

Chapter 2 - It Seems to Be an Escape from the Town

Once Renya quickly freed up the place with the finger-like object by brushing the soil away with his hands, he managed to confirm that it was doubtlessly the finger of a young man. Predicting the position of the head by making an estimate from the finger's location, Renya dug up the ground with a wooden splinter, which must have belonged to furniture or similar before, in place of a wooden spatula. After a while of digging, he found the head of a person with violet hair.

The world was vast, but only demons possessed violet hair. In short, what was completely buried beneath Renya's feet right now was a demon.

"Hmm?"

As far as Renya knew, demons should be quite powerful in this world when you only compared the races by ability. He didn't know the reason behind it, but in front of him such a demon had been completely buried in the ground.

Just as Renya was about to consider what it could mean, he noticed how Frau and Shion, who had been watching Renya's work in disgust from a slight distance, were both pointing at something.

"What's wrong?"

"Master, I feel like...that finger is moving ~no."

Being told so by Frau, Renya looked down at the finger he just dug out. The finger, which protruded out of the ground like some kind of joke, hadn't moved at all when Renya dug it free, but now it moved as if scratching at something, albeit slowly. The head next to Renya also started to move as if writhing.

"R-Renya...?"

It was creepy, or rather felt really nasty. Either way, Shion uneasily called out to Renya after seeing something that would make anyone want to get away as quickly as possible.

Renya looked up to the sky, closed his eyes while feeling like something completely irrational was going on, and after brooding for a while, opened his eyes and headed over to Shion and Frau with a sigh.

"Well, it's as you can see. I guess we'll run away..."

The instant he started to speak, a flash that seemed to burn one's eyes and an explosion that tore one's eardrums hit Renya's group. With a ripping shock wave, several of the buildings that had been barely left standing crumbled apart with a clattering after succumbing to the impact.

Once Renya looked in the direction, which was very likely the origin of the explosion, after all of it settled down, he saw how black smoke billowed into the sky with the flames, which Croire should have extinguished earlier, blazing up once more.

"What was that? What do you think, Renya?" Renya asked Croire, who had drawn close after getting surprised by the noise, trying to check back with her, although he somehow had an idea about the true identity behind all of this.

Having become teary-eyed, probably because her fine ears were fully affected by the explosion just now, Croire answered while rubbing her long ears, "It's just a guess, but...wasn't that Dra-kun's breath exploding there?"

"Because of this, huh?" Renya pointed at the thing squirming at his feet.

Croire lowered her eyes while wiping the tears out of her eyes, and immediately backed off in surprise.

"It's alive?"

"It'd be weird to call it alive in a state like this, wouldn't it?"

"I-In other words, it's undead..."

Renya also didn't know what triggered it to move. However, since one was buried beneath his feet, it wouldn't be strange for others to be buried all over the town either. Rather, if he assumed that the residents of this town hadn't vanished like smoke, it'd be actually natural to conclude that all of them were buried in the town.

"Demons as undead...that's the worst."

"I'm with you there."

Even though he didn't know what logic it followed, the demon buried at his feet dragged its body out of the ground in one go, and tried to stand up. In an instant, Renya's katana flashed after he drew it from his waist, drawing a scarlet line on the neck of the demon. The demon's head slid down alongside that line, falling to the ground.

The headless torso stopped moving, and when it collapsed to the ground, Renya's katana, which he should have drawn moments ago, was already hanging at his waist again. Due to the speed of his technique, including not only him drawing the sword but also him sheathing it in a fluent motion, Croire stared at Renya's face, having completely forgotten about her earlier surprise.

"It looks like they'll stop moving if you behead them." Renya commented while kicking the head away, probably for caution's sake.

The demon's head, which drew a parabola in the air, dropped to the ground without flying too far, and the area where it fell suddenly bulged.

"Ah, just as expected, more of them are buried around here..."

One hand after the other was thrust out from underground while clawing at empty air, just to hold onto the ground's surface to drag up the bodies connected to the hands. Similar scenes could be seen around Shion and the other women, causing Rona to yelp next to Shion.

"Isn't this your field of expertise, seeing how they're undead and all, Rona?" Renya said wondering whether it was the time for her to scream around.

In response, Rona complained while smashing the head of a demon that emerged from the soil with her mace, "Even if I'm a saint, the visual impact of stuff like this is just too intense!"

"You can complain all you want, but you do have some at disposal, a divine art against undead, or some such, right? Please use that."

Kicking down an undead young female demon, who had approached him, Renya crushed her forehead with his heel after she fell face-up. Next Renya sent the arms of another undead, who came grabbing at him, flying by cutting them off at the shoulders, and then he blew the torso away with a turning kick that used plenty of strength and centrifugal force, resulting in the undead drawing a bloody flower on the wall of a worn building after slamming against it.

"O-Okay. Umm...Impurity, leave in the name of Giliel-sama!"

In accordance with Rona's hurried divine prayer, her mace started to gleam as she held it up. Renya wondered whether some kind of holy seal wouldn't appear at times like these, instead of normal light, but once he considered it, he corrected his thinking as the goddess Giliel, whose name hadn't been worshipped so far, might not have anything like a holy seal.

Anyway, the divine art unleashed by Rona continued to fill the vicinity with pure light, and the undead began to groan in anguish as soon as they got touched by that light. However, while things appeared to proceed smoothly, only Rona raised her voice in panic.



"It's useless, Renya! The divine art is being resisted!"

If the basis of the undead had been normal humans, just the light released by Rona might have been enough to purify them. However, even if their enemies were literally rotten, they were still demons. To begin with, they had possessed much higher abilities than humans before their death, which apparently endowed the undead with a high resistance against magic and divine arts.

"They're getting damaged, but...I can't burn them to cinders!"

At a glance, it was obvious that white smoke was rising from the skin of the undead, who were touched by the light, which meant that their skin had begun to burn hideously, but although it was only slowly, their bodies started to move again within the light even while being burned.

Renya pondered about the fairly delicate issue whether this was owed to a lack of Rona's power, a lack in ability of Giliel who lent her the necessary power, or the extremely strong abilities of the demons while cleaving yet another undead apart.

"Renya, there's too many of them!" Shion yelled while randomly slashing the undead, who were trying to surround them, apart with her katana.

Even if her enemies looked somewhat gross, Shion didn't seem to have an issue with it as long as she could cut them with her katana. With her movements being completely different from when she trembled in fear of ghosts, she slew one undead demon after the other as they crawled towards her from the ground, but still, the number of undead crawling went beyond what she could handle with her katana. While yelling with panic clearly dyeing her voice, she ran all the way behind Renya.

Frau, who had been continuously scurrying around Renya's feet, seemed to weave her way through the undead encirclement unarmed while capitalizing on her small body.

"Retreat to the plaza! We'll join up with Liari, Az, and Dra-kun, and escape! I don't know how many residents have been buried in this town, but it'll be endless if we try to take on all citizens of a town!"

Another flash and explosion reached them from the plaza's direction. Apparently Liaris' group was also in combat with undead who had crawled out from somewhere, but that was all Renya could tell from here.

Given that Liaris herself shouldn't possess any abilities allowing her to cause an explosion, Az and Dra-kun ought to frantically push back the undead with their magic arts and breaths. Renya believed that nothing extreme should happen with both of them working together, but in some cases, numbers easily bridged the gap in individual ability. If they were to lose Dra-kun here, they'd also lose their means to travel across the vast demon country, thus Renya couldn't afford to be careless.

"Shion, Frau, guard Rona! Rona, release as much light as you can!"

"Got it!"

"Okay, master ~nano."

"Croire, we'll open a path together."

While catching at the edge of his visual field how Croire silently nodded, Renya silently cast <Flame Lance>. Renya invested a great amount of mana into the fire spell, which had forcibly overpowered even an evil dragon, causing countless lances to appear above his head.

"Gooo!"

The swarm of flame lance followed Renya's will, rushed off, and stabbed the area in front of Renya's group, as if performing a carpet bombing all over the place. Buildings, undead - anything and everything touched by the lances was swallowed up in a vortex of red flames. At the same time, the wind spell cast by Croire blew through the thunderously roaring flames, creating a wind corridor through a squall.

"Run!"

With the flames that would burn anyone's skin being reflected, everyone ran through Croire's wind corridor upon Renya's order. Some of the undead tried to break through Renya's firewall, relying on their high resistance and stamina they had possessed while still alive. But, their movements became sluggish as soon as they suffered the effect of Rona's divine art which she kept up desperately, and with Reny shooting new flame lances at them, they turned into torches before falling apart to ash.

Buildings blocking their path were burned away by Renya, and lost their shape after being blown away by Croire's wind. Renya's group ran in a straight line for the plaza, and as soon as they arrived there, they became speechless upon seeing the spectacle unfolding in front of them.

"Whoaa..."

A fireball hurled by Az caused an explosion, mowing down several undead. Dra-kun's breath pierced into the middle of the undead who tried to advance further while stepping over their fallen comrades. The undead, who got roasted by the high-temperature flames, lost their shape within the conflagration without even the chance to groan.

And yet, more of them followed on the spot. Due to the swarm of undead that endlessly flocked into the plaza trying to completely surround them, Az and Dra-kun were evidently worn down. Liaris gave instructions to Dra-kun while overlooking the situation from atop his back. Dra-kun mowed down undead with his tail and pushed them back by flapping his wings powerfully, somehow managing to prevent them getting surrounded.

Neither Az nor Dra-kun used any big techniques as they didn't know where Renya's group was at, and thus feared to get them dragged in. But, even if they could get rid of a big number of undead with a big technique, the number of undead was simply too huge. Renya realized that both had judged that it would be smarter to prevent the undead from approaching by using small and compact techniques.

"Az! Sorry for making you wait!"

Noticing Renya's group as they approached while cutting a path open, relief showed on Az's face. Dra-kun breathed through his nose as if saying, "You finally showed up, eh?", and Liaris loudly

yelled on his back.

"Everyone! Hurry and get on Dra-kun's back!"

"It'll be a pain if they cling to Dra-kun. I'll unleash one big shot. All of you, use that opportunity to get on Dra-kun's back!"

""""""""You're the wrong guy for this!""""""""

Everyone besides Renya stopped him from preparing a full-power shot with the intent to buy everyone enough time to get on Dra-kun's back. While Renya froze as he hadn't expected to be voted down here, Rona swiftly ran up towards Dra-kun's back, and released a brilliance overshadowing the light so far by investing a big amount of divine power. With a sidelong glance at the undead whose movements had become slow while being burned by Rona's dazzling light, the other members jumped on Dra-kun's back.

Once Renya jumped on Dra-kun's back as the last one while still feeling somewhat unsatisfied, Dra-kun immediately kicked off the ground, and soared up into the sky while flapping his wings.

"Renya-san, please form a path to Dra-kun and lend him some mana!"

"S-Sure."

Doing as told by Liaris, Renya connected a mana path to Dra-kun, and infused it with his mana. While blending Renya's mana with his own, Dra-kun poured it into his muzzle, kneading a high-power fire breath he wouldn't be able to produce by himself.

"Dra-kun, shoot as you see fit!"

As Renya had experienced a disaster when he did something similar with Rubydra before, he had somewhat lowered the speed and amount of mana he poured into Dra-kun. After having gained enough altitude and refined the mana amply, Dra-kun spat the breath out of his mouth at the point when he almost lost control over it. The breath transformed into a red flash, burned through the atmosphere, and pierced into the plaza where Dra-kun had just taken off. One beat later, a deep crimson flower, big enough to swallow up the whole town, bloomed.

