

CHAPTER 23

Even as a Devil—one whose body had long since surpassed mortal frailty through cultivation—Rias had not been immune to the dreaded pins and needles.

This... felt like that.

She leaned back against the smooth stone lip of the spring, crimson hair fanning out in the water as she closed her eyes and surrendered herself to the relic's work. Everywhere the spring touched her—skin, muscle, bone—it was as if a thousand faint sparks danced beneath the surface. Not painful... but not exactly pleasant either.

Uncomfortable, she decided. But tolerable.

It was nothing—*nothing*—compared to the Purification Elixir her parents had forced down her throat when she was a child. That Devils all over the Underworld endured for a *fraction* of what this world-shattering relic could promise.

She did not have fond memories of those elixirs, even if they'd helped her with her cultivation *immensely*. They had been pure agony. A violent and traumatic experience that had scarred her in ways she still wasn't willing to admit. Hours of retching up acrid bile as her core burned itself raw from the inside out.

The fact that I don't have to vomit the impurities out is a miracle all on its own... Somehow, I can still taste that vile filth on my tongue...

'Woah,' Issei muttered beside her. 'You're dirty as hell, babe.'

Rias cracked one eye open and shot him a glare sharp enough to cut Voidsteel.

Then she followed his gaze.

Her irritation evaporated.

The water immediately surrounding her body had turned murky. Not opaque, but clouded and faintly iridescent, as if something fine and particulate were suspended throughout the water. The sight stirred a strange sense of familiarity.

Jewellery cleansing baths.

Alchemical solutions used to strip grime and residue from precious metals—where dirt didn't simply disperse, but sloughed away, separating itself from the object entirely.

I guess that's what's happening to me right now...

She watched, transfixed, as faint wisps—almost smoke-like—peeled away from her submerged skin. Darker threads, heavier than water, spiralled downward in lazy coils before vanishing entirely.

Not floating, not dissolving either.

Being *drawn*.

Into what...?

She followed the motion downward, then lifted her gaze to the far end of the spring.

The dragon statue loomed there in silent watchfulness, marble scales catching the moonlight. Water continued to pour from its open jaws, unbroken, constant.

Rias' eyes lingered.

Is that... the filtration system too? The statue both provides this miraculous water and cleanses impurities...?

The idea sent a shiver through her—not of fear, but awe. If that statue truly handled the by-product of purification on this scale, then its internal complexity bordered on the absurd.

She turned her head slowly toward Issei.

He was... clear.

Utterly so.

The water around him was pristine, unmarred by the drifting clouds that surrounded her. Whatever impurities he'd possessed had already been stripped away—and judging by the lack of new residue, there wasn't much left to strip at all.

Her brows knit faintly.

He's only been cultivating for a few weeks...

It was easy—dangerously easy—to forget that.

She'd seen his growth, tracked his gains, felt the way the world responded to him now. The speed of it all blurred together until it felt natural. She'd even just seen the results of his *experimentation* on the training room that was supposed to be able to take punishment on a level none of them should be able to achieve unless she used her bloodline.

Then another thought came to her, unbidden.

Imagine how powerful he'll become now that every step of his cultivation will be boosted by a perfectly pure core...

Rias exhaled slowly and sank deeper into the spring, letting the strange, tingling discomfort wash over her again.

Issei...with Rias and the Codex's help...would become a *monster*.

She smirked.

Good.

Several long, quiet moments passed before Rias turned her head.

The steam curled lazily between them. The only sounds were the faint rush of water from the dragon's mouth and Issei's slow, steady breathing.

'Don't just sit there,' she said at last, her tone dry. 'Purchase the second level of the store before you buy me another ludicrous gift and waste all our points.'

Issei's eyes opened halfway.

By the time she finished speaking, he was grinning from ear to ear.

'No more presents for you for a *while*, babe,' he said smugly. 'I think with the Lexicon and this? I'm so far ahead on the boyfriend point meter you'll *never* catch up.'

Rias' eyes flashed, playful and sharp.

'Oh? Didn't you know?' she replied sweetly. 'Once we're married, those points don't get converted to *husband* points. Obviously. That would be ridiculous.'

He blinked, and Rias smiled.

Wide.

‘You lose them *all*.’

Issei wheezed, his lips gaping like a fish out of water.

She giggled, and immediately paid for it as he splashed a wave of warm water at her face. She sputtered, laughing, and flicked some right back at him in retaliation.

‘That’s bullshit and you know it!’

Pouting like an offended child, Issei crossed his arms and closed his eyes, sinking deeper into the spring.

Rias watched him for a moment, fondness warming her chest.

Not only was this relic something that defied everything she thought she understood about purification, ascension, and dragon-kind...it was also, infuriatingly, a *perfect* hot spring. The temperature was ideal, the water rich and soothing, and whatever was mixed into it left her feeling cleaner than she ever had in her life.

Which should have been impossible.

She was, quite literally, bathing in her own impurities.

‘Bought it,’ Issei grouched suddenly, his voice clipped. He was still, clearly, very salty.

So precious.

Rias turned her head toward him. ‘That’s it? No fanfare? No fireworks?’

‘Nothing,’ he confirmed. His eyes had gone faintly glassy—clearly scanning the new store page. ‘Just... a new page in the Point Shop. Some interesting options. One I’m even tempted to buy right now just to wipe that smug grin off that pretty boy’s face...’

Her lips curved in amusement but she brushed that thought aside for now.

‘Tell me there’s an upgrade for the cage spell.’

Under the water, she reached across and gently cupped his manhood, her thumb brushing lazily against his suddenly energised tip as she leaned closer.

‘I’m *not* going weeks again without feeling you inside me,’ she added calmly, her tone deadly serious. ‘I don’t care how much it slows down your growth.’

Issei froze.

‘...You sure?’ he asked, voice suddenly cautious. ‘Some of these upgrades are... big. Stupidly big.’

Rias answered him with a look.

He didn’t last long.

Issei shrugged and trembled at her touch, a grin breaking through as he slipped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her close, warm and solid at her side.

‘Alright,’ he said cheerfully. ‘I’ll just show you the only option that meets my lady’s standards, then!’

‘Good boy,’ she purred directly into his ear in such a wicked tone that, when combined with her continued fondling of his cock, turned Issei into jelly.

Crimson light bloomed between them as the Codex interface unfolded.

Draconic Codex Ascension Point Shop
Level 2

Ability Upgrade: Lament of the Chaste - 0 AP

Evolution - Consecration of Manhood

*"To consecrate is not to lose.
It is to surrender willingly, and be remade through purpose."*

The cage is no longer a restraint-it is a vow.

Your manhood is consecrated, set apart from personal claim and dedicated to a chosen authority. Arousal, pleasure, and release are no longer governed by instinct or will, but entrusted to another. In return, ascension becomes constant, unwavering, and absolute.

This is no longer denial, but true submission.

Effect Change:

You lose the stacking buff effect of Lament of the Chaste and instead gain a passive bonus of +80% to all AP gains once this spell is activated.

The Chastity Cage is replaced with a Ring worn around the manhood that cannot be removed once affixed, lest you render the Consecration of Manhood spell permanently ineffective.

Rias' breath came slower as she reread the description, letting each line settle into place.

A vow... Not denial... Not restraint... Submission.

Her grip tightened possessively around Issei's eager member beneath the water.

He's turned on by this too...

She lifted her gaze to him, eyes heavy-lidded, warmth pooling low in her abdomen.

'Well?' she asked softly, a wicked gleam in her eyes. 'Will you submit to me, my love? Will you consecrate your manhood to me? *For me?*'

Issei's cheeks turned a deep, spectacular crimson. He scratched at his cheek and looked pointedly away.

'Stop making it weird,' he muttered. 'It's not that big a deal, right? You already own every part of my body anyway... How's this magic cock-ring any different?'

The words struck her like a spark to dry tinder.

She felt the truth of it in her bones—she felt the same way about him—but hearing it spoken aloud, hearing him say it so casually, so willingly, made something inside her tighten deliciously.

She reached up and placed a hand against his cheek, guiding his flushed face back toward her.

Without another word, she kissed him.

Slow, but deep and filled with her passion and desire.

When she pulled back, they were both breathing harder. His face had somehow grown even redder.

'Buy it,' she whispered with a need she couldn't deny. 'I don't need to see the other upgrades. I don't *care* about the other upgrades. Give yourself to me, my love...'

He blinked at her owlishly.

'I already... did? Was I not supposed to?'

Rias bit her lip. Then she smiled, her eyes glimmering with repressed heat.

'*Show me.*'

He obeyed without hesitation, rising from the spring. Steam curled around his perfect, muscular body as he sat up on the stone lip, his hard member bouncing in her face and utterly unselfconscious beneath her gaze.

A pulse of Aether thrummed through the air.

She watched, transfixed, as a thin, dark band phased into existence at the base of his shaft—smooth, seamless, etched with impossibly fine runes that glowed faintly before settling into a quiet sheen.

Despite Issei's visible shudder at her proximity, she examined it with a professional eye, her face millimetres away from his throbbing manhood.

I don't recognize these runes... but they must allow for dynamic expansion and contraction. It wouldn't function otherwise.

Then...something shifted. Something...*changed*.

A subtle click in her awareness.

Rias' posture straightened instantly. She was intimately familiar with her own mental architecture, with the wards and compartments she'd built over years of cultivation and assembling her mental palace. Even the slightest foreign presence would set alarms ringing.

'...Did you—?'

Issei nodded, breath slightly uneven.

‘I had to designate you after I summoned it.’

Understanding flooded her mind. Invasive at first, but she calmed when she treated it as the mental instruction manual that it was...

Knowledge—not in words, but in instinct. A comprehension of how much power she now had over Issei. Of how to best use this...*cock ring*. And how best to torment her beloved with that knowledge.

So this was what it felt like when the Codex imparted comprehension.

‘...I see,’ she murmured.

She let her fingers trail experimentally over his bobbing shaft, and felt the response—not just the obvious one in her fiancé’s cock alone, but in the new bond between them. A direct line of authority, waiting to be exercised.

‘I want to test it,’ she admitted aloud, then groaned softly in frustration. ‘But we said no sex tonight.’

Issei laughed, voice slightly strained.

‘Keep touching me like that and I don’t think it’ll matter...’

Rias’ eyes flashed, wicked amusement glinting in their blue-green depths.

‘Oh no, my love,’ she purred softly, with condescension. ‘I can touch you for as long as I like. If I don’t allow it, you’ll not finish.’

The weight of it settled over him visibly.

He shuddered and sank back into the spring, steam rising around his flushed face.

‘That’s... so hot.’

Rias laughed sultrily as Issei settled back in the water next to her. ‘Dirty boy.’

She let the spring continue with its task of purging her body of impurities as she made herself comfortable, her head resting on Issei’s shoulder. She left his manhood alone for now—there’d be plenty of time to experiment later.

‘Now,’ she continued, tone returning to something more measured, though the warmth remained in her eyes, ‘tell me. What other options are there in the new level of the store?’

He showed her, and Rias’s eyes scanned through the scrolling store page.

Her eyes skimmed over the other upgrades to the chastity cage—ones she couldn’t care less about—before widening as she took in the additional options now available to Issei.

Several were impressive.

One stood out immediately.

Draconic Will - 4000 AP

True dragons exert their will long before they master fang or flame. Their presence bends intent, warps resolve, and presses upon the world with quiet

*inevitability. Lesser beings often find them themselves quailing in fear
when in the presence of a True Dragon.*

As they should.

Effect: Upon purchase, the Codex awakens a fragment of draconic will
within the bearer, allowing their intent to bleed into the surrounding
world.

Dragons had always been prideful creatures—beings capable of exerting their will upon reality through sheer force of personality and ego alone. Even granting Issei a fragment of that capacity would be... game-changing. Especially as it would stack exponentially with his existing will-enhancing artefacts and purchases.

But Issei's lack of enthusiasm gave her pause.

Was he simply failing to grasp the implications?

Or was there something else?

'Buy the Draconic Will upgrade,' she urged, placing a hand on his shoulder to pause his scrolling. 'That won't just enhance your spellcasting moving forward—it will make forming your core significantly more manageable.'

He barely reacted to the mention of spellcasting.

But when she brought up the forming of his core, a flicker of interest ignited in his eyes.

It was unreasonably soon to think about such things with Issei...but his growth had been unreasonably fast. Even now, she could *feel* his body thrumming with the Aether he'd infused it with, as if his flesh was a natural treasure all on its own.

He's ready...But why is he so hesitant...? What isn't he telling me?

'I don't know...' he began, then stopped himself short, gaze locking with hers.

Something was wrong.

And it frustrated her deeply that he wasn't simply saying it.

Unless he feels like he can't...

As usual, her mind began assembling the pieces before she consciously directed it.

We're alone here... so why wouldn't he just say what's bothering him...?

Her breath stilled, her eyes widening in realisation.

Oh. *Of course.*

They *weren't* alone, were they?

They were *never* alone.

Not anymore.

Ddraig had already made it abundantly clear that he could observe their interactions—and far more than that, if the points they'd earned the previous evening were any indication.

I need to find a way for us to communicate without the Dragon knowing. Without it skimming his thoughts...

Still, given Issei's reluctance and the context of the situation, she suspected she understood his concern.

Resting a hand on his thigh, she leaned in, meeting his eyes and softening her posture deliberately. If he felt words were dangerous, then let her presence and assured sincerity offer him comfort.

'Buy the Draconic Will upgrade,' she urged gently, her gaze conveying far more than her voice. *'Trust me.'*

She let the silence stretch meaningfully before continuing.

'The Draconic *dōjutsu*?' She began, her lips quirking at the corner in amusement as the concerned frown on Issei's face crumbled with his mirth. There were also ocular upgrades in the store—but she quite liked Issei's eyes the way they were, thank-you-very-much. 'You don't need that. If you truly want to improve your eyes, I can help you refine what you were born with. Something better. Something *yours*.'

Issei smiled—but it was thin. Tense. She knew he didn't miss the subtext of her words, but he was still afraid.

And it hurt her to see it.

He's afraid that buying too many draconic evolutions will cost him something. Whether that's greater influence from Ddraig... or something subtler.

It was the only explanation that made sense.

The store page had presented him with several literal *dōjutsu* equivalents—abilities she knew, beyond doubt, would normally have had him practically vibrating with excitement.

Yet he hesitated.

'You sure?' he teased lightly, though the humor didn't quite reach his eyes. 'What if I turn into some omega prick after buying it?'

Rias squeezed his thigh reassuringly.

'A dragons' pride is not literal arrogance,' she said evenly. 'It is the ability to impose one's will upon reality. That is what this offers. It will not implant emotions or desires that are not already yours.'

He searched her face for a long moment.

Then nodded.

Slowly, deliberately, he made the purchase.

A faint shudder ran through him as the change took root.

'Feel any different?' she asked quietly.

'I... don't think so...?' His brow furrowed. 'I'm not sure how to test it.'

'Matsuda with his *huge* cock and fumbling inexperience managed to fuck me better than you ever did... *cuck*.'

Issei gaped at her in shock, his eyes widening into saucers. Rias leaned into his side, her lips pressed to his ear as she continued to spew more degenerate, cuckold-related teases in his ear.

Rather than swell up with rage and indignation at having his competency and dominion of her questioned, he shuddered, coming undone in her grasp as his arousal sky rocketed.

When Rias pulled back, Issei's face was flushed crimson and he was breathing heavily. Rias fared little better. The warmth in her core felt like a furnace at this point and, while the idea of a quiet, romantic evening together had sounded nice initially, she didn't know how much longer she could last without mounting Issei and fucking him for all he was worth.

'I don't think you're afflicted with an overinflated sense of self-worth, my beloved *cuck*...'

'Fuuuuuck,' Issei groaned, sinking deep into the spring until his head rested on the stone lip. 'That was *filthy*.'

Glad that he'd made the purchase, and that she'd increased the quality of her fiancé's initial core by proxy, Rias giggled and rubbed gentle circles over his abs with her fingers as she went back to scrolling the new store.

The ocular evolutions *were* interesting, and she saw several that would boost Issei's power by a not-insignificant amount, but she also agreed with his hesitancy and put them out of her mind.

Besides, all the best purchases have been from the relic exchange anyway. I suppose I shouldn't be surprised that a system created by a dragon would heavily bias pillaging a treasure hoard...

Speaking of hoards...

Ability Upgrade: Draconic Hoard - 5000AP

Upgrade - Vast Hoard

Major increase to the size of your hoard.

Effect: 3x3x3m → 30x30x30m

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Upgrade - Armory

Call upon anything within your vault with but a flex of your will and manifest it beside you.

*Effect: Minor Increase to the size of your hoard. 3x3x3m → 6x6x6m.
Can instantly summon anything within your hoard to or beside your person, instantaneously.*

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Upgrade - Hoard Projection

Effect: The Hoard is no longer accessed through a single, fixed aperture. Upon activation, the bearer gains full authority over how and where the Hoard manifests.

These apertures do not merely open into the Hoard—they call to its contents, allowing stored items to project themselves into reality at the bearer's will.

Effect: 3x3x3m → 15x15x15m.

Multiple apertures may be opened simultaneously, each varying in size, orientation, and duration. Anything the User considers a weapon may be fired through the apertures.

Rias turned slowly to Issei.

‘How many points do you have left?’

‘Uh...’ He navigated through the interface until he found his answer. ‘Around forty thousand.’

She paused, shocked.

Even after all the extravagant purchases, with the ridiculous, unapproved splurging, he still had so many points left?

I really did go over the top with Matsuda...

She felt a delicious tingling in her nethers at the thought and secretly wondered when it would be time to go back and do some *grinding*.

She turned to Issei with a guilty look in her eyes and it was as if he could read her mind. She smiled sweetly. *Too sweetly*. Issei rolled his eyes and huffed in amusement.

Each upgrade had its merit. The size of Vast Hoard was staggering. Given weight wasn't an issue with what he stored, she imagined the kind of carnage he could unleash if he lugged around a meteor of that size and dropped it on people with an extra bit of acceleration from his magic...

Probably an unwise amount...

The second upgrade was the one she was most interested in, but knowing her fiancé...she'd put her entire wealth on Issei eyeing up the third like a greedy little *otaku*.

Just call it the Gates of Babylon and get it over with...

She exhaled softly and shook her head, then turned back to her fiancé—and nearly laughed at the way she could practically smell the eagerness radiating off him.

As she expected, his eyes were greedily locked onto the final option.

'Buy the Armory.'

'But—!'

‘Buy. The. Armory.’ She punctuated each word with a merciless pinch to his sides, ignoring his petulant whining. ‘Stop fantasizing about turning into your *Zasshu Daddy* and think *logically*. Not only will the Armory let you call your sword—or any weapon—to your side *instantly*... it will let you summon clothes. *Armour*.’

He froze.

That landed.

She pressed her advantage.

‘You are powerful, Issei. You are *not* invincible. Being able to arm yourself in less than a heartbeat *matters*. I thought Kiba kicking your butt around the training room for hours would have drilled that into you by now?’

He pouted as logic visibly wrestled with nerd instinct. She ignored his grumbling about Kiba not beating him up *that* badly too.

Rias couldn’t entirely blame Issei. If the roles were reversed, and she’d been handed the opportunity to emulate one of her favourite heroines down to aesthetic and ability...

She might have been tempted too.

Issei sighed dramatically.

‘There has to be a Voidsteel Greatshield or something in the Relic Exchange too,’ he muttered in resignation. ‘Being able to pull that out in a blink sounds pretty... cool. I guess.’

Rias smiled and gave his chest an approving clap.

‘Exactly.’

He glared at her.

‘Cool isn’t better than *fucking awesome!*’

This time, she didn’t bother with words.

Her glare did all the work.

Issei deflated.

‘Pops was right,’ he muttered. ‘Happy wife, happy life.’

‘My future father-in-law is truly a man of great wisdom.’

With a final grumble and a side-eyed glare, he made the purchase.

Unlike some of his other acquisitions, he wasted no time experimenting.

Rias watched as the air shimmered beside him. In a blink, the massive slab of Voidsteel—the very blade that had nearly reduced her obscenely expensive training room to rubble—manifested at his side.

He dismissed it.

Summoned it again.

Shifted its orientation.

Pulled it directly into his waiting grip without even looking.

It was smooth and seamless. Rias...couldn't help but feel intimidated by the display. Her analytical mind forged through countless Rating Games hammering in how such an absurd ability could be abused and, frankly, overpowered.

Rias allowed herself a small, satisfied smile as she let her fantasies run wild—particularly ones involving Issei pulverising her betrothed the way he'd done to her training room.

This was...*significant*.

It bruised her pride slightly that his Sacred Gear had so effortlessly upstaged her own dimensional storage—a technique she had refined over years—but she swallowed the humiliation with dignity.

If it made him stronger...

If it made him safer...

Her pride could endure the hit.

And if she was being honest...watching him pull that ridiculous weapon out of thin air, seeing it wink in and out of existence...

It was *very* impressive.

Oh my love...to think you actually believe you're useless...

Now that Issei had grown accustomed to his new upgrades, they continued scrolling through the rest of the store.

The fact that he could purchase *Weapon Mastery* was... interesting.

They both agreed it was also a waste of points. Not only did her peerage already have two frontline fighters—three if she counted Lucien—it was much simpler to recruit more in the future. Mages were rarer, and Issei was showing... *surprising* proficiency in that area.

Enough that he could rival even Akeno and herself one day.

‘How funny would it be to see Pretty Boy’s face though,’ Issei mused, ‘when I upstage him in sword combat?’

Rias rolled her eyes.

‘Not funny enough to throw away that many points.’

‘Yes, *mommy*.’

Her lips quirked upward. Issei could be so childish at times.

‘Thank you for listening, *daddy*.’

Issei froze.

Not merely at the word—but at the deliberate heat she laced into it.

His gaze slowly dropped to his lap.

‘...Welp.’

Rias let out a very unladylike guffaw.

‘*You* started it.’

He muttered something under his breath that sounded suspiciously like a prayer for self-control before they went back to scanning the new store page.

The upgraded Alchemy section was, admittedly, impressive, if a little dull.

The potions listed were markedly stronger, more refined. She noted with interest that there was no mention of incompatibility with the previous tier's offerings.

They'll stack. Very interesting... That alone would be a monumental boost once he began forming his core. Especially since everything involving the Codex seems to stack multiplicatively...

Her mind began quietly running the calculations, and she couldn't help the growing excitement.

She couldn't wait to see how Issei's core formation went.

Finally, her attention settled on the last notable option—one that had also appeared in the first level, and which they had ignored then as well.

Soulbrand Catalyst - 20000 AP

A powerful magical catalyst infused with the boundless knowledge of Korr'Vhalyx, the Forge-Soul that allows the user to craft a low tier, soulbound growth item without the requisite crafting knowledge.

'Yeah,' Issei said after reading it, 'given video game logic, I'm assuming that creates a basic bitch artefact that grows in power with me?'

Rias paused thoughtfully.

‘Mostly,’ she admitted. ‘The initial quality depends on both the crafter’s skill and the wielder’s foundation. It may begin... *modestly*.’ A small smile curved her lips. ‘Given it has appeared again, I suspect it will be available at every level. And given the rise in cost, I assume the third offering will be orders of magnitude more expensive...’

‘...Should I buy it?’

She considered it seriously.

He wouldn’t be buying *this* one, but the identical option in the first tier of the shop. Given the grandiose name of the artificer—she assumed a Dragon of some repute—Rias suspected the artefact would be *powerful*, but...

‘Probably not,’ she said at last. ‘Wait until you form your core. Artefacts like that tend to respond better when there is more... substance to anchor to. And given these are limited through store upgrades and increasing pricing, we don’t want an inferior artefact...’

‘So... save the rest of the points?’

Instead of answering immediately, Rias swung a leg over his and settled herself comfortably in his lap.

Issei stiffened instantly.

‘Woman,’ he warned, glaring up at her, ‘this evening is about to become significantly less “romantic” if you keep doing that.’

She giggled and looped her arms around his shoulders, staring deep into his eyes as her nethers ground sensually against his rock-hard manhood. She wasn’t worried about Issei *finishing*. *She* was in control of that part of him now.

If she did not wish it, Issei would not climax. If she desired it, Issei would stay hard for her for as long as she wanted.

'Use the remaining points when you form your core,' she instructed softly. 'Buy whatever will assist from the Relic Exchange. You should have enough for something substantial, alongside the potions and elixirs you'll need.'

He nodded, as if already knowing her thought process. 'They'll stack with the first level potions. I know.'

Rias smiled, pleased. She shouldn't have been surprised. They were of one mind when it came to theorycrafting in their RPGs...

'Good boy.'

She leaned down and pressed a gentle kiss to his lips, swallowing his pained groan with delight.

'My beautiful, powerful boy,' she murmured, pulling back and stroking the side of his face with love shining in her eyes. 'I can't wait to see what you devise in that demented head of yours. Did you read all the books I gave you?'

'Yep,' he admitted, his voice strained.

Her eyes narrowed slightly at his flippant response as her hand slid to the back of his neck, fingers tightening just enough to keep his attention.

'...And?'

He shrugged noncommittally.

'They're... interesting.'

‘Issei...’

‘Oioi,’ he shot back, pushing her just enough that she had to still her hips. ‘I read enough to know that you shouldn’t interfere in someone else’s cultivation.’

Rias pinched the bridge of her nose and exhaled a long, suffering sigh.

‘You’re going to do something stupid, aren’t you?’

‘Probably.’

Her groan echoed across the clearing, but she snapped her lips shut when she felt it.

Familiar signatures. Approaching from the forest.

Her head turned slowly toward the treeline, senses sharpening.

It seemed the others had finally noticed the new addition to the manor.

With a sigh, she slid off Issei’s lap and settled beside him, suddenly eager to see her peerage’s reaction to the *impossible* Purification Spring...