

## **Chapter 278 - Reunion with Evil God Steertop**

After I contacted my chosen bloodkin I decided to test something I had come up with on a whim. I operated my item box, took out the Ten Heavenly Evil Figure Nicross, which Liliza had dropped, and held it up.

It was an obscene key with a shape similar to the head of a rhinoceros beetle. I wondered whether Evil Good Steertop would react to it, but...nothing.

The bluish white fog only kept wafting creepily...

"Hey, Evil Good Steertop-san, you're watching, aren't you? I thought you might be interested in this key, but maybe I'm wrong?"

The instant I asked the fog, a part of it gathered, forming the face of Steertop.

"...Humph, long time no see, lancer. I'm making a special exception for coming out this time, okay?"

『Your Excellency, just as you said before, he really appeared. However, he's different from before. His mana is extremely thin』

Just as Helme pointed out...his mana is weak. His voice is no different from before though...

"Special exception, eh? Whatever, long time no see, Steertop-sama."

"Such a polite speech is unnecessary. Rather than that, where did you obtain that key?"

Rollo extended her head, seemingly curious about Steertop's face-only appearance. "N, nyaaa," she meowed and was about to get off my shoulder, but I held her back.

"What's that!?"

"The true shape of that eerie fog, eh!? Eat this——"

Bia apparently activated some kind of skill. However, Steertop's face only swayed a bit in response, nothing else.

"My <Paralyzing Evil Eye> doesn't work?"

"Master, this is an evil god..."

"Correct. You guys, no need to attack him. Stand down." I ordered my <Servant Leaders> who got ready for combat, having them step back after waving them off with my right hand, indirectly telling them that it was alright. And then, while glaring at Steertop, "I obtained this key after I defeated the apostle of an evil god, no, turned a part of that apostle into my subordinate."

Then I deliberately moved my new finger a bit.

"...Whaaat, you turned an evil god's underling into your own underling?"

"Indeed."

"I guess it's a result of coincidences overlapping with each other, but...you're one messed up guy."

Surely, another part of this might have been that my skill worked exactly because it was Liliza.

"...Well, you have absorbed a part of me, and if it's my apostle, the spearmaster and the black cat...I guess it's feasible."

"I don't recall having become your apostle..."

"Guhahaha, you're making me laugh. You're already my apostle. At the moment you took in my power, or maybe absorbed it...although I hadn't expected for that to happen at all...shit, just remembering it..."

The evil god's tiger face could probably be described as amusing. His lower jaw expanded, and while showing off his uneven teeth, he rejoiced, became sad, and got scared, all on his own device.

"...Steertop, you just want to convince yourself that I'm your apostle, don't you?"

"...Humph, you're so uncute! Besides, it doesn't matter! After all it's a fact that you released my poweeer."

I guess I hit bull's eye. Steertop-kun, your eyes are trembling, y'know?

"Anyway, we're off-topic. Going by the beetle head of the key in question...it looks like a key of Evil God Nicross, but are you planning to dedicate it to me?"

"Dedicate? Are you telling me to dance and offer this to you? What would be my gain in doing something like that?"

Hearing my question, Steertop twisted his face, and showed his fangs, forming an ugly smile. The very definition of an evil god.

"...In exchange, I'll grant you my evil domain tools."

"Evil domain tools, eh?"

If I use this beetle-head key, it should be possible to open the door of Evil God Nicross' statue. I don't know since I haven't examined Nicross' statue yet, but...it's very likely that I will find a secret room, just like the one in Steertop's statue where we are right now, with a crooked crystal enshrined beyond the door... and it's also possible that Evil God Nicross himself, a clone of him, or other apostles will be in there.

The crystal there might allow me to warp to the New World on the 15th floor mentioned by Catiza and **【Club Ice】**, or other worlds altogether.

But, why does Steertop want this key in the first place?

"...Why do you want this?"

"...Don't mind that and hand it over. I've got the special Tree Word Serge, Double Apron Fence, Tree Folly Best, Psycho Dive Plant, Steer Stone, Extreme Tree Curse Text, Woodsword - Exclamation Crossbow, Woodspear - Lightning Twist, Twelve Feathers of Pesantium...and many more. I'll exchange the key for one of these items."

The mist drifting around Steertop transformed into various item shapes. I'm very curious about any of the items he presented...

But, since I got to know everyone from **【Club Ice】** a while ago, and going by Steertop's attitude...there seems to exist some kind of backstory why he doesn't answer my question, so I'll hold back on handing the key over to him.

"...I'm not going to give you this key."

"Tsk, you've got no desires, or what? Well, whatever. The fact that you usurped the kin of an evil god should be regarded as a threat by the other gods. At this rate you're going to walk the same path as I am, you know? Guhahaha."

...I guess there's something behind the evil gods' actions. It makes me recall what Steertop had said in the past.

『Possessing the Ten Heavenly Evil Figure means that you have the aptitude to become my underling. Is that the reason why you were able to access this place? Are you really a human?』

In short, Steertop probably doesn't want me, who owns Nicross' key, to get in contact with Nicross since I could become his apostle. I might be totally wrong on this though...

"...I will tread my own path, just so you know."

"Hah, call me again if you change your mind. I'll trade you that key——"

Seemingly having lost interest, his eyes turn into dots as he vanishes like mist without waiting for my answer.

"He's already gone, huh...?"

"Milord, your conversation with the evil god...although he seemed to only be a face, I sensed a terrifyingly heavy pressure..."

"...Yeah, for our Suzerain-sama to talk with the gods..."

"Don't stress over it. We're going outside."

I walked through the space in the evil god's domain with everyone. The space gradually narrowing

down was no different from before. We arrived at a place as small as a sake cup. In front we could see a magnificent, golden door looking like the evil god was telling us that this was the exit.

"We will go outside here." As I informed everyone, I inserted the Ten Heavenly Evil Figure key into the keyhole, and turned it.

Once the door opened, a short, shrill sound rang, and then a terribly low bass sound reverberated. My <Servant Leaders> got surprised by this, and screamed.

Souther got apparently so startled by the exceedingly shrill sound that she flashily fell over. Flopping to the ground, she got covered by the fog, and vanished from sight.

However, Rollo's tentacles precisely homed in on the small Souther. The tentacles coiled themselves around her body, and gently helped her up.

"Rollo-sama...thanks."

Souther's body was wrapped up by tentacles, but I could see how her cheeks took on a faintly red tinge.

"Nn, nyao."

Rollo has probably answered 『Don't mind it nya』. How kind of you, Rollo.

Just like that, all of us went outside through the door. What came in sight were the ruins on the 20th floor with the array of evil god statues.

Along the way, I also checked the statue of Nicross. I spotted something like a keyhole, but ignored it for now. Climbing the stairs in the ruins, we came out at the 【Evil God's Mound】.

Just like before, the sky shone dimly as if being hazy. The demon Souq had mentioned that somewhere up there was something like a hole connecting to the 19th floor.

"...This is the world of the labyrinth's 20th floor!?"

"Ooohhh, we've exceeded the legendary clans!"

Due to Bia howling in her peculiar way, resembling joy, Mamani faintly furrowed her eyebrows as if to say that she was too loud, and then said, "...Bia, you're talking too fast. It's difficult to understand you..."

Because of her conspicuous tiger fur, it was hard to read the slight changes in her expression triggered by her emotions.

"It's only natural for her to talk quickly, isn't it? Using Master's mirror and key, we managed to come to the unexplored 20th floor, you know? After all is said and done, we're still adventurers."

"Certainly...I was surprised by the huge evil god statues, but...this place is..."

"It's a wide plain, right...? More plains, mountains, and forests are also visible in the distance." Fuu shaded her eyes, staring into the far distance.

Seeing her doing that reminded me that Kaldo had done the same when we came here the last time.

『Your Excellency, which way are you going to head this time?』 Helme spoke up to me while doing her mysterious breaststrokes at the left edge of my visual field.

『...Let's see. Last time we went left, traveling through the great grasslands and passing the Ragni Lake, so I think we should try going right this time.』

『——Okay, a quest for the unknown it is.』 Helme whirled around once.

『Yep』

Now then...I guess I'll first tell everyone the name of this place.

"...Currently we're at a spot called **【Evil God's Mound】**."

"A mound...?" Mamani reacted to the 'mound' terminology.

"I heard that you led the Espada Mercenary Band, repelling a company of the Gluton Empire many times over..." Fuu asked about Mamani's past.

Come to think of it, I also heard that Mamani had taken command on the battlefield on several occasions.

"The events on the Haldigar Hill are a wonderful memory. However, the vivid memory of the battlefield...on Algan's Hill is..." [efn\_note]By the way the term used for Mound above (丘 or oka) can also be hill. So all her recounts here are memories connected to hills/mounds[/efn\_note]

Her twin hills look plump enough that they make her white armor bulge.

Meanwhile I focused on Catiza in her finger state, ordering her, 『Purin, come out.』

While my sixth finger dropped to the ground, it transformed into a small, golden caterpillar, and then immediately following, into Purin with her bones and flesh forming up. It'd be fine to consume mana and fight with her as a third arm, but this time I'm going to use Purin for the first time.

Seeing her transformation from a golden caterpillar, my <Servant Leaders> cried out in surprise.

"...A caterpillar! I've seen her before!"

"It's the monster under Master's command."

"It doesn't seem to have silver hair, though."

It looks like the change takes as long as it does for Catiza. ...After a bit of time had passed, Purin's transformation finished.

A woman with blond hair and light blue eyes. A neatly linear, pitch black crest mark extended from her forehead to beneath her eyes. She was small with a lovely, triangular, slender chin and a beautiful skin line from her nape to her collarbone. Her nicely-shaped breasts swayed.

However, those beautiful boobs of her were immediately hidden by a costume covering her whole body. Its design was fairly exquisite. It was short-sleeved, and similar to the area around her eyes, a pitch-black crest mark covered her bare skin from her wrists to the elbows.

In this area she had much more style than Catiza and Tsuan. I guess it's her individuality peeking through.

She also had a characteristic bone tail growing out at her butt. It was small and cute.

As if to confirm her surroundings, she surveyed the mound. Then she looked at my face, and bowed lightly at me.

"...Emissary-sama, everyone, hello. I'm the apostle Purin."

"So you're Purin-sama, the subordinate of Master. I'm Mamani. I've become Master's bloodkin, a <Servant Leader>." Mamani talked to her after first making a greeting gesture vividly reminding me of a karate kata.

"Right, I'm Bia. Also a <Servant Leader>."

"My name is Fuu. My combat occupation is <Blood Race Caster>. I'm a lowly family member of the Lucival."

"My name's Souther."

I think Purin is approximately as tall as Souther.

"You're Emissary-sama's honored family then. I have heard about it from Tsuan and Catiza. Nice to meet you. I excel in ranged attacks with my bone needles."

"Well then, everyone, we're going to head to the forest on the right side and hunt there. Basically we will annihilate all monsters that show up. Our objective is just the collection of large magic stones, so I don't plan to make any stopovers."

"Okay."

"Affirmative."

"Got it, the direction with the mountains and forest then."

"Let's go."

"Bia, we take the lead."

Mamani nimbly moved to the front, running down the **【Evil God's Mound】** ahead of us. I guess I should follow as well.

While feeling the body weight of Rollo on my shoulder, I descended the hill, taking Fuu and Purin with me. Given that Purin had small legs, her steps were small as well. Hence she had to walk quickly to match her pace with Fuu and me. I also slowed down the pace to make it easier on her.

Thereupon, "——Emissary-sama, I will do anything!" said Purin cheerfully to me as she kept pace.

Anything, she says...isn't that quite the brave statement of her?

"Nyao." Rollo responded to the cute behavior of Purin.

I wonder whether she considers Purin a new playmate in addition to Souther.

"...From now on it'll be the same as your activity as an adventurer. We'll focus on the magic stone collection. I might request personal stuff from you as I see fit."

"Okay!" Purin replied with a pure and innocent expression.

She threw out her chest in dignity, making me clearly sense that her heart was pure, lacking any selfishness.

『Your Excellency, if your chosen bloodkin were with us, this might have caused a squabble to break out about who's going to do what for you.』

『You say so, but you're not going to check Purin's butt, Helme?』

『Oh my! Your Excellency, have you recently found pleasure in my hobby?』

『Haha, that's only natural, isn't it? After all I love the silly Helme as well.』

Hearing my telepathic reply, Helme stopped swimming, and smiled sweetly.

『Fufu, thank you very much. On this occasion, please show me some of that affection...』

I guess she's asking me to give her mana by rubbing her inner thighs against each other.

『Here you go.』

The instant I sent mana to Helme, she vanished from my sight.

『——Ahn』 (format small letters)

I heard her carnal voice for the first time in a while.

At that moment, Purin powerfully exclaimed, "Emissary-sama, I will do my very best today to not lose out to Tsuan and Catiza in me."

I don't think that there's any lie in her words. Her light blue eyes reminded me of a clear lake. I could sense a strong determination dwelling deep in those eyes.

"...I'm looking forward to your power as a former B-Rank adventurer rear guard. On that note, it seems that bone needles are your main weapon, but how do they actually work?"

"I use the Selele's secret art like this——"

She held her wrists overhead. Thereupon thick bone pipes grew out of her skin. Bone needles were shot out from the tips of those tubes at a speed that seemed to exceed those of bullets.

The bone needles that headed towards the plains were no longer visible. It kinda looked like artificial hands had detached from her arms. However, her elbows were still attached normally. The bone pipes were narrow at their end, like rifles. They looked oddly cool, kinda like 『Space Cobra』. [efn\_note][https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Adventure\\_Cobra:\\_The\\_Movie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Adventure_Cobra:_The_Movie) [/efn\_note]

So that's the secret skill owned by her race, huh?

"...Wow. Such a weapon is, ah..." I recalled that I had the perfect weapon for Purin.

It's a weapon I had Suloz's classy shopkeeper appraise as a long and slender bone needle. Its name was Selele's Bone Pipe.

I retrieved it from my item box.

"Purin, what about this?"

"Oh, that is!"

"Does it belong to the Selele after all?"

"Yes."

"I'll give it to you. It's something Liliza had with her, and originally belonged to you." I passed the pipe to her.

"——It's something I had lost. Thank you very much, Emissary-sama! If I have the Selele's Bone Pipe, which has the power of our ancestors dwell in it, it will allow me to shoot many bone needles."

She gleefully grew a bone out of one wrist again, and attached Selele's Bone Pipe I had given her to the tip of the bone. The bone pipe automatically fastened to her bone.

Its end was extending, but it clearly looked as if it had been part of her bone from the very start. There was no seam as it appeared to be connected to her bone down to a micrometer. Though the measure unit might be completely different in this world.

She stored the bone pipe away within her sleeve like an expandable telescope. Fuu watched Purin, mystified, but then cautiously scanned our vicinity while holding her short wand.