

Chapter 168 - It seems to be the Dismantling of the Ancient Dragon

At a far distant place one can see blue dragons frantically releasing breaths and spells towards the ground.

The instant the blue breaths and water-attributed spells impact on the ground, they transform into vapor which quickly rises into the sky.

Even so, the ground's heat doesn't abate at all.

The blue dragons flying in the sky also seemed somewhat unsteady and dispirited due to that heat. Although there's nothing burnable left anymore, the ground isn't about to cool down.

Renya looks to the side.

The hill-like, large build lying over there is the ancient dragon, which was the strongest and biggest among the evil dragons which fell after being beaten down by Renya.

Since it crashed barely outside the dragonoid city's wall, he was worried that the corpse might have been hurled somewhere by the wind barrier he deployed himself, but thanks to him having made the barrier somewhat big with enough room, the huge body was left behind without being carried away somewhere by the wind.

Renya casts the <Manipulation> spell on the corpse and moves it over to a spot that's slightly away from the city.

Even at that spot there was nothing in the vicinity except for a faintly warm and blackened soil.

On that ground Renya takes out a knife from his inventory and slowly reinforces the knife by making his mana permeate into it.

<Well, what should I say...you will just insist on saying that it's been an emergency measure in a dire situation, but Renya, let me pass on to you what I know about sorcery so that the same thing won't happen again.> (Emedra)

After anything and everything had literally ended, Emedra, who had taken refuge in a considerably far distance, said after seizing Renya as soon as she returned.

Renya silently surveyed the surrounding's state from above Rubydra's back.

Even though nothing that could burn should have been left anymore, bright red flames were flickering across the ground.

The dragonoid's city, the sole remaining structure left standing on the ground which was completely barren as far as the eye could see, somehow managed to keep its shape with the wall being partly destroyed while being illuminated by the red flames.

The sky was entirely covered by soot, which had been blown up by the explosion and the blazing fires, causing even the sunlight to not reach the ground.

<This...was me? What the hell...eeeeehh!?!> (Rubydra)

Rubydra was shocked while hovering in the sky.

The monster army that attacked the city had vanished without a trace.

All that was left was a ground that had transformed into crimson lava.

Besides that, nothing else was to be found.

It was a state where it would be too optimistic to even describe it as burnt area.

<The dragonoids' views are split into two factions; that they should thank you or file a protest.> (Emedra)

Emedra says telepathically while adding plenty of sighs.

<Even I wonder about filing a protest since they would have likely lost their lives if you guys hadn't come, but this is a disastrous scene where you could say that they lost everything besides their lives. Currently the dragons are frantically fighting the fires, but the prospect of them extinguishing all of it looks bleak. Wasn't there a way that's a little bit more gentle to resolve this?> (Emedra)

"I assert that it was the very best move at that time." (Renya)

Renya declared flatly and clearly, but Shion and Rubydra didn't overlook how his look was shifting around.

Rubydra, who might be the world's greatest authority in regards to fire aptitude, thoroughly burned everything within her range to nothing with her fire breath that was released after using the huge mana supplied by Renya.

The calculation of Emedra, who had seen it albeit not all of it, was that the breath might have changed the terrain like the breaths released by the Four Greater Dragons, assuming that Rubydra's mind had been a little bit stronger, allowing her to take in an even bigger amount of mana from Renya.

That's no miscalculation.

Given that it hadn't been a calculated act in the first place, there's no way for it to have been a miscalculation.

The attack, which was carried out under the extremely lackadaisical thought that the demons probably wouldn't get burned together with the monster forces unless the whole area would be reduced to ashes with maximum firepower, certainly attained that very result.

If there were to exist demons who could stay alive in such a situation, Emedra definitely wouldn't be able to come up with a method how to defeat them.

On the other hand, the damage, which the dragonoids suffered, is big as well.

The reason why the city somehow kept its shape was thanks to the heroes, including the dragonoid Albert, being inside the city.

Those four created a defense barrier across the whole city, centered on the wall, which looked like a tassel. Together with the wind barrier deployed by Renya just before that, its defense force somehow managed to completely withstand the blast.

"It didn't feel as if we'd survive," is Lepard's impression.

Because Emedra shifted towards escape at full power at the moment when she guessed what happened, she didn't sustain any damage, but the explosion of Rubydra's breath, which she watched from far away, didn't look as anything but the end of this world.

Everyone remaining on Emedra's back stared with their mouth gaping wide open, except for Emil who was the only one apparently roaring in laughter.

Normally a dragon never gives that knowledge to a human, but Emedra has judged that leaving Renya alone, especially after having watched that spectacle, is extremely dangerous, coming even before the issue of defeating or not defeating the demon king. Thus she decided to transcribe a part of the knowledge she possesses about sorcery into Renya's head.

"Do I have a right to veto?" (Renya)

<Do you think so, based on this terrible scene?> (Emedra)

"I'm a swordsman, though?" (Renya)

<Please, I'm asking you; just accept it! I will even beg by prostrating myself if you like.> (Emedra)

'Since there exists an upper limit in brain capacity for humans, there's no need for such knowledge,' Renya thought, but once he was begged in tears, he couldn't decline it just like that either, resulting in him accepting the knowledge as he was asked by Emedra.

Once he tried putting into practice what he had received, Renya realized that this knowledge was extremely useful.

Self-enhancement techniques that used mana, not to mention all the knowledge about sorcery.

Emedra furthermore handed over techniques how to strengthen items through mana.

Renya wondered whether that might not simply raise his own danger grade, but Emedra apparently judged the danger to be low if he properly understands the principles behind using his power rather than exercising it unknowingly.

<As for the self-enhancement, it seems as if you are already applying it unconsciously, but if you do it carelessly, it will hurt your body. Since there's also the possibility that you will damage it beyond recovery in the worst case, it's better for you to know about the technique in advance.> (Emedra)

Renya, who acquired a dragon's sorcery knowledge for that reason, completely delegated the settlement of the aftermath to others, and went to recover the evil dragons he beat down during the battle.

The corpses of their allied dragons were retrieved by Emedra and Rubydra.

Because they crashed into the city and not onto the battlefield, they were left behind without getting reduced to cinder or being hurled away. Emil wanted to get her hands on those, but Renya strictly prohibited her to do so.

As there appears to be a burial rite for dragons, he thought that it might be a sacrilege to put one's hands on the corpses.

In exchange they were told by Emedra to do as they like with the corpses of the evil dragons. Emil readily went with Renya's opinion on this.

'Leaving aside the corpses of their brethren, Emedra and Rubydra apparently think that it doesn't matter all that much what happens with the dead evil dragons.

Emil merrily dismantled the small evil dragons, dividing their raw materials and meat, however Renya insisted on his ownership of the ancient dragon, and thus it was left to him. As it had been showered with fire spells, the scales and skin have mostly lost their value as raw materials.

Renya skillfully tears off the scales and skin, which have been burned and grilled all over, with his mana-enhanced knife.

Even the meat below them is burned on the surface, but quite good meat has remained inside the dragon's body, and Renya cut that meat off in suitably small chunks.

The flesh of an animal with a big body is red was the knowledge Renya possessed, but the ancient dragon's meat hadn't that much of a red tinge. If pushed to say, it had a pink color and softly coiled itself around Renya's fingers.

Starting a fire with firewood he retrieved out of his inventory, Renya prepares metal skewers, stabs the meat onto them, and begins grilling it by thrusting the skewers into the ground next to the fire.

As it might become too dry if it's grilled for too long, he extinguished the fire as soon as the lightly warmed oil began to melt, sprinkled salt on the meat, and carelessly sank his teeth into it, causing him to raise a low moan.

He had wondered how it might turn out as food since there had been no bloodletting in advance nor had the meat been cured, but the instant it entered his mouth, fragrant oil streamed into his throat, and mellow meat juice poured out each time he bit into it while the meat itself gave his teeth a firm texture.

The slightly perceptible blood taste and smell didn't disturb the meat's flavor, but instead stimulated his nose and mouth as flavor and scent overflowing with wildness. That impressive quality excited Renya's sensation all the more with a feeling of satisfaction after it reached his stomach.

"Delicious..." (Renya)

Once Renya, who ended up eating a whole skewer in a flash, muttered that in ecstasy, he immediately came to his senses, and resumed the dismantling work of the ancient dragon. 'If it's an ingredient that becomes so delicious by just grilling it in a fairly non committal manner, I'm sure it will become a lot more tasty if it's cooked properly. 'Moreover, if the meat's already so delicious, the intestines might even go beyond that. 'On top of that, I think I will be able to make a great soup stock out of the bones, and if I open its head, I will find the magic stone and its brain. 'I will turn the magic stone into money, and I believe the brain will be edible and fairly delicious depending on the way it's cooked. 'This is a corpse where I must not waste even the smallest part,' Renya devoted himself to his dismantling with all his energy. That was the moment when the beings called evil dragons, which are avoided as it's said that they play a part in every calamity on this world, were registered as first-rate food ingredient in Renya's perception. (T/N: RIP Evil dragons)

<I just pray that this perception doesn't turn our way.> (Rubydra)

Shion smiles bitterly next to Rubydra, who transmitted this very worn-out telepathic message. In front of those two, the huge body of the ancient dragon was dismantled at an absurd rate. Evil dragons don't matter to Rubydra. It was at the level that she thought he might turn them into food or raw materials as he pleases, but seeing as she's a being that's likewise called dragon, she was scared that Renya would start asking, "Aren't you guys actually delicious as well?" In that case she would have no choice but to escape at full speed, but Rubydra has a hunch that she wouldn't be able to get away anyway.

"I think you'll be alright. You might not think so, but Renya is a gentle person to those who he has recognized as his comrades." (Shion)

Shion gently strokes the nape of Rubydra, who's limply laying on the ground, as if to give her a peace of mind. Seemingly comforted by that sensation, Rubydra curred quietly.

<It would be great if I have been recognized as comrade, but I'm not so sure about that.> (Rubydra)

"It's fine, probably." (Shion)

<That's a worrisome reply.> (Rubydra)

The reason for Rubydra being exhausted is Emedra's sermon. She was scolded that even though the main reason might be Renya, there might have been various methods to go about it, such as splitting and scattering the breath at the time of its release, or severing the path and thus stopping the mana supply before it became so big. From Rubydra's standpoint, as the one who got dragged into it, it was an argumentation that felt

extremely unreasonable, but certainly, since she was well aware that she might have been able to keep the damage slightly lower, had she not been confused by the amount of provided mana, she obediently received the sermon, albeit getting mentally worn out by it quite a bit.

<So, what are you guys going to do after this?> (Rubydra)

"Let's see..." (Shion)

Currently the eldest of the dragonoids, who evacuated earlier, people of each race, such as Kaede, Rona and Croire as those holding a certain position, and the four heroes are holding a conference to talk about that matter.

Shion quickly ran away saying that such talks are too difficult for her.

As for Rubydra, who heard about that, she wondered what to think of escaping from the conference for such reason, but Renya's reason for escaping was even more unreasonable.

"Please decide whatever you think is right as I don't care." Those were the words he left behind when running away from the conference.

This indifference, or rather, way of talking apparently made the dragonoids, especially the elderly ones, furious, but Renya doesn't look as if he cared at all.

In the first place, Renya's position is that of the human hero's guardian or patron. In the present situation where all four heroes assembled, there's no reason that he must be present there.

And yet, since he didn't know what Kurz would start to speak about if left alone, Rona had to stay behind as watchdog.

Though Rona ended up sighing while saying, "I really drew the short end of the stick here."

"I don't know whether I'm correct here, but I guess there are two options." (Shion)

<Try telling me. I will judge by myself.> (Rubydra)

"First, aim for the recovery of the dragonoid territory. Second, put aside the dragonoids' matters for the time being and defeat the demon king with the four heroes." (Shion)

<You mean, various problems will likely get resolved, if you crush the main cause, eh? So, what do you think, which option are they going to choose?> (Rubydra)

"Probably the recovery of the dragonoids' territory." (Shion)

<Why?> (Rubydra)

Shion sinks into silence for a while after that question.

'It seems she's sorting out inside her mind what she should say,' Rubydra waited for Shion to open her mouth while still having her nape caressed.

"Certainly, if the demon king is defeated, the demons will likely withdraw to their own territory. But there's no means to allow the four heroes to reach the demon king castle, which is said to be located in the center of the demons' domain, in the first place. Until now the four continents started a general offensive into the demons' territory, penetrating the territory as far as possible. That was the usual practice, but...I think that will be difficult this time." (Shion)

Rubydra stays silent and ponders about Shion's opinion.

'Certainly, so far they adopted the method of approaching up to the demon king castle, forcibly breaking through with the heroes' power and fighting against the demon king, as Shion said.

'However, considering the current situation, the dragonoids had a fairly big part of their domain easily stolen by the demons first, making it quite unlikely for them to have the power to carry out a reverse invasion.

'Despite the combat force called Trident Principality being in good health, the human territory has the weakness that the Holy Kingdom, which was its strongest power, has been almost destroyed.

'The human losses didn't amount to such huge numbers, but the physical and monetary damage was too big.

'In addition, the Holy Kingdom's relations to the surrounding countries has deteriorated a lot due to the matter of the hero preceding Kurz. The atmosphere of cooperating together to invade the demon country is definitely gone.

'Even if the Trident Principality is capable of defending itself, it lacks the power to turn to offense all by itself.

Rubydra doesn't know much about the elves.

If it's at the level of gossip, she heard as much that the nobles around the emperor have become cowardly due to having been attacked beforehand, and are now loudly advocating that defense should be given the priority.

'If that's the truth, even the emperor probably won't be able to overcome the resistance against an offensive unless he ignores the nobles' view,' Rubydra assesses.

Expecting Rubydra to be able to say anything about the beastmen was out of the question.

In the first place, there's no precedence where the beastmen succeeded if things were entrusted to them.

'Even if they might be able to win local battles after solely focusing on the fight in front of their eyes, there are many battles where they are defeated in the big picture since they are battle maniacs', is Rubydra's impression of the beastmen.

'Moreover, there are presently four kings among the beastmen. There are rumors that they are opposing each other. As long as they don't resolve that issue, they won't be able to go against the demon country.

<If I try considering it, it sure won't result in anything decent.> (Rubydra)

"After all we don't have the strength allowing us to directly go to war." (Shion)

<If they idle around too long, the lost share of monster will be replenished eventually and we will be attacked again.> (Rubydra)

"I leave it to the important people to think about that part." (Shion)

Readily using a phrase that would be retorted by Rona with, "You are also in an important position as first princess of a country which is one of the major powers of the humans," if she happened to be present, Shion gazes at Renya who has started to organize the parts, which had been efficiently cut apart, by their purpose in front of the ancient dragon's corpse which had mostly lost its shape.

"Though I believe that various problems would be solved rather quickly if Renya would go at it for real." (Shion)

Even while knowing that Renya hasn't any intention to do something like that, Shion muttered that under her breath, seemingly unable to avoid letting it go unsaid. Rubydra raised a groan different

from the one when her nape was caressed, as if agreeing with Shion's words.