

Prologue - It seems to be a Flight

The arts crest stuffed with enough mana to activate dyed the whole city white alongside Renya's shout. At the same time, Renya felt a terrible spell of dizziness, immediately going down on a knee.

He somehow perceived how the ground began to pulsate within his giddy visual field, but the ground didn't fly off completely from just a bit of trembling.

"It has...activated, right?" Rona asked worriedly after running up to him and supporting his body that had suddenly crumbled down, but as Renya was unable to reply anything sensible in the middle of an intense dizziness, Frau answered in his stead while putting on a difficult expression.

"It looks like it has failed to activate ~no."

"Huh?"

"To explain it simply, a shortage of output ~no."

Rona listened to Frau's explanation while unable to believe what she was hearing. Based on her experiences so far, Rona knew about the ludicrously huge amount of mana Renya possessed, comparable to the sum of what many, many magicians would be able to pool together. Thus she asked herself, just which place on this world was supposed to provide enough mana to activate the crest currently drawn all over the city, assuming that the output fell short even after using Renya's mana.

"In other words, this crest is grounded on a wrong theory..."

"Could you possibly not slander me like that ~nano...?"

For Frau it was somewhat upsetting to be told that she had failed because she had merely arranged the arts crest for using the spell <Flight> into a version influencing a whole city. However, it was unthinkable that anyone would be able to activate something Renya couldn't activate. Seeing how it was impossible to start it up, it was inevitable to label it as a failure for a crest, no matter how great the underlying theory.

"Lowering the designated range...ah wait, it's too late for that now ~nano. Since there's also the roots of the trees grown by Croire-ane-sama to consider, it'd just become even more difficult to let it take flight, even if we narrowed down the range."

Frau thought that it might have been better to keep the scale as small as possible from the very start, but at this point it was too late. Even if they tried to adjust the range now, the roots of Croire's trees, which had stretched out and entangled with each other underground in complicated ways to solidify and support the soil base, would become a hindrance getting in the way of the magic art's execution.

In front of Frau, who was at a loss at what to do, Renya covered his face with a palm, and frantically tried to get up, looking quite unsteady as he endured the dizziness. It wasn't as though the remaining amount of mana was displayed in some sort of way like it happened in games. Nevertheless, Renya felt how the mana within him continued to decrease at a rate he had never

experienced before. Also, he realized that his natural recovery, boosted by the regeneration skill, was completely unable to keep up with that mana drain.

"Master, it's unreasonable ~nano. At the moment it failed at the start, this..."

A magic crest, or also an arts crest, wasn't anything that would activate one day as long as you continued to pour mana into it. If one couldn't provide all the mana needed to activate a crest in one go, the crest would just keep pointlessly consuming mana while remaining in an idle state forever to never exhibit its intended effect.

Precisely because Frau knew that, she had begun exploring other options at the moment when Renya failed with its launch, but just as she was about to stop Renya from investing any more mana, she noticed a change in the mana provided by Renya, and refrained from speaking up.

Under normal circumstances, people wouldn't change the amount of mana they possessed in such a short time. Although this was how it should be, the amount of mana invested into the crest by Renya started to grow as time passed. This pointed to the possibility that the upper limit of the mana stored by Renya was right now continuing to increase just as he was doing this.

Noticing that, Frau ended up flabbergasted with her mouth half open.

"My master...has occasional times where I doubt whether he's really a human...~no."

"I'd like to ask what you're saying at this point, but this isn't the right place and time for this." Renya wiped the sweat from his face as he muttered this with an annoyed undertone. "Even with the mana pool increasing, the regeneration still can't catch up..."

The amount poured into the crest increasing was proof for Renya's upper mana limit growing, but it didn't mean that the amount of mana he possessed right now would increase as well. Given that the vessel for storing the mana had become bigger, it simply meant that the mana usable at once increased in quantity, but it didn't mean that the mana inside that vessel would regenerate. And, naturally the consumption rate would also increase if the usable amount grew.

In reality, the regeneration skill itself had been continuing to improve its performance as well unbeknown to Renya, but limiting it to the current situation, the consumption rate was simply too high, resulting in the regeneration not keeping up at all. As long as regeneration didn't catch up, Renya's mana would keep decreasing. At first he had only one knee on the ground, but at last his second knee fell to the ground as well.

"Master, this is reckless ~no. I will ponder a bit about how to alter the crest's formula ~no."

"We don't have that much time...I'll somehow handle it."

"Somehow, you say...normally you can't do anything about this ~no." Frau said while fully aware that Renya was anything but normal.

Now she regretted that she had depended too much on his abnormality. She had compiled a formula directly connecting the paths of the crest with the mana released by Renya believing that Renya would be able to handle it, but normally you would pull the mana from somewhere first and

distribute it into the paths only after gathering enough mana for an activation through something like a relay station. Since the formula would become increasingly complex the more mechanisms you added in-between, the control would become more difficult as well, but it should have been somewhat easier to activate than the one right now. In short, this was nothing more but Frau making a mistake in the design.

In front of Frau, who had started to ponder how much time it'd take and what she'd need to adjust if she were to add the necessary mechanisms to change the design, Renya stood up while borrowing Rona's shoulder, repeatedly breathed in very deeply many times, and slapped his own cheeks as if firing himself up.

"Umm, master?"

"I'll give it another push!"

Intentionally ignoring Frau who tried to hold him back, Renya psyched himself up even further while receiving Rona's support, and invested more mana into the crest. Adding a little mana to the whole didn't change anything. Certainly, he increased the amount of mana invested when compared to before and the crest's reaction shifted towards being stronger as well, but apparently still lacking mana to activate, the city didn't experience the effect of the <Flight> spell, with just the ground shaking.

Frau thought that she should stop Renya before he ran out of mana, even if she had to use a slightly forceful method to do so, but suddenly she noticed how the quality of the mana invested into the crest was changing. That didn't mean that Renya had started to create finer mana than at the beginning.

The mana itself didn't seem as if it had changed from the mana Renya possessed originally, but Frau had a feeling that something, which hadn't existed inside his mana so far, suddenly got mixed in conspicuously. However, Frau didn't know the answer to the question of what this 'something' might actually be. Even so, she could tell that something abnormal had definitely blended in with Renya's mana.

With a slight delay, Croire, who had been watching the course of events from nearby, apparently noticed that something odd was going on, and started to scan their surroundings with a puzzled expression.

"Did you perceive it as well, Croire-ane-sama ~no?"

"Frau, what...just what is this? An effect from the arts crest?"

"I haven't included such a weird function in the crest ~no."

In the first place, since it was a sense of discomfort stemming from Renya's mana before it was poured into the crest, it was next to impossible for the crest to have anything to do with it, but even though the fairy Frau could grasp such fine details, the elf Croire couldn't quite sense it yet. Not to even mention the human Rona who didn't know what was going on at all. While propping up Renya's body, she carefully listened to Croire and Frau's conversation while not understanding its content.

"This strange feeling comes from master's mana ~nano."

"Even if you identify Renya's mana as the origin, to me he looks to be in a state where his mana is going to run out very soon, as far as I can tell."

Panicked by Croire's analysis, Frau checked Renya's condition.

Renya himself seemed to suffer from just staying on feet. His mana had definitely fallen to a level where it'd likely run dry very soon, just as Croire said. Frau considered stopping him forcibly, but the instant she tried to take some kind of action, a change occurred in the crest on the ground that had been shining whiteley so far.

The dazzling white light of the crest transformed, for some kind of reason, into such a deep red light that anyone would consider it sinister.

"Frau, what's this!?"

"I haven't drawn such a function into the crest ~nano!"

Croire was surprised, whereas Frau got flustered.

A majestic female voice reverberated inside the head of Rona who frantically supported Renya who didn't even try to stop providing mana despite seeing the reactions of Croire and Frau.

<Rona. Saintess Rona, answer me. Just what is happening over there?>

"Eh? This is..."

<My name is Giliel. I am the one receiving thine worship. Answer, Rona. Just what is happening over there right now?>

Rona hadn't expected even in her wildest dreams that she'd receive an oracle in the demon country, and moreover, at this very moment, but going by the powerful thoughts, their divinity, and the name used, this was doubtlessly a contact by her goddess, and thus she telepathically reported everything she was currently seeing with her own eyes.

The thought of Giliel, who listened to all of it silently, addressed Rona once again after she finished speaking.

<I see. I understand the gist. There is no need to fear that power. But, for that power having manifested means that the Lost is close to his limit. The magic crest will activate very soon. Thou are to immediately escape the demon country while healing the Lost with thine healing arts. Got it?>

"U-Umm, just what is happening to Renya?"

It was right at that moment when Rona directed that question at the thought entity.

The crest, which had been casting a red light, released another, far stronger radiance, and immediately following, a thick cloud of dust shot up around the city. Cracks ran across the city, and with the sounds of things being ripped off and torn out as background, the entire city began to separate from the ground, albeit really slowly.

After making sure of this with his own eyes and flashing a broad grin on his lips, all power left Renya's body, forcing Rona to hurriedly fix her hold on him into a firm hug.

"No way!? I activated ~no!"

Now that it had activated once, the crest would continue demonstrating its effect as long as it was supplied with the mana necessary to maintain the spell. Even if the caster himself lost consciousness, there'd be no problem as long as he had mana. And, compared to the mana needed for activating the spell, the mana necessary to maintain it was extremely low.

"Something like...no, now's not the time to think about this. We must pick up Shion-san and Emil-san who are both still outside the city."

"I think they will come back, but we have to make sure ~nano!"

"Rona, sorry, but please take care of Renya for a while."

While watching the backs of Croire and Frau as they ran away, she held onto Renya's limp body, who had fainted probably because he expended all his power to activate the crest, and began to slowly cast healing arts after deciding that she'd do what she was capable of.

<No way...for the resources, which had been scattered by adding them little by little to his huge mana pool, to be released in an almost raw state once he ran out of mana... Master, isn't this slightly dangerous? Using something like resources with the mortal body of a human...eh!? Is this still connected? P-Please disconnect this a b-bit faster!>

Rona felt somehow lightheaded because she couldn't catch up with the situations, and as she was mostly preoccupied with Renya, she didn't notice the still existing connection via thought with Giliel, and the truly faint voice that whispered its complaints.