



On the other hand, Renya was ascertaining the condition of his body while surveying Jade's city, which Shion and the others had left earlier, and the area around it from the balcony of the room situated at the highest point of Jade's mansion. Next to him stood Croire who had followed outside after saying that she was worried about him.

The feeling of mana being drained didn't really stop, but as he sensed that his mana was gradually recovering, Renya could actually experience how his physical condition was returning to its former state, albeit very slowly. Renya suspected that the reason for him to keep recovering despite keeping this huge city afloat might be grounded in his aggregate amount of mana growing little-by-little as it recovered in addition to the consumption decreasing.

Jade, who had been looking all over the place in order to check the condition of his city next to Renya, turned his eyes to Renya's face, donning an expression as if he was seeing something unbelievable.

"I don't really get any joy out of a passionate stare by a guy, you know?" Renya commented while feeling uncomfortable from Jade's gaze which you could as well describe as clingy.

Without averting his eyes, Jade responded, "Don't worry, I don't have any such fetishes."

"Don't stare at me like this then. If you feel the urge to stare either way, you can settle for that lovely girl over here." Renya spat out while pointing with his eyes at Croire who was snuggling up to him.

Hearing his words, Croire immediately became embarrassed.

However, without the slightest change on his face and in his voice, Jade indifferently replied, "I have no interest in thin elves."

"Wai-, what was that!?"

"Ah, I see. Because it doesn't sway, right?"

"Even you, Renya!? You're hurting my feelings here, okay!? The same applies for you as well, demon!"

Croire was on the verge of flaring up at the demon Jade and Renya, a man outside any norm as a human, although any other life-form would have probably deemed it the smarter option to run away while throwing such concepts as shame or honor to the wind. In response, both voiced out the same line in perfect harmony for some mysterious reason.

""It's not like I've been talking about your chest in particular.""

"Ugh..."

"A slim body should be something similar to a characteristic of elves, and my opinion should be the

general view of the public. It's not like I've pinpointed it to a special part of you."

"Not swaying was about your skirt. That one is way too much of an impregnable fortress, you know?"

Renya felt like it was slowly getting pathetic to tease Croire with this gag, but among the women around him, only Croire seemed to be the perfect target for that joke. Moreover, since it was the first time for Jade to make that kind of a joke, Renya wanted her to endure on this occasion. On the other hand, Croire, who thought that she might collapse emotionally and in reality, prevented her fall by tightly holding onto Renya's arm while putting strength into her look and declaring, "I-I do have parts t-that sway!"

"...Enlighten me then."

"My hair, for example..."

'She must have died internally after saying this.

At the same time as she made that statement, all power vanished from her eyes and she slid down on the floor. While looking down at Croire, Renya thought that it must be quite difficult to always put on airs, treating it completely as someone else's affair.

"Leaving that aside, why are you staring this way when you're not hoping for a feast of the eyes?"

Even throughout the whole chain of events just now, Jade's eyes had never stopped being fixated on Renya's face. When Renya tried to ask him for the reason while not feeling all that happy about Jade's persistent stare, the demon answered with a calm voice, "You'll naturally end up staring at something unbelievable if it's in front of your eyes."

"Don't treat other people like monsters..."

"A monster would still count as cute in comparison to you."

Renya thought that this assessment might be overboard, but Jade continued with a very serious expression, "Simply not running out of mana while spending enough to let a mass as big as this city fly is already worthy of pure admiration, but how should I describe if not monster when you start recovering your mana on top of all that?"

"Being evaluated like that by a demon makes me wonder whether I should feel honored or offended..." Even though he answered like that, Renya's eyes concentrated on the flight direction of the city.

Quite some time had passed ever since Shion's group had departed on Dra-kun. Considering Dra-kun's flight speed, it wouldn't be strange for them to have arrived at the predicted barrier manifestation spot by now.

"Can you feel anything, Croire?"

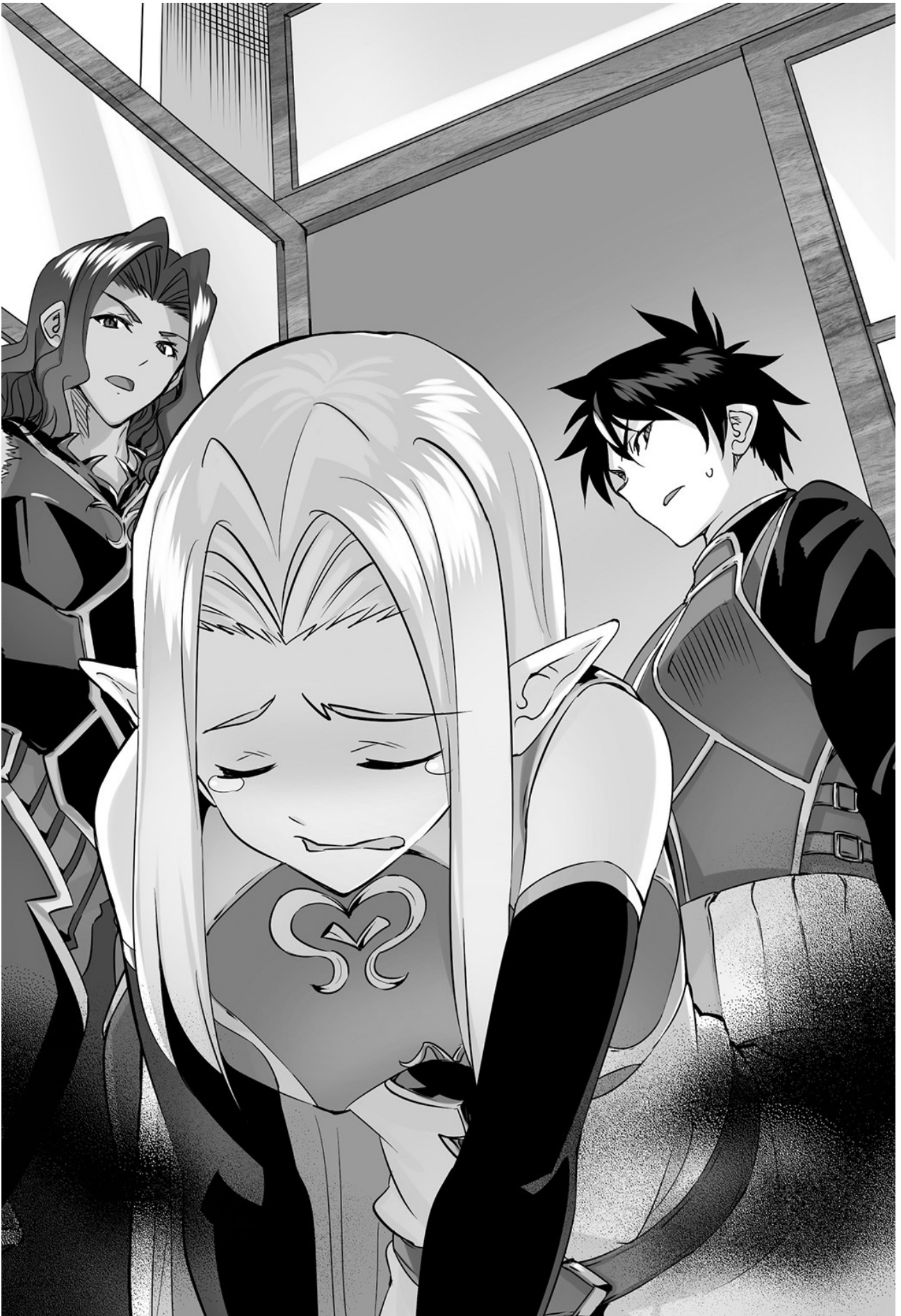
"A faint feeling of despair..."

Renya let his shoulders drop slightly because of Croire's gloomy reply. While grabbing Croire's arm and pulling her up as she hadn't yet stood back up, Renya came up with some words that might improve Croire's mood, "Don't worry. I don't judge women by their thickness or their swaying parts."

"If this was supposed to be a consolation, I'd say they missed their point, don't you think?"

It was a remark based on what Renya had concluded in his own way, but it seemed dissatisfying for Croire. And yet, seemingly having recovered some of her mood, even if only a little, Croire got up with Renya's help, and turned her attention in the flight direction of the city in order to find an answer to Renya's question.

"I feel like we'd immediately see something outrageous, even before I sense anything, if Shion's group were to do something."



"You've got a point...they have Shion, Emil, and Frau with them after all..."

Depending on the circumstances, those three were far more dangerous than the likes of a demon king in Renya's eyes. Since they had departed to destroy something, it'd be no wonder at all if something outlandish were to happen at any moment, just as Croire said.

However, there were no conspicuous movements in the flight direction of the city with only the forest endlessly continuing to stretch out.

"I can't feel the sensation of the trees in the forest disappearing either." Croire mumbled under her breath while straining her eyes to stare ahead.

"Explosions aren't visible either."

"Isn't there something...like...yea, something like a black presence or some such?"

"You people...are talking about your friends, aren't you?" Jade cut into Croire and Renya's conversation, somehow feeling like drawing back from them, but the two kept gazing into the far distance without even trying to answer Jade's question.

"What do you think?"

Renya asked without specifying what he meant. Croire pondered for a little while, and answered, "It's hard to imagine that they failed. We're talking about that crazy lineup. Considering it like that, maybe they succeeded with a smart, quiet method...?"

"No, that's out of the question."

Due to Renya's instantaneous denial, it was this time Croire who let her shoulders slump down, before continuing, "Or maybe they came up with another method. That's all I can think of at least."

"Another method..."

"I think that a failure on their side is in the realm of possibility, but even in such a case, they should be alright. It's not like Shion and the others would be affected by falling off Dra-kun."

Renya felt conflicted on judging whether those words were an expression of trust or irresponsible resignation, but he had no objection to the content of what Croire was saying.

"If there's going to be a problem, it'd be on our side, huh?"

Renya and Croire were naturally confident that they'd be able to somehow cope with the situation, even if Jade's city were to break apart in mid-air or crash into the barrier. But, there was no way they could expect the same from the demons who were likely huddling together in this city at present while driven by fear. A part of the might be able to escape by themselves or get rescued by others, but the majority would likely get swallowed up by the city's destruction, and pass away then and there.

"If I release my control of the city for a moment, I might be able to somehow destroy the barrier by

myself, but..."

"I feel like you said something preposterous just now? That's definitely not a line I'd expect out of a human's mouth, you know?"

"If the other side tries to destroy the city by hitting it with the barrier's wall, we won't be able to do anything."

"I've already considered the option to cover the entire city with a barrier and let it fall to the ground in such a case."

'Even if they adopt the method of crashing the wall into the city by using the generation of the barrier like a shutter that's being raised or lowered, it might be possible to make it float back up as long as the city itself doesn't get destroyed,' Renya assessed.

He argued that it might be an option to release the control of the flight spell temporarily and route all his power into defense, but Croire rejected that idea.

"Even if you were to protect the city itself from the impact after crashing down, greater parts of the people in the city will die after getting smacked against the floor or a wall, I think."

"Demons sure are frail then..."

"Wait a sec there! Be it humans, elves, beastmen, or dragonoids...most of them would die from something like that!"

"Besides, I believe you'd need the same amount of mana as you had to use earlier to get it to float again. Would you be able to handle that, Renya?"

Renya honestly shook his head in response.

As his ability had grown thanks to the massive consumption of mana, he might now have an aggregate amount that would make it easier for him to launch the city up again compared to the first time, but Renya was currently in the middle of recovering and not fully rested. If asked whether he could provide the mana necessary to launch the spell again in such a state, he had no choice but to deny it.

"Finding the time to recover enough mana to launch the spell again while having people with you that need to be protected right in the middle of the Miasma Forest would be an impossible undertaking. I can't really recommend attempting it."

"Looking at it like this, demons, who're always feared as dreadful existences, unexpectedly aren't all that tough, are they?"

"Even demons have all sorts of different people! Stop assessing people while using yourselves as standard!"

"No, I'm judging with Emil as standard."

Once Renya answered, probably feeling bad about having continuously ignored Jade who repeatedly raised his voice in protest, Jade fell silent while donning an indescribable expression. If he were to honestly voice out his thoughts, he'd probably ask to not be lumped together with 'that', but he appeared to be quite hesitant to use such wording for his blood-related sister, and since he had no means to object without speaking up here, his only option was to remain silent. That was the impression Jade gave Renya.

"Well, let's leave the teasing of the serious lord at this."

"Hey, elf..."

"We have to come up with some kind of method and put it into action. Time is running...uh?"  
Croire's expression changed in the middle of speaking.

While hugging her own shoulders, Croire shivered while faltering to speak. Seeing her like that, Renya became confused.

"What's wrong?"

"Just now...something cold has...you haven't felt anything, Renya?"

Renya focused his concentration and scanned their surroundings, but he could sense a hint of something that would make him shiver with just his perception alone. However, he tilted his head as he did feel some strange discomfort.

He had a hunch that it was some presence he had sensed in the past, but he couldn't immediately recall what it was.

"What's up? Is something here?"

"What is it? Just what the hell is it?"

Jade was the only one not perceiving anything, but even Renya couldn't give an explanation since he didn't know what that something could be despite knowing that something was nearby. He felt like the true identity was on the tip of his tongue, but faster than Renya, who searching his memories while feeling quite irked, Croire apparently managed to realize the true identity of that presence, but seemingly unable to properly voice out its name, she released her hands from hugging her own shoulders, and held down her forehead with her left hand while spinning around the index finger of her right hand.

"Umm...look, umm...that is...the something Frau brought with her from the beach...umm..."

"Beach? You mean the Gordonal Barony?"

There was no other beach Renya had visited in this world so far. And if it came to things Frau had brought back from there, only one being would meet that condition.

"In that case, this presence is..."

At this point, Renya finally remembered its name. It inhabited the space between the continents and the bottom of this flat world. An ultra-big life-form which stretched its huge amount of super long tentacles across all oceans of this world.

"The katurul!? No, but we're on land right now...wait, it also came to Klinge?"

If it was the katurul said to span its tentacles all over the world and considering this here was the demon continent, located in the central part of the world where the katurul's main body seemed to be, then it wasn't all that strange for the katurul to pierce its tentacles through the ground to make them come out on the surface. However, Renya had absolutely no clue what the katurul was planning by extending its tentacles right in the middle of a land mass.

Renya wondered why the katurul, which was difficult to communicate with, would wriggle its tentacles around here, but then he remembered Frau.

"...I don't want to believe it, but..."

"Are you saying you have an idea what might be going on?"

"Doesn't this mean that Shion's group has passed through the barrier in some way or another...and returned to Klinge?"

The end of a katurul tentacle was wobbling around in the room with the spell formula of the transfer gate after having been extended all the way to Klinge instead of a transfer gate path to the Gordonal Barony. And assuming Frau was capable to arrive at that place, and assuming she was able to make a request to the katurul through the tentacle with some kind of method,

"I have a really bad feeling about this."

"I'm with you on that."

"I don't understand what you're talking about, but I agree with the part about the bad feeling."

The instant the three had reached an agreement, they could see from the balcony how the earth trembled and the trees shook. And then a swarm of countless huge tentacles thrust out through the ground with a force as if to pierce through heaven while raising thick clouds of dust.

"Uwaah..."

"It might be too late, but Jade, tell the residents to not look outsi...nevermind, I guess it's too late after all."

Looking down on Jade who had fallen down with a thud after fainting and was now completely still, Renya only prayed that there would be no casualties among the residents and soldiers.