

Chapter 157 - It seems to be the Dragonoid Country

"Umm, you know. It's said the mind of living beings which possess emotions or intelligence is something extremely convenient to be used as sorcery-like filter or amplifier. The sorcery creatures at the bottom of this Hell Furnace...I call them Putry-chan...on top of allowing them to inhabit this tentacle-covered creature, they form the main body of the furnace. Once you put sacrifices inside the furnace, the Putry-chan seize them, and make them suffer while pouring mana into them. Due to this, the negative emotions dwelling in the bodies of living creatures are amplified, magnifying the mana. That strengthened mana is once again collected by the Putry-chan and then used for other purposes. That's the basic function of the Hell Furnace." (Emil)

"You've come up with something nasty once again. But, I don't quite get the underlying principle behind the furnace." (Renya)

"Look, occasionally a protagonist, who was done in by their friends, will become strangely powerful and shout "Uoooooh" or such, even though you'd think something like, if you have such power, then friggin' use it from the start, right? There are stories where a protagonist becomes unable to fight due to a single surprise attack although there's no way for them to get injured by such an attack, no matter how you look at it, correct? It is certainly true that it can't be helped if something like that happens, seeing as it's the development of the story, but you'd be like, why did that attack connect despite their high defense values!? Something like that?"

"I will refrain from commenting on this."

"In other words, if you take a human for example, you can say the intensity goes up and down depending on the undulations of their emotions, can't you? So, look at it like that. It's a system that wrings out the negative emotions with a torture-like tormenting since according to scientific investigations it's easier to extract anger or grief, which are classified as negative emotions, than comfort or joy, which are classified as positive emotions, got it...?" (Emil)

"What kind of dangerous conversation do you guys have going there?" (Lepard)

Hearing Lepard's calm voice, both, Renya and Emil, turn towards him.

Emil drew precise diagrams randomly at their feet as they were squatting with a chalk which she had suddenly retrieved out of nowhere.

Those seem to be the blueprints of the device called Hell Furnace mentioned by her, but for Lepard, who's completely unfamiliar with these kind of things, they only look like scribbles that are a combination of straight lines and curves.

Their current location is a cave called "Foreigner's Shrine" by the dragonoids according to Croire. They stood alone in the deepest part of the fairly shallow cave. It was a simple place with nothing but a transfer gate that looked as if it hadn't been used much.

Location-wise they are halfway between the boundary line of the dragonoid's territory, which ends at the Miasma Forest's edge, and the "Dragon's Den" located at the northern tip.

Once they left the cave, they found a reasonably well-maintained road in front of their eyes, but there was absolutely no presence of any people around them.

In short, they came out at an extremely half-assed place where they might head in the direction of the Miasma Forest to investigate the reason why the transfer gate paths were cut off, or likewise go to the Dragon's Den to learn of the current state of the dragonoid country.

Because the elves were usually given a lift by young dragons, who would turn up to help with the

travel on a whim, or wyverns who had been tamed by the dragonoids, they apparently didn't care much about the location of the shrine, but right now it was a considerable problem for Renya and the others.

Even the distance to the city that might be the closest is quite far if traveled by foot. In the first place, there's no way for them to know in what kind of state that particular city might be at the moment.

On top of that, there's not a single person among the members of Renya's party, who is familiar with the land.

The humans and beastmen were out of the question, but even the two elves, Croire and Grün, never actually visited the dragonoid country. They only obtained their knowledge from hearsay and several documents and books that had been left behind.

Even so, that's still better than having absolutely nothing to work with. Currently Croire and Grün have gone ahead in order to search the vicinity. The group that stayed behind is waiting at the shrine with the transfer gate since there's no other place where they can rest their bodies.

In brief, it means the waiting group has too much time on their hands.

The group of Kurz and the two beastmen priestesses assigned to him peacefully huddled together in a corner of the cave, and easily allowed themselves to drift off into the lands of dreams.

Shion and Rona stood guard and checked the situation around them within their capacities, but seemingly believing that there's no meaning in being vigilant in a place where there's nothing as far as the eye can see, they settled down close to Kurz and the beastmen priestesses at a moment when Renya and those around him took their eye off them, and soon started to sleep peacefully next to each other.

Renya, Emil, Lepard and Kaede missed their timing to go sleep while still having too much time on their hands. They intently waited for the return of Croire and Grün, but during that time Renya and Emil started some questionable conversation.

"There ain't no way that you can build such inhuman device in a human country, right?" (Lepard)

"That's right, you two. No matter how superior such device might be, something like that can't..." (Kaede)

Following right after Lepard, Kaede started to speak, but seeing Renya and Emil, who gazed at the two beastmen with puzzled expressions, she asks in a way that might be called timid,

"...be built...right?" (Kaede)

"It's not a matter whether it can or cannot be built, now is it?" (Emil)

Although it's just faintly, the faces of Lepard and Kaede turn pale upon Emil's words which she states bluntly in a quite indifferent manner.

"Well, as long as you don't put it to use and just build it for fun, it's a great story, I guess." (Renya)

"No, no, Renya. I'm pretty sure some country will definitely put it to practical use if this is built, you know?" (Emil)

For some reason Emil is full of confidence.

As if not noticing how the couple of beastmen is gradually becoming paler, Emil throws out her chest and says,

"It's a fact that there are many humans that are troublesome to get rid of such as criminals and similar in any country. It's a dream device that allows you to clean up those beings in one go and on top use them for a long time as supply for plenty of mana, don't you think? There's absolutely no reason to not introduce such wonderful system with its low cost and high return, is there?" (Emil)

"It's a dream I can't consider as anything else but a nightmare though..." (Renya)

"But listen, if that story was true, wouldn't it sound also good if a reverse of hell existed as well?" (Lepard)

Apparently having noticed the bad complexion of Kaede, Lepard changes the direction of the talk, obviously having hit upon an idea.

Certainly, since they expressly added the name "Hell Furnace" to that device, the idea that a device that has aligned its vectors in the reverse direction might exist isn't all that weird either.

"Ah, so far as it goes, that kind of system...in other words, a furnace that uses positive emotions as source sure existed as well." (Emil)

While scratching her cheek with the index finger and smiling bitterly, Emil looks somewhat hesitant as she says,

"Though it was discarded for various reasons in the end. The biggest reason for the discarding is a secret, however." (Emil)

"Aah...I'm sure it's some quite wicked reason. At least that's my prediction." (Renya)

Lepard realizes that he failed at changing the topic while donning a dejected expression. Renya, who thought, 'Continuing this topic any further somehow doesn't seem overly good for them,' takes it upon himself to change the topic.

"At any rate, they sure had a nerve to have built the transfer gate in such an empty place, hadn't they?" (Renya)

"Yeah, you're right. I guess the maintenance in such place is difficult as well." (Emil)

"Did they hate other races getting close to their own cities so much?" (Renya)

"Now that you mention it, it sure seems so. Even the transfer gates in our beastmen country were not connected to places inside the cities, but to ones that are slightly outside, weren't they?" (Lepard)

Upon Lepard saying that, obviously rummaging through his memories, Renya wondered whether it might be the same for the transfer gates in the human countries as well, but even if he wants to confirm it, all humans besides him are peacefully asleep at the moment. Feeling like it would be evil to expressly wake them up just to ask that, Renya decides to shelve that question for later.

"That's because the ones called dragonoids are somewhat really troublesome." (Emil)

"Really? The dragonoid hero Albert whom I met before was an unusually decent hero though?" (Renya)

It's been quite a while ago already, but Renya says so while remembering the face of the hero who came to greet him once.

"Wait a moment. Hey Renya, what do you mean by 'unusually decent hero'?" (Lepard)

Lepard took a part of the words he heard from Renya as challenge and flared up at him. Apparently he thought that Renya's words had the implication that all the other heroes besides Albert aren't overly decent.

Renya stares at Lepard's face, then on the face of Kurz, who is sleeping soundly, and moreover thinks about Grün, who left to scout outside the cave. After pondering for a short time, he opened his mouth.

"Sorry. I suppose the only one, who's not normal, is you." (Renya)

"I'm very normal!" (Lepard)

"Lepard, there's zero persuasive power in those words." (Kaede)

Lepard claimed while raising his voice, but once he's bluntly refuted by Kaede, he ends up utterly dispirited as he seems to not have any words to return.

Letting his ears and tail hang, Lepard shrinks his big body and turns in the direction of the wall, but it looks like Kaede doesn't feel like comforting him.

"Occasionally I wonder about it, but do you guys really love each other?" (Renya)

Renya wonders whether that's not the moment where she should console Lepard, even if it's a lie, but Kaede immediately flapped her hand.

"He will get conceited if I pamper him too much. The male beastmen are in the perfect state if they are slightly disheartened." (Kaede)

"Even if I die, I definitely don't want to be reborn as beastman." (Renya)

Due to Renya saying that he would be horrified from continuously being treated in such way, Kaede and Emil burst into laughter together for some reason.

"Did I say something funny?" (Renya)

They probably couldn't hear his question through their laughter, but all of a sudden Croire turns up from the cave's entrance.

At the time of departure Croire left empty-handed without particularly taking any arms with her, but in her right hand dangle several wild rabbits which had their necks strangled and precisely broken. Now they are tied together by something like an ivy at their ears.

In her other hand she's grasping a bundle of leaves that are very likely some kind of herbs and wild grasses which she had picked somewhere along the way.

"Croire, tell me again, what was the reason why you went out?" (Renya)

Once Renya asked her while looking at the things in her hands, Croire immediately replied with a smile plastered all over her face,

"To investigate and check the situation in the vicinity." (Croire)

"What are those things you're holding in your hands then?" (Renya)

Once asked by Renya as he repeatedly points at her hands, Croire thrust her loot in front of him while maintaining her smile.

"It's food. Please be delighted, Renya. This area has a soil where herbs are growing en masse, and plenty of wild rabbits and wild mice inhabit the area." (Croire)

"You're sure you're an elf, right...?" (Renya)

Renya, who wonders what to think of an elf who happily eats wild rabbits and mice, says sarcastically, but it looks like Croire didn't understand his implications at all.

"If asked which of either I am in this regards, my eating habits have gotten closer to those of humans since I started to live with you, Renya." (Croire)

"Now that you mention it, you're certainly right there." (Renya)

"Grün-niisama is slightly worried, but since it's not like we can't eat meat anyway, it's fine." (Croire)

"What about the report of your investigation...?" (Renya)

"There's nothing at all. Absolutely no sign of people or battle. There are no dragons in the sky either. It's very peaceful. There's also nothing you ought to see." (Croire)

Renya wasn't sure whether she hadn't forgotten her own task, but so far as it goes Croire apparently understood what she has to report.



"It might be a little bit harsh to travel by foot. The continent with the least amount of cities among the four continents in this world is the northern one. The distances from one city to another is very long." (Croire)

"I guess there's also the option to ask Dra-kun and his friends to lend us a dragon." (Renya)

When it comes to having the speed of a flying dragon, it's possible to travel without wasting overly much time, even if it's a considerable distance.

'There not being any dragons in the sky as reported by Croire means we have to make them allow us to use them as transportation by some kind of method once we discover a flying dragon,' Renya assessed.

In this case 'some kind of method' becomes one centered around physical means, or to be precise, forceful persuasion by shooting them down, though.

"As for me, I believe that it might be better to stay in this shrine today, no matter whether we are going to head for a nearby city or go to the Dragon's Den."

"That's true...traveling will probably be less burdensome after taking a good rest. Maybe there is something like a dragonoid patrol that might visit this place here, too."

Seeing as the transfer gate has been installed here, it was difficult to imagine that the cave, where Renya and the others are currently at, had been completely abandoned.

'In order for the transfer gate to properly keep functioning as one, regular maintenance is necessary. That's a task that can only be carried out by the hands of people.'

'If we are lucky, now might be just the time for that maintenance. And even if that's not the case, it wouldn't be weird if the fact that this transfer gate had been activated forcibly by the elven country has been transmitted to the dragonoids controlling this gate.'

'In that case it's also possible that someone will be dispatched to check the situation.'

"Waking those who are sleeping right now to start moving seems pitiful as well...I guess we will prepare a camp as well." (Renya)

Once they decided on a course of action, things went quickly.

Given that the number of people in Renya's party, which included the heroes, is high, the amount of food brought back by Croire wouldn't be able to feed all of them.

Renya has put various ingredients that seem usable inside his inventory, but as it's currently a situation, where he doesn't know for how long they have to stay in the dragonoid country from now on, he judges that it would be better to supply food that can be procured locally rather than touching the ingredients in his inventory.

Croire put down the ingredients in her hand and went outside to inform Grün to temporarily return to the cave. Whereas it's been decided that Lepard and Kaede would go out to secure some herbs and meat.

"Renya, what about us?" (Emil)

"I suppose we will prepare the rabbits while staying here." (Renya)

No matter how many rabbits Croire caught, there's no one amongst Renya's party who would eat them with their fur and skin still attached.

As such it becomes necessary to process the wild rabbits into raw meat that can be prepared for eating.

"Leave the dismantling to me." (Emil)

As if to say that dissection and dismantling is her specialty, Emil took out several knives out of her coat, and immediately started dismantling the wild rabbits.

While watching her work which is abnormally skillful, Renya began to ponder about their actions from now on in his head, 'Now then, what should we do after this?'