



"Emil Rajah is...my big sister is...a <Hero>." The words that Jade spoke intermittently, as if squeezing them out, felt as if they passed from one of Renya's ears, through his brain, and then out through the other ear.

Renya wondered whether that demon, who was looking mortified in front of his eyes, got an overdose of coercion and made some joke comment without really knowing what he was saying. Still, he admired Jade as being quite a guy for having spat out such messed up words under these circumstances. But, when Renya spotted even the soldiers standing behind Jade looking flabbergasted, he perceived that Jade's statement might not be just him screwing around. And yet, unable to believe the words he had just heard, Renya suddenly came up with the idea that he might have misheard something, and thus asked Jade once more.

"Sorry, it's my first time to use the demon language, so maybe I misunderstood something. Could you repeat your words once more?" Renya asked while paying attention to not come across as rude.

In response, the soldiers behind Jade also for some reason. Apparently this was news that had heard for the first time as well, but contrary to Renya, who worried whether it was something the soldiers should listen to, Jade had apparently become a bit more comfortable in talking about it, now that he mentioned it once, and thus his next words came out a lot more smoother than before, albeit slowly.

"I said my sister, Emil Rajah, is a being which is commonly referred to as <Hero> in this world."

"...Are you serious?" Renya asked Jade once more, as what he was saying didn't sound quite real to Renya.

"It's reasonable for you to not believe me. But, it's the truth."

"Is that something the soldiers behind you should listen to?"

Even if Renya shelved the question about the authenticity of Jade's words, he still understood from Jade's face that this was undoubtedly a topic quite difficult for him to speak about. Even more so, when seeing the shock on the faces of the soldiers, which made it pretty clear that they had never heard anything about this.

Renya worried that one would usually have people, who weren't supposed to hear a certain topic, step out during such conversations, but probably because Jade had always hidden this deep in his heart, he now looked as if a weight had been taken off his mind as he answered Renya, "There's no way I wouldn't let my subordinates listen to something I allow a human bastard like you to hear, is there?"

"This is something my dead parents have very likely informed Emil about in the form of a letter by now," with that preface, Jade began to explain to Renya and the soldiers, who were all still dumbfounded, "Among the four races on this world, it's set for the three races besides the humans to select a hero from among themselves. The appearance of the heroes on the occasion of the humans summoning a hero from another world is a fact that's commonly known these days, but the appearance of a hero also includes the demons as inhabitants of the same world."

This was a truth known only to the demons. In the first place, demons weren't all that different from humans, except for their slightly differently shaped eyes, their brown skin color, and their violet hair colors. Even among humans you'd find people with dark brown skin, and on top of the eye shape not being very easy to tell unless you got considerably close to a demon, you couldn't really use it as a trait to differentiate demons from humans since there were individual differences among demons, too.

In other words, if a demon changed their hair color like Emil, a human wouldn't be able to tell that they were a demon at a glance, so they wouldn't get exposed even if they blended in with the other races and joined the demon king subjugation. However, when it came to the demon's side, only the act of changing their hair color was apparently something they couldn't quite stand, even when setting aside many other issues, and thus there didn't exist any demons who'd go this far to blend in with the humans.

Renya remembered how Croire got terribly surprised how Emil changed her hair color when she started to live under Renya's roof, and pointed it out.

"Fair point. However, there are various reasons for this. For example, one bodily trait will appear for those among us who carry the hero factor. It's them lacking one of the demons' traits."

"That's the hair color? ...In Emil's case it's the skin color, isn't it!?"

Even if they had a resistance against changing their hair color with their own hands, it'd be a different matter if their hair wasn't violet by birth. In the past, demon heroes, who lacked this hair color, apparently assisted the heroes of the other races for the most part. However, had they loudly announced their being a hero, they'd be questioned about their race. No matter how much they would name themselves as heroes, the fact of them being demons would make it impossible for the other races to accept one of their hated enemies in their midst. In the past, many people apparently became companions of heroes without letting others know their race, fought together with them, and secretly left after the demon king was defeated, but most of those people were demon heroes, according to Jade.

Emil was the type of hero lacking the demon's skin color. Renya could fully agree with that as Emil's skin was so white that you couldn't even see any blood veins, let alone the demons' characteristic brown skin. Thinking about it now, Renya had to admit that Emil not having a brown skin like all other demons was odd, but Renya simply assessed that she had changed her skin color for some reason, just like she had done with her hair color.

However, that wouldn't explain why Emil had expressly kept her hair color as violet when they reunited in those rocky mountains, Renya could agree with the story if it was an in-born hair color.

"It's not said that you can't defeat the demon king unless you gather all heroes. Though it might also be a faulty way to call the demon hero a being who doesn't matter either way."

"No, wait a sec. It's fine for a hero to appear among demons and all, but why would that hero lend a hand in defeating the demon king? The demon king is the ruler of all demons, right? Even if the demon king and hero might be antipodes, why would they help killing their own king?"

It was impossible for him to mention it here, but Renya was aware of the battle between demon king and heroes in this world actually being part of a game played by the supervisors of this world. Renya always felt doubtful what he should be thinking about a game where the battle would always be fairly unbalanced since it hosted demons vs. everyone else, but if on top of that, a hero even appeared at the demon king's feet as another component, Renya felt like it completely disqualified it as a game.

"It means the demon hero is a wildcard who can support either side. They can ally with the demon king and ambush the other races, or they can become a hero for the demons to save them, if the demon king turns into a calamity unbearable by the demons. That's how it works."

Renya understood that the demon hero was similar to a joker who might become an ally or enemy for the demon king, a being overpowering any single hero in abilities. If the demon hero joined the demon's side, it'd result in the kings of the humans and elves becoming demon kings for that hero. If you considered that hero as gambling element that could immediately plunge the demon king into a bad situation if they increased the heroes' side by one more or make the game proceed favorably for the demon king if he won the demon hero over as ally, Renya could somewhat understand the intent behind this.

"It's become so bloody complicated..."

'Give me a damn rule book,' Renya cursed.

"If the demon king's rule is for the sake of his people, the hero will become his strength, and if the demon king becomes a tyrant terrorizing even his own people, the hero will simply help take him down. Even for you humans it's not unusual to kill a king you brought to power with your own hands, is it?"

"That's, well...you're not wrong."

It was a common story. Similar events took place in Renya's former world, and if one were to scan through the history of this world, they'd find many instances of the same here as well.

"So being a hero wasn't limited to males, huh?"

"That's a condition limited to only the human's hero, I think. Among the other races mostly men come forward as heroes, but it's not like there were no female heroes in the past."

"What would be the reason to try killing a hero, who could increase your military power, all of a sudden?"

"There are two reasons I can think of. First, the idea that it's easier to get rid of an element, where you don't know what it'll do, before it turns into a problem. This is the reason why quite a few of the past demon heroes met their end at the demon king's hand."

Renya could somehow guess the other reason. With a feeling of wanting to match up answers, Renya spoke up before Jade could mention the second reason.

"The other reason would be the demon king having judged that he'll be able to win this fight even

without the hero at his side, huh?"

"It's as you say. The stronger the demon king, the more of a nuisance the existence of the hero becomes."

'It looks like it takes quite a bit of time and effort if the demon hero decides to become an enemy, and even if they become the demon king's ally, they won't count for much of a reinforcement in combat power, but isn't that treatment way too terrible?' Renya wondered. 'But, the ones who set it like this while perceiving all of it as a game are the supervisors. I'm sure they haven't considered the sufferings of the people, who drew the short stick of becoming a demon hero, even in the slightest.' Renya sighed.

"What's the reason for you not exposing Emil as a hero until now?"

'Wouldn't a person lacking the racial traits be found out right away? Back then the demon king might not have existed yet, and the humans hadn't summoned their hero either, but even if people didn't know whether she was the hero, her family should have at least known that there would be suspicions about it.'

"My sister left the house early on and fully devoted herself to research." Jade answered as if recalling the past. A pang of bitterness was visible on his face. "Though you could also say that she was induced to do so. My research-loving sister even used her own body as a research subject...and transferred her consciousness to a body that looked like a normal demon. Her original body was hidden away, so she probably wouldn't have been found out by anyone."

'It's probably the body I fought with when we met for the first time,' Renya recalled. 'If I assume that Emil's existence wouldn't have been exposed to the demon king with that body as cover, it's my fault for destroying it and returning Emil to her original body.'

"The present demon king...I don't know what he's thinking. I'd still understand if he was targeting my sister as an individual, but it's inconceivable for him to suddenly be slaying my parents."

"It's not just your guys' parents, probably."

"What?" Jade's expression changed.

Renya told Jade and the soldiers about the town they had stopped by before coming here.

"Until we came, the demon country had been isolated from outside. In that case, the only being capable of easily eradicating a demon town would be the demon king, right?"

"Your Majesty...Your Majesty, just what are you...?" Jade groaned lowly as he drummed his clenched fists on his knees.

Before long he spoke to Renya while staring at his face. His voice was filled with so much bitterness and grief that even Renya, who didn't harbor many positive feelings for demons, reflexively straightened himself.

"That's why. We have once sworn loyalty to His Majesty the Demon King, no matter how we'd be

treated. While it may be true that we don't understand his thinking, we can't do much about it now. But, that doesn't apply to my sister. She was shunned and kept at distance from the very start. There's no need for her to keep us company here."

"Okay?"

"If we continue to resist here, even His Majesty might not be able to have his eyes everywhere. Isn't it possible for you to use that time to take my sister and return to your homeland? I know you won't be able to listen when it's a request from me, but you don't think so badly of my sister, do you?"

'How should I answer this?

While looking back into Jade's eyes who kept his gaze pinned on Renya with a serious expression, Renya scratched his cheek, obviously slightly troubled.

