

## **Chapter 189 - It seems to be the Beginning of the Return**

"Hey, Albert. I got a little something to talk about. You mind?" Renya called out.

It was just when Albert was all by himself.

Compared to his title as hero, Albert was being pushed around so much that one couldn't call it anything but him being mostly in charge of odd jobs, as far Renya could see. It was a moment when he seemed to finally take a rest between jobs, but as soon as he saw Renya, he immediately straightened himself again.

"Oh, Margrave-dono. Thanks for your hard work. Do you have some business with me?" Albert asked.

It was a polite manner to deal with Renya, but in Renya's eyes Albert was so exhausted that it was visible from his outward appearance. Stamina-wise, and attire-wise.

Even though it looked like the katana hanging at his waist - seemingly even called an exclusive hero item - hadn't been maintained overly much, it didn't seem as though it had lost its brilliance either, but his casual wear had become worn-out. The armor like his boots and the leather tekkou on both his hands were covered in dirt and dust, appearing to not have been properly cleaned either.

Although his hair had been neatly combed down, it looked somehow greasy, and above all, stubbles had started to grow at the outline of his fairly good-looking face.

No matter how one looked at this, it seemed as though he had spent all his time on hard work that didn't even allow him to clean his body, let alone pay attention to his clothes.

Renya observed Albert closely, just to see that Albert's casual dress and his boots looked like a considerable mismatch, all things considered.

Due to Renya not being about to talk about his business with Albert despite having called out to him, Albert scratched his cheek as if stumped, "Umm...Margrave-dono?"

"Ah? Aah, sorry. I ended up brooding over something. Let me see..." Renya, who was about to broach his topic with Albert, faltered for an instant.

'Now that I consider it, Albert's treatment seemed to repeatedly be that of a single, common soldier, despite his position as hero, and moreover, it looks like Albert himself isn't discontent with that treatment either.

To Renya it appeared as if it was because Albert himself was taking social status as absolute measure, but in this situation it raised the doubt whether Albert would move as Renya expected in case he talked with Albert about the matter in question.

Renya pondered about it for just a little moment, and immediately deemed that possibility to be low. Renya's business was of course returning to Klinge through the territory of the beastmen or elves so that it wouldn't be reported to the Witenagemot.

Renya got a headache from just thinking how to handle a group, which was such a major pain in the ass to deal with even when nothing was going on, with the information that its chairman's son died on the battlefield on the table.

It didn't take Renya much time to reach the conclusion that he should let any reports vanish and run away, seeing as he was going to keep cooperating more or less by continuing the support anyway.

What turned into a problem at this point was Albert's existence.

In Renya's eyes, heroes and demon kings were relatively inconsequential. Rather, the problem how

to make absolutely sure to get a supply on fish-related resources, which were serious lacking in comparison to the meat resources that had been filling the storehouses and his inventory, was of utmost importance, but in order to be able to freely rack his brain about this problem, the situation had to stabilize first.

For the sake of stabilizing the situation, he hadn't the spare time to lead a war. For the sake of making the war stop, it was necessary to have the demon king vanish completely from this world once and for all.

Renya pondered whether he might be able to handle that by himself, but no matter whom he tried to ask or what books he read, it was only the heroes that could oppose the demon king. He thought that he wouldn't know how much of that story was true unless he actually tried to have a look himself, but as far as he could judge from this generation's heroes, he couldn't believe the heroes to be the strongest beings on this world at all.

If the heroes weren't the strongest in the world, there should be beings stronger than them. It shouldn't be all that odd even if the demon king was to be defeated by those, but such stories hadn't been passed on no matter how much he tried to investigate it.

'From here on out it's a guess, but I wonder whether the beings called demon king and heroes are maybe special, only allowing the heroes to affect the existence and life of the demon king,' Renya pondered. 'In that case, it makes me want to keep all heroes at hand.'

'If you consider that the ones called heroes don't exist only to defeat the demon king, but also have the task to save the people suffering from monsters, monopolizing the heroes wouldn't be an overly nice act,' Renya believed, 'however, since all of them will eventually be assembled and thrown against the demon king army, I don't think it really matters even if I speed up that process a bit.

Even if Renya were to be powerless against the demon king, he might be able to deal with everything else beside the demon king. In other words, he thought that he might be at least capable of playing the vanguard for the heroes in order to allow them to reach the demon king.

'I haven't the slightest intention to boast about it, but so far I haven't met anyone in this world who would be able to play the role of vanguard better than me.

"Margrave-dono?" Albert asked, puzzled.

Renya realized that his thoughts had veered off quite a bit.

In short, as Renya wanted to place the four heroes under his hand, he'd like Albert to accompany them to Klinge, but even if he were to honestly voice it out, he somehow felt like Albert wouldn't follow his wish.

'What would be the best course of action in this case?

"Umm, Margrave-dono?" Albert probed once more.

"Yeah, sorry...you know, Albert...what's that?" Renya suddenly pointed somewhere after beckoning over Albert.

Since their location was inside the city, there was no way for it to be something that unusual. Albert walked over next to Renya, following his beckoning while wondering just what Renya wanted him to see.

Renya seized the shoulder of Albert, abruptly pulled it towards himself, and delivered a pointed hit against his nape.

"Gah!? M-Margrave-dono!?" Albert screamed in surprise.

"Huh? It was too shallow?" Renya muttered.

Renya went easy on Albert, believing that Albert wouldn't be able to recover from losing his head if he hit him for real, but it looked as though his adjustment didn't turn out well. Albert tried to get away from Renya while holding the struck area out of pain.

Renya, who grasped him so as to not let him get away, drove his knee into Albert's solar plexus while pulling both of Albert's shoulders towards him, and settled into Guillotine choke by twining his arms around Albert's neck from the front, who had folded while heavily groaning.



Albert, who had his throat constricted on top of choking due to the impact against his solar plexus, showed small signs of resistance, but once Renya suddenly put some strength into his hold, his body lost its strength on the spot, becoming flaccid.

Renya thought that Albert, going by his character, likely wasn't able to skillfully pretend having been defeated so as to lure his opponent into negligence, but even so he checked that Albert had properly fainted for caution's sake and then retrieved a rope out of his inventory while continuing to pay attention to Albert. He bound the legs of the limp Albert, placed his hands on the back and firmly bound those as well, made him bite a gag, blindfolded him, and finally stuffed cotton into his ears.

Afterwards he wrapped up Albert's entire body in a cloth and loosely tied the cloth bundle with a string so as to make it easier to transport, resulting in Renya accomplishing even a full packaging.

"Pheewew..." Renya breathed out in satisfaction after having finished his job.

The time required up to this point was a mere few minutes.

Since it would naturally become troublesome if the other dragonoids heard talks about going to a human country, he had called out to Albert after he chose a deserted spot, resulting in no one having witnessed the whole scene.

One could call it a truly speedy and adept criminal technique of abduction.

Renya easily shouldered the bundle, which had been packaged properly, ran up the wall of a nearby building after lightly kicking the ground, and started to move along the roofs, thinking that it might be bad if someone were to see what he was shouldering.

"Just what the hell are those guys thinking!?"

The information about the hero's kidnapping reached the dragonoid soldiers faster than Renya had expected.

Renya believed that they would likely be slow in reacting given that they had lost their commander in battle, but for some reason the reaction of the dragonoid soldiers was abnormally fast.

They immediately gathered their guards at the building with the transfer gate inside the city, and laid out a firm guard protocol so as to not allow a single ant to go inside or come outside.

Moreover, they sent out quite a big number of soldiers in order to secure Renya's friends at the places they might be.

However, that didn't bring about any notable results.

They didn't even find Emil, Grün, and Croire. They did manage to discover Kurz and the two priestesses, but the soldiers ended up scurrying from just the threat that Kurz would let the black mist out of his hands, not even cladding himself in the armor.

Lepard and Kaede were on the verge of being arrested after having been spotted, but being hit by Lepard's counterattack after he snapped due to the dragonoid soldiers' way of handling Kaede being anything but courteous, the soldiers were annihilated.

Rona was arrested for a moment, but she complained about wanting to go back to her room to put on new clothes after being taken away. She asked her guards to wait outside since she was going to change her clothes inside the room, and entered while only carrying her change of clothes.

Although it was unclear to the soldiers where she had hidden it as they were waiting outside, she used some kind of tool, blowing up the entire building from inside the room, and escaped.

Only Shion alone seemingly noticed that something had happened after seeing the soldiers' faces, drew her sword, and plunged into battle without any questions asked.

She deceived the dragonoid soldiers, who at first underrated her as a human swordswoman, thinking that they would be able to easily capture her, with her calm appearance and quickly chopped them

up, beating any soldier she happened to meet.

With this the dragonoid army failed to catch any of Renya's party, but Renya and the others had no choice but to go through a transfer gate in order to escape from this continent to their own continent.

The judgment of gaining control of that place first could be more or less called admirable.

But, going by the strength of Renya's group, it was easy to predict that breaking through the dragonoid army surrounding the transfer gate and recapturing the gate would pose no problem.

Based on that, the soldiers who were on guard duty took the destruction of the transfer gate into consideration in the worst case if it meant not letting Renya's group get away.

"You still haven't found them!? We have a reasonable number of people on this! It shouldn't be difficult to find them!"

The outlook of being likely able to find them because of their big numbers even though they hadn't been able to find the two elves and Emil was a line of thinking that could only be called naive, but as they had to cope with a continuous chain of troubles such as being pitted against the demon's army, having their brethren annihilated in battle, losing their commander, and having their hero kidnapped, it might be heartless to condemn them after having been thrown into confusion.

As if to spur on their confusion, something suddenly happened above their heads.

Someone had launched something into the air above the city. When the soldiers noticed it, several shots had already been launched. As the soldiers watched attentively, wondering just what happened, those flying objects suddenly exploded, unleashing a thunderous roar and a flash once they had reached the sky right above the city.

Seemingly having launched quite high into the air, it was only sound and light that reached the city. The shock of the explosion didn't cause the city's buildings to tremble, but if that shock had directly hit the city, it would have likely been difficult for the city, which had been thoroughly trampled down by monsters once, to keep its shape.

Explosions of such extent occurred in succession.

"What the hell is going on!? Is it an enemy attack!?"

"We don't know!"

"Tighten the city's guard! Leave just a few soldiers at the transfer gate, and dispatch the rest to defend the city!"

"Is that alright? If we do something like that, those humans will easily..."

"Having the city attacked and stolen once more will cause bigger damage than allowing those guys to escape! Hurry!"

There was also the viewpoint that the explosions in the sky were Renya's group's diversion, but the soldiers feared the possibility that the demon's invasion army might attack the city once again much more than allowing Renya and the others to escape.

Them still leaving several soldiers at the transfer gate was because they estimated that they could likely use the possible fact of Renya's group forcing their way through there for some kind of deal later on.

They believed that the conditions would probably be completely different between Renya's group passing through while the gate was completely defenseless, and Renya's group passing through

while causing some trouble because of the few soldiers left behind.

However, their expectations easily went amiss.

The chaos induced by the explosions settled down as time passed, but Renya's group didn't show up around the transfer gate. That didn't change even after night came and the next day started.

"Well, it would have been nice if we could have used the transfer gate in that city." Renya muttered to himself while enjoying the pleasant wind which was suppressed to a level of making his forelocks flutter.

"I believed that they would definitely gain control of the transfer gate first. Even if it would have been easy to break through, it seemed that matters afterwards would become troublesome."

"Is it just me who feels like matters have become totally troublesome at the point you kidnapped their hero?" Shion said while closely clinging to Renya's back, but Renya ignored her deliberately.

Rather than that, the look of Croire, who was sitting even further back, was scary.

Croire, who sat down in a somewhat separated place, glared at Renya and Shion with a glazed look as if she was going to kill them if things took a turn for the worse while grinding her teeth so strongly that it was barely audible.

Grün, who sat cross-legged next to her, stroke Croire's head in order to soothe her while smiling bitterly, but there wasn't even the slightest indication of her mood improving.

<I'd like you to pardon me from starting a scene of carnage on my back...>

The one muttering that serious comment was a dragon whose deep crimson scales glittered under the sunlight.

The one flying parallel next to her, was a dragon with vividly emerald scales. Kurz, Lepard, and the three priestesses sat on that dragon's back.

For some reason Emil was sitting cross-legged on top of the crimson dragon's head. On the other hand, Rona sat at the area around the tail's root in the opposite direction of the flight's direction while trying to straddle the tail, seemingly keeping watch of the rear.

"For that reason we didn't forcibly use the city's transfer gate, but are going instead to return home by using the cave's transfer gate which we used when coming here."

<Was such a large-scaled spell necessary to gloss over our arrival and departure?>

Since he kept the telepathic channel open, it was easy for Renya to call Rubydra. He had her bring along Emedra while at it too, but the arrival and departure of two dragons would have stood out too much.

Given that the dragonoids wouldn't have any method allowing them to pursuit even if they found about it, calling it inconsequential either way might have been fine, but considering it not amusing if even the cave's transfer gate was to be blocked because of that, Renya caused an explosion, which would cover the city's entire sky, with sorcery just for the sake of concealing the two dragons.

Since it hadn't had the objective to have an influence on the city, he had several shots of that spell detonate at a height and level of fire power that wouldn't cause any damage to the city after Emil calculated it.

You could say, he depended on Emil in times of trouble.

Renya was confident that he would have doubtlessly caused extensive damage to the city if he had

adjusted the spell himself.

<We are pretty much...in the upper ranks even among dragons, but...being called as mounts on a beck's call, that is...troublesome, or rather...we have a position to keep...>

It wasn't as if Renya didn't understand what Emedra wanted to complain about.

As long as the situation permitted it, he respected sticking to pride and such, but if he were to show that respect here, the one troubled would be Renya himself.

"Well, look, I'm just borrowing your help once." Renya soothed Emedra.

<Really? That was a promise just now, right?>

For some reason Emedra strangely jumped at Renya's words which he voiced out while thinking that this might be her point of compromise.

Renya faltered a bit, wondering whether he might have said something bad, but having obtained that promise from him, Emedra didn't say anything further.

Still, it might result in him being burdened with some kind of troublesome matter again.

While feeling the soft presence of Shion, who was clinging to his back with a strangely happy expression, and the presence of Croire, which seemed to be accompanied by a physical pressure due to the blood thirst she had quietly included into her gaze, Renya looked at front, and focused his consciousness on thinking how to gather information on places where marine products can be obtained once he returned to Klinge.





