



"I surely hadn't expected for a child's body to become such a burden...I think I'm getting sleepy."

"A child needs its sleeping time." (Arnest)

"Since it's truly a child's body, it also tires quickly."

"Children also require naps."

"Still, this isn't a situation allowing me to sleep around!"

Having broken through the labyrinth's first floor with the dragon tank and the second floor with the flock of small dragon golems, we climb the stairs to the third floor. Because the golems of this underground labyrinth are going to pursue us as soon as we stop our feet, any hope for a rest on the stairway ends up in vain all too easily.

"After wearing down the invaders by not giving them the time to rest, they surround them with numbers to go for the kill. It is a labyrinth full of traps that seem to have been thought up by a truly malicious soldier."

Does Arnest bear some grudges against soldiers? Military is a necessary evil in any world. It's not strange for an army to have some bad apples in its ranks, is it?

"Sensei, there's a big group incoming from behind!" Cindy reports to me.

Unlike the dragon tank which ran on caterpillars, the small dragons can fly, and thus have continued following us while growing in number. To me it seems like their numbers keep increasing the more time passes.

"Don't mind them! We're going to rush onto the third floor just like that!"

"I think it'd be better to have the enemies fall back a bit by landing at least one blow on them." Cindy says while looking at the huge amount of dragons closing in on us from behind.

Hmm, she's not wrong. Maybe we should lower their numbers a bit since their numbers have grown way big. But, it'd be a bad idea to make Cindy and the other two exhausted here.

Accordingly...

"Arnest, around one blow should be alright, no?"

"My...offensive magic is..."

"No, not that! I mean this."

I retrieve a throwing spear out of my magic bag. If he throws it after casting 『Body Strengthening』 on himself, he should be able to kill something at the level of small dragon golems.

"I have no confidence in my aim with this."

"Just throw it."

"Understood."

Reluctantly, Arnest increases his body's strength with magic, and throws the spear at the dragons in the rear. It's immediately obvious that it's a really poor throw, but without a moment's delay, I tune the spear's trajectory with my magic.

Arnest's spear causes quite a few dragons to be unable to continue pursuing us.

"What an admirable, direct hit."

"Well, I did adjust its flight path after all."

Even I'm capable of at least this much.

"Sensei, you're really amazing."

"Wow, to tune the spear's trajectory with a tiny bit of mana..."

"A skilled technique as expected of you."

"No, look, it was me who threw the spear here."

"Let's go on to the next floor."

We invade the third floor while ignoring Arnest's objection.



"Sensei! Is this a trap?"

"How should we interpret this?"

The third floor has a slightly weird atmosphere. The instant we entered it, the entrance door suddenly vanished. Moreover, the third floor also has a layout that looks like a simply, wide space.

It's clear that the room is gradually getting smaller, albeit slowly. The walls on all four sides are steadily approaching us. At this rate we might get crushed flat.

"Oohh! The door has vanished all of a sudden, locking us up. The seamless walls are moving, narrowing the room! This is a precious relic!"

"Now's not the time to admire the setup!"

Especially when we might end up getting crushed because of that precious relic! This is the reason why scholars are so...!

Still, he's right about it being mysterious for the door to suddenly vanish and the smooth walls to approach from all sides.

"It is nothing you have to worry about so much. It is relatively easy to get out of this trap."

"Really?"

"This floor is a trap to lure the invaders into a dilemma."

According to Arnest, the walls here should be destroyable with fairly powerful magic.

"A trap with such mysterious structure is actually surprisingly brittle. Having said that, since you must destroy it with a considerably powerful spell, it will deplete our mana."

Oh, I get it. The objective of the approaching walls isn't to crush the intruders, but to tire them out by forcing them to destroy the wall, huh?

In short, it's evident that this isn't the last floor of this ruin. It's because there's no change in the ruin's basic policy of gradually exhausting the intruders.

"Earl Baumeister, did you notice the other dilemma we are facing?"

"...It's about when we should make our escape, right?"

"That is correct."

"Sensei, what do you mean by that?"

Not only Agnes, but the other two also tilt their heads in confusion.

"Surely, the walls of this room are steadily closing in on us, and it's set in stone that we'll be crushed at this rate. But, that's still a long way off."

At the walls' current pace, we should be safe for at least one hour. Arnest should be assessing it in the same way.

"One hour, you say?"

"Yes. So here's a question to you, Betty: Should we rest for an hour and then advance after destroying the wall with magic? Or, should we immediately destroy and advance? Those are the two choices."

"I think we can rest for an hour..."

Thanks to the golems chasing after us up until now, we haven't had an opportunity to take a break.

Being able to rest up here for an hour is valuable. But, of course resting has its demerits, too. Either choice is right as neither is more advantageous.

"Both choices have merits and demerits."

"Try to first think about it by yourselves, and then choose either option."

At times it's necessary for adventurers to make such decisions. This is yet another troublesome matter as it's not said that there's necessarily always an obviously correct choice. There are times where the outcome won't change much, no matter which you choose, because of the merits and demerits offsetting each other for all alternatives.

However, if you make a fatal mistake in your choice and die because of that, you'll be blamed for having been a fool.

"Even so, you girls must make a decision. It's also possible to leave it to me, but it's not like I'll be always around to make the choices for you. Not to mention that I'm currently a burden as a child."

"Sensei, you're no burden!"

"Cindy, I'm capable of giving you some advice, but at present I have Arnest carry me. Please acknowledge the reality that I'm a burden. After all, you should factor my current usefulness based on that fact into your calculations. Oh, if you don't choose quickly, it'll naturally develop into us taking a break for an hour, but is that fine with you?"

I urge the girls to make their decision quickly. That's because not being able to choose one option as a result of merely having wasted the time on hesitating to choose while carefully scrutinizing the two alternatives is going to very likely have a completely different effect, even if they had chosen that option in the end.

"The merits of heading to the next floor right away...a decrease in the danger that the small dragons will chase after us from the second floor. Betty, what are the demerits?" Agnes asks Betty.

"Since we've got to destroy this place with magic either way, we'll expend a large amount of mana in any case. We've reached this place without any breaks, so I think it's a demerit to pile up mental fatigue. We can recover our mana with magic gems, but the same can't be said about fatigue."

"As there's no guarantee that we'll be able to take a break from here on out, I believe that it'd be advantageous to take a rest, even if it's just an hour. It's going to have an effect on alleviating the mental fatigue, and we'll recover a bit mana, too."

"Cindy, the small dragons of the second floor will gather up if we take a rest for an hour. If their numbers grow too big, we'll be forced to kill a part of them with magic, and thus might instead deplete our mana even more." Agnes objects Cindy's opinion.

This is how it should be. They'll be fine if they get close to a conclusion by having their opinions clash.

"Going by the structure of this room, I don't think that the small dragons can get close to us."

"Cindy-chan, it's better to go with the worst-case scenario. If we destroy the wall to get out of here, the device that made the entrance door disappear and locked us in might stop working. In such a case, the small dragons, which might have gathered in huge numbers on the stairway connecting the second with the third floor, are going to flood this place." Betty argues towards Cindy, basically saying that there'd be no meaning to have taken a break since it'll be necessary to deal with the swarm of golems.

"But, sensei is with us. Currently sensei has the stamina of an average child."

"The issue of sensei's stamina..."

Once Cindy brings up that my stamina won't last if I don't rest up for a bit, Betty starts brooding.

I guess I'll cut in here with a short comment.

"You don't need to consider me."

After all, I'll have Arnest carry me in the worst case.

"No, I actually think it's better to allow you to get some rest, sensei."

"...Why, Cindy?" Agnes, who has been silent for a bit, asks Cindy for her reasoning.

"I mean, making it impossible for that weird dragon golem to climb the stairs, and having the small dragons kill each other, both were sensei's plans. Even if sensei's stamina is that of an average child, his experience and thinking remains as it was, so having him rest up properly will become a trump card for us."

Right now, I don't have stamina either way. At this rate, I might unintentionally fall asleep if we don't take any rest. If that happens, they won't be able to rely on my decisions when it counts. I guess they want me to relieve my mental fatigue by getting a nap here, as short as it might be.

"Sensei's advice has been effective enough to get us all the way here."

"Certainly, it's just as you say, Cindy. Let's take a rest then. Sensei, is that alright with you?"

Agnes' group decides to advance after resting for an hour, and requests my approval.

"I'll follow your decision."

""Sensei...""

I've announced that I'd do that in the beginning. Also, we won't know which choice was actually correct until later.

"Pheew, I can finally take a break." Arnest, who can't read the mood as always, sits down on the spot while still carrying me.

"Hey! Put me down first!"

"I forgot."

This asshole, is this his revenge for having to continue carrying me? Well, whatever...

I get off Arnest's back, and sit down as well. A child's body really tires easily. By just sitting, I can feel how my exhaustion melts away. I think it's also the same for Agnes' group who has been plunged into such a situation all of a sudden today.

"We should sate our thirst in preparation. On the other hand, it might be better to desist from eating."

Given that digestion might use up stamina, it's better to avoid taking in anything solid, if possible. I take a flask out of my magic bag, and start drinking. The flask is filled with a juice using the Demon Forest's fruit.

"Arnest, you want to drink as well?"

"Yes. Since food will only obstruct my body's movements, I will just drink for now."

Arnest accepts the flask from me, and drinks up the juice within. In reality, it'd be fine to go with normal water blended with a small dose of sugar and salt, but it's fine like this since it'll dampen our spirits if we stick to the common rules too much.

Agnes' group also retrieved their canteens from their magic bags, and drank some.

"Earl Baumeister, I am going to take a little nap."

"Me too."

This child body truly tires too quickly. Though I somehow feel like I had a little bit more stamina during my time in the Baumeister Knightdom.

"This place is completely different from hills and plains where you can move around freely."

"I guess that makes sense in a way."

This situation, where we can't see the exit with enemies continuously popping out on us, probably places a heavy burden on a child's body.

"I think it'll make a difference if you can sleep, even if only for ten minutes..."

Since I've been stuck in this body now, my most important duty is to not get in the way of Agnes' team. Even if it's just a bit, I should get in some sleep for that sake.

"Sensei, here you go."

At this moment, Agnes offers me her lap. Is she telling me to sleep there since she's going to give

me a lap pillow?

"No, it's okay..."

"Sensei, exactly because it's a nap, it's not good for a child's body to sleep on the hard stone floor. You don't need to hold back. Rather, I'll be happy..."

"Eh? What was that just now?"

"Nothing! Now, come on."

"If you're going to insist on it so much..."

As it's an emergency measure, it's not like it'd count as an affair, so... I try to borrow Agnes' lap while making up the excuse in my mind that there's nothing like that between teacher and student.

Thereupon, Cindy calls out to me, offering me her lap as well, "Sensei, Agnes should be tired from her leader duty. Please use my lap to nap instead."

"Eh? It's not like I'm actually tired or anything..."

"It's going to be fairly difficult from now on, so you have to rest up as much as possible as well, Agnes. Right now you're just not feeling any fatigue since your nerves are still high-strung. You must take a rest now." Cindy returns a sound argument at Agnes who's tried to retort that she's not tired.

Certainly, it's Agnes who's pulling our party right now while standing at the front line. Given that she's essentially the leader, it's probably better for her to rest up as much as she can now. It's not a situation where she can give me a lap pillow.

"Umm, then I'm going to borrow Cindy's lap..."

"E——eh!"

"Agnes, is it something justifying for you to cry out so loudly?"

Our most important objective right now is to escape this ruin. It's obviously smarter to go with the most efficient methods.

"Therefore, I think I'm going to borrow Cindy's lap."

"Sensei, please nap while using my lap."

"Betty?"

At this moment, Betty also offers her lap to me.

"Cindy-chan is the youngest amongst us three. I believe her body and mind should be quite strained as well, and Agnes-chan has a heavy responsibility as our leader. Thus, please take a nap on my lap,

seeing how I've trained my body by hunting frequently."

"Hmm, now that you mention it..."

Betty's opinion makes sense. Seeing that Agnes' team is going to take a nap as well, it's imperative to allow them to recover as much mana and stamina as possible. Since Agnes acts as the leader of the three, she bears a heavy toll, and Cindy is the youngest.

It might be best for me to borrow the lap of Betty, who's trained as a hunter. There's absolutely no way that I'm thinking any such perverted stuff like her legs having been the smoothest with the nicest comfort a while back or anything like that.

Anyway, now that we've decided to rest, I gotta use every second of it to do just that.

As I try to borrow Betty's lap after deciding so, another person joins in, "Earl Baumeister, I am waiting."

"Eh? I wouldn't borrow your lap even if it were to kill me."

What's with that sad idea that I ought to nap on the lap of some old dude. His legs are hard anyway, so I might as well sleep on the floor then.

"I can not recommend you laying down for a short-time nap."

"Oohh! That's what you mean!"

Nothing less of a scholar. He's saying something sounding quite expert, even though he belongs to another field of science.

"This is something I have heard from a specialist in this field, but if you are going to nap for a short time, it is best to sleep while falling prostrate on something like a desk. I am going to do the same as well."

"I suppose you're right..."

Looking at the state of the approaching walls, it seems that I can sleep for around 30 minutes. If the speed of the walls increases after I've laid down, there's the worry that I might be late in my response. Precisely because it's a nap, it's necessary to use logic here.

Even in my previous life I pulled through by napping for ten to twenty minutes on my table after finishing lunch.

"It's just like Arnest says. If I remember correctly..."

I retrieve small desks, including Agnes' team's shares, from my magic bag. You might wonder why I'm carrying even something like this with me, but the capacity of my magic bag is big, so there's actually many items I've stored away in there.

"You girls, feel free to sleep while using these. I'm sleepy..."

This child body...

I immediately fall prostrate on my desk as I'm assailed by drowsiness at a rate that would be usually impossible. Anyway, let's sleep for now...in order to safely escape this ridiculous underground ruin with everyone.

* * *