

Chapter 217 - Monsters Living in Pelneet - Sequel



Lifting the hood made his characteristic blond sidelocks sway. A high nose bridge, a pair of clear, ultramarine eyes. Instead of a comb, he used his fat fingers to brush up his long, sidebangs. If he had been a handsome guy, that might have been a picturesque act. However, his face was completely that of a cow.

"——Kreuz-sama, Varmina-sama, hooray!"

"——For the 【'Apostles of Nightmares' (Bellahozuma Varmina)】."

"——For Varmina-sama."

"——Bellahozuma, hurrah!"

Following the cow-faced person, who appeared to beam with pride, those of his group around him exposed their faces as well. As they did, they repeatedly called out to Bellahozuma, and Varmina-sama. Only a few of them called out to Kreuz-sama.

The largely-built man with the cow face nodded.

'The new pomade said to have been produced based on demonic whale oil is really quite magnificent, isn't it...? It smells nice and the hairdo doesn't get disheveled.' While thinking about such things, the cow-faced man exchanged looks with the others, and slid one hand out of the robe by parting it to the sides in the middle. Then he lifted that hand, obviously telling his surroundings to quiet down. He waited until those of the group around him stopped talking.

'Going by the numbers we gathered, it's safe to say that we trustworthily accomplished the task given to us as 【Apostles of Nightmares】.'

While gazing at the captured women with his blue eyes in satisfaction, "...You did well to have gathered this many. I'm sure our commander-in-chief, Bellahozuma Naromivas-sama, will also be delighted," he proudly said to his comrades who had exposed their bare faces.

Then he slid the other hand out of his robe, putting the blackish pointy hat in his hand on his head, and adjusting its position.

The embroidery of a huge, golden eyeball had been stitched into the center of the hat. The embroidery itself was squirming, but not a single person noticed that. But, that was inevitable.

He was the highest leader of 【Apostles of Nightmares】, and a unique sorcerer who had been turned into a kin. His hat was one piece of a series of special magic items. One of the reasons was that it concealed mana itself. At first glance, it looked like a simple embroidery.

"...Kreuz-sama, thank you. Naromivas-sama's delight is the delight of 【Apostles of Nightmares】."

"Kreuz-sama, it was worthwhile for us to have done our best."

The others of the group called the cow-faced man by the name Kreuz-sama. Indeed, his full name was Banabi Ze Kreuz. Publicly he was an adventurer, and a noble. His appearance was that of a

brawny, buffed warrior, but certainly not that of a magician. After all he had the stature of a martial artist, who regularly participated in fighting tournaments, or a gladiator, who fought at the arena. A great quantity of mana dwelt in his eyes that had a look as sharp as a blade.

"...It appears so. Wasn't it difficult to gather this many women?" Kreuz asked as if concerned about the others of the group.

"Since that Mad Knight, who went at us many times over, vanished, gathering the women was easy, but...in the midst of it, we got obstructed by a female knight, and several of our comrades..."

"...You can call the guards incompetent, but the White Nine Great Knights spell trouble. Different from 【Owl's Fangs】, who was flexible enough to let us do our thing, 【Remains of the Moon】 makes it tough to get our work done in their turf."

The two people standing next to Kreuz said. The woman allowed a peculiar, mugwort-colored uniform to peek out from her robe. One could grasp through the gaps of the man's robe that he was also wearing such a uniform. Going by their physique, they both gave one the impression of closely resembling commissioned officers.

"...If you limit your activities to outside their turf for now, 【Remains of the Moon】 will leave you alone, right? Rather than them, the one being a problem is the female Great Knight...Naromivas-sama has also said that he would consider how to deal with her." Kreuz said with a look that brimmed with expectations.

"Oooh, Naromivas-sama will..."

"Finally, that annoying Knight will be dealt with..."

"As expected of Naromivas-sama. If that pesky woman disappears, it will become easy to gather sacrifices."

"Yes, as we definitely need the "Three-orbed Jewel" connected to the "Dream Scriptures" at the time of the ritual — evidence will be left behind. Different from the dark incidents perpetrated by other sects, it has become quite famous as three-orb jewel serial murder case among the public..."

"Yes, since that captious announcer kept blaring it out, I scalped him." The man with the militaristic atmosphere next to Kreuz admitted.

He had a unique powder applied on his face as make-up.

"Noran, it's great that you work fast, but...can you please stop acting too conspicuously in public?"

"Kreuz-sama...I'm very well aware of it." Noran faintly smiled with his mouth extending horizontally and the edges of his mouth tearing apart.

He laughed while showing off his teeth ridge. Some of the powder came off, and fell to the ground. While looking at Noran, Kreuz thought, 'With his eerie, torn mouth, he looks like some circus clown, but...he's a former soldier of Seven Pholia, the southern major power. He's properly completed his dark jobs.'

"...I see. Since it's you we're talking about here, I won't investigate it any further, but...well, we own positions of heavy influence in public as well...so, even if that Great Knight bitch barks, the truth behind the three-orb jewel case will likely remain in obscurity for eternity." Kreuz extended his hands overhead while changing his tone.

Bracelets adorned the wrists of his raised arms. They were magatama styled with three jewels that contained dense mana.

The dazzling hue of the gems charmed the captured women. However, one of them didn't respond to those jewels at all.

"The mana of our three-orbed jewels is truly great."

As if matching Kreuz' action, the other group members also hoisted their three-orbed jewels with similar mana above their heads.

Probably as an effect of those jewels, the madder red space brightly lit up for an instant. The evening sun-like light illuminated the cave like rays scanning its terrain.

"Indeed, it's the power of the great Queen of Nightmares." Kreuz stated.

All the members of 【Apostles of Nightmares】 saluted to him, simultaneously reciting, ""For the glory of 【Apostles of Nightmares】!""

"...Our commander-in-chief, Naromivas-sama, said 『The time is ripe. We will greatly make use of the battle against the empire』. Both the empire and the kingdom can be called big enemies of our hidden 【Apostles of Nightmares】 faction. However, in the end they are human countries ruled by trash. Since that's what they are, they are no enemies worthy of Naromivas-sama who has been chosen by the gods and not some royals. To sum it up, by just believing in the words of that great person, our bodies and souls will be rescued alike. For eternity..." Kreuz announced to his comrades like a missionary.

"...How magnificent. We shall abide to Naromivas-sama and Kreuz-sama."

"I will obey you, Kreuz-sama."

"...Camis, that makes me happy."

Listening to everyone's words, Kreuz looked at the woman on his right while breathing roughly through his nose with his nostrils widening, seemingly having his desire to be recognized satisfied. Camis had been serving him as his subordinate for many years. She was a boyish woman with short, navy blue hair. Her eyes, which seemed to be stretched out, had beautiful pupils closely resembling sapphires.

Passion filled those pretty pupils as she stated, "...Don't mention it. And Kreuz-sama, about those sacrifices. Will you personally evaluate them today, before bringing them to the commander-in-chief?"

"That's correct... This is also an important duty of the "No. 2" that has been entrusted to me by the commander-in-chief. I will examine them." Kreuz answered with his mood having improved.

After calling himself 『Number Two』...he stared at the women with a cold look. He observed them with his blue eyes that had been accumulating mana since a while ago now.

"Mmh..." Kreuz let his eyes wander from the right to the left, checking them in turns.

His eyes stopped at the woman furthest left. His thick, golden eyebrows twitched as he glared at her through his blue eyes.

That woman was a beauty with a coquettish air, dark skin, and silver hair.

Kreuz closely scanned her whole body. Him noticing was only natural.

The woman had been focusing an abnormal amount of mana in her pretty, silver hair. Even though there was no wind blowing, every single thin strand of her hair stood on end while squirming like living creatures.

"...Kreuz-sama, did something happen?" Camis asked after having been staring at Kreuz.

'She has drawn Kreuz-sama's attention? I wonder whether this silver-haired woman is different from the other sacrifices...' Camis pondered while watching Kreuz' face.

"...Yes. There's a woman that bothers me a bit as if making the core of my mind throb. We will leave only this silver-haired woman here. You guys, take the other sacrifices, and bring them to Naromivas-sama." Kreuz ordered.

"O-Okay...what about you, Kreuz-sama?" While Camis inquired, she wondered, 'Does Kreuz-sama fancy the silver-haired one? She seems to be different from the others... Maybe she's someone resenting us 【Apostles of Nightmares】.' While considering all that...and after casting a passionate look at Kreuz, she declared, "I will personally talk with this silver-haired woman——"

Thereupon Kreuz confirmed Camis' question with a nod. Then he fully spread his robe to the left and right, as if tearing it at his chest, making a picture, the exclusive combat tool of a Magic Painter, appear from within. It was contained in a steel frame. Kreuz easily held that steel-made picture frame with one of his thick arms. In the other hand he had been grasping the dream scriptures, one of the spirit world 4-9-3 documents entrusted to him by Naromivas as proof of him being the highest leader of 【Apostles of Nightmares】.

The combat occupation of Banabi Ze Kreuz, a former human, was <Magic Dream Prison Painter>. The painting in the steel frame overflowing with mana was...the realistic drawing of a dog possessing three heads as it befitted that combat occupation.

"No way...you're saying this woman is abnormal..." Camis remarked.

She was very familiar with Kreuz' combat style. She grasped the reason why Kreuz had taken out the demonic document and the frame in both its meanings.

First, because his prided hunting dog, Fedelaos, had been sealed in the magic frame, and second, as precaution in case he had to immediately switch towards a combat stance.

'It's not that he's boasting right now. She's not normal. We have to withdraw right away. But...'

Camis thought.

While extending her hand to the hilt of her favorite magic sword, which had its entry in the legends of Zamalia, she cautiously watched her surroundings.

'Is there anyone else?'

Even while jumping at shadows like that...she stared with a zealous look at Kreuz.

The voice of the woman laughing scornfully at Camis' look reverberated through the cave. "...Oh my~, cow face-san? You took out a lovely picture of a dog. You want us to appreciate it together?"

After stabbing the woman with a glare, Cami returned her eyes to Kreuz, and announced, "...Kreuz-sama, I will follow your order. Bellahozuma Varmina, hurray! You guys, we're moving——"

All the members of **【Apostles of Nightmares】**, who sensed her unusual presence and movements, made sure to follow her order...

While each of them recalled what they had been ordered by their strongest leader, Kreuz...they took the charmed women along to offer them to the commander-in-chief as planned, swiftly leaving this place.

By the way, this was the underground of **【Labyrinth City Pelneet】**. There were countless entrances into the underground. It wasn't common knowledge, but small underground cities that seemed to resemble historic underground cities like the one in **【Demonic Steel City Holkerbaum】** definitely existed here as well.

"Bye bye~" On the other hand, the silver-haired woman watched their behavior as if it was all a big comedy act.

She faced the women, which were taken along, and waved her arms several times while bidding them farewell many times over with a 『Bye bye~』.

The silver-haired woman thought, 'Fufu, I certainly didn't expect things to develop in this direction ~ How fun. The great gathering of the apostles on the 15th floor, the extermination of adventurers and demon king-class monsters, and leaving the apostles after having turned them into stone was also a lot of fun. But, this surface is fun in yet another way. Once I chased the smell of that tigrewoman and her friends, whom I met on the fifth floor, and happened upon a woman who seemed to be a servant in the middle of shopping...I was kidnapped together with that woman for some reason, fufu. Ah, the cow-faced magician is glaring at me.'

Even being showered by Kreuz' look...only caused the silver-haired woman to get all excited and happy.

After Kreuz' eyebrow twitched faintly, he asked, "——What are you?"

While amassing mana in his eyes, Kreuz also poured mana into the frame in his left hand. In an instant, a sound as if compressed air suddenly escaped outside, was audible from the frame. With that, a huge beast possessing three heads appeared.

"Garuruuuu."

"Guuu."

"Gauuu!"

The huge beast easily surpassed Kreuz' large build. It was a monster reminding one of Cerberos, the watchdog of Hell which wore a carapace armor. Many fangs grew in the big muzzles of all three heads.

Indeed, what he had enslaved wasn't a normal monster. It was a monster he had caught together

with Naromivas when they had gone to the spirit world while using a certain demonoid tool. It was the hunting dog Fedelaos said to be used by the goddesses of the spirit world for hunting.

"——Wow! A huge doggy!"

"...I have asked you who you are. Can you understand the human language of this area?"

"You're a rude guy, aren't you? Although it's so obvious that I understand you! Also, I have a cute name, it's Liliza." The monster, which introduced itself as Liliza, held her mouth in the middle of her speech, adopting the pose of a woman acting innocent and helpless, and then shut one eye as if winking at Kreuz.

"Liliza..."

"Well then, I'm going to fight against that doggy——!" The silver-haired woman raised a shrill voice, and spread her muscular arms to the sides.

Relaxedly lifting her two elbows at an angle of 40°, she drew two small magic crests with her fingers that were clad in mana. The instant she strummed those small crests, an offensive fish smell provoked Kreuz' nose, and at the same time, skeletal <Demonic Bonefish> came into existence in the air around Liliza with a clattering.

Liliza gently caressed the skeletal surface of the fish, which were floating in the air, with her palms while donning a merry expression.

"You sweeties~ It's your tuuurn. Get rid of that doggy!"

The <Demonic Bonefish>, which had sharp-looking fangs densely growing within their circular mouths plunged forwards while wiggling their bony torsos as if swimming through the sea. Fedelaos reacted swiftly.

"Gauuu——"

It precisely released a directional, freezing breath attack from one of its three mouths. The chilly air turned into a wind, freezing the vicinity. The approaching bonefish had their skeletal frames frozen in no time, crashing to the ground like deep frozen fish.

"Hee..." Liliza's face was dyed with admiration due to her summoned bonefish having been finished off so easily, but that lasted for only an instant.

She altered the shape of her silver hair growing on her head while knitting her eyebrows that seemed to have been drawn on her face with a fine pencil, and extended her pretty black nails on both hands in a spiral shape, transforming them into something akin to flamberges.

The ten, thick, black nails, similar to black sword ends, headed towards the heads of Fedelaos' hunting dog while drawing an arc in midair.

On the other hand, the hunting dog jumped at the ten flamberge-shaped nails. It bit into the nails with its sharp fangs, crunching on them alongside metallic sounds. As it was eating them while crunching the nails into small pieces as if devouring them greedily, it leaped to the side.

Capitalizing on its four powerful limbs, the hunting dog skilfully ran along the cave's wall while ignoring gravity.

"The likes of a dog is eating my mana!?" Liliza screamed while quickly restoring her broken and devoured nails. "How irritatiing."

Liliza launched the regenerated nails at the hunting dog as it was running along the wall, but the nails only punctured the madder red wall with dull impact sounds.

The swift movements of the beast, which didn't suit its huge frame, possessed a quality that made one remember a certain black divine beast. Fedelaos splendidly dodged all the approaching nail thrust attacks, which were carried out like a line of spears held at the ready, and then launched an attack on Liliza instead.

"——Fedelaos, kill her." Kreuz, who had been amassing mana in his entire body, ordered.

At the same time, the dream scriptures were opened automatically, naturally stopping at the right page. Once the magic runes recorded on that page were clad in an artificial light, magic lines similar to DNA sequences floated up above the dream scriptures from the shining runes. In that moment the spiraling magic lines distorted their shapes, combined, and transformed into small magic crests forming piled-up layers. The small crests manifested above the scriptures while forming three layers. The thin magic lines released from those magic crest layers connected with Kreuz' eyes. Simultaneously, weak mana, which an ordinary person wouldn't be able to spot, was released from the big eyeball as if wrapping Kreuz' upper body up in a mana membrane.

Kreuz revealed an expression that had a tinge of joy while magic crests were projected in his blue eyes.

'Fufu, it's the activation of the dream scriptures. I suppose I will play around with it for a bit,' he thought. While manipulating Fedelaos, he kept using and invoking the special, original magic linked to his eyes.

"——I'm going to kill you, doggy!" Liliza reacted by making her silver hair move as if she had known in advance that her black nails would be dodged.

Liliza's hair, which had changed its shape into three silver stakes, stabbed at the three heads of Fedelaos, which was approaching from the sky, in the style of a counter. No, her hair didn't manage to penetrate its heads.

The three hair stakes were stuck between Fedelaos' fangs and gnawed upon. Just like the nails which had been bitten and eaten moments ago...Fedelaos gnawed on the hair stakes with its sharp fangs while restlessly moving its three heads around.

But, it couldn't bite through Liliza's hair stakes. Different from the black nails, the hair wasn't severed nor broken. Only a big amount of the black salvia dripping down from its fangs clung to the hair.

"...For Fedelaos to be unable to bite through it on top of having his movements stopped...that hair must be powerful and sturdy."

"Humph! It got its filthy spit on my lovely hair! I will tear that composed attitude of yours down." Liliza made black nails grow from the fingers of both her hands in order to pierce Fedelaos which was hanging in the air as it was gnawing at her silver hair.

"Gaaooo——"

Fedelaos stopped biting the hair, and jumped as if there was some foothold in midair. Skilfully leaping while revolving, which caused its underbelly to show, it magnificently evaded the nails, and returned to Kreuz.

"What's that dog! It's big but quick!" Liliza shouted while changing the shape of her silver hair with her darkish skin blushing.

Once she firmly stepped down on the madder red ground with one leg, she created a clean footprint, albeit a small one.

Kreuz narrowed his eyes upon that action of her. The three magatama on his bracelets, which he wore on both wrists, shone slightly.

'This Liliza doesn't seem to be all that intelligent, but she's dangerous... She has easily parried the attacks of the spirit world's hunting dog, and still behaves as if having the upper hand. However, she's already within the special magic of the dream scriptures...let's have her dance within the dream just like this.'

"...For Fedelaos to be unable to kill you...Liliza-san, you're a monster, aren't you? It looks like you love those rotten-smelling, floating bonefish, but are you possibly connected to the gods of the spirit world?"

"——The gods of the spirit wooorld? Don't put me into one bunch with those filthy usurpers! I'm a chosen apostle of Evil God Niclus-sama, the third apostle Liliza!" Hearing Kreuz' words, Liliza squared her shoulders, and rebutted him strongly with all her hair standing on end.

'This cow face is pissing me off. How brazen for him to make magic crests appear in his eyes. In addition, he just put me in one group with that prejudiced spirit world gang. Seeing that cow face of his that seems to provoke Liliza, I will just kill this guy without eating him...' She decided.

"Third apostle..."

"I'm going to kill you——" Liliza spread her arms and transformed.

Not only her black nails, and not to mention her palms, both her arms completely tore apart as if splitting into countless cells. The torn flesh and bones transformed into the shapes of living chrysanthemums, and those chrysanthemums of despair headed towards Kreuz and the dog while giving off a foul stench.

Fedelaos released a freezing breath from all three of its heads. However, only a small portion of the flesh chrysanthemums were frozen and fell to the ground.

Even as the threat closed in on him, Kreuz calm demeanor didn't change. He manipulated the dream scriptures he held in one hand.

Faint neon-like magic runes rose up from the disk-shaped magic crest on the topmost layer of the magic crests floating above the scriptures. In an instant, those magic runes changed their shapes into magic swords, spears, and stakes. Several magic weapons were created around Kreuz, and assailed the large number of chrysanthemums.

The disorderly dancing magic weapons and the boisterously dancing chrysanthemums with their rotten smell violently clashed in front of Kreuz' eyes.

As if a swarm of butterflies had suddenly dispersed, sparks scattered into the vicinity, creating flashes similar to particles colliding against each other. The madder red cave shone radiantly.

"...A wicked believer of the gods dwelling in the labyrinth, you say...? What a nuisance." Kreuz' blue eyes shone as they were connected to the magic crests through magic lines.

The magic crests in his eyes mysteriously rotated like the dial of a lock, or a clock. He hatefully glared at Liliza with his demonic eyes-like blue eyes, and then he suddenly adopted a forward-bent posture. Making sure to weave his way through the gaps between the magic weapons and the chrysanthemums, he advanced while using Magic Combat Step. He fully swung the steel frame in his other hand down towards Liliza's head.

"——Humph!" While raising a sullen voice, Liliza blocked the approaching frame by stopping it in front of her with a cluster of hair that seemed to wrap up her head.

She smiled complacently. '<Bewitching Flower Hands> was blocked, but he shouldn't be able to block this!'

At that moment, half of Liliza's beautiful face melted, no, its flesh and bones transformed with eerie sounds, changing into a single, huge flesh spear. It was a flesh spear that reminded one of Shuuya's <Darkness Drill - Evil Destruction Spear>.

The huge flesh spear lunged at Kreuz with an abnormal speed as if tearing through space, a speed that was unimaginable from its mass. It was also the fastest technique in Liliza's repertoire.

"——What the hell!?! Guaaa——" Kreuz was unable to react, so were the magic swords and spears that had been manifested from the dream scriptures. The upper part of his large build was penetrated by the flesh spear, and blown away.

"Fufu~♪ Tricked ya~. It's because you're so obsessed over a humanoid shape." The thing with its unknown nature that had transformed half of its body into a flesh spear squirmed, and then returned to its previous, beautiful woman form.

'He's a cow face, but I guess I will absorb him anyway~.

Kreuz hung his head after his back collided against the cave's wall, but...it was unnatural for him to not move.

"Huuuh? There's no way for you to die from this much..."

At that point Liliza's sight suddenly blacked out, and then Kreuz' body had vanished like an illusion.

"Eh? What's going on!?"

'It was an illusion? But, the remains of my black nails are laying around, and blood has been scattered as well... An apostle like me fell for an illusion in the middle of a fight? The cow face isn't anywhere either... He was able to get away, or rather, was I messed with?'

'Demonic eyes? I don't know... Yep, now I'm really pissed off.

'The other day, the adventurers were able to get away as well, but back then I had fun as I could feel that those girls were frantically trying to survive.

'But, this is no fun as I have been toyed with by the cow face!

"...It's been a while for me to suffer such a defeat. If I see a human next time, I will eat them right away!"

Right then, at that moment...the former templar Tsuan showed up...
'Ah, I will distract myself by eating this guy~♪
Liliza stopped maintaining a human shape.



"——I'll do it!"

'A woman's voice?

The former templar Tsuan walked up close to the female voice he could hear from the madder red cave.

"No magic? An unnatural light?"

"——Guuooon (Bon appetite)."

The last image reflected in Tsuan's field of vision was a huge crowd of fangs that all sprout out like a winding maelstrom.

