

The burning temples atop Mount Hiei. The sin of Oda Nobunaga. A strike against the divine that for whatever reason now lives inside of me as a forever raging inferno.

That's where I've taken Shalba Beelzebub. This demon god who seeks to rule hell, now trapped in a man-made hell by a self-appointed demon king.

While the flames are merely 'hot' to me, it's still a discomfort when I'm suffering the burns inflicted by Diodora's queen. But it's nothing compared to the furious hatred with which the flames seize upon Beelzebub as the two of us crash into the temple courtyard, a charred offering box splintering under his back as he impacts it with me atop him.

These fires aren't an eerie blue or any other kind of unnatural colour. Crackling reds, yellows, and oranges all blend together as flame wreathes Beelzebub's form to light him up like an effigy atop a bonfire.

He howls.

A sound of true pain, of torment I'm not sure such a powerful devil has ever experienced in his life of looking down on others and plotting world conquest.

Now he's in my world, and he doesn't like it.

I'd hoped that would be enough. That this god-hating fire would devour him in such a fashion he could do nothing except succumb to his fate.

The fist crashing into my chin disabuses me of that notion.

It's not even like the blows he delivered to Nanael, Issei, and Saeko. He's spasming. Uncoordinated and wracked by pain.

It still dislocates my jaw and sends me reeling off of him, rolling and sprawling across scattered religious iconography that crumbles to ash under my weight.

"Auuugh...!" an insensate pained noise comes out of me, everything in my mouth feeling *wrong*. Chubby fingers grab at my chin not in mute horror but with purpose, firm force applied and an aching wrench setting it back in, spasms of pain searing up the side of my face and making my temples throb, vision whiting out for a second of agony that almost makes me miss what's right in front of me.

Beelzebub is getting up.

Despite the grip the flames have on him, he's forcing himself to his feet. His skin blackening in places, his armour ruined from the cumulative effects of Nanael and Saeko's attacks crumbling off of his body, but somehow he endures.

There's something around him. *Inside* of him. Looping and twisting through his body like a snake. I'd never be able to see it normally, but the fires can. They burn all the more intensely there, like *that* rather than the devil himself is the source of god-like power I'd felt. I can only see it through the environmental effects, like clear glass moving through water. It thrashes and his body jerks in response to its movements, his face showing pain while those brown eyes of his glare at me through the fire.

"What... have you... done...?!" the words grind out of him, the thudding impact of his knee-plate falling off and hitting the ground echoed a second later by the shifting and crackling collapse of a torii gate behind him.

I need to move. I bring my feet under me and push upwards, the scattered trash proving firm enough for me to move against and find solid footing despite the way it had crumbled when I fell upon it moments before.

This is my world. No matter how hellish it might look, it will always support me.

"Even if it's a God or a Buddha," I answer, my voice a little thick, tongue swollen inside my mouth after that hit, "In here it all burns."

He looks shocked at my words, and I can only wonder at how he can say or do *anything* given the hellish fire eroding at his very existence right now. But then he laughs. A strangled guttural noise that turns into a gasping wheeze as the snake coiling through him thrashes more desperately. "Aha- ahahaha-auugh!" he doubles forward, clutching at his chest and glaring at me with hatred.

"Ophis... the Infinite Dragon God... even without your power I... hnngh...! I am still Shalba Beelzebub, the rightful King of Hell!"

Buoyed by his own pep-talk, he throws himself at me, shedding more armour as the flames maintain their relentless grip on him and the thrashing dying snake interrupts his movements with its spasms. It's what gives me a chance, as having seen how he handled everyone else back in the 'real' world, I don't think I could stand up to him if he didn't have the entire world currently arrayed against him.

I dodge his lunge, his feet dragging through charred detritus like he's having to wade through a snow-drift, while my own feet always find something solid to land on, the ground sure for me despite being uneven for him. I doubt the flames licking up over his face are doing much for his vision either, but he still stays locked on target.

My fist slams into his flank, low and just above the hip. His armour in enough of a ruin by now to expose blackening skin, my pointed knuckles striking at his kidney in a viciously cheap shot. I'm not here to be nice.

Even then the grunt he lets out is underwhelming in response, and a clawed swipe of his hand draws blood across my flabby chest. A little closer and he might've gotten hooked into my ribs and who knows how fucked I'd be?

I have to fight defensively. I have to keep his attention. The world itself is what's doing the real work, but I don't know if he can just teleport himself out if given some time to focus. So I need to keep him busy enough that he's stuck here, while making sure he doesn't actually get his hands on me where the gulf between our strength will only result in one outcome.

I feint a leg-sweep. An offering board disintegrates like powder as my foot swings through it, while a charred and fraying sacred rope loops around his own foot when he tries to dodge. Another pointed strike to the kidney, focusing on the same spot to build up damage, to punch through his resistance. This time he staggers from it, almost tripping before that bound length of hemp breaks apart around his shin instead.

The ero-battery is plummeting. I'm using it to push my physical limits, and using it to power my inner world. A week's worth of fun with Kaori had left me with what seemed a bountiful reserve for a few tournament matches especially with careful husbanding towards decisive strikes.

But it's being pulled on from every direction now, keeping me afloat against an enemy I have no business fighting all by myself.

Beelzebub clearly agrees going by the indignant and frustrated roar he makes as he swings a hammer blow towards me, only for another spasm to interrupt his attack and give me an opening to further punish his kidney... I hope it hurts, but I'm not sure it's doing enough. I can't afford to use the ice blizzard, I can't spare the focus when I need every bit of energy I've got. The second or two it might freeze him for might be worth ten times as long keeping him trapped here and burning.

"Damn you!" he yells, staggering back and then dropping to his knees with an anguished noise. His hands scramble through the air... not blindly though. They grope for that thrashing snake, and intangible as it might seem, they find purchase.

"Ophis...!" he gasps out, fingers digging in through the flames burning all the more fiercely around his... symbiote? Those fingers blacken all the more fiercely, flesh literally unravelling up his digits, but he doesn't stop. Squeezing. Pulling. Stretching something that seems to coil all the more desperately to his body in response. "I don't need your power... I can win... by myself!" He wrenches his arm away from himself and there's a meaty *tearing* sound, a shower of blood splattering and hissing through the flames as he rips that phantasmal

passenger free. It becomes visible, a black serpent bereft of any features, lit up by the surging fire which even now still grip it tightly as it lands amidst the temple debris.

The flames still hold onto Beelzebub, but less tightly. They don't like him, but it's nothing compared to the hatred they feel for the snake. He gasps, wheezing, a gurgle sending foamy blood past his lips... and my knee crashes into his face, much like he'd done with Nanael.

I can't just fucking stand there and let him find a way out of here, even if that was metal as fuck what he just did.

"Stay down!"

He falls back under my weight, yielding in a way he didn't even to Nanael's ultimate super attack from earlier. I land on top of him, and much like I'd done to Diodora's rook earlier, I pummel my fists down against his face, throwing my back into each descending hammer-blow. His face gets rocked to the side by each hit, blood drawn, bruises added to the charring that's taking over all the more of his body... I can see white past the black. I can see his fucking bones.

And still he has it in him to fight back. Worse he seems to have been paying attention, or he's got a grudge, because I feel a hit in my side right above the kidney that makes me wheeze and topple off of him. Even if it was a clumsy blow with no leverage, he still fucking *hits*.

He's in bad shape though. Struggling to his feet while I do the same. The snake's dead, I can just tell. The fire had its fill, whatever echo of this Infinite Dragon God's power it held, it was decidedly finite against this place. Beelzebub is struggling, no longer having its immense power to bolster him, but at the same time no longer handicapped by its dying struggles coursing through his body. His body which while perhaps not divine, is still sufficiently 'mysterious' that the flames that burnt Mount Hiei's temple complex find him an acceptable source of kindling.

"Jhirohh Onanohh..." he says my name with hatred and a drooling slur besides, my punches and the traumatic evacuation of godly serpent having done nothing for his diction. A chunk of blackened flesh falls away from the bottom of his chin, but that does nothing to diminish the intensity of his gaze. "Shalbahh Beelshebub... shall not fall... to the likesh of you...!"

Yeah buddy, keep talking. Trust me, the breather's doing me a lot more than it's doing you, every second is giving the fire more time to erode away at his body, to let this burning mountain do more than my fists ever could.

But that's all he wanted to say, because he throws himself at me again. A near skeletal hand leading the way. It's not even a knife-hand, I don't think he has the muscular capability to clench a fist at this point. Is this what fighting zombies was like for Saeko? I dodge to the side, sweeping my hand through a fallen box of paper fortunes which disintegrate into ash, a

billowing cloud of stinging black particles getting right in his face, making him choke and sputter in outrage while I circle behind him and deliver another kidney punch for his trouble.

This one makes him buckle, but even in his blind flailing an elbow catches me in the side and makes me stumble as well, the two of us dropping with a crash into shifting debris. It hurts, but not as much as the first punch he landed, I think it's just bruised and not broken anything.

His position's worse than mine of course. When he tries to push himself up, the ground churns and slides under him. When I do, it's solid and firm. I rally faster, a punch slamming into the back of his head and burying him deeper into shifting and burning shrine ornamentation. My knee presses into his back and his arm gets twisted back in its socket, drawing a sharp noise of pain from him as I assert my leverage.

"This is it, this is your end!" I growl, knowing it's him or me. I set out when we left the school intending to kill *someone*, and even if he's not Diodora, at this point if I don't kill him then he's going to kill me and everyone else I came here with.

"Nnnnghooo!" his denial is a throaty rasping noise and I'm not sure his mouth is in great shape to be verbalising anything at this point, more of his skin is black than not but he's *still* moving. I catch a flash of light, the radiant green of a magic circle starting to form, a desperate attempt to use magic against me while his body sinks and burns and dies. Another punch to the back of his head disorients him and ruins the attempt, his body rocking forward while my cruel grip on his arm wrenches it now completely out of its socket, the ligaments that would've helped hold it in place burning away to embers.

Even absent an arm he tries to fight. He thrashes under me, his body strains to pull free. And I hit him through it, I brutalise his other arm, I punish every struggle, and his immense demonic strength ultimately falters. He stops moving. He stops making noise. And the fires burn through flesh and bone until Shalba Beelzebub becomes indistinguishable from the burnt trash littering Mount Hiei after Oda Nobunaga's razing of the temples.

And not a moment too soon. The ero-battery ran out, only the fact he was on his last legs and couldn't form any leverage let me keep him pinned at the end there. Light-headedness begins to catch up with me, and I allow my inner world to collapse back inside of my soul or whatever metaphysical construct you prefer to interpret magical phenomenon with.

Only then remembering that when it formed, I'd just tackled Beelzebub out of Diodora's mansion and we were three storeys up in the open air.

"I am the Demon King of the Sixth Heaven, Jiro Onano!"

Kaori didn't understand why Jiro was always so self-conscious about that chant, if you couldn't put aside your embarrassment over things the rest of the world viewed as foolish then you had no business practicing the occult!

Luckily he hadn't let it hold him back as he'd thrown himself against Beelzebub and the two had vanished from reality. She'd been in there only twice but that was enough, it felt awful, and there wasn't much that could physically bother Kaori these days. Not that beam Beelzebub had hit her with moments ago, not the flames issued by Diodora's queen, and *certainly* not that lucky punch Toujou had gotten her with.

"Wh-where'd they go?" Nanael slowed and blinked in confusion at the abrupt disappearance.

"They're inside his Reality Marble," Kaori told her, feeling quite smug at knowing more than a literal angel when it came to magic.

"Reality marble?" Hyoudou questioned as he approached, now all healed while Asia ran off to take care of Saeko. Magdalene was groaning and starting to stir, but hopefully the nun would know better than to heal her. In fact Raynare was creeping in no doubt to try and get some treatment herself during this break in combat.

She kept an eye on Diodora to make sure he didn't start anything while it was all paused for the moment. "It's his inner world made manifest on reality. If the world as we know it can be considered a globe, Jiro's world would be a marble in comparison, but one that superimposes its reality on top of our own. Hence the name I came up with."

He just kept calling it his inner world, but she was confident her own name would stick. It had gravitas. When dealing with unprecedented magical phenomenon, you had to confidently assert a label and put your own mark on it from the start.

"Well we need to get in there and help him! That guy'll tear him apart!" Hyoudou shouted, running to the edge and groping blindly towards the air where they'd vanished. It wouldn't do any good. Anyone nearby at the initial manifestation was sucked in, but after that the worlds were separate until Jiro ended the manifestation.

They hadn't been able to meaningfully test it, but he'd seemed confident that the more mysterious or divine a thing was, the more it would be harmed by exposure. She could only hope it would even the scales against a Canaanite god.

Or the descendent of one, it seemed that all the devils they met were merely namesakes of more storied progenitors. The knowledge was still relevant, people could stand to be a bit more grateful she was well read on these topics!

"Ahahaha...!"

A laugh bubbled up from Diodora, drawing more attention his way as he clutched at his head. "You're all so marvellously calm!" he said upon receiving their stares. "Don't you understand? Shalba Beelzebub is going to kill you all when he finishes with that fat oaf. You should all be saying your tearful goodbyes!"

Honestly that was a bit of a point. Even if she was immortal she didn't exactly want to be at his mercy for a prolonged period. Hopefully he wasn't the type to torture her and they could work out a more productive arrangement. But better yet would just be to get out of here. There was just a strange lack of tension now Beelzebub's overwhelmingly threatening presence was absent, but he could return any second.

"Raynare, can you teleport us back to Kuoh?" she asked as the dark-haired fallen angel was bathing under the green glow of Asia's twilight healing. Which was considerably more effective than what that devil girl from the Sitri peerage had shown earlier.

She shook her head though. "Not from inside here, we'd have to get back outside where we arrived."

"We should ready ourselves, I'm certain he'll be weaker from Jiro's efforts, that'll give us our chance," Saeko said as she stepped towards the edge, though her sword was now smaller than Kaori was, so she wasn't sure what good it would do. At least her living clothes seemed to have benefitted from the healing as much as Saeko herself.

Diodora only laughed again, but there was a manic tone to it. They'd already been gone for longer than one might expect considering how quickly Beelzebub had defeated Nanael. None of this was going how he must have predicted. "Haha, you're all idiots! When Lord Beelzebub comes back from that fool's marble world-"

"It's a reality marble!" she interrupted. She'd just told him the name, he had to be doing that on purpose.

"He'll tear you all to shreds!" the devil lordling continued as if he hadn't heard her.

"Nanael-sama, we were going to kill him, weren't we?" Raynare ventured hopefully, now in the process of removing her superfluous bandages.

"I mean... angels really shouldn't..." Nanael's tone of voice suggested it was more of a burdensome chore than a strongly held conviction as she looked at Diodora with some consideration. "Do we have something to at least tie them up?" she then asked her assorted minions.

For her part Kaori exchanged looks with Saeko. Jiro definitely seemed like he wanted revenge for Mittelt, however conflicted his feelings might have been for the allegedly elegant fallen angel, but it wasn't really their place to say.

Yet amidst their debate, an arctic wind suddenly blew in and another figure appeared outside the mansion almost as dramatically as Beelzebub had. A mature looking woman with long silvery-grey hair and piercing red eyes, she wore an odd black and green outfit that exposed her belly button for some reason, and she wasn't alone as a host of devils wearing intimidating black masks and armour flew in at her flanks. The way Diodora's expression turned even more crestfallen at her arrival suggested this wasn't going to be like the last one.

Then again he had seemed a bit cut up over the apparent debt Beelzebub was leveraging over him. Idiot, his own fault for making a bad deal with a devil. Kaori would never.

"Good afternoon, Astaroth-sama. Please forgive the intrusion, but there have been disturbing reports of your conduct in Kuoh town and... well, an angel and fallen angels visiting?" she arched an elegant eyebrow as her heeled boots landed inside the battle-ravaged bedroom, several of the other armoured devils splitting off probably down to where they'd left those battered pawns at the gate. "I'm sure there's a good explanation which will satisfy all parties, yes?"

She seemed pretty composed and in control of the situation, which almost made Kaori sigh in relief. Except there was no telling if Beelzebub wasn't going to just burst back onto the scene full of fire and fury to brutalise her as easily as he'd handled Nanael. What was even happening in there? She was curious enough to almost wish she'd risked joining them, not knowing whether a triumphant devil was about to emerge and resume the slaughter or the exceedingly unlikely figure of Jiro would surprise them all was fraying her nerves. It was amazing she was willing to give him any credence, but he *had* won his fight in the tournament. She knew better than most that there was more power in the husky frame of his than appearances would suggest.

"Aaaaauuugh!" a sudden bellowing yell jerked her attention out to the front of the mansion past that shattered wall and behind the suddenly startled newcomer's back and she watched as Jiro's half naked figure along with a bunch of black fragments all plummeted to the ground several storeys below. That idiot! He knew he could move around inside his reality marble and have it translate to movement in the real world. He'd been so proud the first time he'd tested it to bypass a wall! Why would he reappear in thin air like that?

She only had the time to think of that mental rebuke before Jiro slammed into the ground and she winced. His leg was *definitely* not supposed to go in that direction. "Asia-chan!" her voice had a sickly sweet lilt in it, as if sufficient pep could overcome the grisly sight below. "We're going to need you downstairs!"

Bliss. Everything feels *amazing* as I open my eyes to see a beautiful blonde nun leaning over me with a worried gaze, every ache and pain vanished from my body as if I'd had a good night's sleep.

[spoiler=Wiki Roll]

[8-4 [url=<https://queensblade.fandom.com/wiki/Heaven>]Heaven[/url]

The world in the sky where angels dwell. Due to the low power, this merely creates a permanent aura of holiness that only extends a short distance but nonetheless bestows the properties of 'heaven' where blessings are abundant. The aura is fixed to Asia Argento.]
[/spoiler]

"I love you," I say dazedly as I look into the luminous green eyes of my salvation, and she suddenly blushes and claps her hands over her cheeks, the soothing green light abating but it doesn't matter because I feel great, if a bit embarrassed over my saccharine expression of gratitude.

"J-j-j-jiro-san, w-we just met!" she stammers out, retreating from me and drawing hisses from several devils who proceed to edge away from her in turn.

Devils? I sit up, noticing some tightness in my blood-stained and ripped and burnt track pants. It's a wonder I'm not showing my dick to everyone but it's a close-run thing. There's Diodora and his peerage, all severely bound with thick iron manacles around their arms and feet.

"Wuh? Where'd you get the handcuffs?" I ask as I sit up and look around, it seems like everyone's here and intact. Well, everyone except Beelzebub. There's fragments of his armour and charred bits of bone all around on the grass which shows what happened to him. In fact I have to brush away a bit that's stuck against my butt. Not exactly the most dignified end for a devil god.

"Other devils showed up while you were away," Kaori reports, causing me to glance where she's looking. There's a bunch of armoured figures that actually do look like stereotypical evil devils you'd see in an RPG or something, though one figure with her face exposed and showing off a rocking bod bucks the trend. Before I can get distracted by them I hear another unwelcome voice though.

"I don't believe it..." Diodora sounds like he's in shock. "How could a human like you kill Lord Beelzebub?"

"Well you better believe it," I say turn back to him with my chin jutting out, only holding back from adding any profanity because of Asia's innocently wholesome presence. In fact I want to say something callous like 'he died like a bitch', but I don't want to subject her ears to that. Besides he actually was kind of cool when he ripped out his god-snake symbiote, I can admit it, so he can rest without me levelling disrespect at his memory. Instead I lever myself to my feet and glare across at the devil, "And why shouldn't you join him?"

He cringes back, and it feels *good*. I feel powerful, and righteous. He deserves anything I could do to him. But it's Asia, his actual victim, who speaks on his behalf. "N-no!" she hurriedly steps in front of me. "I know. I know he's a bad person, but if you kill him then it'll be like nothing I did mattered. Like I shouldn't have healed him or met Nanael-sama and Issei-kun everyone in Japan. And I don't think Mittelt-san would be happy either if you stained yourself for her sake."

Did... did she ever talk to Mittelt? At all?

I can definitely imagine her cheering me from beyond the grave for some vengeance-fuelled murder.

But then, I guess she had been an angel once, right? Like a proper angel, not a Nanael-style weirdo? Hard to imagine, but I guess there was a time when she probably had a lot in common with Asia. Thinking on it, I kind of want to imagine it. She was probably even cuter then. Dressed in white with a pure-hearted smile on her lips...

I guess... I've already killed one person today. Maybe it's a slippery slope, but... I'm tired, and Asia looks so determined yet sweet, I'd have to be a real piece of shit to just go and kill the guy now in the face of her innocent wish. And as we've established, I'm not good at clean executions, it would be a drawn out and messy and painful affair.

"Fine," I say, tension seeming to leak out of several people as if my word has that much weight. Even the newcomer devils seem to have been waiting on me for some reason, but really Asia's the one who most matters right now. I'm not going to step over her moral lines.

And you know what? It's kind of worth it just to see the beaming smile that lights up her face in response to my begrudging mercy, before she turns and stomps towards Diodora, rather cutely given her whole small and harmless-looking vibe, but he cringes back from her and even his peerage all step away, right down to that flame-throwing bad bitch of a queen.

Smack!

Asia's dainty palm impacts his cheek, barely turning his head but leaving a stark red handprint there all the same.

"Don't ever toy with a girl's heart again!"

Author Notes

Reality Marble is too cool a term not to use, so rather than hope someone from Fate shows up in time to say, "Wow Jiro, that's a cool reality marble you have! You're so strong and handsome, lets have sex!" we can just have our resident expert of the occult coin the term for us. Everything needs a name, after all!

