

Chapter 204 - It seems to be the Lepard Capture Battle

The report of Lepard's discovery came in when it had started to become considerably dark outside with the light of dusk enveloping the vicinity. The search inside the city of Klinge had already come to an end. Judging that Lepard couldn't be inside the city, the Hunting Headquarters began to extend the search range to outside the city, and it was a little while later that Lepard was found.

"He's sure taking up our time ~no."

A large sofa had been carried in next to Frau's seat as she muttered that comment in annoyance. Kurz and the two beastman priestesses were calmly sleeping next to each other on the sofa's soft and fluffy cushions. Just as Frau had predicted, the persuasion of Kurz took no time once Renya's name came into play.

She had summoned Kurz, made him sit down together with the two priestesses on the quickly provided sofa. Then, since it was a request by Renya, Kurz cheerfully agreed to wait there until the four heroes were all gathered. Afterwards Kurz kept his hands busy with the sweets and juice which had been prepared by Frau, and waited with the two priestesses while chatting, but getting tired of waiting at some point, the three had peacefully fallen asleep.

It was only at such a time that a warm and fluffy atmosphere hung around Kurz who was still a child, even if he might possess the powers of a hero.

Once Frau turned her eyes towards the wall, she saw three seats prepared over there.

One was for the sake of Kaede, the beastman priestess. She had been single-mindedly continuing to wolf down large amounts of tea and sweets ever since she was dragged over to this headquarters. It was such an amount that it would give anyone watching from the side a heartburn, but the person herself kept up her fast eating pace while being all smiles. At this point it was already such a huge amount of food that it made the people around Kaede wonder just where she had so much space in her body, but once Frau explained that she must be keeping something that was special to beastmen inside her stomach, everyone present stopped questioning it any further.

Stopping to think was an action that would be evaluated lowly in most cases, but the citizens and soldiers had realized that it was an indispensable skill to live skilfully in Klinge.

Croire and Grün were sitting on the remaining two seats.

Those two enjoyed a graceful atmosphere that seemed to be disconnected from their surroundings. They drank Frau's cherished wine, and ate elven beans boiled with salt, dry-cured ham made out of the leg meat of wyverns and evil dragons, and Klinge's prided vegetable sticks.

Wine couldn't be produced in the Kunugi Margraviate. As a last resort, Frau tested the wines produced in other territories, and this wine was the one that won her favor after a careful selection, but the dish, which Frau would call her most prized creation, was the dry-cured ham.

'The one made out evil dragon meat isn't quite as perfect as I desired because it hasn't matured long enough, but the wyvern one has turned out almost flawlessly,' Frau judged.

Frau generously offered this dish, which would cost a big amount of money if purchased, or rather, couldn't normally be obtained on the market, to Croire and Grün. However, since she thought that the elves might be more delighted over vegetables than meat, she also added vegetable sticks and elven beans, which were produced in Klinge, to the meat dish.

The surroundings had started to forget it quite often, and it even slipped Frau's mind at times, but Frau's true nature was that of a silky with a vocation as maid. Because of that, Frau tried to search for the most perfect and best hospitality at such times. Of course she chose the people to whom she would offer that hospitality, though.

"Come to think of it, where's Albert ~nano?" Frau tried to survey the vicinity while speaking about the third hero, but she couldn't spot Albert, the dragonoid's hero, anywhere.

Once she looked up to Keith next to her, wondering whether Albert might have run away once more after having been caught temporarily, Keith, who had looked around him restlessly just like Frau, apparently discovered the person in question after a short moment, and pointed in the direction of a corner in the hall.

"He seems to lie over there."

"Lie..."

When Frau followed Keith's finger with her eyes, a long and narrow object, which was tightly packaged with straw ropes and white cloths, had been placed all alone alongside the wall without anyone paying attention to it. Probably because it would be bad if he were to suffocate, only his head had been more or less allowed to stick outside the package, but rather than understanding something, Albert's face showed that he had completely given up on everything. Seemingly lacking the will to escape, his tightly bound body didn't even twitch anymore.

"A-As expected, even Frau wonders what to actually think of that ~no..." Apparently feeling pity towards Albert's wretched state, Frau asked Keith with a single line of sweat streaming down her cheek.

In response, Keith answered indifferently as if talking about something completely trivial, "It's nothing out of the ordinary, is it?"

"The other party is a hero ~nano. Sure, it's not like Frau doesn't harbor a slightly bad impression of the dragonoids, but Frau doesn't see any fault in Albert ~no."

"Is that so? Let's have him stand by in another room after clearly telling him that he will be strangled if he runs away." When Keith gave that reply and pointed at Albert with his chin, several soldiers carried Albert's body out of the room.

It was definitely not okay to strangle a hero. However, in Klinge the warning that you'd be strangled if you were to escape wasn't just a mere threat, but something that would quickly turn into reality if the other party met the conditions, no matter who they might be.

Moreover, it appeared that Keith thought Frau hadn't noticed it, but transferring Albert to another

room was a countermeasure so that Frau wouldn't harbor any strange feelings of sympathy towards Albert who invited her pity with his appearance in front of her eyes. Of course Frau had inferred as much, but she refrained from saying anything unnecessary. She only thought that it might be nice if Albert could have some good luck as well.

"As this side should be alright for now, how's Lepard's side going ~no?"

"Currently we're encountering him at the plains west of Klinge. The capturing with 30 soldiers is in progress, but the situation isn't developing to our advantage. Several of the soldiers have already been forced to retire. At the moment we're in the middle of deploying reinforcements." A soldier answered Frau's question in a loud voice, summarizing the reports that continued to flow in one after the other.

At once a flag was stuck into the map of the bulletin board, marking the area where Klinge's soldiers and Lepard held open hostilities, but seeing the place, Frau clicked her tongue.

Hearing that quiet sound coming from Frau, Keith looked at the map, wondering just what might have displeased Frau, and somehow managed to understand the situation.

"The place is bad, isn't it?"

"A battle on the plains allows too much of an unobstructed view, and there's no cover either ~no. With this, our side's soldiers have no option but to fight from the front, unable to strike unexpectedly ~no. In such a situation the difference in ability will be fully exhibited ~no."

No matter how much higher the combat prowess of Klinge's soldiers might be compared to that of other countries' soldiers, it was still several levels below that of a hero.

Albert having easily been captured by Klinge's soldiers was largely owed to the circumstance that the soldiers could launch surprise attacks because they were inside the city, in addition to him being attacked in a situation where he hadn't expected it.

However, even if they wanted to launch a surprise attack, there didn't exist any places to hide on a plain with unobstructed view like the one where Lepard was currently at. Furthermore, a battle maniac like Lepard had the tendency to put a higher priority on enjoying battle than his duty as hero.

In other words, he wouldn't unconsciously go easy on his opponents like Albert who considered common soldiers as targets to be protected. No matter whether his opponents might be common soldiers or whatever, Lepard would be driven by the very simple idea of wanting to mercilessly crush them.

With this, Klinge's side couldn't make use of any schemes, and had no other option but to clash with the hero's combat force head-on. And with this method, Klinge's side must resolve itself to suffer considerable losses even if they were to crush Lepard with manpower.

That wasn't anything Frau desired.

Frau cast a glance at the seats near the wall. After fixedly staring at a person sitting over there, Frau

called a single maid by beckoning her over, ordered the maid to lend her an ear, brought her mouth close to the maid's ear, and whispered something into it.

Seemingly having comprehended Frau's whispered instructions, the maid nodded once and left to somewhere.

"An evil scheme?"

"Keith, that's slander. It's a strategy ~nano." Frau answered Keith, who had asked with a calm look, while donning a slightly sullen expression.

Once Frau left her seat just like that, Keith's voice that seemed to be somewhat panicked stopped her feet.

"Did I hurt your feelings?"

"By no means. If the conversation just now were to be enough to offend me, Frau wouldn't be fit to serve as master's maid ~no."

"Then..."

"Frau is departing to capture Leopard ~no. Don't fret, Frau won't enter battle personally ~no. It's time to negotiate ~nano." Frau smiled wryly at the panicked expression flashing up on Keith's face the instant she said that she would depart herself.

What Keith very likely worried about wasn't Frau's safety. After all it would be meaningless for Keith to be anxious about Frau, seeing how she repelled the demon king's terminal.

If one were to ask just what he was so uneasy about then, Frau was pretty sure that it was about the considerable damage that might be caused to the vicinity in case Frau and Leopard were to clash directly, even if there would be a very low chance for Frau to lose.

Leopard might also have gone easy on common soldiers as opponents within limitations, but there was no way that they could tell him to take it easy with Frau as an opponent, and he would likely resist while making full use of his powers as hero.

Once that happened, it wouldn't be odd for the city to get damaged, even if the battle itself might take place outside the city.

"Keith, just accompany me if you're so worried ~no."

"Of course I will."

Keith bowed courteously towards Frau who declared so bluntly without even looking back, and chased after her back.

Meanwhile, around that time, Leopard was in the middle of exasperating in irritation and a sense of danger due to Klinge's soldiers continuously attacking him. He had slipped out of the city at a suitable moment, planning to hunt monsters outside the city to waste some time, but then got

surrounded by Klinge's soldiers all of a sudden.

When Lepard asked if something had happened, the soldiers demanded of him to follow them to Renya's mansion. Things would have ended at that point if Lepard had gone along with this, but Lepard rejected that request, telling the soldiers to show him the merit of doing so if they wanted him to do as they said. After saying that they would do so by all means, the soldiers and Lepard plunged into combat, which led to the current situation.

The plains with their good visibility and the time slot of the day continuing to grow darker were in Lepard's favor, but Lepard still couldn't bring down Klinge's soldiers completely.

In the first place, Klinge's soldiers wouldn't try the unreasonable. When fighting against Lepard, they always attacked him with at least three soldiers at the same time. If just one of them got injured, the soldier would fall back while being immediately replaced by another soldier.

Without fighting straight from the front, one of them would always restrain him while the remaining soldiers would try to circle to his sides or back. If Lepard tried to release a big technique, one soldier, who was monitoring Lepard's behavior, would warn the others, and the soldiers would all at once start taking evasive actions.

If Lepard tried to break through the encirclement to run away, the ring of surrounding soldiers moved in response to that while keeping Lepard captured in the middle.

Those actions were almost entirely repeated without any delay.

Several soldiers had withdrawn from the front after Lepard landed a good blow, but there was still a considerably large number of soldiers left. Moreover, Lepard had perceived the footsteps of reinforcements approaching from the distance with his good hearing ability. It was very unlikely that he would be able to escape by breaking through the encirclement.

Once Lepard asked himself whether he should surrender in that case, he immediately denied that thought.

"No matter what you say, I'm still the hero representing the beastmen. Don't think that I'll go along with your wishes so easily, okay?" Lepard waited for the attack of the next soldier while muttering so with a laugh, but his expression immediately warped in suspicion.

Klinge's soldiers, who had attacked him in waves so far, suddenly pulled back as if their tenacity until now had been no more than a lie. Lepard thought that they might finally have given up, but he understood that his thinking was too shallow right away.

That's because a girl in maid clothes, who proudly threw out her chest, became visible between the withdrawing soldiers.

"Enter the star performer ~nano!"

"No, no, no, no, wait! It's no good for you to come out here, right!?"

Frau roughly and powerfully breathed out through her nose once in front of the flustered Lepard.