

Chapter 159 - It seems to be a Reunion

Past midnight, when everyone had fallen asleep, Renya, who stood guard at the fire, lifted his eyes from staring into the fire, feeling as if he had heard something.

There seem to be few clouds in the sky, and the stars are strangely clearly shining.

Although Renya's sight is somewhat effective in the dark, he can't see anything in the night sky that might the origin of the sound he thought he'd heard.

"What's wrong?"

Shion, who was likewise on nightwatch sitting right next to Renya, notices Renya suddenly raising his face and thus asks.

'As if I know that myself.' After pondering for a little while, Renya decided to give a neutral reply.

"I felt as if I've heard something, but I guess it was just my imagination." (Renya)

Renya turns his eyes back towards the campfire and throws some firewood into the flames.

The place with the small shrine, where Renya and the others are resting, is located in an environment with no forest in sight and only small trees that grow sparsely in the vicinity, making it difficult to secure firewood.

They had brought some with them in their luggage, but certainly not an amount allowing for a fire to burn throughout an entire night.

If they were to burn the trees growing around them just because there's no firewood to be found, smoke would rise on top of the fact that live trees don't catch fire well.

If smoke were to flow into the cave, it would definitely not allow for anyone to sleep.

As a last resort Renya had to maintain the fire with the firewood they brought along while drying the wood of living trees with that fire, but because smoke still rose as it's not like he could completely dry the wood in such a short time, Renya was forced to carry out two tasks in parallel: first, keeping the fire going and second, making sure that the smoke doesn't flow into the cave by using wind sorcery.

Missing the timing to change the guard duty thanks to that, Renya was expected to continue standing watch until midnight, but Shion, who was told to keep him company, watched Renya's work while smiling without any raising any objections.

'Though it would be fine if she voices out her complaints,' Renya believes.

However, in Shion's mind doing her best to allow the others to have a quiet sleep is a great deed. At the same time she hasn't realized at all that it would be just the two of them as long as there's no shift change.

"Just for reference, what kind of sound did you hear?" (Shion)

"I think you could call it the sound of wind being cut. Like a shrill, echoing sound..." (Renya)

"I didn't hear anything, though..." (Shion)

Being told that, Shion looks up into the sky, but for her eyes, which only possess the average strength of a human, only the stars' twinkling is visible. There's no way that she could see something that cuts through the wind like Renya mentioned.

"I think it's just my imagination. Even if something was there for argument's sake, I don't think that

we would be able to see anything now by looking up since it was a speed that cut through the wind." (Renya)

"That makes sense..." (Shion)

After nodding once, Shion rests her look on Renya again as he's watching the fire. Seeing her smiling face, Renya tilts his head in confusion, wondering just what might be so amusing, but thinking that it might be something that he won't be able to guess anyway, he decides to stay silent about it.

"As this place is what it is, it's not all that strange for outrageous things to fly around either though." (Renya)

"Well, it's the dragonoids' country after all...I guess it wouldn't be a surprise for dragons to soar through the sky." (Shion)

"It's not strange, but it would sure be easier for us if they could descend here." (Renya)

Renya says while throwing another piece of firewood into the fire.

'Considering it normally, there doesn't exist any idiot that desires an encounter with a dragon in the middle of camping outdoor.

'After all that would usually mean one's death.

'However, in the eyes of the members currently present here, an encounter with a dragon doesn't mean death, but only a future chance for a competition over foodstuff and materials,' Shion smiles bitterly.

"I'm not going to hunt it, okay?" (Renya)

Renya says, apparently having seen through Shion's thoughts.

As if hearing something unexpected, Shion's expression changes into one full of surprise.

"You won't?" (Shion)

Renya nods at Shion who asks anew, wondering whether she had misheard.

"I won't hunt it. I will capture it." (Renya)

"I mean, it will serve as means of transportation and source of information, so what's the point in hunting it?" Renya asks.

'Dragon - a being that's even being called the strongest monster so far as it goes; it makes me wonder whether Renya and the allies around him are not crazy,' Shion let a sigh escape her lips.

'I don't think that he's bad, but at the same time he has many parts that wouldn't allow me to nod honestly if asked whether they are good.

Though Shion is aware herself that recently her own thinking has been strongly influenced by his, too.

"Can't you shoot it down?" (Shion)

"It might be possible if I see it, but in such a night sky... In the first place, isn't shooting it down,

ordering to hand over its information and forcing it to let us ride it not exactly the type of stuff a villain would do?" (Renya)

"Hmm, you're certainly right there. But somehow I feel like, why care about that now of all times." (Shion)

'Based on that I've seen from the way of him handling Dra-kun, aren't those kinds of threats and coercions a daily occurrence?' Shion wonders.

"Since I have never meddled with the dragons over here, you can't really call it 'now of all times.'" (Renya)

'It looks like he's well aware of his cruel treatment of the dragons over there, or in other words the dragons in the outskirts of Kukrika and those related to them.
The face of Renya, who stated that flatly, shows not a single sign of a guilty conscience.

"Well...that's all fine, but..." (Shion)

Renya interrupts Shion, who started to speak in an astounded manner, with his eyes.
And this time Shion, who hurriedly held her tongue, could clearly hear the sound of something.
It's a somewhat high-pitched, scream-like sound.
Guessing from the sound's weakness, it felt to Shion as if it's occurring in a quite distant place from where they are now.
In front of Shion's eyes, who was about to ask Renya just what might be causing that sound, Renya suddenly holds up a palm towards the sky.
In the next instant, several small fireballs, drawing countless crimson trails in the night sky, were launched from his palm.

"<Fireball>?" (Shion)

"I don't know anything beyond it being a small-scaled spell that is visible in the dark and usable at night." (Renya)

'Jeez, what a waste," Shion always thinks.
'Renya's mana should be enormous, and yet he can't use anything besides really basic sorcery, if you exclude the void and wind attributes.
'Even though he should be able to become a world-leading sorcerer going far beyond the abilities of humans, if only he properly learned sorcery from a reliable sorcery teacher, Renya wastes most of his mana pointlessly or provides it to Frau.
'Given that he should be disconnected from the supply line to Frau right now because of the distance, Renya's huge mana seems to just accumulate. The sight of the continuously fired <Fireball> spells as if now was the time to go all out, which color the night sky crimson is fairly beautiful, yet a magnificently pointless act.

"R-Renya? Just what are you doing?" (Shion)

"There was something in the sky. I have no intention to hit it, but it might come down to see what's going on, right?" (Renya)

It's a spell that will explode if it hits something, but if there's nothing to hit, it will merely scatter in the sky fruitlessly.

Even so, as he's launching a number of spells that's gradually going beyond common sense, the situation in the sky became visible for Shion, albeit only vaguely.

"Certainly, it's quite far away, but...something's flying over there?" (Shion)

"It seems to be circling on the spot, but it doesn't actually come down. I guess it's being cautious?" (Renya)

"Wouldn't it be better to stop with the fireballs and switch over to <Bright Light>?" (Shion)

Even if it's called a weak spell, fireball is still offensive sorcery.

Shion could see a shadow, which is as small as the tip of her pinky finger's nail, flying high up in the sky, but whatever it is, it only makes sense to be cautious if attack sorcery is launched into the sky.

That's why Shion tried to propose the usage of <Bright Light> which has no offensive ability, but this ends up being rejected by Renya.

"Divine arts look like they can be fired, but you can't make the spell <Bright Light> fly." (Renya)

"Oh, I guess it's Rona's turn then?" (Shion)

Rona is sleeping inside the cave.

Renya grabbed the shoulder of Shion who was just about to go wake her up.

"Renya?" (Shion)

"There was a response over there." (Renya)

Ahead of Renya's look, the distant, small shadow cast a light strong enough to be seen even at their location.

Seeing that light, Renya stops releasing spells from his palm.

Watching the small shadow, which had been circling around in the sky, abruptly descending in a straight line, Shion's face became stiff.

Obviously its speed is too abnormal.

The sight of the shadow, which had only the size of her nail tip at first, very quickly changing into a huge shadow with spread wings caused Shion to consider its speed as dangerous, even before asking what the true identity of the shadow might actually be.

"Renya!" (Shion)

"It doesn't seem as if it's going to particularly cause harm to us, you know?" (Renya)

"Even without that being the case, I feel like the result will be the same anyway!? If it comes down with such a speed, just the shockwave and the wind pressure will..." (Shion)

A huge mass moves with a corresponding speed, and if it crashes into the ground, the generated shockwave will be fairly devastating.

Also, the wind pressure caused for such a huge mass to fly in the air shouldn't be anything to scoff at either.

Shion called out to Renya while uneasy about those things, but Renya doesn't look as if he's regarding those as dangerous at all.

"Those guys flying in the sky has no relation to physical laws." (Renya)

"Eh?" (Shion)

Being told that, Shion stares at the descending shadow.

The large build, which is landing with a fairly high speed while casting a light, was something even Shion had witnessed many times in Kukrika.

"A dragon!?" (Shion)

<Just as I wondered who it might be that randomly shoots spells into the sky at such a place, it's you, huh?>

The large build, which lowered its speed and calmly stayed in the air after getting close enough, was certainly a dragon.

Moreover, Renya feels as if he had seen that dragon somewhere before.

"We met somewhere before, didn't we?" (Renya)

<You forgot...but I guess that's inevitable. I'm the individual called Emedra by you.>

"Ooh, Emedra-kun, eh? It's been a while. You healthy?" (Renya)

Renya casually raises a hand in greeting.

The dragon with the name Emedra started to hover at a fixed altitude, but although it was vaguely, its astonishment was obvious from its behavior.

<There's no change in the physical condition of us dragons. We always maintain the most ideal state.> (Emedra)

"It doesn't feel like that applies to Dra-kun though?" (Renya)

<Such dragons exist as well.> (Emedra)

Renya and Emedra are holding a light chat, but seeing that, Shion is on tenterhooks.

After all the dragon flapping its wings above their heads is far bigger than Dra-kun.

The intimidation triggered by its large build isn't a joke either.

"Shion? What's up?" (Renya)

Seeming having noticed Shion's nervousness, Renya calls out to her.

Shion gave him an answer while being careful that her voice doesn't tremble in some way.

"Nah...I just thought that you're sure calm about this." (Shion)

"Calm, you say...you've met this one before, didn't you?" (Renya)

Being told so, Shion looks once more at the dragon flying above her, but no matter how closely she looks, there's no way for her to tell apart the individual differences of a dragon's face. After scrutinizing for a while, Shion obviously gave up and shook her head.

"That dragon is unknown to me." (Shion)

"It's the Emedra dragon who gave us his help during the war against the Holy Kingdom." (Renya)

<I haven't met the woman over there much. Since even you, who rode on my back, forgot, it's not that unnatural for her to not know me.> (Emedra)

For some reason a hint of apprehension could be sensed in that telepathic message. After perceiving the reality that she, who's no more than a human that might as well be equal to trash in the eyes of a dragon, is apparently causing feelings of apprehension to a dragon, Shion feels shocked.

Seemingly reading the stirrings in Shion's heart from her expression, Emedra said with a clearly apprehensive atmosphere,

<It seems like you had your share of hardships. You have my sympathies.> (Emedra)

"Ah, no, it's nothing of that level...wai-! You can hear my voice as well!?" (Shion)

<Even without hearing it, you were suffering during our conversation, weren't you?> (Emedra)

Emedra honestly answers the surprised Shion, and gently lands on the ground. It was a soft touchdown that didn't produce any wind pressure or shockwave as had been worried by Shion.

<It's a reunion at a weird place, but I guess it's not like you can really call it coincidence either.> (Emedra)

Emedra said while looking in the direction of the cave behind Renya and Shion, and Renya nodded.

"The transfer gates from the human and beastmen countries have become unusable. In order to investigate what has happened, we came here together with the hero." (Renya)

<I hear you are the guardian of the hero? That sounds like a hassle.> (Emedra)

"Thanks for your concern. Right now I'd rather have some information than such concern, though. Please tell us if you know anything." (Renya)

Upon Renya's request, Emedra didn't use telepathic communication, but instead spit out its breath as if squeezing it out of its mouth with the array of sharp fangs, and slowly laid down its body in front of Renya and Shion.

<Very well. I will answer your questions as far as I can.> (Emedra)

Somehow a pronounced weariness clung to Emedra's telepathic message.