

Chapter 177 - It seems to be the Beginning of the March

The dragonoids' army is advancing through the dragonoid continent.

The army has loaded materials and food together with around a dozen soldiers on something similar to troop transport wagons called "tanks" by the dragonoids. Those tanks are pulled by sub-dragons and flanked by cavalry, allowing the march of the dragonoids' military forces to be fairly fast.

Their numbers amount to several hundreds.

Since the ration between following cavalry and soldiers riding the tanks is about 1 to 2, the entire military force amounts to approximately 10,000.

That army of 10,000 soldiers is a military force the Witenagemot had barely managed to scrape together after desperate efforts. It appears to be the biggest military force the dragonoids can muster at the current point in time.

Originally there are a lot more soldiers in the dragonoid country, but as they are scattered at military bases all over after the chain of defeats, they couldn't assemble all military forces. Those were the words of the Witenagemot.

Renya believes that statement to be somewhat fake.

They are using the excuse that they can't send out all military forces since it's necessary to leave military forces behind in order to defend the cities and bases spread all over the continent that haven't yet been taken by the enemy army.

However, it's not like there are this many bases across the dragonoids' continent. Moreover, if it comes to places that are going to be attacked next, there's the capital, or in other words, the biggest military position of the dragonoids to begin with. It's also the place where the main force of the demon king's army, which had invaded the dragonoids' continent, has been stationed.

If that place isn't recaptured, it will be impossible to liberate the continent. At the same time, if they can recapture that place, it will likely turn into an important position that might cause the downfall of the demon king's army units that are active at other places.

The excuse that they can't concentrate their military forces despite attacking that place is unacceptable.

One of the reason why the Witenagemot remains stingy on their military forces while being well aware of that fact is their reliance on Renya's extraordinary combat abilities.

It's even possible that they think that Renya should go recover the capital all by himself, if things go west.

He might be overthinking things, but from the start Renya felt something like that from the Witenagemot's words no matter how much they explained the current circumstances or made excuses.

According to them, the number of troops of the demon king army stationed in the dragonoids' capital seems to not go beyond a few ten thousands.

Moreover, it's a considerably powerful battle formation centered around intermediate-level monsters such as orcs and ogres.

If one considered things logically, a recapture is a dream within a dream.

No matter how much the formation might rely on Renya and the four heroes, it's a situation that's very easy to grasp.

Renya ended up wondering whether he should lock up anything and everything in an ice world through the activation of several downbursts from outside the attack range of both sides, friend and foe, by depending on his incredible amount of mana if the talks become far too weird, but it's not like he could clearly declare his intention. Also, what made him give up on that idea was the fact that the ones being most troubled by an annihilation of the capital would be the residents who had been driven out of the city.

Due to the considerable physical strength of sub-dragons, they can keep running with less breaks than carriages at a higher speed than carriages. Their movement range goes slightly above twice that of a carriage.

If they are set on it, they can run as fast as an average fast horse, but if they did something like that, the accompanying cavalry would throw in the towel.

Having said that, there's not enough tanks and sub-dragons allowing to transport the entire army with sub-dragons. Not to mention that it would likely turn out badly and simply place them at a disadvantage if the army consisted of only infantry, once it comes to a battle.

As result it has been arranged that the sub-dragons and the cavalry advance at roughly the same speed. It will result in consuming a bigger amount of time, but the fact of traveling a distance that would take ten days by carriage in six days can be called super fast as marching speed in this world, according to Rona's explanation.

"I really would like to know the method how the demon king's army invaded so quickly." (Rona)

Based on Rona's knowledge, the demon king army's march speed on the dragonoids' continent was abnormal.

Rona says that it's a speed as if the entire army had been transferred, but even after scanning through the dragon's sorcery knowledge Renya had received from Emedra, he couldn't find any such method.

Just for caution's sake Renya chose a good time with no one around and tried asking Emil whether the demons possess such a technique, but the reply he has been told in return is a simple no.

"Well, I don't think that there are any idiots that would leak the demons' internal state of affairs though..." (Renya)

Renya presumed that Emil might have her position as demon to care about, but Emil shook her head while laughing in a silly manner, and denied those words.

"No, not at all. To put things bluntly, I have spilled all the beans to you. If there's a device to create a path between fixed points of departure and destination, quite the large-scaled transfer is possible, okay? Just like that Forest Labyrinth. If you properly travel through the labyrinth, take up position at the entrance and exit, and form a path through the dungeon itself, it's actually feasible." (Emil)

"The transfer gates use the same theory," Emil says. "However, there exists exclusive, ceremonial sorcery that doesn't require devices to go through a path. It's techniques hidden by the other races so that the demons wouldn't learn of them."

"I guess it would be correct to destroy them in advance." (Renya)

"Certainly. His Majesty Demon King Stolas Vasalgo, was it? I think he's in quite a hurry. I believe the first attack of His Majesty's military forces against the dragonoid continent was a surprise attack by transferring through the Forest Labyrinth, but that can't explain the marching speed of the occupation army afterwards. The fixation of a point of departure and destination is impossible. In the first place, there are no devices to go through a path." (Emil)

The demon king's name Renya had heard from Frau was circulated as information to all powers by Renya.

There was no point in hiding it as information anyway. Renya partly expected that some kind of bickering might be thrown his way due to spreading the information, but so far there hasn't be any reaction.

He tried asking Emil as well, but her response was completely outside Renya's prediction.

"If it's Stolas Vasalgo, it's not that I don't know him. He's the son of an influential demon noble. If I'm not mistaken, he's a man." (Emil)

In Renya's eyes the demon king's gender didn't really matter either way, but for some reason Emil informs Renya while stressing the part about him being a man in an odd way.

Renya feels slightly disappointed that he's considered to be a human who would take the other party into consideration if she were a woman, but as it's not a situation to worry about something like that right now, he switched over his thinking.

"You knowing his name means that he's quite powerful, doesn't it Emil?" (REnya)

"Nah, not really. As far as I know, Stolas is far from being a powerful demon. If I had to choose either, I'd label him as a dropout. If he had fought against me, I would have actually been able to dissect him from the top of his head to the tips of his toes within five minutes." (Emil)

As if recalling old memories, Emil continued while gazing into the air,

"He's a person who wouldn't have ever popped up as candidate in my mind. All I know is that his family is influential and his reputation as being a dunce who doesn't measure up to his lineage at all." (Emil)

"Even someone like that can become the demon king?" (REnya)

"No, there's no way for that to be possible, is there?" (Emil)

Emil is fed up due to Renya being surprised.

Due to Renya mumbling complaints that it's unfair to be fed up since he doesn't know the internal affairs of the demons, Emil says as if preaching to him,

"It's obviously the same with the heroes, but even the demon king will be chosen from among the excellent people among the demons." (Emil)

"Sorry, but I can't agree with that, no matter how I look at it. I will agree with you in regards to our Kurz, the elven Grün and the dragonoids' Albert, but...the beastmen have that." (REnya)

"No....well, yeah, umm...isn't he superior as a beastman? Even if that's not the case for argument's sake, it's a failure rate of 25% if you regard the total number." (Emil)

This conversation was transmitted to Leopard himself without sparing any details due to his characteristic, excellent sense of hearing as beastman as he accidentally happened to pass by. Later on Leopard was seen as he was consoled by Kaede, but Renya and Emil believed that it hadn't been heard by the person himself. As for the reason, they completely didn't know about it since the person himself didn't mention anything.

"Anyway, as far as I know, he's so incompetent that he wouldn't have become a candidate, but the fact that he was named the demon king is a big problem. I mean, there's no way for the other candidates to accept it silently, is there? Therefore, Renya, it's better for you to be careful. I don't know how he became the demon king, but it's clear that he possesses a mean to name himself demon king while forcing the influential demons to stay silent." (Emil)

Emil's expression was dyed by honest anxiety.

That Emil was currently riding diagonally behind Renya, but he regards that expression as something extremely interesting.

Pondering about the reason for that, Renya was driven by shameful feelings.

"How unexpected. There are things you can't do either, Renya."

The one saying so was Shion who's grasping the reins of the horse.

As for handling a carriage, Renya had become able to somehow make it move after learning the basics from Shion before, but he was completely useless in regards to riding on the back of a horse. If it's just sitting on it, even Renya can handle as much with his movements that can be called nimble, but any further than that is beyond him.

When he held the reins, the horse didn't even try to move, standing stock still.

Due to the horse not moving at all like a sculpture even when he pulled or lashed the reins, Renya gave up easily and tried to ride Emedra or Rubydra, but Emedra put a stop to this.

According to the investigation by the dragons, there are no evil dragons with the main force of the demon king's army. Seeing as there are no evil dragons, the dragons stated that they can't approve of getting involved in the battle.

Rubydra was fully willing to allow Renya to ride her, but giving up reluctantly after being persuaded by Emedra, the two dragons returned to the Dragon Den, saying that they will stay back this time.

There seems to have been an entreaty towards Emedra by the Witenagemot asking whether she can't somehow do something about this, but Emedra apparently rejected it firmly.

'It might be something like a line they cannot cross, but right now it's not a situation where they can say such things either,' Renya thinks, but since it certainly serves no purpose even if they take someone, who states that they definitely won't go, to the battlefield, he has left them alone.

"After all the combat forces, which they prepared against the enemy forces, are lacking anyway, therefore it likely won't have any big impact even if we leave the dragons out of the quotation at this point," Renya say, but there wasn't a single person supporting that way of thinking.

Putting that aside, Sihon proposed to Renya, who started to think that he might as well run since it can't be helped either way, that he can ride on the back of the horse she's riding.

Croire pulling a face that said "Damn it!" at the time when Shion suggested this somewhat bothered Renya, but although he felt like he wouldn't fall behind even while running, Renya decided to accept Shion's proposal while thinking that it might not be bad to accept riding behind Shion if it means not running in-between horses and sub-dragons who will very likely be very noisy with their heavy footsteps.

"Renya, make sure to not fall off by tightly putting your arms around my waist." (Shion)

"Even without me going out of the way to do something like that, I won't really fall off, though...?" (Renya)

In Renya's eyes it's just a story of him being unable to make a horse move. The riding itself is no

problem in any way.

Keeping his balance atop a horse was a trivial matter even without any support, but Shion's intention was apparently slightly different from what Renya was thinking.

"If you like, you can also place your arms a little bit higher, you know?" (Shion)

"What are you actually expecting me to do here?" (Renya)

"If you insist, I guess it's you grabbing the upper area energetically...after all there's just the right place to properly hold onto." (Shion)

"I'm going to throw water over you, you horny cat." (Renya)

Shion starting to blurt out weird things while blushing triggered the wish in Renya to reconsider whether he might have had accepted her proposal too hastily, but feeling like it will turn into a situation that resembles the request by Croire who seems to want to say that he should come over to her, he resigns himself, believing that he has to endure here.

"If it's Croire, it doesn't look like there's any place to hold onto. If it's her flat stone board." (Emil)

"Emil...you should get killed by Croire once."

While lowering his fist on the head of the smirking Emil, Renya finally became a rider after accepting the ride behind Shion.

From here on out it becomes Renya's miscalculation who lightly pondered about this, but for the dragonoids not being able to ride a horse seems to be extremely rare. Furthermore, the act of accepting to ride behind a woman seems to not be a very admirable act for them.

Being showered with plenty of gazes, which regarded him as a fool for not being able to ride a horse, in the surroundings, Renya's positive perception towards the dragonoids was in the middle of taking a nosedive inside Renya's head.

This displeasure of Renya is somehow transmitted to the atmosphere within the entire army. Those not understanding the situation feel suspicious as to what might cause this chill. Those, who have associated with Renya for a long time and understand the situation, accepted it as funny story, but people like Albert, who haven't associated with him much yet, cannot help feeling like Renya might explode at any time, resulting in him hesitantly running behind Renya with a pale face.

Thus the dragonoid army was marching straight towards the dragonoids' capital while having an atmosphere of unrest spread among their ranks.