

Intermission 2 - It seems to Have Been Misfortune

The city Klinge in the Kunugi Margraviate of the Trident Principality could be labeled as exceedingly abnormal when compared to the common sense of the world. Speaking of its location, the city was closest to the Miasma Forest among all other human habitats, lacking even a single reason as to why it should prosper. It was a city established in an area where even the principality's patronage wouldn't necessarily guarantee its continuous existence, while at the same time being exposed to a constant fear of monster attacks and bad public order.

That's how it should be, but in reality, Klinge flourished at a level probably unequaled not only in the human lands, but all over the world. Albeit being a city located at the edge of the human continent, the trade was going strong, resulting in extremely unusual goods occasionally drifting into this city where the coming and going of people and goods was fairly intense. For some reason, it had become common practice to immediately contact Frau whenever items, which were especially rare among all the unusual goods, entered the city.

"Why has it turned out like this?" Renya asked Frau that question when they were in a certain warehouse located in the outskirts of Klinge.

Various goods that had flowed into the city from outside were temporarily stored in the warehouses directly managed by the Margrave Kunugi House, and were only allowed to enter Klinge's markets after running through various checks and examinations. Of course it wasn't as though they could perfectly manage all the goods flowing into the city through this system, but it was still regarded as quite an effective security measure, and played a major role as a breakwater to prevent the entry of dangerous goods on the markets of the Kunugi Margraviate.

"Because of its practical reasons, and since it's a hobby of mine ~nano."

After receiving a message from the examiners, Frau led Renya, Shion, and Croire, who looked bored, to the warehouse in question. Along the way, Renya received an explanation about the system, how the reports would be delivered to Frau, the specific roles of the warehouses, etc., and when he confronted Frau with what he considered questionable, she readily answered him.

'Leaving aside the practical reasons, just what does she mean with it being a hobby of hers?' Frau's reply only gave birth to new questions, but as Renya hadn't the slightest motivation to ask Frau about this, he somehow ignored it altogether.

"Frau, your hobby means..."

"Stop it, Shion. There are some things in this world better left unknown." Renya slowly shook his head as he interrupted Shion who was about to ask Frau what Renya had avoided to do.

Seeing his gesture, Shion nodded with a somewhat stiff expression, holding her tongue.

"Umm, master? Just what are you imagining Frau's hobbies to be ~no?"

"You really want me to ask?"

"Uh? Hmm? No, please forget that I asked ~no." Receiving Renya's serious, inquisitive look, Frau withdrew her question, obviously having no interest in Renya digging any further than this.

Frau's choice was probably based on the hunch that she'd be forced to say things she didn't want to talk about, if he had asked, but, at the moment she declined any further questions, it became plainly clear to Renya and the others that Frau had several things she didn't want to be revealed. Renya sighed, Shion smiled wryly, and Croire stared at Frau with an expression full of keen interest for some reason.

"R-Rather than that, I had you come along this time because there's something I want you to see ~no."

Seemingly accepting Frau's attempt to shift the topic, as he knew that nothing good would come out of pursuing it any further, Renya turned his eyes at 'that' which had been placed on a work stand, situated in a section of the workshop he had been led to, while stored away in a wooden box - a single sword.

At a glance, it wasn't clear what metal had been used to forge it, and overall the blackish sword was longer and bigger than the katana used by Renya.

'Going by the hilt's length, it looks like it's somewhat usable when held with two hands. It's obviously clear that it's what you'd call a greatsword.

However, although it looked like it would fetch a good price as elaborate decorations had been added all over its frame, it seemed to be a sword easily available on the market if you just invested some cash. Renya didn't grasp at all why Frau would receive a report that it was something especially rare.

"Hey Renya, is there something special to this?"

Assuming that there was no way for Frau to drag them all the way here just to show them some greatsword with its price being the only redeeming trait, Renya - apparently having quickly lost interest in the item he was shown - looked at the item Shion had pulled out of a nearby, unchecked package, and announced the item's name while being lightly surprised.

"It's a harisen [efn_note]A paper fan used by one party of a slapstick duo[/efn_note] , isn't it? More or less...it's a sort of weapon."

"Hee...a blunt weapon?"

"Yeah, pretty much."

While wondering why something like a harisen would be mixed among the goods stored here, Renya received the harisen from Shion. In case of a normal harisen, it'd be made out of several layers of paper, but the one he got from Shion seemed to be made out of some kind of leather, as far as he could tell, and was heavier than he had expected, turning it into a fairly sturdy item.

As its damage output should rise in proportion to its toughness, Renya wondered whether it couldn't actually be used as a real weapon by accident.

Next to him, Frau complained, "That's not what Frau wanted you to take a look at ~no!"

"Well, I get as much, but even if you scream, that over there is just a simple sword, isn't it?"

Frau raised her index finger at Renya, and moved it left and right while clicking her tongue. Feeling somewhat extremely irritated by that gesture, Renya pondered whether he should wallop her one with the harisen at hand.

Meanwhile, Frau announced the sword's true identity, "This is no normal sword ~no. Perk up your ears and be astonished. This is a magic sword ~nano!"

"A magic sword!? This!?" It was Croire who raised her voice in surprise.

Shion only stared at Frau's face with a blank expression, and Renya lowered his eyes on the greatsword laying on the stand, clearly lacking any interest.

"H-Huh? That's a rather weak reaction there ~no."

"What's the point in even bringing out some fantasy item like a magic sword at this point? Besides, I won't use it anyway."

"Compared to the katana I got from Renya, this one seems to be of a bad make, looking like it'll break easily."

Perceiving from Shion and Renya's impressions that she made a big blunder, Frau got completely flustered in her mind even while keeping up a smile outwardly. 'Now that I think about it, Renya's weapon is that katana. Most other weapons will likely dwarf in front of its abilities. And above all, the option to use a greatsword doesn't really exist for Renya's way of fighting in the first place.

On the other hand, considering it from Shion's point of view, the katana given to her by Renya was already hanging at her hip, and going by its workmanship, something like the magic sword discovered by Frau was far inferior.

"Same can be said about the idea of having the heroes use it."

"Well, they have their exclusive equipment either way."

"Gununu ~nano."

A magic sword was an extremely rare item. In ancient times, the production techniques had been keenly passed down, and a considerable number of blacksmiths and sorcerers capable of making magic swords existed, but nowadays, the techniques to forge magic swords were mostly lost, and hardly anyone was capable of forging one. There were some smiths who managed to barely produce some low-quality items, but the types of magic swords generally available on the current markets were relics that had been forged during ancient times.

Frau wanted to immediately show it to Renya and the others after finding one, because of its rarity, but considering it calmly, it was only natural for Renya's group to not show any excitement over it,

as it'd only register as an oversized, useless piece of junk in their eyes.

"But, Renya, if this is a genuine magic sword, you'd be able to buy a noble mansion including servants with it, you know?"

Maybe wanting to patch up things for Frau who had succumbed to despair, or possibly being truly surprised by such a rare item like a magic sword, Croire thrust her hands into the wooden box, grabbed its hilt with both hands, and easily lifted it up.

Renya hadn't expected that she would be able to lift a greatsword, which should be quite heavy, so easily with her slender, elven arms, but contrary to his expectations, Croire took the sword out of its box as easily as picking up a twig.

"Ah, Croire-ane-sama, wait a moment ~no."

"This is quite light. It looks like even I could handle i..." In the middle of her words, Croire's body trembled with a start.

At the same time, a vortex of air started to form inside the warehouse, centered around Croire. While Shion put herself on guard after sensing the abnormality of the phenomenon, Renya glared at the pale Frau, as if telling her "Now you've done it," while tapping his shoulder with the harisen.

"Frau, do you have any excuse for this?"

"This is Frau's fault ~nano!? That is a type of magic sword which is slightly cursed as it attempts to dominate the mind of its wielder ~nano."

"Okay, I got it. You'll get your spanking later."

"Please don't be too hard on me ~no..."

Leaving Frau, who hung her head in disappointment, alone for the time being, Renya checked the state of Croire who was standing in the middle of the steadily intensifying air current.

"Kukuku....kuhahahahaha! Finally! Finally I obtained a body!"

The voice of Croire, who was laughing with her head bent back while grasping the greatsword in both hands as it emitted something like black flames from its blade, sounded shrill, broken and full of uncontainable joy.

"Last time I suffered a crushing defeat, but this time I won't allow that to happen! The feeling of cutting through flesh! The warmth of the blood flowing down the blade! Everlasting battles!"

"I guess it's one of those, the ones that had been sealed away."

Croire, who had been laughing loudly, turned her face alongside its unfocused eyes towards Renya because of his fed-up voice. Her movements somewhat reminded one of a doll, giving Renya a bad feeling.

"Perfect timing...how unfortunate of you to be present during my release. First I will have you appease my thirst with your blood!"

"I suppose the development from here on out is easily predictable."

"The one most unfortunate is Frau ~nano!"

Apparently having no plans to assist Renya in handling Croire, Shion watched the situation while squatting down next to Frau who was cowering on the floor, at her wits' end.

Even while puzzled by Shion's action, the thing possessing Croire's body charged at Renya with the greatsword at the ready. Accompanied by the wind which had swirled around Croire so far, her movements, as she rushed while pulverizing the stand between her and Renya alongside a thunderous crash, didn't resemble the elven fighting style at all. With a twisted smile plastered on her face, the thing, slashing away at Renya, anticipated the moment the blade would sink into his body, seeing how he didn't seem to react at all. Croire's smile became even more warped, but while having such a crooked expression, Croire's head furiously moved up and down.

Without even the time to wonder what might have happened, the body it should be controlling lost its strength, and crashed onto the floor of the warehouse, sliding across the tiles with the momentum of the charge still in effect.

"Frau, make sure to apologize to Croire later on, okay?"

"Isn't it Croire-ane-sama's fault for picking it up without any caution ~no!?"

"It sure looks like Croire is unexpectedly weak on the mental side."

While listening to their conversation, the thing haunting Croire's body squirmed, trying to get up, but Croire's body showed no response, not even twitching once.

"It's useless, you know? I struck the chin and the crown of the head. Having jolted the brain, the body won't listen to anything you tell it, no matter whether you're conscious or not." While shouldering the harisen which he had probably used for those blows, Renya kicked the magic sword out of Croire's powerless hands.

Renya slowly walked after the magic sword, which slid across the ground, and picked it up.

Shion, who was about to nurse the unconscious Croire, dropped Croire's body in the middle of raising it due to Renya's action. Frau caught the back of Croire's head with her stomach after sliding across the floor in panic to stop it from hitting the hard ground, raising a somewhat crude groan.

"Renya!? If you get possessed, who's going to stop you...!?"

"No need to worry. There's no way that I'd get manipulated by something like this, is there?"

As he lifted up the greatsword with both hands, Renya could hear something like the mental voice of the magic sword, very likely the one who had taken over Croire's mind.

<No way! You're telling me that you won't fall under my domination!?!>

"There's a limit to messing around. As if the likes of a tool could manipulate its wielder."

<Impossible! I am...>

"Shut up. I don't know what kind of magic sword you are, but in my eyes, you're even below this harisen here."

<You're saying I'm beneath that toy!?!>

"Yeah, you got it."

In the eyes of a bystander, it might look as though Renya was simply talking to himself. Renya casually tossed the greatsword into the air, and while it whirled around, Renya unleashed a flash with the harisen at the instant the sword had fallen to the level of his eyesight.

A sudden gust violently swept across the warehouse, probably triggered by the harisen. While Shion pinned down her hair and the hem of her outfit, the magic sword split into two after being cut in the middle of its blade, and both pieces dropped to the ground with slightly dry clanks.

"You gotta be kidding..." Shion could only stare dumbfounded in front of the reality of a leather harisen having severed a metallic sword.

Not to mention that the sword in question wasn't just any sword, but a magic one. Once it was so easily turned into pieces of trash, she couldn't help but go beyond surprise, gazing at the spectacle in wonder.

"Make sure to remember this, Shion." Renya warned Shion while putting away the harisen, which had not a single trace of having cut through a magic sword, into the package where Shion had taken it out from, "In the end, it just depends on the ability of the one who used it last."

"N-No...isn't this an exception at this point?"

It didn't mean that Shion didn't understand what Renya tried to tell her, but even if she tried to copy what she had seen moments ago, it'd be impossible for her. And even if she were to try summing it up nicely, for Shion there was no choice but to laugh it off as it made Renya's abnormality all too clear.



It's a digression, but the theft of the magic sword, which had been sealed away a long time ago as it caused many, many victims while changing hands in quick succession, from its sealing place was discovered a good while later. Being treated as stolen goods, the investigators tracked what kind of route the magic sword took.

The investigation was carried out very carefully by the Trident Principality which feared the

possible damage caused by the magic sword, but it was discovered that the trail of the sword suddenly ended at Klinge.



The archduchess, who received a report from the nobles claiming that she should get Margrave Kunugi to cooperate in the investigation, issued following order to the nobles after hearing that the sword's route got lost in Klinge:

"I'm sure, that~ was a disaster~ for magic sword-kun, too~. That's why you can stop the investigation~"

Afterwards, no stories revolving around that magic sword were ever to be heard again. In exchange, a blunt weapon called harisen with an exceedingly high damage output while clad by an abnormal aura of mana was found in Klinge, and while passing through the hands of many people, it kept spinning all kinds of tales, but that's a story for yet another time.