

## **Chapter 280 - Blood Beast Squad and Muku**

At the moment when we finished the collection of the magic stones, Souther sullenly commented, "Master, the one to have gathered the most magic stones is Rollo-sama. It won't make any sense for her to punch herself!"

"I know as much myself as well, I'll give Rollo a reward later."

"Nn, nyao." The black panther meows happily, bumping her head against my waist.

The characteristic animal scent of Rollo wafted over. I gently brushed the fluffy fur on her face with my right hand.

"...Well then, let's go inside the forest on the right side."

"Nyao."

"Okay! I want to test out a swordsmanship that copies your kicking next, Master!"

"Probably many of those plant monsters from just now are living in there."

"Sounds likely. However, the plants just now moved as if they were following our scent." Fuu replied to Mamani.

She's right. The monsters were moving almost as if they were aware of us from the very start.

"The branches that stabbed into me were also very sensitive to my blood circulation." Mamani added with her white whiskers trembling.

Were the plant monsters affected by <Inhalation of Odor Technique> by some chance?

While discussing this with everyone, we advanced towards the forest. Using that opportunity, I addressed Purin, who was walking in a way of always staying right next to me.

"Purin, rather than bone needles, you should call them bone spheres, don't you think?"

"Spheres, you say? It's a skill with the name <Bone Rock Needle>." Purin's bone tail shook adorably while she explained.

Continuing onwards, we entered the forest. It was different from the forest area around Rulizeze's cave. It didn't have any wall-like tree roots. If I had to compare it...I think it'd be closer to the Great Forest of the Evil Haunts. Leaves and branches blanketed the sky like a lid...big roots lay all over the ground, making it difficult to look far into the forest.

This is going to make ranged combat quite difficult.

"Purin, revert into a finger for now."

"Okay."

Purin's body crumbled apart in an instant, transforming into the golden caterpillar Ca-chan. After making her meandering body bend, she straightly extended her soft body towards my palm like a spring, and attached herself to it, changing into a sixth finger in no time.

Next I released the futuristic Gatrance uniform. After becoming stark naked, I focused on my right shoulder.

"Waahh."

"Mufuu."

"..."

"Oohh."

My <Servant Leaders> fixed their eyes on my body. In the next moment, the shoulder dragon surfaced out of the skin.

Mmhwee-san, please take care of it.

A dark green cloth was spit out of the shoulder dragon's mouth, waving across my entire body, and covering me in a coat with pretty silver branch patterns within milliseconds. I didn't use the tube-shaped upper arm protectors.

"Master, your attire uses a really magnificent fabric."

"Fuu, your cheeks are flushing red."

"Yeah..."

Besides Fuu, everyone else had also stared at my dick and the cross-shaped mark with the entangled chain when I was naked. But I didn't go out of my way to remind them of this.

If it's in private, I'll gladly humor them by swinging my waist, though.

"——Now then, we're going to head deeper into the forest."

""Okay!""

We began to genuinely trespass into the woodland. On our way, we encountered various monsters.

The first was a monster with crooked one-eyed heads on both shoulders, a flabby belly, and imposing metal bars in both hands. According to Mamani, it appeared to resemble a monster called "Troll."

Next we ran into monsters combining crocodile heads and human bodies. Going by Bia, they were extremely similar to the crocodile-shaped Lizardmen, albeit smaller.

Lastly, we encountered an unknown monster, a combination of a bat and monkey. Even my <Servant Leaders>, who had experienced the labyrinth up to the eighth floor, didn't know about this particular monster.

Among those three types, it was the crocodile-headed monsters we encountered the most. They spoke in something similar to a language I couldn't translate, and lived in houses made out of teeth and bones I had never seen before. Every time we ran into one of their settlements, they were carrying out some religious ceremony consisting of roaring and making smoke rise up.

Since I felt like they had something like a peculiar culture, I ignored Bia's warning, and approached them in a friendly manner at first, but...I was immediately attacked for just getting close to them.

They fired bone fangs growing in their mouths and on their hands at me. I knocked the fangs down by rotating Baldok, but still suffered a cut on my cheek.

"For you to injure Master!" Mamani bellowed.

Afterwards, all of us attacked the crocodile-heads first. We completely annihilated them each time we encountered them. Given that they dropped large magic stones upon death, there was no doubt about them being monsters.

We kept advancing through the dark forest at a leisurely pace while slaying the monsters we found.

"...The 20th floor. It's a completely different world. The forest here resembles those on the surface, but it has slight differences in many aspects. Please look at this leaf! It looks like a Mement herb, but it's something else." Mamani, the one in charge of scouting, points at a herb growing at her feet.

If it's the Mement herb, I know of it.

"We're in the Evil Domain Hellrhone. Even the shapes of the spirits are unusual and of a different kind. It's actually a surprise to find spirits dwelling here, but it probably means that this place has a faint connection to the surface. I haven't seen any Debonchhichi, though."

"The spirit-sama's words are complicated and incomprehensible. But, I hadn't expected that monsters would keep appearing so frequently. Since the crocodile people resembled lizardmen, I got agitated."

"They look like lizardmen, but since they shoot their filthy fangs at us, I hate them...their blood was delicious, though."

"Mmh, I also walked the eighth floor quite a bit, but—— this floor is full of unknowns!" The thrilled Souther leaps towards a tree branch, performs a triangle jump, and walks in front.

"Nyao."

"I see, it looks like you're enjoying yourself, Souther. Rollo is unleashing cat punches."

"Rollo-sama..."

Huh, Souther's look is weird. Is she that happy about having been protected by Rollo?

I shifted my eyes back towards the forest. So far only Mamani had been scouting. I guess I'll do my best from here on out as well.

"...I think I'm going ahead to scout."

"Ah, please wait, Master!" Mamani came in front of me, genuflected, and said with a strong glint in her eyes, "I'm now a member of the Lucival family, but I shall bet my name as Fujique on it, so please leave the scouting to me."

It looks like I hurt her pride.

"Sure, go for it."

"Yes, I'm off——"

The sole tiger beastman of the Lucival family, Mamani, disappeared inside the forest with an elated expression.

"I'm going to return into your eye."

"Okay."

Helme liquefied in an instant, and came back into my left eye. While waiting for Mamani to report in...

"Rollo, let's play a game of tag."

"Nn, nya?"

"If you find me, I'll take you to heaven by massaging your paws which will also count as reward for earlier."

"N, nya, nya, nyaa."

In her excitement, Rollo caught me before the game of tag even started, and started to lick my face.

"Hahaha, I know, I know. Wait a little bit. Come chase me ten seconds after I disappeared into the forest, okay?"

"Nyaa."

"Alright——"

I escaped into the distance, using trunks as scaffoldings while dashing through the forest. Then I found a depression thickly overgrown by the forest. I laid down in there and activated <Hide>. Since it was boosted through <Trickster Adaption>, finding me that easily shouldn't...

Ugh, I'm immediately spotted alongside a "Nyaaaa——". It looks like <Hide> is useless against Rollo.

『Rollo-sama has an amazing sense of smell, and her nose's twitching is really cute! I shall dedicate a new pose to her!』

Helme-san pulls off a mysterious pose of spreading both arms upwards after shaking her butt...

Anyway, right now I'm in the middle of giving Rollodeen-san her reward by massaging her paws. As we're spending such a relaxed time, a blood message arrives from Mamani.

"Rollo, playtime is over."

"N, nya."

We took action after Mamani's report came in. Attacking the troll-shaped monsters, we annihilated the whole bunch of them. With this hunt as a start, we went with the flow of Mamani always scouting first to find out the numbers and types of monsters.

Using her skill <Extreme Blood Olfaction>, the evolved version of <Extreme Olfaction>, she swiftly spotted enemies for us. We closely cooperated while texting each other through blood messages.

Even right now, I'm reading a report from Mamani.

『A huge monster with four pig heads and many legs is fighting against a slime-like, liquid monster over a dead deer-shaped monster at the base of a cliff. Are we going to barge in?』

A struggle for survival, eh? I feel sorry for the monsters, but...she mentioned a slime, I wonder what kind of slime we're talking about here. I suppose it's the gross type, not the kind of Sliyo, Akemi-san's subordinate.

Well, right now the priority lies in gathering magic stones.

『...Yes, we are.』

『Got it. I'll use Pheromones' Touch』

『Sure. Everyone, we're heading for the location mentioned by Mamani』

『Okay』

『Affirmative』

『Understood』

After contacting my party members with a blood message, "Rollo."

"Nya."

Together with Rollodeen in her black panther form, I ran towards the place of Mamani's scent.

I spotted Mamani having lowered her body with one knee placed on the branch of a thick tree crookedly protruding from the tip of a cliff's top. On her back she had the big shuriken, Ashram, equipped.

As I was being fascinated by her cool appearance befitting a scout, my <Servant Leaders> arrived with a slight delay.

Mamani silently extended her arm, gesturing 『They're over there』. All of us checked the place she was pointing at...

I see...it really got four pig heads. Its torso looked like it was coated by steel as it held light brown cudgels in its two, long arms. Moreover, it also possessed six legs that seemed to be likewise coated by steel.

A partly eaten large deer lay on the ground right below the pig monster. In addition, there was a slime-type liquid monster crawling across the ground, trying to get a bite of that deer. It wasn't one of the cute slimes following Akemi-san, but the disgusting kind.

The pig monster swung its cudgels down at the approaching slime. Each time its weapons smashed into the slime, fluid splashed into the vicinity. However, every time the slime returned into its previous shape within no time as if nothing had happened, and kept sliding across the ground towards the deer with smacking sounds.

The pig monster apparently couldn't tolerate the slime as it hammered down its cudgels while howling. The slime got smashed many times over. Or rather, just its liquid was sent flying.

However, that slime...was now looking weird. It was glowing, as it seemingly gathered mana in its body.

In the next moment it extended branch-like liquid tentacles towards the pig monster, launching a counterattack. The multicolored tentacles clung to a part of the pig monster's legs at its lower body. Immediately following, the multicolored liquid seeped into the parts it touched, causing them to melt.

"Gyaaaaa." The pig monster screamed in agony, shaking its four heads.

It looks like those tentacles also possess an acidic effect.

But, the slime that released those tentacles...suddenly became quite sluggish. There were too many of the direct hits by the cudgels wielded by the pig monster, which collapsed after losing several legs. At the same time, the slime's recovery rate had also dropped significantly.

『...Milord, your orders please』

She's right, the time for an observational study is over.

In a whisper, I said, "Bia, Mamani, you deal with that pig. The slime will be handled with magic. I'll use ice, Fuu earth. Or alternatively, I'll burn it down with Murasame. If it's still no good despite all that, I'll order Rollo to burn it down with her flame breath...even if it'll likely burn down the forest around here."

『Affirmative, I'm off』

Bia descended the cliff, meandering her lower body as suitable for a lamia. My other bloodkin followed her.

After having gotten off the cliff, Bia retrieved a javelin from the quiver on her back, and hurled it with <Throwing>, directly hitting one of the pig heads. Confirming that one of the monster's heads had been crushed, Bia drew her black shamshir from its bordeaux scabbard. While advancing with her snake body winding across the ground, she slashed her shamshir from the side, aiming for the pig monster's torso, as if performing a bat swing, causing the monsters to stagger after a direct hit.

Moreover, arrows shot by Mamani stabbed into its torso and some of the monster's legs. The slime, which had been fighting the pig monster, unleashed tentacle attacks against it as well.

The pig monster's legs melted due to the acid tentacles, and after completely losing half of its legs, the pig monster stopped moving altogether.

At that moment I spotted Souther swiftly moving behind it, and fully swinging her swords at one of the pig monster's legs while twisting her body, seemingly boosted by the effect of the boots I gave her. It was a magnificent screw slash using her Twin Water Swords. I didn't know the techniques' name though.

Now then, I guess I'll do my best as well...

I turned my eyes towards the slime. The slime seemed to still consider the pig monster as its target, and didn't pay much attention to us.

Okay, I'll simply wallop it from a distance then.

I released a barrage of Frozen Arrows and Frozen Snake Arrows without casting. The spells were driven into the slime like the bullets of a machine gun. Ice gradually started to corrode the slime from the impact holes, rapidly turning it into a block of ice. With the final Frozen Arrow stabbing it, the lump of ice developed a crack, and crumbled apart.

At that moment, Fuu's rock spell directly clashed against the crumbling slime ice, pulverizing it. Moreover, a worrisome impact reverberated...from its magic stone. But, I saw how the stone dropped to the ground, undamaged.

The pig monster was in a precarious state as well. Bia's chain attack of demonic shield and shamshir settled it. The pig monster's steely torso deeply caved in.

"Everyone! I will finish it!" Mamani declared with a roar.

Her <Throwing> with Ashram destroyed one of the pig heads.

"Mamani, unfortunately—— I'll be the one to deliver the final blow!" Souther exclaimed as she moved behind the pig monster.

After instantly increasing her speed, she unleashed a diagonal slash with her swords after whirling around. Driving her blades through the back of the monster's last head, it was cut off, resulting in the monster collapsing. Performing a splendid landing, Souther brandished her swords once, waving the blood off the blades, and sheathed her swords into their scabbards protruding at the tips of her shoulders. A faint clicking sound could be heard as the blades were fully arrested.

Her appearance gave me the vivid impression that she was a genuine swordswoman.

This wrapped up the surprise attack. Rollodeen didn't get a turn this time. Without being particularly unhappy about it, she repeatedly fawned on me by bumping her head against my shin.

Next will be Rollo's turn...no wait, since I want to absorb some blood and souls, I'll act alone next. So Rollo gotta wait, I guess.

I collected the magic stones as I decided so.

Taking advantage of the forest's gloominess, we always attacked preemptively like this.

『...Their ability to promptly execute strategies is truly wonderful. Let's christen them as Lucival's special force **【Blood Beast Squad】** directly attached to you, Your Excellency』

『Blood Beast Squad, huh...? Well, you're free to call them whatever you want』

『Okay』

The **【Blood Beast Squad】** proceeded hunting in the forest. I really got fully affected by Helme, eh?

While analyzing myself, I went to the front by myself as vanguard. After finishing a raid, I seized a surviving bat-monkey monster...performing <Drain Soul>. Well, I created four <Servant Leaders> just recently, so I have to replenish my mana and spirit.

Right now my face is probably resembling that of a vampire to a tee. As I was looking like that, I sensed magic sources from within the forest.

"——If we've come this far, we'll be alright! Wait, kyaaaa, a two-eyed, red-eyed demooooon!!!" A three-eyed child screamed after suddenly running into me.

"Aaahhh, Muku! Get behind me!" A three-eyed adult woman called the child Muku, stepping forward with both her arms spread, obviously protecting the child.

"Y-Yoo. Certainly, I have two eyes and I might seem suspicious, but...as you can see, I'm capable of normal conversation."

"Eehh?"

"...Muku, he's a two-eye, but the fact that he's surviving in this forest is proof of his strength, you know?"

"Ah, yeah, that makes sense, but if that demon catches up..." The girl called Muku paid undue attention to the area behind her.

She seemed to be pitifully scared. Her pursuer is a demon, eh? Looking closer, it's obvious that her mother is a beautiful evil race member. Let's get rid of the demon chasing after them.

"...It sounds like you're being chased. Despite my appearance, I'm rather confident in my spearmanship, so do you want me to drive away that demon?"

"Mum, it's the words of a two-eye. Can we trust him?"

"...He's plenty credible by just not attacking us, still..."

It appears they can't trust me. I can't change what they dislike, but it's not like it matters to me either way. I guess I'll go looking for blood-sucking targets elsewhere.

"...I won't do anything then. Though, wouldn't it be better for you to run if you're being chased?"

"...Mum, what are we going to do?"

"Muku...let's have this person protect us."

"Oki."

It seems they're going to place their trust in me. So I'll be protecting Muku and her mother for the time being. I suppose I'll escort them to the forest's south while hunting.

Very soon after, I perceived a magic source response in the direction Muku and her mother had come from, and then, from within the rustling thicket...

"Foound ya~ Huh? There's some stranger with ya."

...appeared a four-eyed demon. So this is their stalker, eh?