remained to be seen was which one of them would strike first.

Inwardly, Cao-Cao was quite pleased. *That went as well as could be expected. Now, with Ophis's ultimatum, Vali will not be able to approach me again. And I only need a few more days, just three more days, to gather the various wizards and magicians allied with me. Then we strike for Tartarus. After I have what lies within, Vali will become a target, just like Ophis and those creatures of hers.*

For his part, Vali was still simmering at the taunt connecting him to his hated family. And although a large portion of his brain refused to admit it, Cao-Cao did have a point. Everything seemed to have gone wrong since he had learned that his destined rival, Issei Hyoudou, the wielder of Ddraig the Boosted Gear, had not become such. Instead, Ddraig had been torn out of Isaac's soul, and then, somehow, Isaac had not tried to reclaim it. Instead, Issei had gone on to be a magician who used... erotic, dirty or simply shameful spells and tricks to win his fights.

If the Red Welsh had bonded with either Potter or the Nekoshuu, that would've been one thing. But as it is, he wasn't. *Not only that, but Kuroka is undoubtedly dead, Bikou is a prisoner of the Grigori despite my efforts to free him, and now I am stuck here, waiting until the plan myself and Ophis put together months back comes to fruition. Not through my actions but hers and, in some small manner, Cao-Cao's as well!*

For a few fulminating moments, Vali stomped through the base in silence before finally opening the mental connection between himself and Albion. "What do you think? Is there any way we can up our training? I must grow stronger! Cao-Cao was nearly able to beat me, and although I know that's because his weapon gives him a natural advantage against my species, it is still galling in the extreme."

For a moment, the White Dragon Emperor was silent, and when Albion began to speak, his words did not bring Vali any comfort. "**Your time in the Khaos Brigade might soon come to an end. You're no follower of Ophis. You're no believer in her cause. You joined the Khaos Brigade in order to fight strong enemies. To grow stronger, as you have always said. Yet, have you grown stronger here? But worse, I think you just lost track of why you wanted to grow stronger in the first place in the past few months, Vali.**"

“That is all I wanted!” Vali shot back. *“To grow stronger, to fight strong opponents, to always push myself forward, ever stronger.”*

“Yes, but why? And don’t try to lie to me. I’ve been part of your soul since the day you were born. When you were younger, you wanted to grow stronger not because of wanting strength for its own right but because there were people you wanted to defend against the cruelties that life heaped on you at the hands of your family,” Albion answered, his tone almost gentle for a dragon spirit.

“Finding your destined rival, proving yourself against my alter as all of my users have been forced to was but one thing. It wasn’t the totality of your drive to become stronger. Remember the cruelties of your grandfather, who drove your father to persecute you, to whip and beat you when you were younger because he could sense your potential to be stronger! Remember who you tried to defend back then. Remember why you wanted to be strong.”

Vali paused, a wrench of great emotion going through him as all of his mental walls fell away for just a moment, leaving only the true desire that had driven him to such heights. The desire to defend his mother and his younger half-siblings. To find and free them from Clan Lucifer as mere chance had allowed him to escape. Vali didn’t even know if they were still alive or what had happened to them, but he could remember them. His mother, the only one in his life who showed him kindness until he escaped. His half-siblings, who he shielded from their father and grandfather’s hatred.

Into the silence, Albion spoke again. **“Remember what truly drives you, the desire to help your family, the desire to free them. Cao-Cao doesn’t have that. He only has his ambition, his desire like a fanatic, needing to drive all nonhumans off of Earth. Your desire for power is purer, more steady. And as long as you remember that, as long as you remember what you are truly becoming strong for, you will continue to grow in strength, no matter how slowly you do it. Do not be concerned about setbacks. Only push forward.”**

Feeling himself far more emotionally centered than he had been when he confronted Cao-Cao, Vali nodded. He wasn’t very good with emotions, although you could hardly blame him for that, considering his upbringing. Albion let the silence linger, knowing that he had given his partner enough of a leg up. Indeed, as Vali remained silent, he turned his feet towards the training grounds. There was always time for more training. For the day when he faced the Boosted Gear. For when he fought the strongest beings in this world, the gods and super devils. For when he found where the Lucifer clan was hiding, defeating his father and grandfather once and for all and freeing his mother and half-siblings from the hell that they were living in.

Within minutes Vali began to train, fighting magically created simulacrum of various well-known warriors from the Three Factions. And as he did so, Albion turned his own thoughts

back to Cao-Cao. ***But really, what is that human up to? For someone who hates anything nonhuman, being around so many evil dragon gods and Ophis must be like nails scraping against stone. Yet he does nothing. Why? And why am I, like my partner, getting the impression that isn't a good thing?***

Scene break

When, after a series of long explanations, Ajuka was offered the chance to take over the new think tank, he surprised everyone by turning it down. Ajuka had a lot of his own projects going on. In particular, he was part of an investigation trying to hunt down someone who had broken into his own labs while Ajuka was off providing reinforcements to Sirzechs during the battle against Hades.

The thief had stolen some of the early models of the peerage system pieces that he had created, pieces whose power output were unstable. Coupled with that, there were reports that the old Satan faction was trying to make a comeback. One of their number, a former assistant of his, had been the one to escape with the peerage pieces in question, her face captured on tape.

“In the wrong hands, those things can do a lot of damage, as each of those pieces can occasionally give the user as much power as a Mutated piece. The backlash to using them is potentially dangerous, but the Old Satan Party doesn't really care about its pawns all that much,” Ajuka explained as he stared out over the vista all around them.

Currently, the two of them and Cú Cuchulain were sitting on the broad side of the caldera, looking out over the island and the distant ocean. Ajuka, like all the others who had come into contact with this island, had felt the inherent goodness of the place, and even though the conversation was a serious one, he could not keep a smile off his face even now.

Down below, lights had appeared moments before. Magical floating lights the sort Harry had first seen used in Hogwarts, blue lights bobbing up the path to the top of the mountain, a sign of some of the preparations that Harry's various ladies had begun down below. With it came a hint of music on the wind, as other magical lights also began to glow, not moving away from the houses below.

Normally, Harry would have led that effort or at least been a part of it, but he had been told tonight that was not in the cards. The ladies each wanted to contribute something, as Kalawarner had that night in Kuoh with a magnificent meal, and wanted everything they were doing to be a surprise for Harry. A notion that had a certain part of Harry's anatomy threatening to rise to the occasion despite his current discussion. It had been several fraught, annoying days, and he **reaaally** wanted some adult-type fun.

“Besides, I think you have enough brains looking at that problem right now,” Ajuka continued, oblivious to how Harry was only half-listening as he looked at the lights below them. “What you need is those differing points of view, not someone who will come in and try to solve the issue on his own. And I know myself all too well. I don’t work well with others when it comes to research or experiments.”

To one side, a magical hand that he had created using Kankara Formula was writing down some notes on the Kuoh wards, the hand gleaming in the dark, almost as much as the outdoor lights scattered around the area. He was using his real hands to drink and finish off a plate of late-night munchies that Kalawarner had created from the leftovers from dinner for the very strange trio. “Mmm, I might try to steal your cook away from you, Harry. Leftovers are not supposed to taste this good.”

“Is that a threat? Wars have begun for less, Ajuka,” Harry answered mock-warningly, causing Cú and Ajuka to laugh.

“No, you don’t need more help on that score I don’t think. Not once you bring in more experts in the various runic languages anyway. And while I am good with Ankhsara, I am no expert with using it in conjunction with other runic languages. I can get you in touch with the few other experts, though.” He then grinned a little, shaking his head. “Unfortunately, Harry, you and Cú here are going to be even more outnumbered than you are now. The two experts I’m thinking of are both women.”

As Cú sat up, wagging his eyebrows, Harry chuckled. “So long as none of them attempt to join my own relationship, I think we can bear up under the strain.”

The Maou nodded, and then his eyes flicked over to where Sona’s notes on the aborted attempt to interrogate Kuroka rested. “I might be able to figure out a way to remove that restriction on Kuroka, but it isn’t a priority. With everything else going on, we can’t afford to let the Old Satan Sect cause issues as well. Especially if the reports hinting at some connection with Ophis and the Khaos Brigade are true. We need to cut that connection. Hopefully before the peace talks begin in two weeks.”

“That’s part I don’t understand,” Cú admitted. “Seems to me that you lot are pretty peaceful as it is.”

“There is peace, and then there is peace. This peace is the frosty tense type that occurs between several nations who don’t want to do anything with one another in modern times but who have a history of hatred,” Ajuka explained. “Further, each nation has their own radicals, their own axes to grind. A formal peace treaty would allow the sharing of resources on a formal level, which might allow us to bring to bear just as much in terms of knowledge and differing points of view as Harry has here with his Kuoh Group.”

The green-haired Maou smiled wryly. "Although probably not nearly as much. I had only the vaguest idea that the Wizarding World existed. I knew of the Youkai Association, obviously. Yet the idea that they could be connected to a wider hidden Wizarding World in some fashion was something I had never thought to look into. Probably because of the very wards that hide that world from the rest of us. I'm still getting used to the idea that humans have come up with wards that are insidious enough to impact the minds of devils and gods alike."

He then laughed. "And fallen too. You know, I read a report from Serafall about how Azazel had been seen in Japan and near Kuoh. I would wager he's been trying to probe the wards you lot put up there from outside and hasn't gotten anywhere."

Harry snorted that while Cú simply nodded sagely. The wards in Kuoh were weird, with a capital W. Too alive by far for his preference.

Then Ajuka became serious, gesturing down again to some of the specific notes Sona had made up at one point "Sona mentions that pamphlet that Miss Granger came up with to explain Akhenaten and his wife. That made for interesting reading."

"We came close, very, very close," Harry said with a sigh. "If the fal stones in Ireland weren't failing to the point where Lily and Asia had their pervasive dreams, if we hadn't agreed to stop what was going on there and then been roped into dealing with Egypt in turn? Egypt would be a dead zone now, and we would have two new gods with power to challenge Shiva and the others. The pair of them had worked on that for centuries, and only luck and the firepower me and mine were able to barely stopped them. Looking back on it, and my interactions with Ophis, the battle against Kokabiel, I would rate Akhenaten and Nefertiti as more dangerous. Intelligent enemies are far more difficult to deal with than non-intelligent ones."

"Hmm... I can't say I agree with that, but the breadth of abilities your two wizards have access to is worrisome. And I obviously won't ever downplay how intelligence can make someone more dangerous. Still, I don't know if I would rate them more dangerous than Ophis. Certainly, if we find them they'll be easier to deal with. Yet..."

Ajuka hummed thoughtfully, a series of numbers appearing in midair next to him before disappearing as he seemingly calculated something quickly using his magic. "Given what Kuroka told you all about how she was captured, we know they infiltrated the Khaos Brigade for some reason. There is an eighty-percent chance that with their ability to transfigure themselves in such a way that the change cannot be discerned magically, these two ancient magic users have also infiltrated both the New Devil and Old Satan parties."

Ajuka fell silent, thinking. "Ophis and her forces are the main threat still. But I cannot deny you're right. They are blunt objects, even with Cao Cao and Vali Lucifer among them."

“Akhenaten and Nefertiti spent centuries setting up events in Egypt,” Harry stated, his tone intense. “That speaks of an ability to plan, an ability to decide on a goal and stick with it. And instead of pulling up shop or simply digging in, hiding themselves away while we were investigating events in Egypt before hand, they decided to still go through with their plan, to kill everyone they could in the hopes they could gain enough power to achieve their goals. They underestimated how much damage me and mine could do, but I don’t think that was their sole role of the dice. I think their infiltration of the Khaos Brigade was the start of some other kind of plan, either an addition, something that they developed after Ophis came on the scene, or as a backup.”

“What that plan might be, I don’t know. I’d hoped that there would be some kind of magical trace, some way to figure out where they had gone. Some trail I could send this hound on,” he quipped, smirking suddenly and pointing to Cú with the thumb. “But there wasn’t.”

Cu laughed, but he also nodded in agreement. He had examined the underground pyramid both immediately after Nefertiti and Akhenaten had gotten away and at times during the reconstruction that followed whenever he was free. But there was no trace he could follow, no magical trail, no sign of where they had escaped to. The teleportation type that they had used had left not a thing behind to trace where they had come out, unlike apparition or a portkey could if you knew what you were doing.

There’d been nothing about bolt holes, safe houses, or anything similar among the few books and scrolls they had confiscated from there. It was very evident that the pair of ancient mass murderers had planned in advance for their eventual retreat from Egypt once Harry and his group began to interfere. Nothing the twosome had left behind was all that important or incriminating. Those books and scrolls were now in Akeno’s custody, a resource possibly for the think tank looking into draining Earth of magic and transferring it into Danan, it was doubtful that they would find anything helpful within.

“... “ For a moment, Ajuka fell silent, thinking, calculating, analyzing. Then he spoke, his tone reluctant but wary and worried. “There is no proof of this. There is nothing backing up your words but logic and calculation based upon the built-up image we have of your enemy’s personalities. Yet given the proclivity they’ve shown to draining-type magic, I... might know what they are after. How they could discern that bit of information is beyond me, but as I said, there is an eighty percent chance that they have infiltrated both of the parties that make up devil society. And if they have, there is a nonzero probability that they know what I am thinking of.”

Cu and Harry both looked at him in question, and Ajuka shrugged. “I suppose it won’t matter if the two of you know, so long as you don’t tell anyone else about it.” He waited until

the two men nodded, and he went on. "There is a prisoner within Tartarus who contains within him a very specific type of power. Samael, one of the first Angels to fall from Grace, well before even Lucifer. It has a strange power, one that is directed against snakes and dragons."

"It almost sounds like a Sacred Gear, and yet you are speaking as if it is also a living creature," Harry mused. He knew that, in a way, Ddraig was alive in the Boosted Gear, but the way Ajuka was talking seemed to imply more than just a Sacred Gear that retained the sentience of the creature it had been made out of.

"I would not say that Samael is alive, or rather... not sentient or living in any manner you or I would recognize. Samael has a body certainly, but it has no direction or will of its own. Samael's gaze serves a single function. It cannot even use the power it drains from dragons on its own, rather bestowing it upon the 'user' so to speak," Ajuka stated.

"That does sound far too tempting a target for Nefertiti and Akhenaten," Harry agreed. He frowned pensively, wondering something. "And perhaps Cao-Cao's plans as well."

"True. How either expect to be able to get into the prison, I don't know. It's one of the most heavily fortified places in the Underworld, with a direct link to both my office and Lucifer's home. We'd be there within seconds to say nothing about the defenses on hand already. But if they can somehow bypass that..." Ajuka shrugged. "It is a very tempting target indeed."

"And no place is entirely secure," Cú agreed, then smirked and pointed over Harry's shoulder back down the path to the houses below. "However, I think you and I're about to overstay our welcome here. I'd say you're a lucky bastard, Potter, if I didn't think that even my vaunted endurance would be tested by those ladies."

Flying up towards them was one of Rias's bat familiars, visible in the light of the numerous magical lights that lit up the area along the river leading up to the caldera. Seeing that, Harry gulped a bit, then stood up, looking over at his two guests. "Lord Ajuka, if you could get permission for us to investigate that prison, or perhaps even just station troops there without anyone the wiser, I think that'll be a very good idea. Myself, Cú, Rias, and a few others. With all of your duties and those Sirzechs is dealing with the two of you can't just stay there on watch, and we might be the next best thing."

Smiling very slightly at the young man as he gave out what could be called orders, no matter how politely phrased, to a Maou, Ajuka nodded. "Agreed. And I know Lucifer will want to meet his sister, tell her what he's been up to in his own words, and fuss over Rias once everything you have been up to comes to light. Although the fact that the Interdict even affects the pocket dimension of the Underworld is monstrously annoying."

Nodding, Harry smiled, knowing that it had indeed been a few weeks, and Lucifer, the sis-con that he was, would undoubtedly make a fuss over everything that Rias had been doing, probably to both praise and pout that he hadn't been able to help much. Idly, he wondered how Irina and Xenovia were doing. The two of them had been sent back to Rome via portkey to another city in Italy with a written report on everything that was going on in Egypt. Of course, even writing that kind of thing down didn't mean that anyone would be able to pay attention to it, but he trusted the two of them to be able to somehow tell the church would have been going on. As well as what they had discovered about the greater issue threatening Earth as a whole.

Now was not the time for such thoughts, however. "Cú, I'll be right back to drop you off somewhere else. But I don't think you want to be on this island tonight."

"Reckon a few of them are screamers? Aye, I figure the same. Just drop me off with a lot of booze on that island you all are starting to call New Australia. That'll do me. I've got some exploring of me own to do, and the trees there will do for building a boat."

Wondering what kind of boat Cú would be able to build, as that wasn't part of his legend, Harry nodded, then with a hand on Lord Ajuka's shoulder and the other on the fal stone, Harry teleported the two of them across dimensions to Kuoh. There, he bid Ajuka farewell, and after watching the man disappear into the teleportation tunnel into the Underworld, he returned. Seeing that Cú had taken a few moments to gather all of the wine and food from their impromptu midnight snack, he teleported him to the fal stone that was still located on the continent-sized island.

Yes, people were unimaginatively calling it New Australia at this point. Harry hoped the name would change eventually, but it would probably stick for now.

By the time he returned to the island, Rias's familiar was hovering in the air above the fal stone set into the rim of the caldera, squeaking and beckoning him down the side of the mountain towards the houses below. He smiled at the little thing, letting it settle down on one of his shoulders before making his way down.

Halfway down, he paused, drinking in the sight of Akeno rising into the air. Her white, purple and black hybrid wings beat the air. She was dressed all in white, almost like an angel, but with a few black markings here and there on the white toga she wore. If that wasn't enough to tell Harry that Akeno was no angel, the smile on her face, the lust in her eyes as she came close, would've done the same.

Without any preamble, she fell down towards Harry, expecting him to catch her, which he did. Before her wings started to disappear, she was kissing him hungrily, one leg wrapped around his middle.

Harry responded just as ardently, one hand going down to her rear, the other arm wrapping around her middle, keeping her steady even as he kept on walking forward. When the pair of them broke for air, Harry moved his mouth down to her neck, nibbling and biting as he spoke. "I take it you ladies have finished all of your preparations for the night? You're oh so mysterious preparations that you refused to let me see beforehand?"

Akeno giggled throatily. "Rias and Yasaka both decided they wanted to play dress-up tonight. That, and this is kind of a special night for you and Yubelluna, isn't it? Just like the night you and I shared up there."

Knowing that Akeno was using a hand or wing to point above them back to the caldera, Harry just nodded, not breaking off his ministrations on her neck and ear, causing her to moan and begin to hump slowly against him.

With an effort of will, Akeno remembered the game plan she and the other ladies had decided on and slowly pushed out of his arms, pushing at his chest with both hands when he almost refused to relinquish his grip on her rear. "Ara, but I am, mmm... getting ahead of myself, Harry. As I said, this night is a special one for you and Yubelluna. As such, she will be going first."

After a few moments, Harry regained control of his own mental faculties and frowned slightly, trying to stare into Akeno's violet eyes rather than down at her chest or anywhere else. "And none of the others resent that, and... she is fine with that? I thought Yubelluna wanted to go on a few more real dates before we jumped into bed with one another."

"That was then, and this is now. Yube's thoughts on that score have changed," Akeno tittered. "She wants some relief tonight, although I do not know if the two of you will go all the way tonight. I will let her tell you more. And as for resenting Yube going first, no. Kalawarner and I have agreed that we will help work you up a bit, but this is mainly for Yubelluna, Yasaka and Rias tonight.

Akeno's eyes flashed, and she leaned in kissing him hard, before quickly pulling back, licking her lips. "Tomorrow morning, though, and tonight after you are done with all three of them... Well, we will reap the benefits of waiting."

"Wicked girl," Harry murmured, kissing her again, his words causing her to giggle against his lips.

If much of his mind wasn't subsumed by arousal, Harry might well have wondered how well Kalawarner and Akeno would be able to get along in terms of sharing time in his bed. They hadn't done so before, and although the two of them had long since buried the hatchet in terms of Akeno's general hatred for fallen Angels, that was a far cry from loving the same man

at once. Still, he trusted the two of them to have worked out something between them, and frankly, he was in no fair state to think of such.

The pair took their time walking down the trail, stopping, kissing, hugging and sometimes just cuddling and exchanging sweet nothings as Akeno took her job of getting Harry worked up (further worked up, really) seriously. And as they went, violin, fiddle and piano music played below. One of the girls, Harry wasn't certain who, had decided tonight should be accompanied by music. The color of the floating lights also changed to light pink, green and white, giving the whole area an even more magical feel.

And as they crested the rocks leading down into the area where the hobbit holes and actual houses began, Harry saw the rest of his ladies waiting below, each of them arrayed in different types of finery. And the sight took his breath away, nearly causing him to stumble, but a giggling Akeno pulled him forward.

Standing in the doorway to the master bedroom/house, Rias and Yasaka were both dressed in Egyptian-themed bathing suits. Well, sort of. The overall look was more Egyptian Priestess cum bathing suit than anything actually designed to swim in, but that really didn't matter at all when worn by women as gorgeous as Yasaka and Rias.

Rias's swimsuit was cut into a v-shape from the front, with a golden outer band paired with dark blue for the main color. Her belly button and taut stomach were on display, as was a significant amount of cleavage, while around her neck, a broad collar, a historical type of Egyptian jewelry, lay. With emeralds mixed in with gold bands, covering the top of her cleavage and then her neck, looking almost as tight as a choker. On either arm, she wore long arm sleeves, ending in golden bands around her wrist and emerald and gold bracelets around her upper arms. Rias's hair was free, falling down her back in a river of red, her ahoge bouncing above her forehead.

Yasaka also wore a choker, though in her case, it was the choker that Harry had given her during the party the clan had on this island what seemed like months ago. She also didn't have the jewelry that covered half of Rias's prodigious cleavage, leaving more of her own on display. Her swimsuit was of the same cut as Rias's, although the color was black rather than dark blue and silver instead of gold. Further, while her cleavage was on display, her stomach wasn't as much, with only an ankh-shaped hole there. For jewelry, she wore bangles on her ankles that tinkled and gold snakes wrapping up her forearms. Her hair too, was loose, a wild cascade of blonde hair matching Rias's.

In stark contrast to the more elaborate costumes of the kitsune and redhead, Kala wore a simple white swimsuit. Although, in her case, it was the kind of swimsuit that would probably be banned on ninety percent of the world's beaches. The barely-there bottom was covered by a

sarong, which swayed lightly in the breeze coming up off the ocean but did nothing to hide how spare that bottom truly was, barely covering her recently waxed mound, hugging her lower lips to the point where Harry could make out the shape of them as he moved closer. Above, the majority of her breasts were bare to the world, with only a thin strip of multicolored cloth covering her nipples, defying physics and every other natural law of the universe by staying in place despite the fact she was bouncing lightly on her toes as she stared up towards Harry, a smile on her face that was equal parts welcoming and challenging.

However, despite how provocative her choice of dress was, it was Kala's wings that drew Harry's attention. Harry very vividly recalled those wings, having made love to Kalawarner once when she had them out and having seen them in battle several times. But unless the light of the magical floating lamps were confusing him, they looked noticeably lighter than they had ever been before. Where before they had been a light gray color, now they looked almost off-white. A part of his mind wondered about that while he stood there for a moment, simply taking in the sight of the three of them as Akeno moved to stand beside Kalawarner.

But then, as he opened his mouth to either ask about Kala's wings or comment on how beautiful they all looked, the door to the master bedroom opened, and Yubelluna stepped out.

She was dressed in a long flowing white dress of some kind, its simplistic nature somewhat like Akeno's. But instead of aping a toga, it looked like a druid's robe, covering her body from shoulders down to her ankles, the only thing making it look anything beyond utilitarian being the body underneath, Yubelluna's chest pressing the garment out, creating a small valley of cleavage, although nothing like what Kala and Yasaka had on display. Around her waist was a golden belt, on her head, a crown of horns, while her hair was done up in two long braids falling down either side of her chest. Intertwined through her hair were four-leafed clovers and sprigs of mistletoe. The only one in the group to wear any makeup, she wore green lipstick and had wode tattoos of vines covering her forearms and biceps.

For a few moments, Harry simply drank in the sight of Yubelluna, as he had done the other ladies previously. Yubelluna blushed rosily under his gaze, then moved purposefully forward, talking to herself sternly. *You are as far removed from a virgin as it is probable to get without being the town bicycle woman! Do not blush!*

"My lord, may this humble believer ask for a night of pleasure with thee?" she asked, making to kneel and bow her head.

Harry stopped that, taking Yube by the shoulders and pulling her up into a hug. "My priestess, you know you never have to ask!" Yubelluna laughed as Harry lifted her up, hugging her tightly, looking around the others with a bright grin before peering down at Yubelluna again. The look of love and affection in those emerald eyes took her breath away.

“You look amazing! Magnificent. But... why the bandrui look? I would have thought you’d go some kind of sexy librarian look given what you’ve said before,” he quipped. “Or perhaps trying to dress up as one of the bond girls, considering how much you like those movies. I think you would be amazing in some of Domino Derval’s outfits.”

“That.. well, that is a thought for the future,” Yubelluna admitted with a giggle and a blush. “But I figured that since I was reincarnated by your powers into a bandrui, I should dress the part for tonight.”

She bit her lip, looking up at Harry expectantly, and Harry obliged by leaning down and kissing her again. They’d shared a few kisses before this, but not all that many in comparison to the other ladies, and as they had shared during the conflict in Egypt and even after Harry woke up had been almost frantic with need rather than passion. This one was somehow different. It felt almost like a promise or a seal, maybe? Marking their relationship as important and equal to the ones Harry had with his other ladies.

Physically, the kiss was soft at first, Harry’s lips touching Yubelluna’s almost as light as a feather, then as she responded, Harry’s kiss became a little bit harder, letting Yubelluna control the flow. When her mouth opened, Harry’s tongue flicked out, licking against hers, before pushing into her mouth, the two tongues twisting around one another as she began to moan. She reached back lightly, grabbing one of Harry’s hands and directing it down her body while pushing the other one between them to her chest.

Harry obliged, beginning to play with her breasts with one hand and her rear with the other. Feeling Harry’s gentle fingers moving over her nipple, Yubelluna moaned despite the dress separating them. But she remembered where she was, the purple-haired woman slowly started to step backward. Not out of Harry’s arms, instead dragging him back towards the entrance to the master bedroom.

Watching all this from the sidelines, Rias and Yasaka smiled and moved forward. Sensing them coming, Harry turned away from Yube, staring at one then another. Somehow, his emerald eyes seemed to gleam even more with desire and love than before as he looked at them all, and Rias leaned in, kissing him ardently. The pair hadn’t had more than a few moments together until they had shifted back to Kuoh, and even there, the most they’d had were a few minutes while working on lunch and dinner, which had been mainly dominated by Kala.

But despite that, Rias knew tonight was for Yube. *She stood beside him throughout the Egypt conflict, served as well as she could after he went down and stood beside me in turn when I arrived. She was there with us all during the Fae War. Yube deserves this, even if they don’t end up going all the way.*

With that in mind, Rias found the willpower to pull back, letting Yasaka swoop in as she moved to Harry on the cheek, neck and then ear while Yasaka whimpered into her kiss, and Yubelluna kissed Harry's neck and collarbone as his hands continued to work on her rear and breast.

Having talked about it with Yubelluna before, Rias made no move to kiss Yube as she would have Yasaka. Like Kalawarner and Akeno, Yubelluna was straight, although she had been forced into some acts with a few of Riser's other peerage members a time or two for his amusement. Instead, she murmured into Harry's ear. "Give Yube a night to remember, lover. But don't you dare use all your endurance on her. You've got more than one job to do tonight."

"Yip!" Yubelluna whimpered, her eyes suddenly flying wide as she pulled her head back from where she had been nibbling at Harry's throat. Looking between them, she giggled, biting her lip, but she sounded a tad nervous to Rias as she spoke. "Aheh, um, it looks like Harry's wizard's staff definitely liked whatever you said, Rias."

"Hah! I'd wager most of that is from you and Akeno more than any words from me," Rias snickered.

"I will choose choice D, ladies, all of the above," Harry groaned as he pulled away from Yasaka. He gave her and Rias both kisses on the cheeks, then removed his hand from Yubelluna's tit. Before Yube could protest, he was reaching past her, pushing the door to the master bedroom open, ushering her in.

As Yubelluna and Harry shifted through the doorway into the master bedroom, Rias and Yasaka turned to look at one another, then Yasaka grinned and suddenly hopped up into Rias's arms, causing the taller Rias to fumble for a moment to catch her while Yasaka began kissing Rias ardently on the lips, pulling back only for a moment to direct the two of them down the path to one of the other bedrooms.

Akeno and Kalawarner watched them go, then shook their heads. The pair of them had some time with Harry before then, with Kala dominating the flirting time during meals and Akeno just now as they walked down from the caldera. "I don't suppose you have any wine on you, do you?" Akeno asked.

Kalawarner grinned, then reached down beside the stone she had been sitting on, pulling up a wine bottle. "Excellent. So, what should we talk about?" Akeno hummed, leading the way over to a flat rock pulling out a deck of cards.

It wasn't a perfect system. There might always be a little bit of annoyance in some of their minds for not being the first to make love with Harry or not have his attention totally

devoted to them. But the girls feared that such was life, and they would deal with it each in their own fashion.

Lemon Start:

As the two of them moved over to the bed, Yubelluna's ardor began to cool, to the point where she almost pulled away from Harry, her eyes flicking from him to the bed. Seeing that and feeling her tremble a little, Harry kissed her forehead, moving his hands from her rear upward, running his hands slowly up and down her back. "It's alright if you want to stop, Yubelluna. No one is going to force you."

"I... I am alright. Just... the sight of the bed. Riser, so many bad things happened in his bedroom. Because he had to hide some of his fetishes from his family, you see." Yube wrung her hands for a moment between them, then smiled as she looked around at the simple but somewhat homely master bedroom.

While no one had really taken much time or effort to decorate any of the houses on the island, it was clear that during the time they had been stuck there, Kunou and Lily had turned their hands to painting. In one corner was a surprisingly excellent painting of a small forest, complete with a series of animals poking their heads out from between trees. Along another wall were simple flowers and wide marks of different colors, which together were somewhat garish but still amusing to look at least, causing her to giggle a bit, if a tad timidly. "I think I'd have a lot more problems if this bedroom looked anything like his, but..."

Once more vowing that if Riser even took a single step out of line again, he would die horribly, Harry nodded, kissing her forehead, then her cheek. He gently held her, placing gentle kisses all along her face, neck, and ears, staying away from her mouth for now.

This seemed to work along with the gentle back rub he was giving her, and more of the tension started to drain out of Yube. After a few moments, she leaned up and kissed him again before gently starting to pull him towards the bed. "I don't think, I don't think I'm ready just yet to go all the way. But that leaves quite a lot of things we can still try."

She added an eyebrow wiggle that was pure Akeno, and Harry chuckled, wondering aloud if she and the others were taking lessons from one another in seduction or playfulness. When Yube replied with a droll, 'No comment,' Harry's chuckle turned into a joyous laugh. "Well, I knew once Kala and Yasaka joined, I would be outnumbered, I just never anticipated that it would get so bad. I'm in danger, and I think I like it."

Laughing at that, Yube now felt almost entirely at ease and gently twisted them around, pushing Harry so that his legs hit the side of the bed. He sat down on the edge, and, after a moment's hesitation, Yube grasped the horned crown on her head, sending it to the side with a

Leviosa spell to rest in the corner with the forest painting. For some reason, she just felt the symbology of that was a good thing. Then, as Harry began to unbutton his shirt and pull it off, Yube hesitantly raised her own dress, halting for a second when Harry spoke. "Can I do that?"

The Yube froze, then slowly shook her head. "No. Let me. I..."

Realizing that once more he'd almost stepped on a land mine, Harry nodded, reaching up to gently take her hand, kissing each finger, then turning it around to kiss her palm, then her pulse point on her wrist, upwards, until he slowly pulled her down into a languid kiss, letting her know without words she could pull away anytime she wanted. "If kissing is all we want to do tonight, Yube, that's fine. I'm not going to pressure you in the bedroom, not now, not ever."

Nodding, Yube pulled away and with a flourish, pulled her bandrui dress up over her head, tossing it to the floor. She stood there, naked bar a small set of panties, staring at Harry.

Harry had seen a Yube naked before, but not like this, and her body took his breath away, just as the bodies of all four of his other lovers did every time he saw them. Her chest wasn't as big as Rias's, let alone Akeno's, but she seemed of a size with Kala, her breasts slightly smaller for her frame. Overall, she looked a little thicker than Rias or Kala, her hips and thighs more like Yasaka's, showing more muscle mass in comparison to her upper body. Her breasts also sagged just a little bit under their own weight, although nowhere near as Akeno or Yasaka's did. Those breasts were tipped with dark purple nipples that threatened to grab Harry's attention and not let go. Her hair, still in two braids, bounced lightly off her chest, and Harry felt the urge to reach out and tug her down by those braids. But he knew that kind of action would not be welcome, even though he could now see a sign of Yube's arousal clear on her simple white pair of panties, the stain rapidly spreading.

Slowly, looking up at her face all the while, Harry reached forward, gently tracing his hands up and down her sides, up and down her thighs, around, up, and down again. Over and over, he just gently allowed his fingers to play over her body as moaning began from the room below the master bedroom.

Yube giggled a little awkwardly as he reached them, but Harry simply smiled. "Don't worry. Like I said, I won't ever push you. We will go at our own pace. It's not a competition. If Rias and Yasaka have decided to let out all of their lust all at once on one another, that's their choice. I have enough self-control to let my own out in bursts."

Biting her lip to stop from making a comment at that, Yube chuckled and then suddenly flung herself down into Harry's arms, pushing aside the last of her concerns for the night with a mixture of desire and bravado. The two of them locked lips again and soon Harry found himself on his back for a moment. His hands, which had been playing up and down Yube's side, shifted as his arms went around her, squeezing her in a hug that was at the same time tight yet tender.

One hand fell to her hip, and the other went up to her neck, stroking at her scalp and neck as he began to slowly take over the kiss.

He didn't dominate the kiss as he might have done with Akeno, Yasaka or Kala. Even Kala, who most enjoyed slow lovemaking, would have equally loved him taking charge. Instead, Harry concentrated on being thorough, first playing with her tongue, then exploring her mouth a little, then pulling back, sucking on her tongue as he urged her to explore his own mouth in turn.

As he did so, he slowly turned them so that they lay on their side. This allowed his hand to move up from Yubelluna's thigh to gently cup one of her breasts while her hands began to fumble at his clothing, undoing the belt and pulling his pants and underwear down in one go. As Harry kicked them off, Yubelluna pulled away from their kiss to look between them, her eyes dilating with arousal for a second before she started to twitch a bit, but when she closed her eyes and breathed in deeply, the momentary frisson of fear that had nearly erased her arousal disappeared, and she eagerly bent down to kiss him again, trying to push Harry back onto his back.

Harry was having none of that, though. He had been very kind up to this point, but that didn't mean that Yube was going to have everything all her own way. Besides, Harry was very afraid that if she started to service him without getting anything in return, bad memories would start to fill her head again. Instead, Harry turned the tables on her. He allowed her to push him onto his back but only so that he could tickle her sides a second later, causing her to squeal and letting him twist them entirely around so that Yube was lying on her back instead.

"Tonight is about you, love," Harry said, his voice now a little stern yet also loving, as he pulled away from her lips to breathe those words out before diving back in. Again, the two of them lost themselves to simply kissing one another, with Yube feeling the arousal pulsing through her body at an ever-increasing rate.

Kissing Riser was never like this, she reflected, almost woozily, as if she was starting to become drunk with arousal and with Harry's simple presence. The man had let his aura come out a little as they made out and had yet to rein it in.

With Riser, his kisses had always been like the rest of the relationship, dominated by his lust, **his** demands. The moment he was done kissing her, they would move on to other things, as if kissing her was but a step necessary to get through to what he really wanted. With Harry, every kiss seemed as if that kiss alone was the goal, as if he was putting all of his efforts into that one moment as if what Yube wanted from that kiss was the single most important thing in Harry's world. It was intoxicating and somewhat startling, but more than anything, it was

incredibly welcome. She found herself whimpering with need and complaint as he pulled away, moving down her body slowly.

When he reached her collarbone, Harry paused, kissing there, lightly running his teeth along her skin but not nipping or leaving a mark as he would have with Rias or any of the others. Again, he got the impression that any kind of pain like that, no matter how small, would threaten to bump Yube out of the moment. Instead, he simply looked up at her, one hand gently moving to play with her hair, tracing a few of the braids through her hair, while the other hand again stroked her sides down to her thighs, his tongue flicking and licking at her skin.

Below, Rias and Yasaka had indeed gone quite a bit further than where Yube and Harry currently found themselves. Portions of their Egyptian motif bathing suits had been pushed aside, and the two of them now sat with Yasaka in Rias's lap, her legs tight around the taller redhead's waist as they humped against one another. Breasts, bare now, pressed deeply into one another, their nipples rubbing against one another, as the pair of them fought for dominance in the kiss until Rias pulled away, then dove down, taking one of Yasaka's nipples in her mouth.

"YIIIP!" Yasaka whimpered, shaking her head. "Mmm... That's good!" She then grinned like a fox and sent her hand diving down between them. Quickly, her two fingers found Rias's slit and slid in, first one, then two, disappearing into Rias's warmth, causing Rias to gasp, pulling away from Yasaka's nipple to moan throatily, shaking her head wildly from side to side, her red hair waving like a fan for a moment. "Hehe, don't think that you'll have this all your own way, lover! Harry is the only one that gets to dom me, and even then, only in his Phoenix werewolf form!"

"MMm, Oh... I didn't think we were having that kind of contest!" Rias gasped before her arms tightened around Yasaka. A second later, she twisted the pair of them around so that Yasaka's back smacked down into the bed that they were currently using. Grinding her barely-clad pussy against the shorter woman's core, Rias leaned down to kiss her again, smirking at the kitsune as she did. "But if that's the case, I will give it my all!"

As the moans from below redoubled, Harry had shifted slightly to the side so that he was kneeling beside Yube, allowing her hands to start to play with his manhood while he played with her nipples. His hands slowly traced up and down along her stomach, around her belly but in a circle, then up again, as he sucked, nibbled and kissed her breasts, moving from one to the other, then back again. As she began to work her hands up and down his shaft, Yube began to lift her hips up off of the bed slowly, up and down, a need beginning to fill her as she approached a crescendo, yet she didn't have quite enough stimulation to throw her over the edge, both ecstatic and terrified at what was happening to her.

Seeing the conflicted look growing on Yube's face as he pulled away from her nipple, Harry ceased his ministrations of her chest, raising both hands up over her body, letting just the tips of his fingers trace up from her stomach and breast before cupping her face, pulling her into a kiss. Her own hands on his began to move even faster on his cock, squeezing harder, almost to the point where it was painful. Harry ignored that sensation for a moment, concentrating again on simply giving Yube the best kiss he could.

Somehow sensing that, the sudden spike of concern about her own body's arousal and the crescendo to come faded away. Eventually, Yubelluna slowly pulled back, staring up at Harry, her eyes half-closed, and Harry breathed against her lips, the words "I love you," doing more than his actions had to calm her down, to making her eyes go wide, a smile appearing on her face as the final vestige of hesitation about what they were doing tonight left her. Never, not once she had become his queen had Riser ever said those words to her, the very absence giving his previous attestations of affection the lie they were.

Seeing the acceptance on Yube's face, Harry allowed one hand to shift down from cupping her face down her body, between her breasts and then further down. He made no move to push aside her panty. Instead, Harry allowed two fingers to slide up and down her panty-covered slit until Harry found a small nub at the top of the now sharply delineated slit, Yube's private nearly visible through the white of her panties thanks to how soaked she was. Once he did, Harry gave that nub a small squeeze.

That was enough. Thanks to all of their foreplay, Yube had been teetering on the brink already, hence her previous small panic attack. Now, panic averted, Yube found her body flung across that edge as if she had just been fired out of a catapult. "Ahhhh!" Yube screamed as she humped up off the bed, her hands around Harry's shaft, squeezing harder than Harry was frankly comfortable with, but he endured, watching, gently kissing her neck and cheeks as Yube worked her way through her orgasm, only slowly coming down.

Yube slowly opened her eyes, blinking, then smiling up at Harry, leaning up quickly to give him a kiss on the lips. Removing her hands from his shaft, she grabbed his shirt, which he was still wearing, and tugged him around until Harry was lying down, and she was now kneeling next to him instead. Pulling away from the kiss, she worked his shirt down one arm, allowing Harry to lean up lightly and pull it off. Tossing it aside left Harry naked except for his socks, which Yube laughed at a little before kissing him ardently once more, one hand moving to play with his cock again. She turned in that direction slightly, watching as her hand moved up and down his large shaft.

She was almost tempted to lean down and see if Harry tasted any better but decided against it. That had been one of Riser's favorite things to make her do, and she did not want to

deal with any more thoughts about him in any way tonight. Instead, Yubelluna kept on moving her hands gently, one up and down Harry's shaft, the other working his cock's crown while Harry's own hands played with her breasts or moved down her body again, gently fondling her rear from behind, then around her thigh, then between her legs. She gasped then as he started to play very gently with her pussy, a single finger moving up and down her panty-covered slit, the touch of that and the hand on her breasts causing her arousal to start to build again.

Against the backdrop of more moaning and groaning from below, it wasn't long before both of them started to push one another to the edge. For Harry, it was the combination of the noises from below from Rias and Yasaka, the moans, the tone of them so familiar to him if muted, coupled with what Yube was doing to him. To Yube, those noises were a distraction, but Harry was playing her body like an instrument so well it didn't matter.

Harry started to lift his hips up off the bed, thrusting more of his shaft into her squeezing hand. Yube started to curl forward as she started to lose control of her body again at the sensations Harry was causing her.

Yet even as she began to hit smaller crescendos with every slow touch of the finger across her slit, her own hands did not stop working. Eventually, Harry began to feel his own plateau coming and hissed out a warning. "Yube, I'm going to cum. You might want to pull away a bit."

Yube only continued her work, only shifting so that her head was further up Harry's body rather than near his crotch as it had been previously due to her earlier movements. She leaned in, kissing Harry hard and squeezing her hand around his shaft just a little bit harder while the nails on her other hand traced around his cockhead and then down to squeeze his balls in turn.

That did it, and Harry came as a final crescendo hit Yube, causing her to moan into his mouth ardently even as spurts of come hit her hands, forearms, and Harry's stomach.

As the aftershocks slowly worked their way through her system, Yube pulled away, rolling slightly on the bed as she stretched out, then leaning in to place her head on Harry's shoulders. For several moments, the two of them simply looked at one another, saying nothing, conveying more through their gazes than words could ever do in so short a time.

Harry smiled gently, leaning forward and giving Yube a kiss on the nose, causing her to giggle a bit.

But it was a very tired giggle. The emotions of the night, the buildup to it, had taken a lot out of the former Bomb Queen far more than the actual orgasms. She soon found herself starting to fade into sleep as Harry let her go, chuckling as he held her against him for a moment.

Almost as if she could sense Yubelluna had enough for the night, Rias popped her head out from the small hatch leading down into the children's area a few minutes later. She looked towards the bed, then, smiling, pushed herself upwards and out of the hole.

When Rias climbed out of the hole, Harry stared, bewitched anew by his redhead lover. She was still wearing the wide collar and one of her armbands, but other than those two pieces of jewelry, she was utterly naked as she sashayed towards him, followed quickly by Yasaka. The sight of Rias's nakedness, her hard nipples, her pussy dripping juices down her legs from her previous lovemaking with Yasaka caused Harry's wizard staff, which had only begun to droop a little after Yubelluna started to nod off, to once more stand at attention.

He made to stand up, but before he could, Rias was at the base of the bed, crawling up over it, and Harry in turn, until she was directly up above him, lowering her moist flower down towards his cock. "No foreplay needed with me tonight, my love." Within seconds, Harry was fully hilted within her, and she began to moan, rising slowly up and down as Yasaka moved to Harry's other side.

Akeno and Kalawarner's faces appeared in the doorway, and then they walked in, arousal evident on both of their faces even though they made no effort to join. Their attempts to stay aloof until their own turns came had failed miserably, but neither was willing to join Rias. Akeno had attempted that before and had found it most offputting. Instead, they conjured up a pair of chairs and began to play with themselves, watching avidly.

From where he lay, Harry could see this, which only spiked his own still further. He turned back to Rias, leaning up to pull her into a heated kiss, dominating the kiss even as his hands began to work her breasts and hips.

How long they kissed, Harry didn't know, but eventually, even he and Rias needed to breathe. As he pulled back, he saw that Yasaka had joined them on the bed and was sitting behind Rias, a talisman of some kind placed on Yube's chest, presumably covering her with the equivalent of a Mufflatio. The kitsune's hands were working Rias's breasts now, and she leaned over Rias's shoulder to kiss Harry as Rias gasped in air.

Still gasping in air, Rias laid her head gently on Harry's shoulder, moaning loudly for several moments as their hips worked against one another. Then she whispered into his ear words that further electrified Harry, causing his hips to start to move even faster, his grip on her hips to tighten. "Get me pregnant, Harry Potter. Here and now, let's make a baby."

For a brief second, just a brief second, a portion of Harry's Occlumens-organized mind tried to hold up a red flag even as his body ardently responded to those words. After all, Rias had told him that she wanted to at least finish high school before having kids. But apparently, plans had changed.

And Harry could no more not want that, not want a child with this magnificent young woman, than he could stop the tide. "As my lady commands," he whispered before going to work on her in earnest.

End lemon

scene break

To no one's surprise, the moment Harry and the ladies transferred back to Kuoh in the morning (well, it was the next morning in Kuoh. Harry and his lovers had actually spent several days together in matrimonial bliss, ending with Harry taking Yubelluna out on a picnic date) they found a message from Lucifer waiting for them, asking them to meet with him down in the Gremory mansion down in hell, or if he and some of his peerage could come up to them instead. As it was a school day, the extended clan had a vote on it and the votes to have a somewhat normal day back.

As such, it was decided that Lucifer and whoever was coming with him could come through in the afternoon, although Rias decided she would head down to hell first to meet with her brother. She wanted to check on Grayfia and to get her brother's reaction to everything she had to tell him over with quickly. As such, Yubelluna was pulled in to act as an anchor for the simulacrum.

"Not that I particularly care about school any longer, but it is simply easier to keep up that illusion rather than deal with the repercussions of our 'suddenly' not caring about school and so forth," Rias stated that morning, getting nods of agreement from Akeno, and, surprisingly, Harry. As much as he enjoyed teaching, there was so much going on these days that going to school seemed a waste.

As the day went on, Harry wondered if he wasn't the only one who was having a bit of a mental whiplash, sliding back into his normal routine as a teacher after so long spent solving the problem in Ireland, then in Egypt and everything else. He could sense Akeno's mind was not on her education but didn't call her on it, while Koneko looked just out of it, and Asia missed him calling on her twice. As for Yubelluna in her Rias simulacrum? She decided to truly act as Rias would. In this case, that meant performing a tick that Rias had developed during their time on the island, that of rubbing her stomach as 'Rias' looked down at it. At least she kept the wide grin Rias had on her face when she did that off the simulacrum's face. That would have been hard to explain. Yet Yube did this so often while wearing the illusion of Rias that several of Rias's fan club asked her if she was sick, which was kind of hilarious to Harry.

Regardless, the school day stretched out as such things did with no surprises until they were finally free.

Given what he had been told about Grayfia's injuries, Harry was not surprised that Rias and Sirzechs did not bring her along. Nor was he surprised by the pouting glare Sirzechs gave him for a few minutes as the siblings came out of Rias's teleportation tunnel from the ORC clubroom. Such things were expected when a sis-con found out said sister was looking to get pregnant by her husband.

Sirzechs had brought along his son, which Harry had somewhat expected and was a little leery of. Milicas's interest in Lily was something he wanted to watch very closely, even if Lily had not shown an ounce of interest in the opposite direction. However, everyone there was surprised at the third individual who came through the tunnel.

The youth was small, maybe a year or two older than Lily if height and face were any indication. He looked like a sparkplug on short legs though, with visible muscles on his lower legs and forearms, as he wore the same strange, Renaissance Era little rich boy outfit Milicas did, something that Mittelt called a crime against fashion. He had dark black hair cropped short, with almost snakelike yellow eyes, showing that whatever he was, his human body couldn't quite hide his inhuman nature. Not that it was the only sign of this or even the most important one. Since the youth, who/whatever he was, had six arms. Each of them was powerfully muscled, and seemed to move with a mind of their own as he looked around himself, breathing deeply.

For a moment, looking at the youth, Harry remembered Luna's vision about a six-armed person. If the youth was connected to that vision or the significance of it, Harry had no idea, as Luna hadn't known either. *He's also a good deal younger than I expected him to be.*

Before Harry or any of the other adults gathered in the compound's garden could say anything or get over their surprise at the youngster's appearance, Lily gasped, racing over to the six-armed newcomer. He backed away a step as Lily, with a child's disregard for personal space, began to bounce all around him, staring at his arms in fascination then thrusting her face into his to peer at his eyes. "Oooh, yellow eyes, those are cool. They remind me of Tiamat's dragon form. Six arms, though, that's neat. Are you some kind of bug monster? With six arms, I bet you'd be a kick-ass goalie!"

As Sirzechs chuckled and the youngster blinked at the deluge of words from the redhead, Harry scowled, his thoughts on the forearmed youth derailed for a moment by fatherly concerns. "Lily! What if we told you about that kind of language?"

Lily pouted, looking down at her feet for a second before apologizing, and Harry ruffled her hair a little harsher than he normally would as a warning to not curse again. Rias also muttered something about taking away dessert privileges that night, which caused the younger redhead to whimper.

“Now, now, that might be a step too far,” Sirzechs soothed. “Only start taking dessert or other privileges away if Lily’s cursing looks to become a habit. And as my six-armed companion seems a bit stunned by Lily’s verbal assault, let me make introductions. This is Typhon. And yes, he is **that** Typhon. It’s a long story that I’ve already told once today, but suffice it to say that while you lot were busy somehow bringing the Wizarding World to heel, my peerage and I were similarly busy, and that business did not come without casualties.”

It had been decided early on that Typhon, although just as much a part of Ajuka’s peerage as Sirzechs, would stay with Sirzechs and his family. Ajuka was a mix between bachelor and mad scientist, so his home wasn’t exactly... livable for most people. He also had no real interest in becoming a semi-father figure for the Titan, whose mental growth had been stymied in some very big ways from a very young age. In combat, the Multi-headed Monster of Gaia was a true beast, but out of combat he was more akin to a child, something his reincarnated devil form showed when they finally had enough mutated pieces to force the transformation. Grayfia and Sirzechs had both room and experience with Milicas, although Typhon was a bit older than their son, and Venelana had leaped on the idea of having another young boy around the Gremory mansion. Rias too, when she first met the young Titan, liked the idea of having another surrogate nephew.

Typhon shook his head, getting over his stunned state at Lily’s social assault, taking in the group ahead of him. Even while stuffed into a semi-human form like he was, Typhon still retained most of his senses as a Titan and they were telling him a lot more about this weird family than his eyes and ears could. The emerald-eyed man was radiating almost as much power as Zeus, the Sky Father, but contained, controlled in a way that egotist would never have agreed to do, let alone been able to. He also wasn’t leaking magic out into the world, which was great to see.

Similarly, the redhead Typhon had met earlier that day with the gold-flecks in her eyes had her power just as contained as Sirzechs and the others, but read to his senses as both devil and demigod, a **weird** combination, but which seemed to work for her. Why that was he didn’t know, as his instincts couldn’t tell him that. The little girl too read as a demigod to his senses, nor was she the only one.

But for all his confusion about Lily, Rias, Harry and a few of the other auras he saw around them, there were two questions that had to be asked right now. “What’s a goalie? What’s soccer?” *After all, so long as they aren’t hurting Mother, I don’t honestly care what they are. It’s weird, but then again, I’m kind of weird now, too, right?*

Mittelt had been lounging nearby to soak in some sun with Yubelluna and Kalawarner. While the two ladies had gotten some sun on the island, having time to just laze out with a good

book was something they both enjoyed a lot, especially since they had both been busy during the day before that, Yube with imitating Rias at school, and Kala with a few portions of the new project. Mittelt now abruptly sat up, her face a rictus of horror as Lily gasped.

“You don’t know what soccer is! What have you been teaching him?” Lily pointed accusingly at Milicas, wagging her finger in his face, making Harry wonder if she realized that he was older than her by a few years.

Then again, it probably doesn’t matter to my daughter, does it? He thought ruefully. *Heck, has that ever mattered to women at any point when they are taking us mere men to task for something?*

“Er, well, how to walk mainly,” the littlest Gremory stated, backing away quickly from Lily’s finger like it was a loaded weapon. “Typhon’s still not very good at it. Something about going from hundreds of feet to two is throwing him.”

“Hah! So you were a bug monster of some kind? Or some weird lizard bug thing?” Lily asked, while Harry chuckled, watching as Kunou and Mittelt came over, joining Lily in her social assault on the nonplussed looking Typhon.

“Er, no, um, more a dinosaur than anything else. I didn’t have any ability to consciously use magic, so I can’t be called a dragon,” Typhon stated, scowling a bit. “Why would Mother make me into a bug monster? Monster or no, bugs are for squishing.”

“And the whole walking thing?” Kunou questioned.

Looking at the shorter girl with fox features, Typhon smiled, amazed anew at how many creatures Mother had given birth to. She didn’t seem nearly as strong as the others, not even the young brunette with the silver streak in her hair who sat nearby with a rather intimidatingly large book open in front of her. But she seemed just as lively, and Typhon found himself staring at her long fox ears as they twitched. “I like foxes. They were always more inquisitive than afraid when I grew up before fighting Zeus and the rest of those cheats.”

Typhon’s youthful face hardened into a scowl as he looked between Kunou, Milicas and Lily. “And I don’t have a problem with walking! You all just don’t have enough legs. It’s not natural to be so unbalanced, why didn’t humans develop like centaurs, honestly.”

“Weird. But exercises and stuff like that sports and stuff, that will help his hand-eye coordination, right?” Lily stated brightly. “Even wrestling would help.”

“I don’t know football or that goalie thing, but I do know wrestling.” The youth flexed all six of his arms. “We Titans developed it long ago. And I’m pretty good at it, too. If you’re challenging me to a match, expect to lose.”

“Ooooh?” Lily snickered, transforming into her phoenix werewolf form growing by several inches even as she hunched forward. Even with the recent flood of deific energies, her phoenix werewolf form looked like an ungainly puppy stretched out. “That sounds like fun!”

“Ahem,” Harry coughed, getting his daughter’s attention even as Koneko moved over to join them. “That sounds like fun, yes, but you know you and Kunou both have homework you have to finish before any fun time. “Koneko, why don’t you take Milicas and Typhon around, showing them the compound. Maybe take over the boy’s TV room and watch a football game.”

“Heh, that’s not a bad idea. I’ll join you for that,” Mittelt stated, hopping off her lounge chair. “I figure if I explain things now, he’ll be better able to keep up with a pickup game later. We might have to ask a few of the Onmyouji kids to join us though considering the whole six-arms thing.”

Lily made to protest, her expression turning hangdog even as she changed back to her normal body, but Harry was unmoved by her or even the combination of Lily and Kunou’s puppy-dog eyes. “The sooner you get done with your homework Lily, the sooner you can see how good Typhon is as a goalie. But not before.”

With all of the events in Egypt done or still being handled by Hermione, Tonks and Kiba, there wasn’t any need for Lily to act as a secondary transporter into and out of Danan. So there was no way Harry was going to let her ignore her schoolwork now that they were back in Kuoh. Normality like that might seem an unpleasant necessity, but Harry wanted his daughter(s) to be grounded in the nonmagical world as well as the magical, and that meant getting them an education. And after the events in Egypt, normality was somewhat like a balm on their minds and bodies, especially the younger set.

Lucifer chuckled as Koneko nodded, reaching over to take the six-armed youth by one of his wrists, and pulling him towards the boy’s dormitory. Typhon looked a little surprised the short Rook was able to move him at all, but went willingly, while Lily and Kunou, both pouting outrageously, headed inside. Yubelluna stood up from her lounge chair as they went, and followed them inside, indicating with a hand wave that she would make certain that the two girls actually did their homework. Milicas followed Typhon, when his Father gestured him in that direction, leaving only Rias and Harry to sit down in front of Sirzechs. The others in the garden were all busy with their own tasks.

Sirzechs watched his son walk off for a moment, then looked around the garden, smiling faintly. It was much smaller than the massive gardens the Gremory estate boasted, but there was something homely to the Kuoh Group’s compound that was quite welcoming. *And it begins with my little sister and her, her husband, blast it. Ugh, even now months later I’m still having*

trouble with that idea... and all it entails, Sirzechs thought, watching Rias sit down next to Harry one hand rubbing her stomach as she looked down at it briefly, before looking back up at him.

Not wanting to think about that, Sirzechs decided to just dive right into the serious stuff. “I have a lot of questions, but I understand that most of my questions about what the two of you have been up to would be both strange and disjointed, both in your ability to answer and my ability to concentrate hard enough on it to understand what you say. But Rias told me about your takeover of the Wizarding World, Harry, and about the think tank you’ve begun to help offset the magical issue.”

He scowled then. “The news Rias passed on about Ophis somehow finding and freeing evil dragons is worrisome. I could wish we had a better idea of how strong they are, but then again I’d wish more to somehow be able to find them behind whatever wards Ophis uses. Then there are the problems with these two ancient magic-users. The idea they’ve been around for so long, infiltrated not just the Khaos Brigade but the other factions, is horrifying.”

Harry nodded grimly, somewhat repeating the same line he’d used when talking to Ajuka about the problem with Ahkenaten and Nefertiti. “An intelligent enemy is far more dangerous than a merely powerful one. An intelligent enemy given time to prepare and plan ahead is much, much worse. I won’t say they are as big a problem as the entirety of the Khaos Brigade, or even Ophis on her own. But they have a potential to be worse given how intelligent they are and how well they can move unseen. Did Ajuka tell you about the guess we’ve made about them?”

“He did,” Sirzechs affirmed. “I don’t think I agree with you or even Ajuka on how big a threat they could be one-on-one, but I am not willing to concentrate so much on the hydra at the gates that I ignore the snake in my garden. With my peerage as reduced as it is, though, Grayfia and I have had to step up a lot in terms of some of the duties my bishops and pawns were doing. Has Rias told you that I’m the only one of the four Maou to have a peerage at all?”

Harry nodded, and Sirzechs continued. “Well, that’s true. Beyond Typhon anyway, and unless I can find a target, he isn’t all that useful in terms of running the Underworld, keeping tabs on various Pillar families, and so forth. My peerage were secretaries, emissaries, visible representations of my power and the authority of the Four Maous. We’ve lost all of that and...”

“Oh tell the truth, Nii-sama. It’s Macgreggor’s ability to do all your paperwork and the intimidation factor of the others,” Rias cajoled, not wanting her brother to sink into a minor depression at the loss of his friends and servants. Now wasn’t the time for that.

“Well, yes. That’s a part of it. The important thing right now is that my peerage and I, and perforce all the Maou, are too busy to really take on another job, even one like reinforcing

Tartarus. Make it more defensible than it already is would be a task anyway, but we just don't have the time--"

He broke off as Harry shook his head. "That isn't a good idea at all. We should let the prison stay as it is but figure out a way to monitor it in a new way that Akhenaten and Nefertiti, or even Cao-Cao and whoever, can't enter without us being warned. That, and a Gremory style teleportation tunnel," Harry smiled, taking the hand that had previously been rubbing Rias's stomach, lifting it to his lips to kiss her palm. "That should be enough. Let us do that, Sirzechs, and me and my family will do the rest."

"Koneko, Yubelluna, myself, Cú, maybe we can even bring in Tiamat again," Rias stated, counting off their numbers on her finger. "Tonks, Luna, some of her Fae too, just to add some strangeness and another avenue of magical attack. We can do this, Nii-sama, believe me. Let them come to us on ground of our choosing, and we can take them."

When Harry nodded firm agreement, Lucifer smiled grimly. "In that case, I think myself and the Devil Government can agree to let you handle this. We will prepare the ground for the conflict to come and wait for your enemies to make their move. Perhaps Cao-Cao, perhaps your Nefertiti and her husband... perhaps even some of the Old Devil Faction. And if they do, we will have them all."

End Chapter