



"Just what the heck is this...?"

Renya had no clue how he should answer Rona's flabbergasted mumbling. Mostly because Shion was trying to suffocate him by clinging to his neck.

Once he told her that she should get behind him if she was going to cling anyway, since he wouldn't be able to move otherwise, Shion obediently did as told, put her arms around his neck from behind, and persistently remained there, closely glued to Renya's back.

For Renya she was no more than a simple, additional weight, but since she kicked up a fuss whenever he tried to tear her off, he reluctantly decided to leave her where she was, also somewhat owed to the sensation of her boobs being pressed against his back.

With Shion latched to his back, Renya got off Dra-kun, and surveyed the vicinity. They were in the central part of the settlement discovered by Croire, which very likely belonged to demons. Dra-kun had used a place similar to an open plaza as a landing point.

A part of his mind had worried how things would turn out if they landed right in the middle of the settlement all of a sudden. However, his thoughts about this had changed when he had Dra-kun circle above the settlement first.

As far as visible from above, this settlement, or rather, town lacked any and all presences of people - in short, it was deserted. If this had been a human town, just a dragon flying above them would have caused a huge panic, and yet, not a single soul came out to check what was going on.

As this was fairly weird, to say the least, he quickly scanned the town for a suitable landing spot for Dra-kun, which resulted in Dra-kun alighting on the central plaza.

'No matter what city it is, they all resemble each other for the greater parts,' Renya assessed. 'Even in Klinge, we've got a central plaza with around the same size, and just like back there, a water fountain has been installed in the middle of the plaza.'

They had set up such a fountain after Emil and Frau suggested that it'd serve as a place of relaxation for the residents, but Renya didn't really know how effective it was. What he knew were the plans to install something like a "Founding Lord Statue" in the fountain, which he personally and physically thwarted by heading over to the fountain and destroying the plan in its early stages.

While bitterly thinking, 'For heaven's sake, you never know what these girls are going to pull off if you leave them to their own devices,' Renya had jumped off Dra-kun's back. Looking down at Frau who had briskly walked over to him and was now tightly clinging to his waist on the right side, Renya pondered, 'Leaving that aside, you can only sum up the situation here as abnormal. The thick, black smoke rising at a place slightly away from the plaza must be the fire Croire had confirmed with her keen eyes. Even though it's been gaining in intensity all the while, there's absolutely no indication that anyone would try to extinguish it.'

No people screaming or yelling as you'd usually hear from places where fires were devastating the

area. Only the flames' thunderous crackling and roaring could be heard within this otherwise deadly silent town. Renya couldn't find any term fitting this situation better than abnormal.

"The question is, what happened, right?" With a worried look and her long elven ears drooping slightly, Croire placed a hand on Renya's left shoulder, opposite from where Frau was glued to him, and leaned in close.

Let alone being flanked by beauties on both sides, Renya had even a third beauty stuck to his back. However, as sad as it might sound, the lucky man himself only indulged in the thought just how difficult it was to move with all those weights dragging him down.

"I've got no idea. And since that's the case, let's try finding out. ...But, since it's somewhat difficult for me to move like that, I wonder whether you could let go of me anytime soon..."

"You haven't said anything like that to Shion-san, though..."

"That's clearly discrimination ~nano."

Renya only flashed a weak smile at Frau and Croire who separated from him while complaining in very bad moods. If he could, he'd love to say the same to Shion, however, in Shion's case it'd turn into a major pain if he did so and tried to get her off his back. After all, it'd be a bad joke if the town got completely wiped out just because Shion went berserk because of her fear towards ghosts. And the frightening part was how Shion was actually quite capable of it.

"How about I hug you from the front, if you have problems keeping your balance?" Rona teased with a grin.

Renya reacted by shooing her away with his hand. Just Shion's boobs were already quite something, but Rona's boobs would pack a completely different kind of punch. Having Rona's boobs pressed against him from the front would easily erase any reasoning in Renya, before he could even worry about an inhibition of his movements and all that. [efn\_note]The author uses "goods" instead of "boobs", but tbh, I can't be arsed to go along with the Japanese prude way of not naming things out of some kind of shame or modesty issues. It loses its comical part after the nth time.[/efn\_note]

"It sure is difficult to be a popular guy, isn't it?"

Liaris was closely snuggling up to Az who had called out to Renya with a smile full of sarcasm. Renya was definitely in the mood of retorting with a teasing of his own, but with him still allowing Shion to cling to his back, it'd lack persuasiveness.

Reluctantly Renya limited it to just sending a glare Az's way, and then called out to his friends after looking around him.

"Let's try to investigate things a bit since I feel like something weird is going on here. Az, Liaris, you stay here. Secure our path of retreat together with Dra-kun. If you notice anything odd, call us over by firing one shot of your breath."

Everyone except for Renya smiled wryly at the exceedingly flashy way of giving a signal. Dra-kun struck the plaza's stone paving with his tail as if to indicate his understanding.

"Be careful where you shoot that breath, okay? If you should fire it our way, roasted dragon tail will be on the menu for today's dinner, got it?"

Dra-kun's expression froze upon Renya's warning. Liaris laughed while consoling Dra-kun who repeatedly nodded his head to make clear that he comprehended.

"Don't worry. He's going to aim for the sky."

"Okay, I leave it to you. It'd be no joke if we were to pass on to the netherworld because of friendly fire."

It wasn't as though Az didn't wonder, 'Would you actually die from something at the level of a dragon's breath,' but being aware when to speak up and when to better stay silent, Az chose the latter.

By the way, since a dragon's tail would fully grow back after being cut off, Az also harbored the quite evil thought that it wouldn't really matter to lop it off in the worst case.

As there was no reason for him to know what Az was thinking, Renya took the other members with him after entrusting the plaza to the three, first heading towards the area where the fire appeared to burn.

"It's burning quite profusely ~no."

The area under fire was a district with what seemed to be residential houses lining up. It wouldn't be funny for them to get enveloped by the flames while they were checking the cause near the conflagration. Thus Renya decided that it'd be better to put out the fire first.

Even if it was easy to talk about putting out the fire, he had no other options but to either extinguish the flames by drowning them in lots of water or to wait for the fire to die out after all the burnable objects had fallen prey to it. Renya pondered which he should choose here.

"Are you going to handle it, Renya?" Since Croire had asked him, albeit with a somewhat worried look, Renya nodded. In response, Croire continued while remaining uneasy, "Could I have you give up on that..."

"Why? Is there some problem with me doing it?"

Croire's expression transformed into an apologetic one when Renya asked back.

"Yes, I mean, if you get involved with this...it seems like the town would be extinguished alongside the fire."

Being seriously told so with a grave expression, Renya was about to protest, but when he looked back at his actions so far, he realized that it might only be natural for her to tell him off. Renya himself was clearly aware that he'd caused quite a bit of damage all over the place thanks to him expanding huge amounts of mana without any restraint. Probably because he wasn't a professional sorcerer, he ended up causing devastating destructions on a large scale, no matter what he did, and

when it came to finer spellwork, he tended to experience a significant drop in precision. He harbored the idea that it'd be fine now that he owned the dragons' sorcery knowledge, but once he assumed that the accumulation of all his previous transgressions was the main cause for Croire's current expression, Renya couldn't possibly file an objection.

"Ugh..."

"Okay, then it's Frau's turn!"

"You would knock down the whole region straight to hell if you tried to extinguish the fire, right?"

Being flatly shot down by Croire, Frau tried to argue, but immediately averted her eyes for some reason, and stepped back while mumbling something under her breath with her face cast down.

While believing that she must be thinking the same what he had thought moments ago, Renya gently stroked Frau's head to comfort her.

"Two peas in a pond consoling each other, how touching."

"That's really terrible of you, Croire! I'm going to send you back to that emperor of yours!"

Seemingly unable to ignore how Frau buried her face in his waist, Renya raised his voice at Croire who went for the finishing blow. Reacting to that, Croire asked Renya while keeping her serious look, "Would it really be fine for the current me to go back to the elven country?"

"...Mmh?"

"I have mastered such strong powers that finding an elf who could oppose me in all of the elven empire would prove to be rather difficult."

'Judging by her strength back when the wall surrounding the demon country was destroyed, that might not be bragging or anything, but a simple fact,' Renya thought.

"In that case, if you were to forcibly send me back to the elven country...I'd kill that retarded father of mine...err, His Majesty the Emperor, and take over the country for myself."

"Wait, wait, wait! What's with all that dangerous stuff you're bringing up here!?"

"It's because I would immediately start a war against the human nations once I usurped the empire's throne, you know? That war would be noted down as <Margrave Renya Kunugi Recapture Campaign> in the elven history books. On my special authority as empress."

"As if I'd allow you to use my name for such a fucked up military campaign!"

"Please let me stay at your side properly then." Completely switching away from her serious expression, a beautiful smile bloomed on Croire's face.

Just going by her appearance, she looked like a lovely fairy, but Renya couldn't help but spit out a deep sigh after realizing that the same abysmal darkness dwelt inside Croire as it did in Frau.

"...Okay, it's your win. But, you being unable to entrust the fire to Frau or me means that you can do something about it yourself, right?"

"Of course, please leave it to me, Renya."

While believing that she should have simply said so from the get-go if she wanted to take care of it herself, Renya decided to entrust the extinguishing of the fire to Croire.

"Okay, I'll start the ceremony of praying for rain, passed down among the elves since ancient times."

"And when is the rain going to start with you doing something like that!?"

"It's a joke. I'm just kidding."

"Man, just give me a break with all the jokes..."

"I believe jokes are necessary to enrich a conversation."

Once Renya glared at Croire while wondering whether her previous usurpation story really followed the intent to enliven the conversation, she ignored his glare, and simply stuck out her tongue at him. The gesture itself was adorable, but he couldn't quite laugh at it.

"Let's see... <Offering my power, I pray to the Queen of Blue Ice - peacefully take everything into your gentle embrace, erasing all sounds from existence>."



The chant was long, and the longer the chant, the stronger the power and range of a spell. In a hurry, Renya rummaged through his draconic sorcery knowledge, looking for the spell Croire had started to chant. The spell Croire had driven against the barrier wasn't known by the dragons, but this time he immediately found the corresponding spell.

It was the high-ranking ice spell <Ice Casket>. A spell used to enclose its target in ice that wouldn't melt. As long as no dispel spell was used, the target would remain locked up in ice for eternity. Still, at the very least it was no magic you'd use to extinguish a fire.

Since it was a powerful spell, no matter how you looked at it, Renya considered stopping Croire for an instant, but this was a demon town, and since the cause for the fire should have already burned down anyway, even if they were to look for it, it should only return the situation to them not knowing what might be best to investigate as they wouldn't learn anything new even if they did examine the site.

Believing that it'd be better to prioritize extinguishing, or rather, stopping the fire from spreading in this case, Renya opted to let Croire do what she wanted to do.

"<Lock it up, Ice Casket>"

At the same time as she finished the spell's chant, blue ice protruded from the ground, where the fire was ravaging furiously, and began to freeze fire and buildings, obviously lumping them together into one. In defiance of the fire's vigor, the area specified by Croire continued to be enveloped in thick layers of ice, and a little while later, completely covered the whole site where the flames had rampaged.

Seemingly unable to exist within the ice, the flames were completely extinguished, leaving only the frozen buildings visible across the transparent layers of ice. Seeing the result, Croire breathed out deeply.

"How about this? Perfect, wouldn't you say?"

"...I don't feel any sympathy since it's a demon town, but it'll likely be a chore to make this subside."

In front of the new mountain of ice, Croire pressed her hands against her hips, donning a triumphant look, whereas Rona very honestly stated her impression while looking up the mountain of ice.

Of course, if a mountain of ice suddenly rose high up into the sky in a section of a town, the temperature would naturally fall in its vicinity. Given that the fire's spread was wide, one could call it inevitable, but while feeling unpleasantly cold beneath the huge block of ice, Renya started to follow the silly question whether the cause for Shion's trembling might be her fear of ghosts or this mountain of ice in his mind.

