

Chapter 181 - It seems to be the Recapture Battle 1

The stones shaping the wall are divided into several parts, but in the end there's a simple rule: the bigger the size of the material forming the wall, the bigger the wall itself.

Since that wall was blown away from the inside by some kind of power, various big and small stone pieces poured down as a rain on the battlefield.

If it were at the level of pebbles falling upon them, the light armor worn by the dragonoids would be plenty to block it.

But, it's unclear what's going to happen if those fragments have the size of a person's head or even span several meters in size.

The answer to that immediately became clear by the reality taking place in front of Renya's eyes.

"I guess it was correct to get away." (Renya)

At the end of Renya's line of sight stones, or maybe it would be better to call them rocks, rained down atop the the dragonoid soldiers that had formed up in a fairly close formation in order to focus their firepower to destroy the wall.

The soldiers, who were capable of putting up defense sorcery, still had a chance to escape harm, but the soldiers, who couldn't cast the next spell since they had just finished launching the last one, had no means left to avoid the falling rocks.

On top of that there were many soldiers that didn't even have any room left to escape within a crowded formation.

The rocks mercilessly swooped down on them.

"Don't give up!"

The voice of the hero Albert pierced the ears of the soldiers who had already closed their eyes while resigning themselves to their fate due to the rocks approaching like a wall in front of them.

Once they opened their eyes, they could see how the approaching rocks were cut into small pieces, scattering into falling pebbles.

"There's no time to dream! Cast defense sorcery! If it's a rock at a reasonable size, cut and hit it apart! Support your fellow comrades!" (Albert)

"Huh? Just when...?" (Renya)

Albert, who had readied his katana, motivates the soldiers in a rough, loud voice.

Not leaving it at only words, Albert cuts up a rock, which was about the size of a soldier, at yet another place, into countless fragments with a flash of the katana in his hands.

The defense sorcery the soldiers, which became able to put priority on the defense of others than their own due to the time bought by Albert, put together diverted the rocks falling in places that Albert couldn't reach.

"He suddenly rushed in just when the wall was broken from the inside." (Shion)

Shion whispered into Renya's ears as he was looking in marvel at the horse that had lost its rider. Albert was mounting it until just a moment ago, but he apparently jumped off, using a gap in Renya's awareness.

That skill was something you could truly call befitting for a hero, but Renya was secretly surprised by one more thing.

It was the fact that Shion had noticed Albert rushing off in the instant his attention was drawn away due to the noise of the wall being broken.

Renya missed it probably because Albert made full use of his hero abilities in addition to it being a movement away from Renya, but due to the fact of only Shion realizing this - whether it might be coincidence or a precise perception - Emil and Rona appeared to be somewhat surprised, and looked at Shion with slightly widened eyes.

"Eh? What? Did I do something again?" (Shion)

"No, yeah, well if you ask whether you did something, you actually did?"

"Why do you phrase it as question?" (Shion)

Without answering to Shion, who asked with a sullen expression, Renya turned his attention back to the battlefield.

The wall, which had been blown away across a fairly wide range, had a considerable amount of debris rain down on the dragonoids because of its height and thickness, but thanks to Albert's participation, the losses could be reduced quite a bit.

However, that doesn't mean that losses were thwarted completely. A high number of soldiers had been smashed by rocks or got injured through direct hits by stones.

"Move back the wounded! Pull back the front line!" (Albert)

"Your bastard! You might be a hero, but that doesn't give you permission to do whatever you want!" (Linus)

Albert was loudly hurling instructions at his allies, but his face became stiff after being interrupted. Linus, the perpetrator of that interruption, drew close to Albert atop his horse and shouted at him from above.

"What's with the 'pull back'!? Now with the wall destroyed, it's the perfect time to advance!" (Linus)

For an instant Albert's eyes had a trace of bloodthirst towards Linus, who's shouting at him with an angry look, but seemingly recalling the other party's standing at once, that bloodthirst dispersed, and Albert made an appeal.

"It not us that destroyed it, but instead it was destroyed!" (Albert)

"The result is the same! What's the point in not advancing now that a hole to storm the city has opened up!?" (Linus)

"It's not the same! The enemy destroyed the wall, which we couldn't break, as if not needing it any longer! Something is bound to happen!" (Albert)

Albert argued frantically, but Linus snorted at that.

"Hero or whatever you might be, did you get infected by cowardice!? There should be our brethren looking for help inside that city. And you say to pull back in fear of something where we don't know whether it will appear or not!?" (Linus)

"Linus-dono!" (Albert)

"Shut up! Dragonoid soldiers! Advance! Take back our city and our brethren!" (Linus)

"Normally you'd think that there's something waiting for you, wouldn't you?"

Even though he should be quite far away, Renya's ears picked up the full exchange between Albert and Linus.

It part of the body enhancement through mana he learned from the knowledge he received from Emedra.

This time he used the spell <Far Hearing>, which picks up sound through wind sorcery and delivers it to the caster's ears, in addition to his enhanced hearing ability. He did what others would call eavesdropping.

However, since one will also pick up unwanted noise when enhancing one's hearing ability, he used it together with a spell to give his hearing sense a directionality.

"What's the situation?" (Shion)

Shion, who's moving in order to get some more distance as she doesn't feel like being dragged into things, asked Renya from behind.

"It appears the sensible hero and the foolish commander are arguing with each other." (Renya)

"And the outcome?" (Shion)

"The idiot is winning." (Renya)

"What a pickle." (Shion)

Shion sighed, but Renya shared her opinion.

There's no reason to blow away the wall, which had been build in order to protect the city, from the inside.

Since something that has no reason happened there, it should have some kind of motive. To advance without knowing that motive wasn't anything praiseworthy, even if you express it diplomatically.

"I won't say that I don't understand how he feels, but..." (Renya)

The city that had been stolen once is in front of his eyes. And, if citizens are possibly waiting in there for help, he can't leisurely get his preparations ready. It's not that Renya can't understand that feeling.

'However, that's the precise reason why one must be careful,' Renya believes.

'Wouldn't it become almost impossible rather than fairly difficult to recapture the capital city if the punitive force, which is currently present there, were to be annihilated?' Renya wonders.

'Assuming this thinking to not be wrong, it should originally be necessary to move while keeping the damages to the lowest minimum.

Even if they failed the recapture once, it would be possible to head in the direction of a retry as long as they kept the military forces in good shape.

"It's an aspect where it's difficult for me as an outsider to speak up." (Renya)

"No, normally you'd pull back here temporarily, I think..." (Shion)

In the eyes of Renya, who's no more than an outsider, it's an emotional aspect where he can't say that it's possible or impossible for him to understand. Although he was evasive about it, Shion easily denied that.

Renya looks at Shion with a pathetic expression unable to say anything, but Shion doesn't comprehend at all just how her words had caused Renya to pull such a face, and tilts her head to the side in puzzlement.

"Pull back...no?" (Shion)

"Probably..." (Renya)

Not knowing whether he should answer anything else, Renya only said as much and then focuses on the battlefield again.

Over there the quarrel between Albert and Linus had apparently reached its conclusion. A part of the soldiers had begun to retreat to the rear while taking their injured comrades along, but the remaining soldiers, who were in good health, had started their advance towards the hole that had opened up in the wall.

Albert didn't get his opinion approved, but just because of that he couldn't withdraw from there either. Renya sighed while watching him marching at the head of the advancing soldiers.

"It looks like they ended up marching onwards."

Rona says while bringing her horse close to Shion's.

"Seeing as they are sending their wounded to the rear, should I go over there?" (Rona)

Rona, a priestess who can use healing arts, is very effective in times like these.

Some dragonoids that can use healing arts should be accompanying the army, but it's doubtlessly a big help to have as many healers at hand as possible.

Even the wounded avoid complications further down the road by being treated right away.

Rona's proposal was based on such thoughts, but Renya held her back.

"Why? You're surely not trying to harass them, are you?" (Rona)

"No way. That's not what I'm thinking..." (Renya)

As Renya, who was about to explain his reasoning, was watching, several black, thin things flew out from the hole in the wall, targeting the dragonoid army which was about to reach the hole. Once those things plunged in-between the soldiers, they coiled themselves around the heads of soldiers that failed to dodge.

"W-What are these...haa!?"

Those were black, thin chains.

The chains, which coiled themselves around the soldiers that failed to escape, tightened as if having been created for just that moment, and pulled the soldiers out of the army with a force unimaginable for their thinness in an instant, dragging them on the other side of the hole.

Once the chains released those soldiers somewhere, they set out to pull in the next set of soldiers again.

Watching the soldiers being dragged inside the city while being slid along the ground or tossed through the air, Renya muttered,

"Somehow I feel like experienced that kind of hauling in before..." (Renya)

"Is that a situation to say such things!? At this rate something really dangerous is going to appear."

Lepard screamed as the number of black chains grew and the intervals of them dragging in new soldiers was gradually getting shorter.

The dragonoid soldiers, who are directly peeking into the hole in contrast to Renya and the others who are watching from a distance, are shouting something while pointing their fingers after having noticed that something first or show their backs as they try to escape from the chains in a panic.

Meanwhile, what appeared from the other side of the hole was a jet-black armor that might very well have a height of around 3 meters.

The instant they saw that, the looks of Renya's party turned towards Kurz all at once.

While Kurz restlessly looked around him due to being in the center of attention without any logical reasoning, a feeling of relief somewhat spread among Renya's group.

"Ah, it startled me..."

"I definitely thought that Kurz-san might have gone ahead and entered the city first."

Due to Croire looking slightly pale and Rona touching her chest in relief, Kurz's cheeks puff up and he protests,

"I haven't done anything bad!" (Kurz)

"You're right. They were just a bit surprised by the slight resemblance with your chains and armor. Please don't be angry since they didn't mean any harm." (Renya)

'Come to think of it, Kurz's armor is silver. What has come out from the city is something like a black mist or a snake that has transformed into that.

'It's not just the armor's color that's different. The unleashed chains are completely different as well, but for some reason everyone immediately associated it with Kurz at the moment they saw it showing up from the other side of the hole.

"Very likely it's something similar." (Emil)

Emil whispers.

Her deliberately having muttered that in a voice that couldn't be heard by almost anyone without bringing her horse close either was apparently done under the assumption that only Renya, who has strengthened his hearing ability, might hear it.

"I think you know that Kurz-kun is a gathering of countless souls carrying the factor 'hero,' but...that black armor is something that had been created while imitating that, I believe." (Emil)

Renya seemed to be about to ask just what she meant by that, but stayed silent instead. Although it's great that Emil muttered all of this quiet enough that they others wouldn't ear from a spot that's slightly apart, Renya has been given a ride behind Shion. No matter how quietly he tried to whisper a response, it would still be audible to Shion. Renya, who had apparently planned to ask something that Shion ought not to hear, decided to use the method of asking Emil by just moving his lips without actually releasing any sounds. Emil, who stared at Renya's lips for a short while, once again whispers,

"Going by the situation, the city's resident's are probably serving as the raw material. Since a considerable density is necessary, isn't it fine to consider that all citizens had been completely killed? And, in regards to the factor...the demon's side doesn't possess something like a hero factor. But, isn't there a single factor which resembles that hero factor?" (Emil)

"...The demon king, eh?" (Renya)

He didn't need almost any time to reach that conclusion. If you assume that it's the heroes which the other races posses and the demons not, it's the demon king which only exists among the demons without existing among the other races. That existence might be called equal to a hero. That's because there was nothing a demon king couldn't do what a hero could.

"Probably. In short, that's a gathering of countless souls which had been attached to some kind of metallic armor and moreover had the demon king factor added to it; a counterfeit of Kurz-kun." (Emil)

Without even hiding her deep curiosity, Emil gazes at the black armor that's slowly coming out of the city's wall with the eyes of a researcher, and says so with a voice tinged with a smile.

"In other words, that has been created to become a countermeasure against the hero, Kurz-kun. I think we should name it an anti-hero." (Emil)

On the other side of the hands covering Renya's face as he's feeling fed up due to yet another annoying thing having shown up, the black armor slowly began to ready its huge, long halberd that even taller than the armor itself, which it had slid out from behind.