



The one noticing it first was Renya. As he was currently in the middle of pouring mana into the magic crest covering the city's interior, he could somehow grasp what was going on inside the city.

As soon as responses that seemed to align with Shion and the other girls climbed the huge trees growing all over the place, they carelessly severed the branches at top, allowing Dra-kun to fly out through the freed-up space.

Renya had also known that Dra-kun was still stuck around that area. But, since he had no means to lower him to the ground, he'd decided to leave him up there until they arrived in Klinge. Just when he was wondering what they were planning, Croire jumped down in front of him. Once she explained the countermeasure they had decided to adopt moments ago against the barrier sealing off the demon domain, Renya got dumbstruck by the overly sloppy method.

Renya felt like a barrier would be way too crude if you could pass it by digging a tunnel underneath, but having said that, even the idea to dig a hole big enough for this huge flying mass to pass through raised the question whether it didn't go way, way overboard.

But, he had no right to complain about it. After all, he was currently preoccupied with recovering his mana and couldn't move about, on top of not having an alternative plan to the one proposed by Shion and the other three. Since Renya had the belief that it was presumptuous of a person, who couldn't do anything, to complain to someone trying to do something, he had no choice but to pray that things would work out, no matter what method it might be.

"Being unable to do anything is really tough."

Contrary to Renya who was assailed by feelings that could be described as bitterness or irritation, Croire sighed, cast her eyes down, and responded, "If I consider that forest will be blown away soon, I get all depressed."

"Ah...well, I guess we should plant new trees then to replace those that are going to get destroyed, once we get back to Klinge."

While wondering whether he should come with her once to restore the share of forest that's going to be gouged out, Renya stroked Croire's head to at least soothe her mind a bit.

Shion and the others, who weren't aware of this at all, explained the circumstances to Liaris and Az, partially dragged them along against their will, got on the back of Dra-kun after rescuing him out of the overgrown foliage, and broke away from the city.

The best part about Dra-kun's flight speed was him being easily able to leave the city behind. Moreover, Shion, Emil, and Frau weren't regarded as enemies by Dra-kun, but once he got urged on by such terrifyingly threatening beings, even Dra-kun frantically flew as fast as possible, and left the city in the lurch as he dashed across the sky.

"D-Dra-kun, c-calm down a bit..."

His flight speed was so fast that Liaris got worried about him being able to control it, but as any delay in the arrival at the barrier's wall meant less time to build the necessary trench, Shion and Emil entreated Liaris to keep flying at top speed, even if it was somewhat unreasonable.

Only Frau sat cross-legged on Dra-kun's head with her arms folded, continuing to ponder about something during the entire flight.

"Frau, you're doing well to sit in such a narrow space. Make sure to not fall off, okay?"

"I think it'd be wise to stop thinking of Frau as normal silky at this point, you know?"

Shion looked at Emil while rolling her eyes as if regarding it as pointless to mention it at this point, but there was a clear difference in the level of recognition between someone actually spelling something out, and everyone present vaguely thinking something. If someone didn't really know about silkies, they might get the wrong impression of silkies being like that, if Frau claimed to be one. There shouldn't be any real harm in that, but if you didn't always make sure that silkies were correctly recognized for what they were, things would become troublesome if something happened. Looking at it from this angle, Emil's comment might have been something that had to be mentioned by someone sooner or later anyway.

"But, if that's the case, it leaves the question open how to perceive Frau then, right?"

"Hmm, you're right. You can think of her as a soul, which is almost perfect in a certain sense, as she used a silky as a core, and compensated for the lacking parts by absorbing countless souls while cutting out the undesired parts."

Emil brooded for some time while mumbling, "If you look at the shape of her soul, it's easy to tell," but eventually squeezed out, somewhat reluctantly or unhappily, with a sulky tone, "It might be weird to hear that out of my mouth as a researcher, but I've been wondering whether that hasn't become something close to a god by now," while donning an expression that made clear she knew she was being watched by Shion from the side.

All living beings possessed some kind of deficiency in their soul. That was a common trait shared among all souls in this world, but what if there existed a soul without any deficiencies? What if a soul with an exemplary shape of a true globe, which had cut off all unnecessary parts of itself as if to set all of the countless parameters to the same value, really existed?

According to Emil, the owner of such a soul could probably only be described as a god.

"It's a theory I can understand, but...close means that it's not perfect, right?"

"Yes. I mean, Frau doesn't possess any divinity or some such, does she?" Emil evaluated with a grin.

Being told so, Shion directed her eyes to Frau's back, then looked back at Emil, who was sitting next to her, and nodded in agreement. But right at that moment, two objects similar to pebbles came flying from the front, hitting the two on their foreheads. The objects themselves were small and light, not causing much of a damage at the places they hit, but once Shion looked at the object that had fallen on her knees while rubbing her forehead, she identified it as small candy.

As Shion picked the candy up, wondering why something like that, Frau yelled from atop Dra-kun's head, "I can hear you loud and clearly ~noo!"

"Ah, sorry, but why candy?" Shion asked, guessing from the direction the candy came from that Frau must have thrown it.

With her conjecture appearing to be correct, Frau answered while straining her voice, "Rather than blabbing about unnecessary things, you might as well eat a candy ~no."

"Oki, thanks." Frankly giving her thanks, Shion tossed the candy into her mouth.

The gentle sweetness, which immediately spread inside her mouth, allowed to infer that a fairly good sugar had been used for making this candy. Sugar itself was a spice that could be obtained on the market commonly, but ordinary sugar had lots of impurities, a bad color, and many components blemishing its taste, but this pure sweetness surprised Shion who estimated this sugar to be of a finer quality than the one she had eaten when she still was a princess.

"Was sugar being produced in Klinge?"

Shion knew that sugar of such quality wasn't available on the markets of the Trident Principality. Frau proudly threw out her chest in response to Shion's thoughtful question.

"It's homemade ~nano."

"...Ah, somehow this made me doubt the quality for a moment there..."

"What do you mean by that ~no!?"

Shion felt it'd be cruel to spit it out, and thus continued to suck on it just like that, but she grimaced as what she had perceived as gentle sweetness moments ago now tasted somewhat black for some reason.

"Frau created it with all her effort ~no! Shion-ane-sama, you're really mean ~no!"

"Somehow it feels like the blackness has gone up in level, doesn't it?"

"Emil-ane-sama, you're also mean ~no! If you're too mean, I'll turn you into a sugar ingredient ~no!"

Once they were told that they'd be chopped up, melted, and turned into goo, Shion and Emil both thought that Frau was probably joking, but it'd be scary if she was serious by any chance.

"I feel kinda nervous..."

"Leave them be, Liaris. It's best to not get involved with them."

Just as Liaris was about to carelessly cut into their conversation, Az stopped her by hugging her close.

Since Shion could somewhat understand the future tragedy that could happen if someone got in-between Frau and Emil's silly bantering without resolving themselves, she believed Az's judgment and action to be correct, but in addition to that, Shion became slightly jealous over Az's affection towards Liaris after being shown such a scene.

"I think we're also being loved, though." Emil said, seemingly having guessed something from her atmosphere or look.

While Frau looked in the flight direction, pretending to not have heard anything, Shion tilted her head, harboring a bit of doubt.

"You sure?"

"No doubt. If not, he wouldn't have come along with you over such a long distance to get back a person with a character like mine while going even as far as suppressing a battlefield." Emil laughed, and added, "If it were anyone else, he'd have just abandoned them."

Shion wasn't so sure about that. Even though he looked unfeeling and cool-headed on top of having the bad habit of getting easily swept along by his emotions and the circumstances, he was here for some reason with a face telling anyone that it was only natural for him to be here. Shion couldn't help but believe that he'd go rescue even a distant acquaintance without doing a loss-win-calculation first. He'd do that without any reason, and after finishing it, brag about it as something he simply wanted to do. Shion couldn't imagine that he, who felt like an incarnation of chaos, harbored any special feelings about her, but as there might be things an onlooker could tell but not someone involved, she stopped doubting at this point.

'At the least, it's not like he dislikes me, seeing how he allows me to be by his side, so he might also notice my feelings someday.

"It's like, what are you saying at this point after kissing?"

"Isn't that because they haven't properly crossed the line? It sounds like she also failed at creeping into his bed at night as well, no?"

"Next time I'll pack plenty of aphrodisiac into the food ~no."

"You think that works on Renya?"

Due to the conversation by the outsiders reaching her ears, Shion was at her wits' end, wondering whether she couldn't even ponder in silence. In front of her, who had decided to be very careful about the food for the time being, Frau looked down towards the ground, seemingly having noticed something.

"I think the wall should be around here ~no!"

Shion and Emil tried to look down at Dra-kun's flanks in response to Frau's comment and her pointing downwards. They felt like they could see a place, where the trees inside the forest were gone in a straight line as if something was there, slightly ahead of Dra-kun's flight path. It stretched

out in a vertical direction when compared to Dra-kun's flight direction, and you couldn't tell just how far it continued, even when looking at it from quite high up in the sky on Dra-kun's back.

"It looks like it, but it doesn't seem like a wall is here." Emil strained her eyes, looking at the empty space.

Frau, who had been pondering something, eventually lifted her head as if having come up with something, tapped Dra-kun's head, and forcefully pointed in a direction.

"Dra-kun, full speed ahead ~nano!"

"Hey!? Frau, just what...!?"

Shion tried to ask in order to find out what Frau was thinking, but her words were drowned out by Dra-kun's sudden acceleration. Due to Dra-kun suddenly speeding up without receiving any kind of order from Liaris, who was supposedly his dragoon, all of them wondered what to think about this, but there was another problem they had to settle first.

"Frau! If the wall materializes, we're going to crash, you know!?"

"No matter how sturdy Dra-kun might be as a dragon, that'd be way too much, okay!?"

Dra-kun kept raising his speed as if to not let the panicking voices of Emil and Shion reach him. As he advanced at a speed that made all of them think that things wouldn't end nicely if he crashed into a wall at this speed, only Frau didn't show any surprise or panic on Dra-kun, and kept tapping his head while single-mindedly staring ahead.

"We're going to pass through the place where the barrier had been!"

"Everyone, please hold tight onto Dra-kun!"

Even without being told so by Liaris, everyone except for Frau was glued to Dra-kun's back. Shion squeezed her eyes shut, having resolved her for a terrifying impact to follow very soon, but even after some time had passed, no shock assailed her body. After waiting a little longer, Shion carefully opened her eyes.

What she could see through the gap in her eyelids was the scenery quickly passing by as if to indicate Dra-kun's continuous, high flight speed, and how Frau was loudly laughing atop of his head.

"Ahahaha! Stupid demon king ~nano! Stupid, stupid!"

"What's going on...?"

As Frau showed no indication of wanting to explain anything, Emil muttered an answer to Shion's aimless question.

"This is...what do you call it? The condition to activate the barrier has changed for the sake of dealing with the flying city, so the barrier didn't show any reaction to tiny beings like us, kind of?"

If Renya had been here, he might have explained it as a pressure sensitivity device not reacting to the weight of a child if it was set to that of an adult, but with him not being here, Shion did her utmost to understand what had happened from what Emil had explained to her.

"Would you understand it if I explain it as an old man being able to read big letters, but being unable to read them, if they're small? In short, I think the barrier simply hasn't registered our presence."

"O-Okay?"

"If you set the barrier's activation condition to anything that passes, even a small insect would cause it to activate, right? That's why it has been set to respond if someone with a certain weight and size passes, but compared to the city, we're tiny and thus don't meet the conditions."

Thanks to Emil's patient explanation, Shion finally grasped what had happened. At the same she wondered whether it wouldn't be possible to stop the city, split up its residents to carry them over with Dra-kun's friends or something else, and pass the barrier in such a way.

Emil had apparently thought the same, but shook her head after noticing that this solution would lead to too many problems.

"Splitting up the people would surely not work. First off, we can't immediately prepare enough dragons to transport all residents, and if it takes a lot of time, the demon king would realize what's going on. Even the method of having Dra-kun do many roundtrips likely won't work for the same reason."

In the first place, the precondition of preparing this many dragons would be odd to begin with, but still, if they used Dra-kun and Renya's power, it'd somehow work, most likely. But, by adding the time condition, it was impossible to put it into practice.

Shion wondered whether they couldn't use some kind of plan to deal with this fact. Because she thought that there might be a simpler method than digging a huge trench into the ground, Shion pondered whether they couldn't use these facts in some way, but Frau's loud laughter continued as if to interrupt her thinking.

"Frau? Just what is going on with you...?"

"Ahahahaha ~nano! I'm fine, Shion-ane-sama ~no! The problem is as good as gone with this, even without any need to ponder deeply about it ~no! Everything will be resolved if we head over to Klinge just like this ~no!"

"Eh? To Klinge?"

Frau's words meant that she had given up on the plan on digging a trench, causing Shion to become confused. Because Frau stated that it was no problem so far as it went, Shion believed that she had some kind of plan in mind, but she had absolutely no clue what that simple solution might be.

"While at it, the city's landing point seems to have been set as well ~nano! Come on, Dra-kun, fly as

fast as you can until your wings fall out ~no!"

"No, I mean, I'm the dragoon here, so, umm..."

"Stop it, Liaris. That's a being you mustn't get in touch with."

Once again Az restrained Liaris by hugging her as she was about to file a strong protest towards Frau who gave instructions to Dra-kun over her head as dragoon.

While vacantly wondering whether it was about high time to retort, "aren't you just looking for reasons to hug Liaris?", Shion accepted the idea of relying on others to solve the problem, believing that all would be fine if she left things to Frau who was hurrying on Dra-kun by cockily tapping his head.

