

## **Chapter 187 - It seems to be Events in the Demon King's Castle**

On the same day, at the same time when Renya blew away the remains of the black armor at the capital of the dragonoids, cries of pain echoed in a wide, empty space.

That dark hall, where the sun never reached, was said to be located in the center of the sole, huge continent on this world since ancient times. A domain in the center that connected the territories where the four races lived. It's the land ruled by a race possessing violet hair and referred to as demons. If one were to speak about buildings situated in the heart of that land, nothing except the castle, where the demon king lived, would come to mind.

Usually that castle had no lord. But, matching the timing of the hero's descent on the world, a king would be born from among the demons, taking the name of demon king. That demon king would become the lord of that castle.

At the time when there was no lord, the demon king's castle would remain completely deserted, but even throughout eternity, its majesty didn't wane. Without knowing who might have built it and when, it would always throw its huge shadow on the land.

At present a lord lived in that demon king's castle.

Many demons were hanging with ropes casually tied around their necks all over the castle where many monsters had gathered.

To the trained eye it would be probably obvious that some of those demons were those who were called influential even among the demons that had raised their names as candidates to be the next demon king. They were the ones who opposed the enthronement of the current demon king and thus were consigned to oblivion by the demon king himself.

The present demon king was recognized as such in both name and reality by personally getting rid of them.

It wasn't a rare occurrence in history for other demons to oppose a demon king's enthronement. It was something like a customary event following the naming of a demon king whose power was all that mattered, but normally a demon king, who originated from powerful demons, would make the demons that opposed him yield without going as far as stealing their lives, as it wouldn't be good to lower the strength of the demons as a whole.

However, this generation's demon king was different.

Without forgiving the demons that went against him, he stole their lives, ripped off their authority, put ropes around their necks, hung them at the walls all over his own castle, and left them to rot.

That deed was the height of madness even by the demons' standards. The demon king's name turned into a synonym for calamity for the demons.

The person, who was breathing roughly in pain while seizing his chest on the throne in a hall located in the center of the demon king's castle, was that very demon king himself, Stolas Vasargo.

His clothes could have been somehow described as a suit worn by a company employee if Renya had been here. He had put on a black jupon above a white shirt, and wore a mantle with a collar.

His looks could be called graceful. It wasn't that he didn't give one a slightly cruel impression, but his slender face and the sharp eyes looked well enough that there would be no objection even if he called himself a fairly handsome man, if he were on the human continent.

He wore his hair knotted in the back, and although they were violet as characteristic of a demon, the violet color was pale, and tinged with a silver hue. Violet hair with a tinge of silver was a phenomenon that almost never manifested itself among demons, but it wasn't as though it never happened. Demons, who were born while possessing that trait, generally had low abilities.

The fact that one would be labeled as incompetent for nothing but this trait alone in the Vasargo family, which was reasonably famous for having produced many influential people even among the demons, was easy to imagine for someone who knew those circumstances.

Moreover, although faintly, golden hair was also mixed into his pale violet hair. This was a trait which was impossible for demons to have. Even if there were different shades of the color, people born as demons always had violet hair.

This phenomenon manifested itself a little while after he took the seat of demon king. Among the demons it was rumored that it might be an old phenomenon taking place after becoming the demon king, but no one besides the demon king himself and another, completely different being knew the truth.

"Your Majesty! What happened!?"

The soldiers, who were on watch, gathered due to the demon king's painful voice reverberating through the throne hall. They were demon soldiers who definitely fell behind in comparison to the demon king and the demon king candidates, but that was owed to the comparison targets being far too outlandish. In the eyes of humans, every one of them could be called an incarnation of nightmares.

Those soldiers assembled due to the abnormal events of the demon king they must protect themselves. But, they weren't able to take a single step into the throne hall.

To enter that place, it was necessary to have the demon king's permission. Even if they might be his royal guards, they were prohibited to enter. Helplessly the soldiers called out in front of the door leading into the throne hall.

However, the words of the demon king towards the soldiers, who called out to him while worried about his safety, were filled with rage, "Don't come! No one is allowed to get close to me! Withdraw!"

"Your Majesty! Just what happened!? What was the voice..."

"Shut up! I ordered you to withdraw, soldiers!" Stolas yelled.

"But, Your Majesty..." The tenacious soldier was likely frantic to accomplish his duty.

For the royal guards, protecting the demon king ought to be the priority, no matter what happened. If the king suffered some kind of harm without them noticing it, it would be a disgrace for them. However, the words of the royal guard, who was anxious about the demon king's safety, apparently achieved nothing but worsening the demon king's mood.

"You talk too much! Don't you understand the order to withdraw!?" Stolas shouted angrily.

The head of the entreating soldier burst open like a watermelon that had been thrown on the ground. A shower of blood and flesh fell on his comrades standing behind him. The body of the headless soldier was vertically crushed as if a huge, invisible hammer smashed it from right above, drawing a bright red circle on the floor.

The royal guards needed some time to process what had happened in front of their eyes due to the all too sudden event. When they finally understood after the blood streaming out of the corpse, which had turned into a meat paste, had reached their feet while they were completely covered with flesh and blood, some among them weakly crumbled down on the spot, and yet others had their faces cramp up in fear and tried to leave the scene albeit taking only several steps.

"I won't repeat myself over and over again! If you don't want to experience the same, then fall back,

soldiers! There are plenty of substitutes for the likes of you bastards! Obey my order!" Stolas threatened.

"Y-...Yes, Your Majesty!" The soldiers, who answered thus in concert, left the place with a speed as if running away.

Only the miserable, smashed corpse of the soldier was left behind, but not a single person tried to touch it.

Very likely it would be left like that for a while. Sooner or later the unlucky person in charge of cleaning would be forced to get rid of it while lamenting over their own circumstances and suppressing nausea.

Glaring at the door with eyes full of hatred until the presences of the soldiers on the other side of the door had completely disappeared, the demon king breathed out very deeply while making a pause for a while after everyone had disappeared.

His left hand was grasping his own chest as if tearing it off. Great amounts of cold sweat were exuded from his face, traced the contour of his chin, and fell down in drops from the chin's tip. His right hand clasped the throne's armrest so strongly that it wasn't unlikely for it to get broken. Seemingly because the pain didn't ebb down, his feet were trembling strongly.

"You were quite flashy there, weren't you?"

Suddenly a carefree voice that completely didn't read the mood echoed in the hall that should be empty except for the demon king.

The demon king, who hung his head apparently because the pain assailing his chest, lifted his eyes with a startled expression, but there was no one in sight.

"Wouldn't it be better if you quickly severed the connection to your puppet?"

"I don't know the details, but...because the puppet was broken in an unusual state, I couldn't sever the path when trying..." Stolas replied.

The wording was still somewhat arrogant, but the tone of the demon king contained something similar to respect towards the voice that could be suddenly heard.

Upon the demon king's reply, laughter echoed within the space that should be empty.

"That's really a misfortune, isn't it? You have to create your puppets while properly considering these things. Hasn't it become a good lesson for you? It looks like the tuition fee was slightly costly, though."

The demon king didn't answer. Maybe because of his pain or his anger towards the voice, he stayed silent while twisting his face.

Without particularly minding the lack of an answer, the voice further added, "Even so, you're wondering just what the hell that person might be, right? He's just a human, isn't he? You are the demon king, aren't you? There should be no way for him to cause such damage with the quality of his attribute, aight?"

The one being able to fight the demon king on equal terms was just the hero. That fact was something like a rule in this world. Even if someone that wasn't the hero were to face off against the

demon king, and even if that person's combat ability exceeded the hero's for argument's sake, just this rule wouldn't be overturned.

Why? Because it had been decided to be so. There not being any room for interposing doubt about that part was common sense in this world.

"Normally you wouldn't consider something like a range attack through the connected path before it's cut off. And even if you had considered it, you would think that there's no way for someone capable of putting that into practice to exist, right? Or, is this the result of some kind of coincidence? Hey, what do you think?"

"The reason why I received damage even in this place...isn't that something you know much better?" The demon king's words, which were partly guesswork but also possessed a small amount of conviction, caused the invisible owner of the voice to fall silent for a short while.

For some time silence dominated the hall. Then, before long, pained breathing and intense, violent coughing could be heard from the demon king.

"Otherwise...it would have been impossible for you to have given me such blessing, wouldn't it?" The demon king asked and stared at his palm that had blocked his mouth when he had his coughing fit.

Bright red blood had been spit on that palm. The demon king understood that his internal organs had been apparently damaged to some extent. It might heal back to its original state once some time passed, but until then he had no choice but to continue bearing the pain and discomfort of the wound he received, no matter how much he might be called demon king.

"I wonder? It might have been my pure, good will to grant that blessing to you, don't you think?"

"Good will, eh? Is it fine to leave it while interpreting it like that?" While carelessly wiping away the blood, which spilled out of the corners of his mouth and dripped down towards his chin while mixing with sweat, with the sleeve of his attire, the demon king replied words that were blended with a bitter smile.

In response, a feeling of sullenness was somewhat added to the voice, "Are you unhappy with it?"

"Certainly not. Of course I have been thankful, my master. No matter what your intentions might be, that is." The demon king said and then spit out the taste of iron rust permeating the inside of his mouth together with saliva on the floor.

"Otherwise, I would have been cursed as incompetent. I had no future except wasting away as an unneeded person while unbeknown to anyone. Thanks to you, I have been able to carry out my revenge against everything." The demon king rejoiced.

"Those who slandered me.

"Those who declared me as unneeded.

"Those who didn't even concern themselves with me, assuming that I didn't exist.

"Those who laughed at me, those who insulted me, those who ignored me, and those who despised me

"If we assume that there doesn't exist any other criterion of evaluation but power as everything for the demons, then it's the demon king that holds a power towering at the top of the demons. If I decide everything besides myself as unneeded, scornful, and despicable, then it should be permitted for me to even cast it away', the demon king believed.  
And the demon king didn't hate exercising that privilege.

"That's right, isn't it? I mean, I lent you my help exactly because you desired power in such circumstances."

"I'm grateful. That's why I will turn the entire world into my enemy as demon king. I will conduct myself as the demon king just as it's expected."

"I see. It will be a big help for me if you can do that. Though it would help me even more if you could go at it with such vigor that everything and anything disappears, returning the world to an empty lot, if possible."

"Then give me even more power!" The demon king beseeched the voice. "If you give me power, I will conquer the world. I won't even mind returning it into nothingness, if you so desire. Thus, give me more power! Power at a level that makes it possible for me to accomplish all that!"

"Let's see. Even if you say that, what I gave you the other day was just a part, but it was still quite considerable, you know? If you can master it properly, it should give you even more power, but...it might be necessary to adjust that area a tiny bit."

"I don't care! Do as you like! As long as I can trample everything and everyone with that, I will accept anything!" The demon king shouted.

Like a starving person wishing for a piece of bread, like a parched person yearning for a cup full of water, the demon king extended his hand towards the empty air, desiring that with bloodshot eyes while forgetting the pain in his chest, tearing off his arranged hair, and dripping greasy sweat. The appearance of the demon king couldn't be regarded as the attitude of one standing at the top of the demons. He looked like a beggar asking for money from the people coming and going at a street corner.

Seemingly overpowered by that appearance of the demon king, the voice stayed silent for a while, and then, finally, directed calm words at the demon king as if throwing cold water at him, "Wouldn't it be better if you didn't become too agitated? It will probably affect your injuries, no? At any rate, first we have to start from healing those wounds. You won't be able to endure this state and die. Then it would bear no meaning for me to have made the effort."

The demon king let the hand, which he had stretched out, hang feebly, and while seizing his chest as usual, he squeezed out his voice since he was gasping roughly, maybe because of his excitement or as he was unable to bear the pain of his wounds once again, "Understood..."

"For the time being, it might be necessary for you to take a rest for some time. As for the adjustment and supplement of power, I will consider it on my side, but first you should get properly attuned with 'that' which I had granted you first. I think it will be fairly difficult since it's something of a different attribute, but that's also something that can be resolved over time."

"Yeah...understood." The demon king answered.

"Since the harvest of what's necessary ended to some extent, forgetting that side is no good, okay? For a while you must think about building up your power. If you end up losing everything by being impatient, it will be meaningless, no matter how much I help you out. Therefore, make sure to not forget it, got it?"

There was no reply to the voice. The demon king had closed his eyes and completely stopped moving, except for a shallow, short breathing. After seeing that, the voice quietly left the place.

"Now then, for that to get injured so severely was unexpected, but it's certainly true that it had become a good excuse to waste some time. If I don't finish the adjustment of the demon king who used 'that' before it results in something strange, it will remain unusable even if I were to try putting it to use."

That, which muttered words in a place with no one listening - words it couldn't afford to be heard by others, began to wrack its brain about the preparations of the thing that will become the new source of power that will be granted to the demon king, and the adjustment schedule of the demon king himself accompanying that.