

Chapter 4 Part 4



At the moment when the roar reached their ears, Reid shouted at everyone.

"Millis, Wiesel! Take those injured and go deeper!!"

Upon seeing the armored dragon charging towards them with a thunderous roar, the two carried the wounded and headed deeper into the cave.

As Reid dragged the stumbling Faregh — a heavy impact and crushing sound was heard from the entrance of the cave. It was the armored dragon trying to stick its head into the cave. However, due to its large body, it could only fit its head inside, and it snarled its fangs, trying to devour Reid and the others before it.

Then, as the armored dragon roared again, Faregh let out a short scream and covered his ears.

"Eek... I-It's attacking us...!!"

"...No way. Did you guys attack it first?"

"No! We were searching, thinking that the academy had something prepared... But we didn't expect it to exist, and when we found it, my legs gave out. Then Valk and Lucas tried to help me and got injured instead... That's all...!!"

Faregh explained the situation clumsily while shedding tears.

"I'm sorry... I'm sorry...!!"

He continued to curl up and cry. It was unclear whether it was for causing the injuries to the two or for involving Reid and the others.

"I... I caused trouble...!! If I didn't suggest searching for it, thinking that there might be a large magical beast around, this wouldn't have happened...!!"

Faregh expressed his remorse while shedding tears.

Upon seeing this, Reid gently patted Faregh's head and said,

"What are you crying for, kid?"

".....Eh?"

"You could have seen it and run away, but you didn't abandon your friends and desperately fled with them while supporting them on your shoulders."

Faregh had been carrying the two while frantically trying to escape. His body was covered in dirt. He definitely had fallen several times in fear, but he could have abandoned the two and saved himself. And yet, he continued to stand up and desperately ran to save the two.

"What you did was admirable. That's when you should hold your head high."

Reid smiled at Faregh and then turned to the two behind him.

"Millis, Wiesel, can you use barrier magic while providing treatment?"

"...I have some magic tools specialized in barrier magic. Even if Millis-san uses up her magic power during the treatment, we should be fine for a while."

"Understood. Hang in there after I leave the cave."

"W-What...? You're not planning on fighting that thing, are you!?"

shouted Faregh, guessing what Reid was about to do.

"It's impossible! I tried to fight back, but that thing —"

"You mean to say that 'magic doesn't work on that thing', right?"

Cutting off Faregh's words, Reid looks at the armored dragon before him.

"It's a magical beast called 'Armament Dragon'. It feeds on mineral veins found in mountains and canyons as its main food source, absorbing metals and magic ores to create an armor-like outer shell. The shell imbued with magic power deflects and reduces the power of incoming magic attacks."

It was a story from over a millennium ago. Altein was at a disadvantage due to the magic created by the 'Sage' and was planning to use a certain magical beast as a weapon in battle. That magical beast was the dragon called 'Armament Dragon'.

After capturing the Armament Dragons, they released them on the battlefield in an attempt to counter the mages led by Vegalta. However, Altein could not control the Armament Dragons, causing massive damage to both sides.

"How... do you know something like that...?"

"Well, I just know because of various reasons."

"Either way, it's reckless to fight against that thing... We should wait for the academy to notice the situation and send reinforcements!!"

"You're right. Even if it were not the academy but Elria, who noticed the abnormality and came here, the situation would have been resolved quickly... But we don't have time to wait."

The Armament Dragon is still trying to devour them and keeps putting its head into the cave. The cave shook every time it did, and dust fell from the ceiling. It was highly likely that the cave had become compromised due to its previous attack. If they left the Armament Dragon alone, they would undoubtedly end up being buried alive.

"Wiesel, as I said before, set up a barrier once I go out."

"S-Stop it! Going alone is suicidal!!"

"Don't get me wrong. I'm not thinking of doing this with the intention of dying."

said Reid as he slowly approached the dragon's jaw.

Once upon a time, Armament Dragons caused great damage on the battlefield. Their magic immunity made it difficult for the mages of Vegalta to fight against them, and even defensive barriers and protections were useless, making it impossible to defend against them.

Altein soldiers, accompanied by Armament Dragons, were helpless and scattered, devoured and crushed by them. The battlefield was engulfed in chaos and despair.

However, the rampaging Armament Dragons were annihilated by a single man. And the man was given a title as the one who saved them from an unprecedented crisis —

"Just being a — 'Hero', is enough to win."

With those words, he raised his fist, and a metallic sound resonated. The massive body of the Armament Dragon floated up from the ground. The Armament Dragon was sent flying and rolled away from the entrance of the cave.

While watching this, Reid slowly stepped out of the cave.

"Surprisingly tough. I didn't know back when I used a sword."

Shaking his fist, he speaks to the Armament Dragon, that is lying down. A faint emotion was visible in the Armament Dragon's red eyes.

Fear.

As a living creature, it was natural for it to feel fear in the presence of a stronger being than itself. To the strongest human who was once called a 'Hero'.

"How nostalgic... When was the last time we fought?"

Against Reid, who utters such words, the Armament Dragon roared and swung its powerful arm. It was a horizontal slash that was more than enough to crush a human.

Without even tracking its movement with his eyes, Reid stopped the attack by raising his right arm —

It was an attack delivered by an overwhelming difference in size. However, even when receiving the attack, Reid did not flinch.

"Oh... no good. Other than the 'Sage', I can't remember the weaklings."

Having said that, Reid then focused his strength on his left arm. With a sensation that surged through his body, he faced the fierce-looking Armament Dragon once again —

"— And that means you're just that weak."

He punched its jaw with his fist.

There was a high-pitched sound of metal colliding, and a dull sound of flesh being hit occurred simultaneously. The huge body that flew past the trees lightly danced in the air. After the massive body fell, the ground shook, and a dust cloud rose.

"Tch... I guess I can't break through its armor."

At the sight of the Armament Dragon stumbling to its feet, Reid clicked his tongue.

Although the Armament Dragon itself also showed fear towards Reid and had stopped moving, it did not show any intention to escape, and judging by its red eyes showing anger, it will likely continue to fight back.

And that's not all —

ooo ——— !!

Resonating roars were echoing from far away.

It seems like there is more than one Armament Dragon in the area. At least, there might be several... Perhaps even the possibility of more than ten.

"...It would be a pain in the ass to deal with all of them barehanded."

It would not be difficult for Reid alone to get through this. However, it would be difficult to escape from a group of Armament Dragons in a situation where there are injured people. If they continued to fight in the vicinity of the cave, there is a possibility that the cave would collapse due to the aftermath.

As Reid was pondering on what to do —

Like rain falling from the sky, a light whip wrapped around the Armament Dragon's body.

After being caught off guard, the Armament Dragon rampages while roaring, but as if to capture its movements, the light whip binds its massive body.

"—— Sorry, I'm late."

In a calm voice from above, Reid looked up.

"Oh, Elria."

"Yes. When I went to hand over the dolls, Alma-sensei told me, '*We have confirmed multiple unidentified magical beasts, so if you find any students, please bring them back*'."

"If there are multiple, then it's not just one."

"I don't know the exact number, but it seems like there are enough Armament Dragons that all the teachers in charge are dealing with them. They need more manpower and fighting power, so I was told to have my restrictions lifted, too."

After dismounting from her staff, Elria turned her gaze to Millis, who was in the cave.

"Millis, maintain the barrier as it is. Did I make myself clear?"

"Y-Yes! I will maintain the barrier!"

"Mm, good girl."

After murmuring softly, right after that —

The cave in front of them disappeared as if the entire space had been gouged out.

Spatial Transfer.

Moreover, it was a large-scale teleportation magic that moved the entire cave.

"With this, we have secured everyone in our class."

"Well, couldn't we have just teleported those guys alone?"

"That's because... there are Armament Dragons all over the place, so the surrounding magic power is unstable. It would be a mess if we just teleported them only."

"But isn't it crazy to teleport the whole cave?"

"...I don't want to hear that from someone punching an Armament Dragon bare-handed."

Elria pouts, and a voice is heard from her waist.

'Elria-chan? There are students inside the cave that was teleported here, right?'

"Yes, there are five people other than Reid. Have you checked all the students?"

'In that case, we have confirmed all the students who were taking the examination, including the other classes. Some are injured, but there are no students in critical condition. All the teachers have also withdrawn.'

"Mm, that's good to hear."

Elria nods as she listens to Alma's voice from her magic tool.

"Then, we'll blow everything away now, so protect the students."

'Huh? Wait a minute, what are you planning to do?'

"Since it's disadvantageous for mages to fight Armament Dragons, Reid and I will blow them all away now."

'No, wait! I didn't say you could do that ——'

Elria cuts off communication with the magic tool and rushes over.

"Reid... it's been a while. Don't you want to get serious for a change?"

asked Elria with a slightly proud expression.

"Serious, you say... If I hit with all my strength, I could take down one or two ——"

"Yes. That's why I'll make sure you can get serious."

Elria raises her wand with a smile. Immediately after, a change occurs in the space in front of them. The concentrated magical light flowing through the wand focuses on one point and takes on a clear shape.

"I've been thinking about it for a long time. How can Reid fight at full power again... How can he smile like he used to when we were fighting?"

Unlike a thousand years ago, Reid has no weapons he can use now. Weapons these days cannot withstand Reid's power.

"I thought that if it was created from my magic, it could withstand your power."

The shape that the concentrated magical light takes on is a 'sword'. A greatsword that surpasses Reid's height.

It is an existence that can be called another version of himself, having passed through countless battlefields together.

"It's late, but —— it's a congratulatory gift for your successful enrollment."

said Elria while blushing and turning her face away.

The moment Reid saw it... he could not help but burst out laughing.

"...**HAHAHA**, I see! So it's a gift for my enrollment!!"

"W-Why are you laughing...!?"

"No... I really think it's just like you. Only you would think of making a sword with magic and calling it a congratulatory gift for enrollment."

"B-Because... I thought Reid would be the happiest about it...!"

Maintaining the magic, Elria said it with her face turning bright red.

However —

"It's not just about being happy."

Feeling a surge of strength in his right arm, Reid held the 'sword' in his hand.

Despite the sensation of the magic power disappearing as it opposed Reid's strength, Elria is able to maintain its shape through the continuous use of magic.

"Your magic, which you used to fight me, is what makes it so durable."

The sword was created using the technique of 'Weighted Multiplication Deployment', which combines a myriad of spells, devised by Elria to defeat Reid. It is perfectly reproduced not only in size and shape but also the detail, such as the fine scars on the blade. Perhaps it is based on Elria's own memories.

It can be called a — <<Magic Sword>>, created by the 'Sage'.

The 'Sage', who was once a sworn enemy, controlled the <<Magic Sword>> while standing beside him.

"Come to think of it... this is the first time I'm fighting together with Reid."

"That's true. We were enemies, after all."

"But now we're together."

"Yeah. A united front in a world one thousand years in the future."

In front of Elria's smiling face, Reid lifted the <<Magic Sword>> as if to show it off.

"Now then... I've received such a good present."

The moment he grips the <<Magic Sword>> with his hands, a surge of power flows through his entire body, causing crackling lightning sounds in response to Elria's magic.

He was not looking at the Armament Dragon that was dying in front of him. The 'Hero' was focused on something far more significant.

"I'm going to show you my —— 'true strength'."

They had fought against each other many times in the past. However, Reid had never shown Elria all of his powers. And that was because Reid was a 'Hero'.

He represented Altein and was willing to risk his life to protect the land and its people. Not just his own countrymen, but also others.

The 'Sage' who envisioned the future, drastically changed the world with new technology called 'Magic' and sought to protect that future.

They could not afford to lose that future to futile acts of war. To protect everything and to prevent harm, they had to restrain their power.

However —— the current Reid is a nobody.

"Even though it's been a while, the body doesn't forget anything!!"

Reid bares his teeth and lets out a gleeful roar. His unique magic power surged and exploded, crushing everything around him.

With just the motion of holding his greatsword deeply at his waist, the pure 'power' overflowing from Reid was too much for the ground to bear as it sank under his feet.

"Watch closely —— Elria Caldwen."

Instead of calling her 'Sage', he speaks the name of a young girl who he admires and reveres as a worthy opponent, as someone who desires to continue fighting from the bottom of his heart.

"This is my —— 'true strength'!!"

Immediately after he declared that, Reid swung his greatsword with great force. Then — the world before them was engulfed by overwhelming ‘violence’.

A blow that forcibly obliterated the existence of the world itself.

A serious blow was delivered by the one who bore the name of the strongest, the ‘Hero’.

After watching the scenes unfold in front of her —

“————”

Elria was captivated by the sight and became speechless.



There was nothing there. The solid ground, which should have been sturdy, had been gouged out to the depths of the earth. The forest that had dyed the earth deep green for countless years had disappeared. Not even its shadow remained. White clouds that hung in the blue sky were split apart as if to indicate the path of 'violence'. Even the sun floating high up in the sky had its light twisted and distorted.

It was an endless horizon.

What is left was — —

"— — Did my 'true strength' exceed your imagination?"

Only one human, carrying a greatsword on his shoulder and wearing a delighted smile.

Looking at his figure, Elria returned his words with a smile.

"Yeah, it was amazing."

"Could you give me a bit more praise?"

"It was so amazing that all I can say is 'amazing'."

"Well, that's a passing grade, I guess."

As he said that with a laugh, Elria squinted her eyes happily.

"...Reid always seems to have the most fun when fighting."

"Oh? Is that so?"

"Yeah. But... I'm sorry, it's not a sword you can keep using."

The greatsword he was carrying was gradually diminishing. Even though it was made by Elria's magic, it could not withstand Reid's magic power completely and would disintegrate and disappear if Elria stopped controlling it. However, Reid shook his head calmly.

"What, you thought I laughed because I finally got to fight with a sword after a long time?"

".....Is that not it?"

"No. It's true that I was happy, but..."

Reid's laughter during battle was not just because fighting was enjoyable. He was not laughing from the bottom of his heart just because of that. Most important of all — —

"— — It's because I'm with you that I'm always having fun and smiling."

Yes, he answered with a broad smile.