

"These accelerator, break, gear...hand brake; what are they for?" (Erwin)

It's a slight distance away and I can't use 『Teleportation』 since it's a place I haven't visited yet, thus I decided to head to the actual site, using one of the magic four-wheels we excavated before.

As it was a car that runs with mana and not fuel, Erw does a test drive while looking at the manual. Driver's licenses or such bullshit doesn't exist in this world. This place is a grassland with no one in sight anyway.

It doesn't matter even if he learns driving by making it move all of a sudden.

Fortunately, or should I say it's because Erw has good reflexes; he was able to drive skillfully in no time.

I also possessed a driver's license in my previous life. I was a paper driver as I had a bit of a blank period where I didn't drive any car, but I should be able to drive normally if I practice it a bit.

It's something the body remembers unexpectedly.

If I don't practice a little bit more, I can't think that I will be allowed to drive on a Japanese street, though.

"I want to learn it, too." (Luise)

"Let's practice in order."

"The people from the past sure created some handy things."

If you want to call it handy, then it might be, but since it's a kind of car its user-friendliness actually becomes unexpectedly bad if the roads aren't maintained properly.

With the apparent premise that they would be used on bad roads, the vehicles that were discovered in the Demon Forest's underground ruin are mostly those resembling jeeps and large trucks.

If that wasn't the case, it might have been impossible for them to be usable on bad roads or roads that are close to it.

"Wend, it's handy, but I kinda feel sick..." (Luise)

Since the base of the Greater League Mountain Range is mostly untouched no-man's-land, the magic four-wheeler shakes terribly if you make it drive through that area.

Since it looks like even Luise feels bad due to motion sickness, it goes without saying that it applies for the others as well.

"The passage of 10,000 years is really cruel. A place that achieved a development competing for the first or second rank on the continent turned into intact nature." (Arnest)

As Arnest was afflicted by car sickness, he worked hard at drawing up a report by himself.

"Arnest-san, you haven't gotten sick at all, have you...?" (Katharina)

Suffering the most of car sickness, Katharina was surprised at Arnest being completely fine.

"In my childhood I had a terrible motion sickness. Nowadays I am alright with it." (Arnest)

Arnest doesn't talk overly much about his home, but occasionally he drops some fragments of information.

In the demon country magic four-wheelers have apparently become popular as if it's the most natural thing in the world.

"What do those who get sick do?"

"They take anti-motion-sickness medicine. Do you need one?" (Arnest)

"It would have been great if you had handed it out in advance..." (Katharina)

Arnest passes the medicine around to everyone. Once they swallowed it, all of them were promptly released from their motion sickness.

We also pass the medicine to the members that have boarded the other four-wheeler, the one driven by Erw.

At any rate, it's quite the effective medicine, isn't it?

The demon country seems to be fairly advanced in medical technology, too.

"Wendelin-san, it looks like you haven't gotten sick either." (Katharina)

"I guess it's because I'm driving?" (Wendelin)

I remember that I had awful motion sickness in my childhood during my previous life.

And yet it's strange because it vanished when I got my driver's license and started to drive a car myself.

"We have arrived." (Arnest)

We have arrived at our planned destination in around 20 minutes, but the local terrain was nothing more than a mountain slope.

It's impossible to imagine that a tunnel from the Ancient Magic Civilization's era is supposed to sleep below this area that's densely overgrown with many trees.

Given that 10,000 years have elapsed, it's probably been completely buried below the mountain.

"I know that it should be roughly around this area, but please do not ask me where exactly."
(Arnest)

"Is there no other option but to dig up the entire area...?"

Just being able to specify the location to some extent makes it already better than for other adventurers and archaeologists.

While thinking that, I begin working.

However, it's not like all will be fine by recklessly blowing away sand and earth with magic.

First I cut down the large amount of trees crowding the slope with 『Wind Cutter』 and collected them into my magic bag.

"I guess they will serve as firewood and lumber..." (Wendelin)

Next I shaved off the rocks, earth and sand, and stored it away as well.

"Wendelin-san, are you not going to get rid of a greater amount at once?" (Katharina)

"No, if I do that, it might damage the tunnel below." (Wendelin)

Among my friends at university there was one guy who majored in archeology. He said that one must proceed carefully when using heavy machinery during excavations.

If you dig out a large amount all at once because of considering it bothersome to go slowly at it, it could turn out badly with rare remains and artifacts getting broken, causing the archaeologists to clamor about their precious materials being lost.

Still, we might be better off as we are not carefully scraping off the soil with a wooden spatula.

"How boring." (Erwin)

"It's not boring for you and the others, now is it?" (Wendelin)

Katharina, Arnest and I search for the tunnel. Erw and the others entertained the flying dragons and wyverns that occasionally turned up here.

The Greater League Mountain Range is a place that should also be called a quasi-monster domain. That's why wyvern will show up, thinking that prey has come, if humans kick up a fuss in their territory.

Compared to other monster domains, the distribution of monsters is irregular, but that doesn't change the fact that this is a monster domain either.

I should probably prepare methods for traveling other than across dangerous mountain roads or via magic airship with its high shipping fees, even if that's a safe method.

"The tunnel is finished. Thus, if the Earl Baumeister household maintains it, it will be profitable." (Wilma)

It's as Wilma says.

People don't move readily if there's no profit to be gained.

"And, this me will be acknowledged, allowing me to increasingly focus on excavation." (Arnest)

Because the tunnel is convenient for me and will enable me to profit from it, and because Arnest wants me to acknowledge further excavations, we are eagerly working here like this.

"Dear, you're also collecting the dug-out earth?" (Elise)

"If it's Roderich, he will likely find some way to make use of it." (Wendelin)

I remembered him talking about there being places he wants fill up before.

If I take it there and use the soil to fill up those places, no useless sand and earth will remain here either.

If we pile it up at some bad spot, I would feel anxious that it might turn into a landslide due to becoming slushy from rain.

"Hhmmm. This place is a miss as well." (Arnest)

We tried to dig quite the range until evening, but we didn't find the all-important tunnel.

After deciding to do the rest tomorrow, we leap to the Associate Baron Baumeister territory with

『Teleportation』.

The reason why we didn't use the four-wheelers was because everyone would have doubtlessly become sick due to the bad roads.

Since I have come to the actual place once now, it's no problems as we will be able to instantly teleport on-site starting from tomorrow.

Even though they are valuable, convenient vehicles, I know of the risk of them being hated because the infrastructure has to be improved first. Cars feel very sickening if the roads are bad.

As for other issues, there's also the problem of countermeasures against theft.

I think normally they would be stolen with a magic bag if we left them on-site.

"Looks like it's quite difficult to find that tunnel, doesn't it?"

"The range of the location labeled as roughly being the right place is extensive after all..."

We return to the Associate Baron Baumeister territory and take dinner together with father and the others.

As expected, the menus has improved substantially, turning into something that's no inferior to that of other noble families.

I continue to talk about today's excavation work with father.

"I guess it's because the tunnel is also buried on top of the forests and mountains growing above it now that 10,000 years have lapsed." (Artur)

"If it hadn't been buried to such an extent, someone would have likely discovered it in the past..." (Wendelin)

"If you manage to make it usable after finding it, I suppose many visitors will arrive in this territory. It's something that would have been unimaginable in my youth." (Artur)

I can't imagine it either.

Father was absorbed in maintaining the small Knight Baumeister territory.

We was probably desperate to accomplish that much.

"The current me is really no more than a retired geezer who is supporting Paul who went independent as new feudal lord. I think helping is the most I can do. Come to think of it, what about Klaus?" (Artur)

"He's behaving obediently..."

I hired Klaus temporarily after he started a rebellion, but in the time when we had been in the Empire he had received assorted jobs from Roderich, and was apparently focused on only carrying out those.

Since he received a large reward in the disturbance with the Margrave Browig household, that must have been sufficient for him.

"It seems Roderich is somewhat keeping an eye on him, but..." (Wendelin)

For a person of Roderich's level, Klaus, who has perpetrated terrible deeds in the past, likely is a person requiring high precaution.

Him assigning assorted jobs to Klaus also serves as way to monitor him.

"I think there's no need to worry too much, though." (Artur)

"Why?" (Wendelin)

"Klaus and I were unable to cooperate, but recently I have become capable of understanding his situation." (Artur)

According to father Klaus seems to have already fulfilled his ambitions.

"Including the Knight Baumeister territory, the development of the Savage Lands is advancing, and exchange with the outside has started as well. This was his ambition. Being able to calmly think of eliminating me and Kurt as no issue for the sake of this aspiration, that's Klaus." (Artur)

"So you're saying that he has already achieved his objective?" (Wendelin)

"That man wasn't picky with his methods, but now that he's achieved them, that's the end of it. He's more intelligent than many others. He's at an advanced age, too, so he should stay obedient from now on." (Artur)

Father's face turned bitter for an instant.

I suppose that intelligence of Klaus is a part that he doesn't like.

He ended up losing his own son, but the lives of Klaus' grandchildren has improved after becoming governors of new villages.

Maybe father is jealous of his difference in ability with Klaus.

Klaus was able to save his grandchildren, same can't be said about father, who couldn't save his son.

"Either way, that's all in the past now. Klaus and I will grow old and die. However, a tunnel, eh? According to the map it's very probable that it's connected to the Breithilde Margraviate, but I wish it will be helpful to this territory prospering successfully. Personally, it will likely increase my pocket money, too." (Artur)

Finishing dinner while holding such a conversation, I go to enjoy the evening's cool in the mansion's back yard.

Outside Erw trained swordsmanship with Karl and Oscar.

"Erw, how it's going?" (Wendelin)

I try asking Erw about my nephews' swordsmanship talent.

"There are actually more talented than you and Erich-san, Wend." (Erwin)

"Hmmm. I don't quite know if the comparison targets are way too bad to make a judgment." (Wendelin)

There's no need to talk about my talent in swordsmanship.

And, the one who exceeds me in being terrible at it is Erich-niisan.

"If they do their best, I think they will be able to reach the third or fourth round in the Martial Arts Tournament." (Erwin)

"That gives me a peace of mind then. I guess their mother's blood is strong in them, huh?"

"I don't think that their blood matters. Even my father was defeated in the second round of the tournament in his youth." (Amelie)

Before I realized it, Amelie stood next to me.

Originally I wanted to talk with her much earlier, but previously Elise and the others were present and also other onlookers.

In front of us Erw is practicing with my nephews, but right now there's no one else nearby.

I guess this means we can have a private chat.

Elise and my other wives might be considerate of us.

"Artur-sama would give practice swordsmanship with them if he has time." (Amelie)

Father has no talent in swordsmanship either, but if it's at the level of teaching them the basics, he should be able to accomplish that.

"Johanna-sama and I teach them writing and calculation, too. Artur-sama also reached the point where he's capable of calculating without almost no discomfort." (Amelie)

While helping with the Associate Baron Baumeister territory which is still in the middle of expansion, despite having retired, he's training archery and swordsmanship with my nephews. Himself studying albeit being busy to all outward appearances might be owed to him feeling something akin to his own incompetence due to the matter with Kurt.

"I see." (Wendelin)

However, I don't voice out my deduction.

It would be rude towards father.

"But that period will also come to an end in a little while." (Amelie)

"Come to an end?" (Wendelin)

"Yes. Karl and Oskar will be left in the care of my parent's home." (Amelie)

After he becomes an adult, Karl will be given a Knight peerage and assigned a territory from the Baumeister Earldom.

It's planned that Oskar will become the Junior Commander of that newly organized Knight territory to support his elder brother, but it was decided that they will be entrusted to the Meinbach family, Amelie's home, during the period until then.

"Isn't that a bit too early?" (Wendelin)

Leaving children, who haven't even turned ten years old yet, with another family feels premature to me.

"My, didn't you depart to the Savage Lands by yourself when you were much younger, Wend-kun?" (Amelie)

"Even so, I returned home every day." (Wendelin)

"Occasionally you didn't come back either though, right?" (Amelie)

"Yes, there were days when I camped outside, too." (Wendelin)

Finally Amelie's tone changed now that it was just the two of us.

I guess she realized that Erw doesn't hear what we are talking about as he's too engrossed in the training.

"It's slightly early, but my father said that it's unconditional." (Amelie)

The new Knight household will succeed the the Meinbach family name.

While it will likewise be a Knight household, it will be set up as something similar to real branch family. That household will also be blood-related to the Earl Baumeister household.

They seem to harbor a sense of impending danger that it must not end in failure, no matter what happens.

"Because they will be tampered by his relatives...father might have a plan too, but..." (Amelie)

The majority of the retainers and residents will be provided by the Knight Meinbach household. Because they are second sons and below, they should normally be in an unfortunate position, but they are trying to secure a new place where they belong thanks to that completely unexpected chance.

"Sounds quite serious." (Wendelin)

I end up thinking that Karl is still quite young, but I guess this is about when he becomes a feudal lord.

I felt doubt towards the way father and Kurt handled things during my childhood, but seen from the standpoint of those concerned, it was probably the result of them desperately keeping things going.

"Are you going to accompany them, Amelie-san?" (Wendelin)

"No. Because I'm the most likely candidate to pamper them as their mother..." (Amelie)

"But you know..." (Wendelin)

I have a problem with it as it's too strict.

After all there are occasionally nobles who end up getting broken by that.

I know that very well as I encountered a weird noble in the royal capital before.

"Father has considered that as well and said that he doesn't mind for me to come visiting them once a month. But..." (Amelie)

Traveling once a month to the Knight Meinbach territory that's located on the other side of the Greater League Mountain Range will be difficult.

A small magic airship is departing once a week from close to the Knight Baumeister household to Breitburg, but if you further travel to the Meinbach territory from there with a carriage, it turns into an issue of money and time.

No matter how much of a small surplus she might have, using close to 200,000 cents per year as traveling expenses to go meet her own children is hard for Amelie.

After all she's holding a position of being a freeloader in Paul-niisan's home.

"I think that it's shameful, but father's expectation is for me to simply depend on you, Wend-kun..." (Amelie)

In other words, Lord Meinbach planned for Amelie to not stay here but at my side?

If it's me, I can easily drop her off with magic at the times when she's going to meet her children and then pick her up later on.

Lord Meinbach has noticed the relationship between me and his daughter, and is planing to use that for his own agenda.

Rather than having her forcibly return home and search for a new marriage partner, it's more lucrative for him to leave her at my side, even if it's in an unofficial position.

It's a thinking that's aristocratic to a remarkable degree, but the existence of the Knight Meinbach territory's retainers and residents are heavily weighing down on his shoulders.

That means he will move for the sake of his household, for the sake of his fief's population, even if he has to make use of his own daughter.

"I guess he's more noble-like than my father..." (Wendelin)

"Most recently he's especially worried..." (Amelie)

As the Knight Meinbach territory is small, there's not much left to reclaim anymore.

There's a limit in the population it can maintain. They have to send away the excess in people elsewhere.

"The are enthusiastically leaving while saying 『I will make a name for myself in the capital!』, but more than half of them stop staying in touch. It would be great if they were able to make a living there, even if it's in the slums, but..." (Amelie)

She's saying that there might be many who have already died.

Amelie says that there were many times where she saw her father worrying, wondering whether he couldn't do anything about it, before becoming a bride.

"That's why he says that they cannot allow this to fail by all means." (Amelie)

He's going to give Karl and Oskar further education, and make them early on meet with the retainer and village chief candidates as well as the residents, who will follow them, to make sure that they will carry out the management and development of the new territory very efficiently.

For him to be able to send out the excess-residents in the Knight Meinbach territory, the development of the new Knight Meinbach territory must not fail.

At the same time he's saying that she has to stay with me a lot more so that things don't come to nothing due me changing my mind.

I guess he's capable to offer his daughter to me without any scruples for that sake.

"Sure, it's fine. You can come to my place." (Wendelin)

"Wend-kun, you do have authority, so it would be fine even if you high-handedly refused, you know?" (Amelie)

"It's not that I haven't thought about that either, but..." (Wendelin)

While being toyed with by the rebel army and the liberation army during the Empire's civil war, I saw many nobles becoming desperate to preserve their own territories. Of course they were also scared of losing their peerage and territory, but at the same time they were so frantic exactly because they were responsible for the lives of their fief's population. Since I have seen such things, I felt that it would be wrong to refuse her.

"Wherever one goes, it's always difficult, isn't it?" (Amelie)

It's because those things become fetters twining around myself. Because of that I feel like I want to decide whom I love like a feudal lord." (Wendelin)

"Love?" (Amelie)

"Amelie-san, you staying at my side is convenient for me." (Wendelin)

"You have really changed, haven't you? To keep such an old lady at your side..." (Amelie)

"Isn't that fine? After all I decided for it to be so." (Wendelin)

"It shall be as you ordered, Earl Baumeister-sama. But, is that alright?" (Amelie)

"Hahaha, I'm Earl Baumeister-sama." (Wendelin)

I acted confident in front of Amelie like that, but within less than one hour after that I ended up doing a beautiful dogeza in front of Elise and the others inside the room that had been assigned to us as lodging.

Well, I guess that's the extent of my authority.

"With the circumstances as mentioned just now..." (Wendelin)

Without mentioning my private feeling that I will be happy if Amelie stays at my side with a single word, I carefully and thoroughly explained that I have to accept her as there are various aristocratic circumstances, and that it's also for the sake of my cute nephews.

Elise and the others listened to my words silently.

Since they aren't saying anything, I feel slightly scared.

"There's no particular reason for me to be against it." (Elise)

"Me neither." (Ina)

"I suppose there's none for me, too." (Luise)

"Wend-sama, you should do as you like." (Wilma)

"That's right. We don't have any reason to interfere either." (Katharina)

"Ooh!" (Wendelin)

I raise a voice full of delight due to the truly unexpected acceptance.

"You might as well say that it feels like it finally happens now after such a long time."

"Indeed. But, since it's unofficial, it would be best for it to be limited to where we can see it." (Ina)

"After all Roderich-san would get troubled before long if 『Earl Baumeister-sama』 slipped out deep in the night to have a tryst with his unofficial mistress."

"There's also the issue of security. It will be troublesome, if something happens to you, Wend-sama. If it's here, the area is as good as uninhabited, and thus the deployment of assassins is uncomplicated." (Wilma)

"In short, in our eyes things improved with this situation."

"If I can have you interpret it like that..." (Wendelin)

It was quite the harsh analysis of the circumstances, but I will consider it as something good since they gave me their acknowledgment.

It was the effect of doing a dogeza while doing my best.

"Besides, as for Amelie-san, I can consider it as 『I guess it's inevitable』."

"Inevitable?" (Wendelin)

"Yes. It's emotionally problematic, but this here is important. After all she's going to live together with us in the mansion from now on."

You can't live together with people who you dislike.

There are many noble wives who are in such relationships. Once things turn out like this, the atmosphere in a mansion becomes strained and deteriorates.

It might be a clear solution characteristic to Elise who's a genuine noble lady.

"Wend, since the relation with your stepmother has lacking parts, I think such parts might get resolved by Amelie-san."

"Ina-chan, something like that is usually called 『onee-san attribute [efn_note]Somehow I can't find the proper word here. She means an attribute of being older than the person concerned. Basically she's saying that Wendelin is drawn to Amelie because she older and more experienced than him. [/efn_note]』. (Luise)

They have analyzed me in various ways, but 『onee-san attribute』...I wonder where Luise picked up this one.

"But, in that case the same applies for Therese?"

"No. Leaving aside right now, the Therese back when we were in the Empire was no good."

"On top of being troublesome, she irritatingly came on Wendelin-san with a suggestive approach, didn't she?" (Katharina)

The past Therese was harshly criticized by Wilma and Katharina. Though I have no doubt that Elise, Ina and Luise should think the same.

"However, back when we were in the Empire, eh? What about now?"

"Now she's docile. Nonpoisonous." (Wilma)

"Now that you mention it, I don't feel such a bad emotions as before."

The current Therese bought a small mansion in the neighborhood and lived there peacefully. For caution's sake we have deployed some guards, but as there are no visitors from outside either, I guess her entertainment is limited to me occasionally going to her for a chat while bringing souvenirs.

"It's probably because Therese also had the social position. The situation in Amelie-san's case isn't that complicated."

To me it feels complicated, but if Elise is able to say that, I suppose it means that it's not such a complicated matter. As expected, noble society is troublesome in various ways.

"I think she won't mind being treated as Head Maid who takes care of household affairs. There are many other nobles who keep their mistress in such a way."

Officially they will have the social status of managing the maids, but in reality they are the noble's mistress. There are many such women.

Given that the social status of the those women's children and their eventually newly born children lies in the power of the noble, who's also the family head, other people can't meddle overly much.

"We have heard the story about Amelie-san from you, dear, and today there's also the excavation job, so let's go sleep early?" (Elise)

As might expected, I decide to go sleep early in preparation for tomorrow without going to the usual tryst cabin today.

If I were to be too careless at such a time, I will surely get severely scolded by Elise and the others.



"I will do my very best at excavating today as well!" (Arnest)

The next morning we leap to the yesterday's spot with 『Teleportation』 and resume the excavation. As usual Arnest was full of energy, but Erw rubbed his eyes while looking sleepy.

"Did you get tired from practicing with Oskar and Karl?" (Wendelin)

"No. Do you remember who's in the same room as me, Wend?" (Erwin)

"Aah..." (Wendelin)

Being responsible for watching him just in case, Erw shared a room with Arnest.

"He continuously wrote and researched something until deep into the night. As it bothered me, I couldn't sleep..." (Erwin)

"Erwin, you are say something strange there. I just calculated the tunnel's estimated burying spot in preparation for today." (Arnest)

A map of this area, which had that noted down, was grasped in Arnest's hand.

"Steady analytical study will give birth to huge results in the future." (Arnest)

"That might be true, but..." (Erwin)

"Let me sleep normally," Erw seems unhappy.

Arnest, who has an oddly high tension all by himself, continues to dig at the estimated spot with magic.

In the middle of it flying dragons and wyverns show up sporadically, but all of them were turned into raw materials by Ina's spear throwing, Wilma's sniping, and Luise's and Erw's attacks.

"It would have been really great if Doushi had been here too."

"Also Burkhardt-san, I guess."

"Those are busy right now."

The two had the task to head all over and explain the events in the Empire's civil war.

Rather than explanation, it might be more correct to call it a lecturer-like job.

Because it's a world that has a lot less entertainment than Earth, there are many people who look forward to such stories.

Since I'm busy as landed nobility, the two got the short end of the stick as that doesn't apply to them.

Especially Burkhardt-san has been asked to do so by Margrave Breithilde and thus he's heading all over the country.

If Burkhardt-san's fame rises, it will lead to peace for Margrave Breithilde who employs him.

For a moment there was a plan to have Burkhardt-san succeed a peerage, but he himself turned that

down.

『What's so sad about it? I have no need for hardships similar to yours, Earl-sama.』 (Burkhardt)

Even if he, who has already passed an age of 50, became a noble, it's very likely that he would be able to stabilize his own territory until his death.

Since there's also the possibility that it could collapse in the generation of his children, I guess his true opinion is to not do the unreasonable?

"I've gotten pretty tired of this." (Katharina)

Having changed wind magic into the shape of something like a drill, we're shaving off the mountain's slope.

As archaeologist Arnest was good at that spell to begin with, but since it's not such a complicated spell either, the three of us are earnestly digging up the mountain's slope.

Leaving aside Arnest, who isn't bothered by such kind of work, Katharina had apparently reached her limit.

"Katharina-dono, excavation is a chain of plain jobs. However, you won't be able to forget the deeply emotional moment when you manage to excavate something." (Arnest)

"Simple tableware from the past or rusted swords, you mean?" (Katharina)

"How did the ancient people use those tools? Just thinking about that is already fun." (Arnest)

"It's a hobby that really doesn't suit me..." (Katharina)

During my previous life, there was a classmate in the same university who excavated a historic ruin as practice during his summer vacations to obtain the qualifications of a curator.

He seemed to be happy as he enjoyed such things, but as far as I have heard him talking about it, to me at least it didn't feel all that enjoyable.

It can't be helped since this is the difference in personal taste.

"That is regrettable! Ooh! Finally it appeared!" (Arnest)

At a place that was whittled down, just one part of an artificial object, which resembled the framework of a tunnel, emerged and shone in the sun.

At last the ancient tunnel, which has been buried for 10,000 years, showed up.

"However, you never know in the middle of mountains like these, right?"

"In these 10,000 years, sand and earth that collapsed down gathered and turned into a mountain. Then trees grew on top of that. Nature is truly fearsome!" (Arnest)

It's not 『The Foolish Old Man Removes the Mountains』, but since it won't emerge if you don't work at it with the intention to tear down a mountain, albeit a small one, I guess it's only natural that it hasn't been discovered so far.

"Let's move all the earth and sand in front of the entrance away." (Wendelin)

"Understood." (Katharina)

"Katharina, you're suddenly fully motivated, aren't you?" (Wendelin)

"I mean, if something appears, you will be curious about its contents."

Certainly, that might be true as well.

I psyched up myself as well, and then the three of us stored all the earth, trees and sand, which buried the tunnel, into my magic bag.

"Just what absurd amount fits in that thing..." (Katharina)

It's probably because I frequently used magic during the Empire's civil war.
My mana has grown to an extent that's obvious at a glance.

"You possess an amount of mana that isn't very common even among demons." (Arnest)

"Having said that, I can't best you though, Arnest." (Wendelin)

"This me played hooky during magic training, but even so I was one of the top five mana possessors in the demon country." (Arnest)

"Then it's really good that you were able to leave the country."

If you are the owner of so much mana, I don't think that the country will let you go, though.

"That is why I smuggled myself out of the country." (Arnest)

He has ignored even his country's rules for the sake of excavating underground ruins.
In a certain sense, Arnest is a genuine scholar, I guess.

"I will enter at once." (Arnest)

The debris at the entrance had been completely removed.
All that's left is to enter the tunnel.

"There are no monsters or something like that in there, right?" (Erwin)

"There is no reason for that to be the case." (Arnest)

Erw's worry is completely denied by Arnest.

We enter inside while staying on guard just in case, but inside it's dark and one can't see properly.
At once I secure an illumination by casting 『Light』.
Erw and Wilma turned on the light in the spare lamps for caution's sake.

"Considering it's been in use 10,000 years ago, it's rather clean, isn't it?"

"That is what I told you. This was a big, national project. Have a look." (Arnest)

Arnest tells me to touch the tunnel's wall, but I recognized its appearance and sensation. It's made out of concrete.

"Mortar from the past?" (Wendelin)

If I were to mention concrete, Arnest with his good perception might suspect something. I deliberately use the word 'mortar.'

"It is something close to it. This is called concrete. Furthermore, this is a kind of 『Special Concrete』 that was used for facilities that were not supposed to break." (Arnest)

"Special means that something has been mixed into that concrete or whatever it's called?" (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister, you are an excellent student. Ah, you succeeded in compounding the Extreme Limit Steel. It is the same here." (Arnest)

In addition to very small doses of orichalcum and mithril, ten kinds of rare earth elements had been mixed into normal concrete. By doing that, they completed a tunnel that didn't break down even after 10,000 years have passed.

"To begin with, Earl Ischrubak had to do with the construction of this. His 『Ultra-Preservation』 magic working is yet another reason why it still stands as is. In addition, reinforcements made out of Extreme Limit Steel should have been added to the concrete, too." (Arnest)

I see. Given that this tunnel is made out special concrete that is reinforced with Extreme Limit Steel bars, it seems to be terribly sturdy.

"In that case it can be used right away?"

"It should be alright to do so. If possible, I would like to investigate it for around a month." (Arnest)

"I don't mind that." (Wendelin)

Even if it might be usable right away, there's no way that we can suddenly open a tunnel. Making the necessary arrangements with the Kingdom, providing illumination as the tunnel's dark, doing a safety check of the entire tunnel, setting up stations to check the tunnel users at the territories on both ends of the tunnel, establishing a guard system, and securing personnel. And, since it would be meaningless if we don't get the nobles on the exit's side to prepare, we also have to consider the other side's convenience.

If we suddenly announce 『We have opened a tunnel, so please feel free to use it』, it would result in the tunnel being overrun by illegal immigration of smugglers and criminals.

It is the job of the administration and civil officials who were often criticized in my previous life, but with so much stuff to do, it will take time.

"I guess we will first proceed as far as we can..." (Wendelin)

"However, it's truly a broad tunnel."

"Five road lanes per side are mentioned in the governments public information." (Arnest)

Once I shone the 『Light』 towards the ground, white lines, which I was used to see from Japan, were drawn there.

In total it's 10 traffic lanes with a width where even large trucks fit easily. In addition they even reserved emergency lanes on both sides for broken cars.

"It looks like a freeway on Earth...)" (Wendelin)

Since it's something that was built by "that" Earl Ischrubak and the ancestors of the Mizuho people, I guess it's no wonder if they did it full of motivation.

"By the way, it appears that there is also illumination." (Arnest)

Magic lights were installed on the ceiling in regular intervals.

"There are probably magic stones, which provide mana, inside." (Arnest)

Additionally ventilation opening to exchange the air inside the tunnel were set up in fixed intervals, too.

"The magic stones to make those move should be installed somewhere," Arnest deduces.

"Indeed..."

I had already taken out the MHCD and was giving Roderich a report.

『I will send guards over right away.』 (Roderich)

Hearing of the available, huge tunnel, the voice of Roderich through the MHCD was full of happiness.

"I leave it to you. We will investigate the tunnel as far as possible in the meantime." (Wendelin)

"Investigate you say, are we going to walk?"

"No, for such times we do have the four-wheelers, don't we?"

Riding separately on two magic four-wheelers, we proceed deeper into the tunnel. Since it's this time a perfectly paved road, no one became motion sick.

"How pleaaaasant——!" (Erwin)

Erw held out his head through the window while driving and frolicked around by himself.

"Operating the four-wheeler is simpler than I thought." (Luise)

In exchange for me, Luise grabs the wheel of the second car and soon becomes capable of driving it skillfully as she has good reflexes to begin with, following after Erw at the same speed.

"Huh? There's something ahead, isn't there?"

After driving through the tunnel for a while, I confirm ten-odd cars and trucks having been abandoned on the emergency lane.

Once we got off and checked their state, the doors were opened and the keys were still stuck at the driver's seats.

"Arnest, this is?" (Wendelin)

"Hmmm." (Arnest)

Arnest searches his own magic bag and retrieves a bundle of several hundred documents. While swiftly turning them over and reading them, he discovered a certain entry and began to explain.

"They followed the urgent evacuation instructions for times of disasters." (Arnest)

"Urgent evacuation instructions for times of disasters?" (Wendelin)

"If you take refuge in a magic four-wheeler at times of disasters such as earthquakes, there is the possibility of crashing into the tunnel's wall due to the aftershock. Accordingly, they parked their magic four-wheelers on the emergency lane, leaving the keys still inside to make it easier to move those cars for rescue parties and such. It's written that this had been a rule." (Arnest)

"What strange rule. What would they have done if their expensive four-wheeler was stolen?" (Erwin)

Erw's way of thinking is common in the current age.
Everyone except for Arnest seems to share the same opinion.

"The civilization during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization was even more advanced than the one in the current demon country. Exactly because it was a state of emergency, they wanted to the citizens to act by certain standards and the majority has enacted this. Given that there actually existed an insurance against theft, everyone abode the government's instructions without worrying about it in particular." (Arnest)

"Insurance; what's that?"

"It is a system where you will be compensated for your losses in case something happens, if you pay a certain amount of money each month in advance." (Arnest)

"I don't really get it. Isn't it usually better to save money to buy a new one instead of doing this monthly pay thing?"

"The money paid monthly is just a small amount." (Arnest)

"In that case I think that there will also be some people demanding funds for a new car after saying their car, which has gotten old, was stolen though..."

"I will not say that such people will not exist, but insurances are a system that will yield a profit if you manage them smartly." (Arnest)

Luise apparently harbored doubts about the insurance system's structure. Certainly, on the current Lingaia Continent it might be difficult to run an insurance company.

"Putting aside that system called insurance, they stopped their cars on the emergency lane and evacuated outside the tunnel because something happened. You say the tunnel was buried for some kind of reason after they left?"

"Rather than some kind, it was likely the huge explosion which destroyed the Ancient Magic Civilization."

Arnest explains that there was an explosion due to a failed large-scale magic device experiment carried out by the central state of the Ancient Magic Civilization, resulting in the disappearance of the central state. The civilization collapsed in the following chaos.

"This tunnel was built quite to have withstood such a huge explosion."

"I imagine that the entrances on both sides had been buried at a relatively early stage. It had been built quite sturdily to begin with, and the 『Ultra-Preservation』 was active as well." (Arnest)

It ended up being buried during the destruction of the Ancient Magic Civilization, and then wasn't restored afterwards due to some kind of circumstances.

I guess that means the amount of debris burying the entrances gradually increased, the number of people remembering the tunnel diminished slowly as well, and in the end it turned into a historic ruin.

"The magic four-wheelers are in a good state as well, aren't they?"

"It was good that the entrances had been blocked as the effect of 『Ultra-Preservation』 even reached the tunnel's space." (Arnest)

As expected, had the magic four-wheelers been exposed to wind for 10,000 years, they would have turned into rubble by now.

Though I suppose they would have been taken away robbers before that.

Almost all the magic four-wheelers that have been parked on the emergency lanes seem to be normally movable.

Their state was the same as back then.

Some are close to new, and there are also worn-out, seasoned trucks.

"I suppose we will leave the retrieval of the vehicles to the guards dispatched by Roderich. Let's move on." (Wendelin)

Thinking that, I'm about to return to our cars. But for some reason only Erw was staring at something through the opened door of a slightly separated car.

"Erw, what's there?" (Wendelin)

"Wend, the books from the Ancient Magic Civilization's era are really amazing!" (Erwin)

What Erw was looking at was something similar to weekly colored magazine. As magazine close to Friday or Focus in Japan, which wrote about the love life and nightly affairs of celebrities, the corruption of politicians and nobles, and also had the typical page with nude and swimsuit gravure pictures.

"How magnificent. To not take that along would be a waste." (Erwin)

Erw was entranced with the nude gravure page of the magazine he had found. It was left inside the car, but I guess the car owner didn't consider the magazine to that much value to take it with them during the evacuation. Well, even in Japan it was something you'd throw away immediately after reading it.

"It is a cheap magazine. They also exist in the demon country." (Arnest)

Arnest says while peeking into the magazine from behind Erw who's zealously staring on the nude gravure.

"They also exist in the demon country?" (Wendelin)

"However, nude photos are prohibited." (Arnest)

"Why?" (Wendelin)

"A women movement was naggy about it. Saying something about it infringing the rights of women." (Arnest)

Somehow that's a story I have heard somewhere before.

"Since half of the voters are women, the politicians have to consider them appropriately, too. In addition a movement towards banning sex services has also started since a few decades ago. A part of the intelligent men are raising appeals that this is the very cause of declining birth rates, but seeing as it is difficult to verify that claim, people, who run illegal brothels or release shady publications in the underground, have appeared once the authorities started to regulate those things. These kind of problems are issues that are extremely difficult to resolve since ancient times." (Arnest)

That's truly a story I have heard somewhere before.

"Erw, take it with you and look at it at home." (Wendelin)

"I'm looking at it here because I can't take it home." (Erwin)

Haruka not participating in this time's excavation is owed to her preparations for the marriage ceremony.

Erw has the job of guarding me, and so he entrusted the preparation to her.

"If it's only that much, you should be able to take it back and look normally at it, no?" (Wendelin)

"No! I will be scolded by Haruka-san!" (Erwin)

"Just how much does she have you under her control..." (Wendelin)

"Wend, I'm not being controlled by her!" (Erwin)

It's no wonder that I think that to be the case, seeing that he will be scolded by his wife for just looking at an erotic picture, right?

After all, someone like me...ah, I guess I don't really need something like erotic pictures. Telling Erw to quickly get on the magic four-wheeler, I try to leave this place.

"Wend, you are also scared of Elise and the others, aren't you?" (Erwin)

"No way, what are you saying all of a sudden..." (Wendelin)

This me, who has become an Earl and who possesses five wives and one mistress, is scared of women?

By no means. I really think that I don't need something like an erotic photo.

"Wend, are those your true feelings?" (Erwin)

"Isn't that obvious?" (Wendelin)

"This magazine writes about a special cosplay edition for this week's release...I don't understand the meaning of the word 'cosplay', but somehow it sounds fun." (Erwin)

"As feudal lord I own the right over artifacts. Erw, if necessary, you will borrow it from me." (Wendelin)

Since it piqued my interest a bit, I decide to set it aside just in case. After all it might actually have some literary value.

"Roger." (Erwin)

I quickly store the magazine into my magic bag and then we depart further into the tunnel. Of course the matter with the ero-book is a secret from Elise and the others.

"What a long tunnel."

While only depending on the lights of the magic four-wheelers, we head deeper into the tunnel. Given that abandoned vehicles, which had been left on the other lanes besides the emergency lanes, gradually became more frequent, I told Luise to drop the driving speed.

We have already advanced roughly 480 km in a half day at an average speed of 40 km/h.

I think it's proper to call it a long tunnel, but if you walk across the mountain roads of the Greater League Mountain Range, the way in one direction takes around half a month.

I guess you can call that only natural.

"I see it." (Arnest)

Finally we discovered a door, which had a sign stating 『Only authorized personnel』, at the tunnel's side.

"I will open it." (Katharina)

Once Katharina opens the door with the 『Unlock』 spell, using it for the first in a while, we find a huge magic crystal and several peripheral devices inside.

"It is not out of order. If you supply mana, as you see..." (Arnest)

Once Arnest pours mana into the empty mana crystal, it immediately recovers its crimson brightness.

When we leave the room, the magic lights and ventilation devices inside the tunnel have come back to life.

"Indeed, with this the tunnel has become really bright."

As expected we were exhausted after being crammed into a car for half a day.

We camp just like that on that day, and once again resume driving with the cars on the next morning.

The destination is the exit on the opposite side.

"Driving it is simple, and not as complicated as riding a horse."

In the eyes of Wilma, who had become capable of handling a magic gun and doing simple maintenance on it, driving the magic four-wheeler doesn't seem to be overly difficult. She switched with Erw, but is likewise steering it skillfully.

"Mmh? The engine stalled?" (Luise)

"That's odd..." (Katharina)

"If you change the gear, you have to let go of the clutch a bit more slowly." (Luise)

On the other hand, Katharina, who changed with Luise, frequently caused the engine to stall at the beginning.

There appears to be no automatic transmission in these magic four-wheelers.

Given that I only drove automatic cars in my previous life, I recalled that I caused the engine to stall a few times at the beginning.

"Like this?" (Katharina)

"Yeah, that's right. You don't have to be flustered since stalling the engine is nothing particularly significant either. If you have driven for a while, you will get used to it before long." (Luise)

"Okay." (Katharina)

At first she was bewildered, but even Katharina became able to drive the car normally in no time.

"But, it's truly a long tunnel, isn't it?"

Since Katharina had gotten used to driving, she switched with Ina next. Given that she has the same good reflexes as Luise, she was immediately able to drive normally.

"We are going to come out in the Breithilde Margraviate, right?"

"According to the map Arnest created while referencing the documents, that seems to be the case."
(Wendelin)

Sitting in the passenger seat, I check back with the handwritten map. It's close to a region of small, mixed fiefs in the east, but according to the calculations, we should come out at the base of a mountain located in the Breithilde Margraviate. If it's him, the various negotiations and formalities shouldn't pose much of a problem even on the opposite side of the tunnel.

"We arrived." (Katharina)

"We will wait here for a while, correct?"

If we suddenly remove the debris on the other side all of a sudden, it might cause many troublesome issues.

Hence we have decided to wait here until the guards dispatched by Roderich finish their examination and the collection of the magic four-wheelers. There rest will be a job I will carry out together with Arnest or Katharina.

"Just in case it's necessary to confirm that it's safe."

Therefore just the three of us will now go back through the tunnel. While casting spells such as 『Detection』, 『Sensing』 and 『Probe』 on the way, we started to check whether there are no damaged parts and internal cracks in the tunnel.

"As might be expected of Earl Ischrubak, a splendid construction work." (Arnest)

Arnest examined the tunnel's state by using an original sonar-like magic. This spells seems to belong to the wind attribute. Besides darkness magic, which manipulates someone's mind, he's apparently good at wind magic. He told me that it's the most useful spell during historic ruin excavations.

"I can use some earth and water magic, too. Fire is of no use to this me. It is at the level of starting a fire during camping." (Arnest)

Except for darkness, which is the special magic of demons, he hasn't learned anything but spells necessary for excavations.

In a certain sense it's even a fresh way of thinking.

"Lord!"

Once we have almost returned to the middle of the tunnel's length while investigating, Thomas and Nikolaus show up while leading several hundred guards.

"I see, this is indeed an amazing, ancient ruin."

Thomas seems to be the guard captain and Nikolaus serves as his vice-captain. Ordering the soldiers, they immediately carried out the work of collecting the vehicles.

"Did the personnel increase again?"

"Yes. The Baumeister Earldom is growing rapidly after all."

New retainers are constantly hired, and they are assigned jobs in accordance with their abilities and personalities.

There are many places that have to be protected. Since public order is slightly bad because of the many new settlers, the organization of the guard unit and the feudal army took priority.

"Nowadays we are treated as seniority."

"By now we have an overwhelming number of juniors."

"Even Roderich, the most senior one among us, has been serving for less than five years."

Thomas' and the others' continuous service isn't much shorter than that of Tristan's group.

"Be that as it may, such a huge tunnel, huh? It looks like guarding it will be hard."

"We still haven't removed the debris at the exit. Once that's done, we will have to settle things such as ownership ratio or the sharing of guarding and administrative responsibilities, but do as much as you can for now." (Wendelin)

"Ah, there's the allotment of ownership, eh? But, won't the negotiations be easy if it's Margrave Breithilde-sama?"

The tunnel goes through the Greater League Mountain Range.

If one were to speak about the owner of that mountain range, it's pretty much set in stone.

South from the summit it's the Baumeister Earldom. The rest belongs to the Breithilde Margraviate and some nobles of an alliance of smaller feudal lords.

However, the Greater League Mountain Range itself has difficult mountain roads, and serves as dwelling of flying dragons and wyverns. In addition there are also many ferocious wild animals. If you were to ask which noble is actually exercising their rule, the answer would be: none.

"Half each with Margrave Breithilde-sama then?"

"We are the discoverers. Even at lowest, we will claim the part until the power room."

The room with the magic crystal that acts as energy source for the magic lights and air condition inside the tunnel. That one is important, so we must not yield its ownership.

"Then let's hurry up and put the rule in practice." (Thomas)

Probably because of their experience in the dispute with the Margrave Browig household, Thomas understood very quickly.

While helping with the tunnel checking and collecting the abandoned vehicles, we are actively taking the tunnel under our control by positioning guards. At the same time the guards practiced driving the four-wheelers.

"I'd like to deploy these to some extent."

"We will definitely do that."

Because the tunnel is too long, they won't be able to cope in an emergency situation if they don't move by car.

Using horses would be fine as well, but that would take time.

"I guess it's finally time to dig out the exit."

Three days after Thomas and the guards came, the tunnel was judged to be completely safe.

Guards have been deployed at the entrance and various other places. They go on periodic patrols with the magic four-wheelers.

The guards have even put their hands on the power room with the magic crystal. At last we began to dig out through the sand and earth at the exit.

"No matter how much I dig, and dig, and dig...sand and earth keeps flowing in..."

A huge amount of sand and earth has piled up above the exit in 10,000 years. It might have turned into a mountain.

I put all of it into magic bags, and go to pass all of it, including the part that covered the entrance, to Roderich.

"Let's use the sand and earth to fill up where necessary." (Roderich)

Roderich proceeded with the plan of the filling up work.

After leaping with 『Teleportation』 on-site, I put the piled-up sand and earth into my magic bag.

The trees will be bought by merchants for lumber.

Thanks to the massive demand for constructions, there's never enough lumber around. The merchants bought all of it happily.

"We have no other choice but to keep digging while being cautious to not get buried alive."

Once we remove sand and earth on the exit's side, more of it streams into the hole, returning it all to its original state.

This repeated itself for a while, but at last sunlight shone through the exit.

"It's sunlight!"

With the tunnel opening, everyone is deeply moved by the light that leaks in.

"I will make a path."

Once I got rid of another big amount of debris, it became apparent that the accumulated sand and earth on the exit's side had also turned into a mountain. After removing all of it, the tunnel was reopened at last.

"It's open, but..."

"How very quiet..."

Luise, who left the tunnel aiming to be the first to get out, can't hide her surprise due to the scenery spreading in front of her. It's because that place is a rural farming region, seemingly located in the mountains. Several farmers were carefreely plowing their fields.

"Oh dear! Just when I thought that the mountain's slope had suddenly vanished, it next turned into a cave."

"We gotta inform the Lord of this."

"Those people are underground dwellers?"

They are surprised by the suddenly opened tunnel. One of the farmers runs at a great speed to call their lord.

"Huh? This isn't the Breithilde Margraviate, is it?" (Wendelin)

"Milord, maybe it's an area managed by a governor?" (Thomas)

Thomas, I and the others can't hide our surprise due to the rural area outside the tunnel's exit. For some reason or another I had a bad premonition, but that I would be dragged into the characteristic troubles of nobility again was something I couldn't imagine at that moment in time.