Chapter 24: It’s that chapter where the silly character stops being silly and people go “oh shit”.

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

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In the first few instances after she realized that Issei of all people was the source of the chaos in the middle of the party, Rias was a kaleidoscope of emotion.

Happy. Surprised. Relieved. Excited. Hopeful. Confused. Bewildered. Stunned. And slightly concerned. She had all but forfeited herself to her fate and future with the blonde asshole when the biggest possible spanner in the works literally cut off the entire event in a blatant and shameless way that only Issei could pull off.

She was on the verge of laughing if only due to the absurdity of the situation, when she was cut off by a malevolent growl that not only caused the room itself to rumble, but echo through her very bones.

It was only then, at the moment that her fleeting joy and laughter died in her throat that she realized that something was wrong.

Something was very, *very* wrong.

““... Issei?””

Another moment passed for her to register that she wasn’t the only one that had said his name in the same confused and unnerved tone.

A third passed as she and the other speaker looked at one another in genuine confusion and astonishment.

It didn’t take them long to find the other since they were standing right next to each other.

““Wait. *YOU* know him?”” Rias and Riser asked the other in complete disbelief.

Before their almost comical reaction could continue, another roil of malicious and murderous growls literally shook the entire room like a minor earthquake.

While Rias refused to have anything in common with Riser as a person, she couldn’t help but suspect that they were sharing the same sinking feeling that they had both been played unknowingly, and the consequence of their ignorance was the incredibly pissed Sekiryuutei that was radiating pure *murder* halfway across the room.

“Bird Person.”

*A titanic claw stepped out of the cave, tearing and plowing apart the stone and earth beneath effortlessly.*

“I asked you a question.”

*A second claw brought with it the rest of the head of the torso. A crimson and ebony lined beast taller than the building they were in towered above all there. Scales were flared out about an eerily emaciated frame that somehow made the underlying skeleton and body of the titan even more ominous and terrifying than it already was to the lesser beings that laid eyes upon it.*

“What is this about your sorry ass having a H̶̟͔̩͐̓̎̄̅́̀̚Ạ̶̰̤̻̹̦̅̈̓͋͋̋̈̕R̷̛̛͍̻͇̘̯͖̹͖̳̭̟̱̟̜͚̯͖̎̈̓͗̃̊̏̄̆̓͘̕͠͝͝E̸̛̜̘̟̿̇̈̉͒M̶̛̞̣̪̺͓̔̈́͂̀̽?!”

*From the shade of the cave, for the first time in years, the pitch and vermillion crowned head of the beast saw daylight. Ivory teeth bared without restraint, and emerald eyes with black sclarea burning with raw blind indignation.*

*The Sl▅▅▅▅▅g ▅▅▅▅▅▅▅h was once more awake.*

Rias had only known Issei for a few months, but she liked to think that she had a good grasp on how to read him, his thoughts, motivations, and true intentions most of the time. He was a peculiar case where he was both more and less than what he portrayed himself at all times. Always voicing his feelings on most matters honestly, but always hiding his deeper thoughts and concerns behind his eccentric personality and behavior. So much so that he was frequently a walking paradox, saying one thing but doing another, and the like.

There was nothing being hidden this time. There were no deeper thoughts in those eyes or body language. Only pure emotion and fury.

A sacrosanct line had been crossed. One as tender, precious, and fragile in his heart as the wellbeing of his mother.

Issei truly wanted to murder Riser from the bottom of his soul at that moment.

It was only a few seconds after he had asked the question a second time that it registered to Rias the bizarre way he had said that last word.

Imagine the Mona Lisa, or any other piece of art or work in the world that simply seemed to exemplify perfection. A marvel that could make a person cry in passion just by witnessing it. An unparalleled magnum opus that brought peace to all that gazed upon it.

Then envision that very same piece of work was utterly destroyed. Rendered into shattered pieces so viciously that the work’s name had been redefined on a global scale, now synonymous with that ruined perfection. Stained. Marred. Broken. Literally redefined into “violated rapture”.

That was the closest Rias could ever come to describing the emotions and way Issei had managed to articulate that lone broken word. Whatever affection and endearment he had for it had been utterly shattered to the point of literal hopelessness and fury every time it left his lips.

She now understood, at least in part, why everyone had stressed to never under any circumstances utter the word “harem” within earshot of the Sekiryuutei. Explosive reactions aside, she would never desire to casually cause such emotional discourse to anyone she liked. Let alone the boy she had come to grow fond of.

Rias had to blink a few times to peer past the image of Issei’s overwhelming Presence to see his actual body a quarter of the way across the main hall alongside one of the walls. For some reason he was draped over the shoulders (surprisingly and not, groping her chest with one hand) of Riser’s *literally* scared stiff Queen, but that did absolutely nothing to lessen the pure animosity that was emanating from the human teen or the glow of his normally brow now green eyes. Around them were some other members of Riser’s Peerage, all fallen back staring at him either terrified or confused senseless.

She didn’t blame them. She’d probably have reacted the same if she was that close when he exploded the way he was. Come to think of it, virtually everyone in the room was more or less paralyzed by the sudden overwhelming pressure and emotions Issei was giving off. Most people would react that way if they suddenly found themselves within spitting distance of an extremely powerful Dragon about to more or less go ballistic.

“Ha. Haha. So that’s what this was all about.” Riser laughed with a tinge of his own unexpected madness just a few feet away from her, taking a step back. She spotted a cold sweat already forming on his face as he tried to keep a confident smile up if only for his own sake. “Riser knew something was amiss, but… no. Riser should have known as much from the start. Only someone as absurd as *you* could survive a battle against the Maou.”

***“I didn’t ask for a pointless monologue.”*** Issei growled menacingly, clearly losing what minor patience he had left if the black and red embers leaking from the mouth of both his draconic visage and his natural body were any indication.

“It takes time to adjust to such a ludacris surprise, you fool.” Riser chuckled almost hysterically while rubbing his forehead. By all rights it looked like he wanted to run at that moment, but didn’t bother simply because he was confident that it was a pointless endeavor.

“You really were alive.”

It was muttered under his breath, so softly that it likely was done as an afterthought, however Rias had managed to hear it, complete with a tone she had never heard from the man before.

Unfortunately, the insult earlier was not the right thing to say to an enraged monster if the trailing flames leaking out of his mouth was any indication.

***“Time you never had.”***

The temperature in the room went to near scalding in an instant as a crimson and black fireball shot like a bullet straight at Riser without little further warning. Just by looking at it, Rias could tell it was a completely different brand of immolation compared to what Issei had produced before, or Riser for that matter.

If anything, it reminded her of her Brother’s power of Destruction in terms of pure destructive quality.

“Shit?!” Riser flinched and turned to run, clearly not expecting Issei to reach the limits of his patience that quickly, but it was a foregone conclusion to anyone watching. Within a few instants, the young Phoenix was going to, if not die, then get severely harmed with little hope of fighting back.

“... I suppose I should have seen this coming.”

Just before the fireball hit the stage, an equally large and intense orb of raw destruction materialized in its path, intercepting it.

Upon contact though, instead of an explosion, or one power eclipsing the other, the two *fought.*

‘Fire’ and ‘Destruction’ pressed harshly against one another for supremacy for a good five seconds, the clashing forces growing more and more erratic and oppressive to the point that breathing itself was difficult for those too close to it…

And then both forces, for lack of a better term, canceled one another out, the very intensity of their respective natures eating at themselves and one another into nothingness.

The silence in the hallway was ominous.

The footsteps of Sirzechs as he casually walked onto the stage more so.

“Issei, I thought we agreed that you would try to avoid displays like this tonight.”

Rias shivered and took a step back from ground zero in genuine astonishment. She had admittedly never witnessed her brother go all out before, but by that same measure, she had never laid eyes to anything could put up a direct fight against Sirzech’s powers either. Normally anything that encountered the Maou’s might was literally obliterated with little resistance or interference. The rare abilities that did put up a fight often either exploded or caused some sort of anomaly that affected the area to circumvent or warp reality to overcome it.

She had never seen anyone or anything flat out *match* and *cancel* her brother before.

Judging from the looks she managed to glimpse of the unassuming audience of the Devil aristocracy, neither had they.

The guilty party in question merely growled, both him and his dragon visage turning their attention to the Maou in annoyance. “**He has a** ***h̵̦͒a̷̰̎r̶̭̔e̸̪͘m̴͓̓***.”

Sirzechs only partially managed to hide a small grimace at the word. Whether it was due to the implications, or the way the enraged teen said it was anyone’s guess. “I suppose he does. But is that relevant right now?”

That was apparantly the wrong thing to say if the beast’s dilating eyes and increase in murderous intent were any indication.

Rias was having trouble breathing. She wasn’t a slouch when it came to power or being around the strong, but there was an overwhelming quality to Issei’s Presence that was absolutely suffocating.

Sirzechs putting his foot down and countering Issei’s unique display of power with his own didn’t help matters.

*Dragon* and *Devil* stood opposed to one another, their very wills and intent was enough to make the very building shake and rattle as though an earthquake was taking place.

Rias stood corrected. This was the first time she had personally witnessed *anyone* standing against Sirzechs without a hit of being cowed once the veil hiding his overwhelming strength was shifted. And the terrifying thing was that she was certain that they were only just barely loosening the restraints of what they were truly like.

**“Move Zechs.”** Issei ordered firmly.

“You know that I can’t do that Issei. I’m quite determined to ensure you don’t make a mistake that you will regret. Remember why you were invited and why you resolved to come at all.”

The power steadily increased in the building, as did the shaking.

Ebony and vermillion bolts of lightning danced around and between the pair.

Sirzechs’ body began to radiate and glow.

Issei’s eyes shone a blinding and vicious green light.

So vicious and intense that his face, both human and dragon, began to take a sickly green color…

And then Issei’s power dropped the same instant both faces cheeks suddenly ballooned out and he went cross eyed.

“Huaaaaghghaah!!”

Correction. His face had turned green all on its own without the aid of mystical powers. Or any form of power for that matter.

It had merely been the preclude of the teen suddenly projectile vomiting to the side.

Judging from everyone’s stunned, confused, and absolutely bewildered expressions, she wasn’t the only one that caught completely flatfooted by the sudden left turn in the event.

Grayfia coughed loudly and stood next to the still hurling teen, who had somehow managed to conjure up a bucket after he had slid off of Yuballuna’s shoulder and was holding onto it for dear life.

“My apologies, Lord Lucifer. I had warned our guest repeatedly of the risks of over-imbibing in the events, however I was paid little heed.”

“Fuuuualdfhglkfhg!!” Issei tried, and failed spectacularly, to reply to the backhanded insult.

Rias couldn’t help but laugh reflexively at how stupid and ludicrous this had all turned out to be.

Much to her surprise, Riser had done the exact same thing.

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