

Chapter 161 - It seems to be before the Travel

Due to Emedra's opinion that it would be dangerous to fly with people on the back while the sun's still not up, Renya's party decided to spend the night at the cave as initially planned. The other members felt slightly worried about Renya as they hadn't taken proper shifts in the guard duty, but as Renya provided the excuse that he had forgotten to alternate as he was busy with the adjustment of the scarce firewood, they calmed down by accepting it inevitable in that case. However, for some reason Shion took Croire and Rona to the side as there seemed to be some kind of dispute going on between them, but Renya didn't find out the reason nor the conclusion. Although he didn't understand, he lowered a fist on Emil's head who was broadly grinning next to him.

"Isn't that far too unreasonable!?" (Emil)

Once Renya grabs the shoulders of Emil, who stroke her head with teary eyes, and draws her to himself, he checks the vicinity. Leopard and Kaede said that they would return into the cave to go sleep, and since Kurz and the two priestesses couldn't be woken up, both likewise carried the young ones into the cave. Grün is talking with Emedra about something and doesn't look in Renya's direction.

"What do you think about Emedra's story?" (Renya)

Once he asks in a whisper, Emil touches Renya's left ear with her right hand after pondering about it for a short moment.

<Isn't that question way too vague?> (Emil)

Seemingly perceiving that it would be best for no one to hear their conversation, she replied his question through telepathic communication.

<You just have to think about what you want to say without worrying since it's bidirectional.> (Emil)

Emil's thought holds back Renya who was about to speak up as he thought that he has to voice out the words.

While shutting his mouth, which he had almost opened, again, Renya asked Emil anew,

<The scale of the monster army. The sortie of evil dragons. The abnormal invasion speed accompanied by those.> (Renya)

<All of it is probably related to the demon king.> (Emil)

Emil's thoughts were entwined with a feeling of being somewhat bored. Probably because this telepathic communication is an exchange of thoughts, the speaker's emotions seem to be quite directly transmitted to the other party.

<The scale of the army is strangish. The way of attacking consists of nothing but surprise attacks. The feeling that the demon king doesn't mind the drawbacks from recruiting even the evil dragons

is prevalent. No matter how I look at it, it gives me the impression that the way of proceeding matters is too high-handed.> (Emil)

<Isn't that what a demon king usually does?> (Renya)

Going by the image Renya possesses, the beings called demon kings are overbearing and arrogant, pressing forward with any kind of power they can obtain.

Once he informs Emil of that, she sighed once while playing around with Renya's ear.

<Certainly, that's how it might be.> (Emil)

<That's a kind of halfhearted way of talking, isn't it?> (Renya)

Once Renya asks while peeking into Emil's face which is right next to him, she stares back at Renya's face after acting as if being somewhat hesitant while saying,

<I don't know who's become the demon king. But I know some of the candidates who were rumored that they might have a good chance. I can't believe that any of them would have done something like this.> (Emil)

<In other words, you're saying that someone else became the demon king?> (Renya)

<No idea. The probability isn't zero, but I think it's low. Say Renya, I have a little request. I wonder, won't you listen to it?> (Emil)

Renya mercilessly drives the thumb of his right hand into the left flank of Emil, who looks at him with upturned eyes after quietly leaning in close as if snuggling up to him a little bit.

Emil, who jumped up with a start out of shock, reflexively removes her hand from Renya's ear, and next crouches down while holding her side due to the pain assailing her.

"It's a talk about catching a demon alive or something like that, right? Even without acting like this, I will handle it as we share a reasonably good friendship." (Renya)

"Y-Yeah. It's a great help that you catch on quickly, but isn't this treatment way too mean?" (Emil)

Renya looks down on Emil, who looks up at him with teary eyes while still squatting, as he folds his arms.

Renya, who had become desperate to suppress his slightly risen pulsation, didn't notice Shion, who had apparently knocked out Croire and Rona, intently watching them from the shadows while biting a handkerchief.

And then dawn breaks.

At the time when Renya said, "Let's depart then?", after they gathered their luggage together and extinguished the fire, he was driven by somewhat uneasy feelings while looking up at Emedra's huge body.

With Renya in the lead, Renya's party consists of 11 people: Shion, Rona, Kurz, Tsubaki, Botan, Lepard, Kaede, Croire, Grün and lastly Emil.

Once Renya asked, "No matter how big your body might be, won't you be overloaded like this, Emedra?", Emedra lifted her long neck, gazed at the own back for a while, and then carefreely said,

<Won't it work out somehow if you sit together closely?> (Emedra)

"Hey, you're one of those dragons that seem to give others a bad riding experience, aren't you?" (Renya)

Although Renya said so, it's not like there's a huge cage like the one used before to carry the soldiers.

Even if comes to making one, there's no material, and they don't have the time for look for some either.

"I guess there's no other option but to resign ourselves to it..." (Renya)

<No, wait, if you give me a little bit of time...> (Emedra)

As if having suddenly realized something, Emedra lifted her head towards the sky and released a single, long, shrill roar.

All present were surprised by Emedra's abrupt roaring, but they immediately grasp the reason for Emedra doing it.

It's because they discovered the dot-like shadow that appeared in a section of the sky.

"Your friend?" (Renya)

<Since I found him flying nearby anyway, I called him over.> (Emedra)

Emedra says as if it's a trivial matter, but hearing that another dragon is going to visit this place, everyone's faces besides Emedra and Renya cramp up.

Emedra is more or less friendly, but that doesn't necessarily mean that other dragons will be friendly towards humans and beastmen.

There also exists the possibility that they will start acting violently while saying something like, "As if I could work together with such diminutive races."

Having thought as far, everyone's eyes focused on Renya.

Renya tilts his head to the side in confusion upon noticing that, not understanding why they are looking at him like this.

"What's wrong?" (Renya)

"Hmm...I guess it just means that they will be separated into food and raw materials, if they are as stupid as going on a rampage..." (Lepard)

When Lepard silently mutters that while representing everyone's feelings on this matter, it's Emedra's turn to have her expression freeze.

Without paying any attention to that exchange, the shadow, which had been no more than a dot in the sky, very quickly grows in size, and turns into a dragon before long.

Contrary to Emedra, this new dragon's body was deep crimson.

"I guess this one will be Rubydra then." (Renya)

<I wondered about it before as well, Renya, but could it be that you don't have any naming sense?> (Emedra)

Renya looked sullen after being head-on reprimanded with a complete denial, but although none of those present said anything, all of them agreed with Emedra's opinion.

Without throwing a single glance at Renya and his party, the deep crimson dragon starts to hover above their heads and fixedly stares at Emedra.

Emedra returned that stare by looking back at the crimson dragon in the same way.

"What's this?"

Two dragons that stare at each other.

One is mannerly sitting on the ground.

The other is floating in the air while flapping its wings powerfully.

Renya's group, which had been completely left out of the loop, has absolutely no idea just what's going on with that staring contest.

<Which reminds me, the telepathic communication among us dragons isn't transmitted to you guys.> (Emedra)

Emedra says after a while as if having finally remembered about their existence. For some reason the hovering dragon averted its face suddenly in a huff.

"You talked amongst each other, didn't you? So, what's the outcome?" (Renya)

Renya asks Emedra while looking up at crimson dragon who was still looking away, but from the attitude of that new dragon, it's easy to imagine that the result wasn't positive.

<He is unwilling, or rather, he declined. It looks like he can't bear to have diminutive beings ride on his back.> (Emedra)

As Emedra said that, the crimson dragon raised the flapping speed of its wings and started to try flying away.

However, no matter how strongly it tries to flap his wing, its body doesn't ascend at all.

After looking above her head with nothing but an "Oh?", Emedra slowly lowers her look towards the ground.

Ahead of her look she found Renya wiggling the fingers of his hand while having a smile plastered all over his face.

<What did you do...?> (Emedra)

Renya replies to the asking Emedra while keeping his smile,

"Nah, I mean, I just thought that there's no way that Rubydra would really do something so cruel." (Renya)

<So?> (Emedra)

Emedra urges him to continue as she once again looks at the crimson dragon who hasn't stopped trying to flap its wings even while having partially succumbed to panic due to not understanding just what's being done to it.

"In the end skinship is necessary to get along with each other, right?" (Renya)

<Who knows, but...what did you do?> (Emedra)

"That's the <Manipulation> spell." (Renya)

Renya says, but Emedra immediately denied those words inside her head.

"The <Manipulation> spell can only manipulate inanimate objects.

'Even the occasional armor throwing performed by Renya only consists of throwing a part of the armor through sorcery while letting the other parts fly while attached to the armor.

"The atmosphere is an inanimate object, right?" (Renya)

Although it's unclear whether Renya knows of Emedra's thoughts or not, he explains so.

'Certainly the atmosphere itself is an inanimate object, and it's not like you can't move it with the <Manipulation> spell.

'However, the amount of mana consumed to restrain a flying dragon by just manipulating the atmosphere is nothing a normal sorcerer could realize, even if they exhausted all of their mana.

<Renya...did you ever hear anything about common sense?> (Emedra)

"How rude. I'm applying the proper usage method of <Manipulation>, am I not?" (Renya)

Renya looks offended as if being upset, but Emedra has no other options left anymore but to give up.

'With the phenomenon taking place in front of my eyes, I'm pretty sure that all sorcerers around the world would deny that this is the proper method to use <Manipulation>.

As Emedra ponders about such things, the movements of the crimson dragon, who continued to flap its wings, changed.

As if being tightly grabbed by a huge, invisible hand, the dragon next stopped to flap its wings and started to writhe in midair while still in the same posture as before.

Averting her eyes from the crimson dragon that struggled fervently while raising a cry that sounds like screaming, Emedra is careful to not put her emotions into her thoughts and asks Renya,

<Just what the heck are you doing now?> (Emedra)

"In order to become good friends through skinship, I do this...tickle, tickle-tickle, tickle-tickle...I suppose...?" (Renya)

While still wiggling the fingers of his hand to manipulate the atmosphere, he adds motions as if kneading something.

Seeing that, Emedra somehow managed to grasp what's happening.

<You mean you're kneading his entire body...?> (Emedra)

"If my knowledge is correct, it's the official way of forming physical bonds with animals." (Renya)

The daredevilry of treating dragons at the same level as animals shouldn't exist in this world, but

even Emedra, who might have set everything on fire in a fit of rage if a normal human had talked to her like that, only feebly laughs at those words coming out of Renya's mouth.

What he's doing is awfully worthless in the eyes of Emedra, but the power spent on it not only hinders a dragon to fly away, but crumples its entire body. It's something so colossal that it completely immobilizes the power of a rampaging dragon.

Moreover, even though he uses such outlandish power, Renya is still smiling and completely looks as if he's casually doing some odd job.

For just an instant Emedra considered whether she should save her brethren.

But, it was really just for an instant. Emedra decided to leave the dragon, who's in a spiral of agony, along as it is.

Is it because dragons are beings situated close to the top of the food chain in this world? At any rate, they have the tendency to look down on everything other than them without even investigating properly.

If the crimson dragon had been careful, it should have realized the existence of Renya, who's far beyond common sense even if only limited to the aspect of mana, on top of the three heroes among Renya's party.

Its current situation, caused by it not doing that, can't be called anything but reaping what you sow according to Emedra.

<Although it would be really great if he had the discernment to apologize before it becomes a matter of life and death.> (Emedra)

Emedra secretly shrugged her shoulders while looking at the state of the crimson dragon who had started to spasm in somewhat strange ways.