

Chapter 7 - Finally, the Martial Arts Tournament

"At last a week has passed, eh? That weird lot has also stopped those incomprehensible performances, skits or whatever. Katia, the perpetrator of this uproar, happily trained in the garden every day, though." (Wendelin)

"Wend, it's a good thing that you hadn't to be bored by those stupid appeals and artistic performances since you were busy with the tunnel construction until evening, don't you think? You should've taken me as guard along, too." (Erwin)

"Since I would be troubled if something happened to Katia, I cannot afford to lower the protection of the mansion here. Roderich prepared retainers who guard me on-site, so it was fine for me to go by myself." (Wendelin)

"There are no men in this mansion except for the middle-aged servants after all. Elise, Haruka and the other seemed to have fun even with the things going on outside as long as they gathered together, but I was bored as I didn't have much to do. I can't just guard Katia all the time." (Erwin)



Tomorrow's the tournament, but these last six days had been difficult in various ways. Many young nobles...a bunch with no confidence in their physical strength...assembled outside the mansion, and eagerly advertised themselves in order to somehow get in contact with Katia. Well, they did go away once it became dark, but continuing for all those days with words of love, poetry, singing, or appealing their own good looks, caused me to think that I had ended up in some kind of performer audition.

But then again, I didn't have to watch them all that much since I did magic construction work around the tunnel on our side during the day.

For Roderich, who got wind of this piece of information, it was convenient. He pushed me around like a demon for the sake of realizing the development project.

At least he allowed me to come back here at evening.

A household manager that can work his master to the bone like this; in a certain sense he's amazing. I guess, at the same time, it's also my fault since I can't get rid of the habit of being used by others.

"Did the construction work advance so much?" (Erwin)

"Thanks to Roderich..." (Wendelin)

First I completely removed the tunnel's sand and debris. Then I prepared the area allowing for a checkpoint, rest area and church to be built next to the entrance.

It was decided to establish the inns for the guests using the tunnel in Paul's territory as it's relatively close to the tunnel.

There was also the matter of establishing a road from the tunnel and preparing the soil at the scheduled construction sites...since that road connects various places in the Baumeister Earldom with the tunnel as starting point, it covered quite a distance.

Moreover, there were small construction jobs I had to do during my free time. All in all I was fairly

busy over those six days.

And yet I was fortunate that I hadn't to watch the unskilled singing and dancing of the strange nobles at the mansion.

"Wend, you...you sure avoided coming back here by all means..." (Erwin)

"Don't spout such lies!" (Wendelin)

It's not that I have an aversion of coming home.

I just didn't want to get involved with Katia and those troublesome nobles sticking to her. Therefore I simply used the opportunity and focused on my work.

I feel like I worked a bit too much, but this seems to be my nature as former Japanese.

On the other hand, Erw seemed to have a lot of spare time as Katia's guard in these six days.

"I had plenty of free time, but it's not like I wished for it. It was you who told me to not leave her side, rightt?" (Erwin)

"Being told that, stings." (Wendelin)

"Tomorrow that troublesome matter will come to an end. Today's the last dinner with her." (Erwin)

Tomorrow the tournament will be held, and the winner will enter the Eulenberg House as Katia's husband. Once he starts to manage the tunnel with the power of his parents, the problems related to the tunnel will be finally resolved as well.

When Erw and I moved to the kitchen, we found Elise and the others merrily preparing dinner.

There were still some of the appealing guys left outside the grounds, but women are strong-willed.

In a short time they learned to completely ignore or not mind them.

"Elise, you're really good at cooking. I can't prepare anything but my family's countryside dishes and crude outdoor cooking." (Katia)

"How about properly studying it from the basics then?"

"I think that's what I will do. Once I get married, it might be better for me to be able to prepare a little bit more dishes. The cooking in this mansion is truly delicious." (Katia)

It looks like she fancies the food here.

While helping Elise and the others right now, she might try to increase her repertoire.

"Are thee going to tempt thy future husband with cooking? It's a cliched means, but effective. I guess I will try my very best in preparation for the future, too." (Therese)

In the eyes of those unconcerned, this time's uproar is an entertaining event and no more than amusement.

Many nobles and their retainers, as well as commoners, who hope to watch the duels, have gathered in the capital after hearing the rumors. Even though it's not the appointed date yet, a great number of carts and stalls targeting those spectators have appeared.

Since the number of guests from the capital's suburbs has increased, the shopkeepers gleefully celebrated the increased sales.

Therese, whom I brought over from Baulburg, is also one of those tourists.
Given that she had been constantly secluded in Baulburg until now, she came to watch the tournament while using the chance to sightsee the capital.
Therese said that she would look for a place to stay, but considering her position, it's only natural for her to be sheltered by us, and thus she's staying in the capital's Baumeister mansion.

"Huh? Your cooking is more decent than I thought..." (Katia)

Of course Katia is well aware of Therese's identity.
She apparently believed that Therese can't cook because of her noble descent. However, learning that Therese's cooking is more elaborate than her own, she couldn't hide her surprise.

"Recently I have had plenty of time to learn cooking to my heart's content. I would venture to say that thou might as well call me teacher." (Therese)

"Well, it was a big help that you were a student with a good memory." (Amalie)

Same as with Therese, I had brought Amalie over, too.
As a matter of fact, I promised her yesterday to let her meet her children and at the same time make it possible for them to watch the tournament, thus I brought her here today.
I knew that she was teaching Therese how to cook, but it looks like they became quite close during my absence.
Are they getting along because both of them are in their twenties?
Since I would likely get scolded if I actually asked something like that, let's stay quiet.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, are those all your wives? There's quite a few of them, don't you think?" (Katia)

"Really? I think this number is normal for an Earl." (Therese)

Therese answered Katia while donning an expression asking 『Is it such a surprise?』.
In the eyes of Therese, a former Duchess and someone with many noble acquaintances in the Empire, the number of wives I possess is just average.
In reality Therese and Amalie officially aren't my wives, or rather, if it comes to Therese, she's not even my lover, but Therese doesn't seem to have any intention to expressly correct that part.

"I understand it logically. There had been many such people among my noble clients, but it feels strange to me because at home Father has only Mother." (Katia)

Her father, Lord Eulenberg, has only one wife, and her elder brother plans to not marry anyone besides his childhood friend. Katia might feel out of place if she's in the presence of a noble with several wives.
Yet, having several wives is proof of being a genuine noble.

"...So my old man was the odd one out, huh...?" (Katia)

"That's right. Thou have to consider the possibility of the legal wife not giving birth to a child.
Since there's also the relations between fellow noble houses, I suppose it's normal for even a Knight House to have two wives, with one being the daughter of a village headman or merchant to establish

a ranking order." (Therese)

"So that the excess children are thrown out? I became an adventurer upon my own wish, but there were plenty of kids of poor nobles who are adventurers because they got no other choice." (Katia)

"That's because it's difficult to create just as many children as thou need." (Therese)

It's better to have too many than being in need.

Seeing that there are children who die from illness and such, it's a safety measure for noble houses.

"I suppose a former Duchess-sama sees things differently. So that's the reason why you are Earl Baumeister-sama's lover?" (Katia)

"Eh?" (Wendelin)

"Hoh, such a rumor has spread already?" (Therese)

In contrast to me, who's surprised by Katia's statement, Therese seems delightful.

"It has. It's said that Earl Baumeister-sama, who played a big role during the Empire's civil war, received the former Duchess Philip-sama, a rival of the new emperor, as spoils of war and is sheltering her." (Katia)

"No, I just have been entrusted with her due to various political reasons..." (Wendelin)

I end up on tenterhooks due to society's gossip that's recounted by Katia.
Or rather, I haven't made a move on her yet.

"'To the public it might seem so, but in reality...' is the rumor going around. At times rumors are close to the truth, too." (Katia)

Katia turned her eyes in the direction of Amelie.

"You mean me...? It appears various things are being said about me, but I don't really care." (Amalie)

『She has offered herself as atonement for her husband, who tried to assassinate his younger brother』 is what society appears to be saying about Amalie.

It looks like various rumors are circulating about me, as if I am a big celebrity.

It's great that variety shows don't exist in this world.

"I have fun right now, thus it's alright. I also managed to make a new friend." (Amalie)

"That's how it is." (Therese)

There have been many occasions where we have been out until evening.

It looks like Therese, who frequented our mansion to take lessons in cooking, got along well with Amelie in the meanwhile.

I guess they have the same circumstances in some way, which made it easy for them to become

friends.

"Currently I'm just a freeloader. I don't know about the future, however." (Therese)

"If you allow me to voice my opinion: it's probably no problem since Earl Baumeister-sama is earning enough money. Even among adventurers there are some who have several wives. There are also some female adventurers who surround themselves with several, young, handsome men."
(Katia)

It's not as if any laws are actually broken by woman having several husbands, just that it's not as often as the other way around.

There is a fixed number of such people among skilled, female adventurers and merchants. Though I never actually met one myself.

"Even my brother...I'm not saying that he has to go as far as Earl Baumeister-sama, but it would be fine if he acted like a noble and took several wives." (Katia)

Katia probably thinks that the Eulenberg House will be made fun of by the other nobles for Veith limiting his wives to just a single daughter of a village headman, even if she might be his childhood friend.

"Katia-san, do you dislike Marita-san?" (Katharina)

Since she's a magician, she hasn't had any mock battles with Katia, but Katharina, who had talked with her quite a bit, asks her such question.

"I don't dislike her. She's also my childhood friend. We did farm work together every day in the past. She's a very nice person, but she's still the village headman's daughter. I had wanted him to consider a noble's daughter as legal wife, and Marita as concubine in order to give birth to an heir for the village headman family." (Katia)

"So that's how it is. But, I think you can say that Veith-san doesn't appear to be that lustful...he seems like the type who will be satisfied with one wife..." (Katharina)

I think so as well.

Besides, I find it questionable whether the Eulenberg House will be able to act like nobility all of a sudden.

"So he appears like that to you as well, Katharina? Jeez, even though he's the heir of a noble house, that brother of mine is..." (Katia)

Katia made a move because she considers her brother to be unreliable.

That definitely doesn't mean that she hates him, but she probably cannot help but feel worried.

"That's why a martial arts tournament to decide thy husband? However, are there any young nobles who can win against thou?" (Therese)

"I'm pretty sure there's at least one." (Katia)

There are more than 3,000 noble families in the Kingdom.
At least one should match Katia's conditions...or that's what Katia herself seems to believe.

"I have no clue." (Therese)

"Ina, Luise, Haruka and Wilma are no good. They are women after all."

Even if he were drawn to Katia, Erw can't win with his abilities. I don't plan to let go of him in the first place, though.

He himself probably doesn't want to manage something like a tunnel either.

Ina, Haruka, Wilma, and Luise, who can win against Katia, are women, thus they are out of the race.

"I know at least that much. I think Wendelin, who's the closest, can win if he fights against thee, Katia." (Therese)

"I don't have the qualifications to enter as a noble family head." (Wendelin)

"That might be true, but I think it would be the best move to skilfully settle the matter." (Therese)

"Skilfully settle the matter, eh...?"

Recently that Therese has start to speak outrageous stuff.

The dishes she made are delicious, but her way of thinking is too spicy.

"If I were in Wendelin's and Margrave Breithilde's position, I would set up a meeting and worry together how to share the concessions and balance the political power, but fortunately I have a social standing with no responsibilities. Since it had been thee, Wendelin, who discovered the tunnel, I can easily tell thee that it's fine to take all the concessions for thyself and prepare an alternative land for the Eulenberg House on the southern side of the Greater League Mountain Range." (Therese)

Certainly, I think that would be the easiest option, but there's also the standpoint of Margrave Breithilde and the other nobles.

I also wonder what's going to happen if I take too much.

"Thou think thou will be a nail that gets hammered back in? For thou to believe that at this point in time... The nail Wendelin is far too tall to be hammered back in." (Therese)

Unintentionally I ended up thinking that Therese's way to phrase that has been rather skillful.

"In a while there won't be any nobles who will publicly oppose thee, Wendelin. After all they might get killed by thee and thy group if they did." (Therese)

Thanks to our overwhelming achievements, nobles trying to openly pick a fight with us won't appear for the time being, according to Therese.

"Wasn't there the matter with the Herthania Valley? It's the same here. If thou take over the expenses while equally splitting the guarding with the royal family, the royal family would become

a nice shield, thou know?" (Therese)

"There's also Margrave Breithilde to consider..." (Wendelin)

The area around the Eulenberg Knightdom completely belongs to the Breithilde Margraviate. I think it's necessary to take him properly into consideration, too.

"Thou are on good terms, aren't thou? Just discuss it with him in advance. Good grief, for Burkhart to not have come up with this...if thou reduce the development of the tunnel's entrance and allocate essential facilities to the neighboring Breithilde Margraviate, he would most certainly agree."
(Therese)

"Ugh...I guess there was such a possibility as well..." (Wendelin)

She lost to Peter, however, as might be expected of a former emperor candidate. While we have reached an impasse, she has come up with a wonderful idea.

"But then again, thou can say that I came up with this after looking at the situation from a position without responsibility." (Therese)

I see, that might be the reason why kings of the past kept clowns.
It's said it's difficult to objectively grasp one's own position and decide in the most ideal way.

"It would be nice if we were spared of the nightmare of no one being able to win against Katia in the tournament."

"No way."

"Yes, yes, the complicated talks end at this point. Since we made various dishes, let's enjoy eating them." (Amalie)

"That's a very good idea, Amalie-sister-in-law." (Wendelin)

"Thou are truly her younger brother-in-law, aren't thou?" (Therese)

It's a relationship where such things occasionally happen, since we aren't older sister and younger brother in reality.

"That's a truly enviable relationship thou share. I am free every night as well. Once thou resolve this dispute, take it into consideration, Wendelin." (Therese)

"Hahaha..." (Wendelin)

You know, Elise and the others are next to us...is what I thought, but they don't seem to pay any attention to Therese's remark, and calmly line up the dishes they prepared.

"Ooh! No doubt that you're a high-ranking noble-sama!" (Katia)

"How about joining in as well, if thou like, Katia? I think that would be fine..." (Therese)

"Eh? Me? No, I will search for a husband by myself..." (Katia)

Katia answered Therese's bold proposal with a red face and a voice that faded gradually. It seems, in proportion to her active nature and abilities as adventurer, she doesn't have much familiarity with relations between the sexes. I'm pretty sure Katia's reckless character has been forged while keeping such things away.

"It's a real feast after a long time." (Erwin)

"Erw-san, I will also prepare a bento for tomorrow. Together with Elise-sama and the others, we agreed to prepare them after dinner." (Haruka)

"I'm looking forward to that!" (Erwin)

"I will stuff it with plenty of your favorite dishes, Erw-san." (Haruka)

"Yahooo——!" (Erwin)

And then Erw and Haruka enjoy the dinner while secluding themselves in their own little world. In the end, we enjoyed a great dinner.



On the next morning the martial arts tournament finally started in the capital's Colosseum. Many younger nobles and royal members have gathered at the venue. All of them were motivated to defeat Katia, become her husband and get their hands on the tunnel rights. At least they are better than the guys that crowded my mansion since they are trying to defeat Katia with their own combat prowess, I guess?

"Erw, what do you think?" (Wendelin)

"Hm——m, it looks like it'll be in vain." (Erwin)

"Eh? In vain?" (Wendelin)

"It's best if you don't place much expectations on them." (Erwin)

"A failure all of a sudden, huh...?" (Wendelin)

At once I begin to check the abilities of the participants together with Erw. That doesn't mean that I'm looking down on them or anything. If there isn't at least one guy that can defeat Katia, I will be in a bind. If it's not decided here, I will have to take care of Katia until the next group of candidates gathers again in the worst case. In that case, strange folks will start to appeal in front of my mansion again, and I, who don't want to see them, will be worked to the bone by Roderich.

Full of hope that I won't have to enter such a bad loop, I tried asking Erw whether there's a participant that might win against Katia, but his answer was negative.

"Their determination is really amazing. It feels like that's all they've got going for them, though."
(Erwin)

Everyone seems restless and wants to procure the tunnel rights.

Because it also affects the level of livelihood of their other relatives, they want to be adopted into the family of the bride by all means.

All of them frantically practiced in preparation of the real battle inside the Colosseum.

His Majesty gave his permission to open the Colosseum for training until the tournament's start.

Since representatives aren't allowed according to the rules, the participants have to wield a sword by themselves, but after watching them, Erw's expression becomes dispirited.

"Won't members of the knight order, who might be able to win against Katia, appear?"

"If it's them, they won't be able to provide personnel for the tunnel management, even if they were to win. I think if it's master Warren, he would win, but that man likely won't participate." (Erwin)

Those who might win can't provide any personnel, and the young nobles, who have that personnel at hand, don't seem likely to win.

Comprehending the situation, Erw sighed deeply.

"That stubborn tomboy is strong, you know?" (Erwin)

"You can't really expect a remarkable adventurer to be weak anyway." (Wendelin)

"Since the number of participants is big, she would deserve it if there was at least one man capable of winning against her." (Erwin)

"It's not like having many participants equals to being something good, right? It's not a lottery."

Erw looked at the participants as they were doing their last training runs, and sighed once more.

No matter how favorably he might assess them, he apparently can't find anyone capable of winning.

"Erw-san, there's no point in worrying about it." (Haruka)

"I guess that's true as well." (Erwin)

However, once he talked with Haruka, he became full of life in an instant.

"Here, have your bento." (Haruka)

"Thanks, what a pleasure." (Erwin)

While eating the handmade bento of his fiancée, Erw has completely turned into a normalfag that watches a match or similar.

In the end...

"Erwin, what do think of the high-classed participants?" (Warren)

"Master, you're off today?" (Erwin)

"Yeah. Recently I haven't gone out anywhere with the children. Thus I came here to watch the matches while at the same time having a good time with them." (Warren)

Warren came to watch the tournament together with his wife and children.
A beautiful wife, and two children, a boy and girl. It's a dazzling normalfag family.
I'm sure, a person like him is a winner in life.

"I am Erwin-sama's fiancée, Haruka Fujibayashi." (Haruka)

"I see...you look quite capable yourself." (Warren)

Warren-san apparently saw through Haruka's strength by just looking at her posture.
At any rate, a pupil who introduces his fiancée, and a master who visits for some entertainment with his family; I wonder, if you don't call this a normalfag gathering, then what else?

"As usual you're depressed over weird things, aren't you?" (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san, who's sitting next to me, stares at me curiously.

"Earl Baumeister, you have my gratitude for allowing me to enter a box seat today."

This time we also reserved a big box seat in the name of the Earl Baumeister House.
Margrave Breithilde brought Philine along with Burkhart-san acting as guard.
In addition, Erich and Helmut have come together with their families. Doushi is greedily devouring the sandwiches prepared by Elise.

"It's increasingly becoming a mere leisure activity..." (Ina)

Ina appears to be slightly astonished, but in the end there's no other option but to enjoy the rare holiday while praying that Katia's husband will be decided here.

"Warren-san, you're not going to participate?" (Wendelin)

"Me? I won't. Well, if I did, I would win though." (Warren)

That's definitely no boasting. If Katia actually fought against Warren-san, she shouldn't be able to win, no matter what she does.

"So you're not going to appear albeit being able to win? It's a good opportunity, don't you think?" (Wendelin)

"I became the commander of the Royal Knight Order through my swordsmanship. Securing the personnel to maintain the tunnel, and managing it all is outside my expertise. Above all, it's not like I can leave His Majesty's side." (Warren)

This is the difficulty of this time's martial arts tournament.

It's not like there are no young nobles stronger than Katia, or rather, if you look for them, it should be possible to find quite a few.

But, even if they apply just because of that, they will be rejected.

On the other hand, the guys who have the connections and ability allowing them to manage the tunnel, can't win against Katia by themselves.

Sure enough I became worried whether anyone is going to come out as winner here.

Are strange folks going to crowd my mansion again, starting with tomorrow?

"It looks like she has become considerably stronger in this one week." (Warren)

"Eh!? You can tell?" (Wendelin)

"I'm acquainted with Katia-dono after all." (Warren)

According to Warren-san, there was an occasion where they investigated the abilities of remarkable adventurers for a mission of the Royal Knight Order.

"If such strong person acts violently in the capital, it's going to be difficult for the normal guards to arrest them, thus the knights of the order will be dispatched. By knowing about the strong ones in advance, you also raise the probability of succeeding in such missions. Such things happen rarely, though." (Warren)

It seems Warren-san has grasped the abilities of almost all famous adventurers for his job.

"Rather than having become stronger, it's more precise to say that she became more skillful, I think?"

Katia is also warming up in a place separated from the other participants, but seeing that, Warren-san perceived differences in her movements in comparison to before.

"Umm, she was training through mock battles against Erw and the others for around a week." (Wendelin)

"That must be it then." (Warren)

"Was that a bad idea?" (Wendelin)

Since it would be troublesome had she said she wants to go outside in this situation, I gave her the permission to train in the garden, but that might have been wrong.

I thought that I would be scolded by Warren-san with 『What's the idea of making her stronger so that there's no one who can win against her!?』.

"No, I don't think there's any problem in particular. I mean, it doesn't look like anyone would have been able to win against her, even if she were to be at her previous skill level. Or rather, that lot probably won't even realize or grasp that Katia-dono became stronger during the last week." (Warren)

Warren-san, who doesn't make any compromises in regards to swordsmanship, evaluated the

participants' skills as worthless.

Certainly, I can't believe that Katia would have suffered defeat against those guys a week ago. And the bunch appealing in front of my mansion had given up on winning in the tournament from the start. It made me seriously worried about the Kingdom's ability to defend itself.

"The guys who are training properly aren't participating in this tournament. It's only folks that are spurred on by their greed. It would be great, if a miracle occurs."

"Miracle; that's nothing happening readily though..." (Erwin)

Everyone looked as if they agreed with Erw's sound objection.

"Miracles are miracles because they don't happen often, aren't they?" (Warren)

It appeared...Warren-san's catchphrase.
And moreover, at the worst situation.

"Erw, how about making an appearance?" (Wendelin)

"As if!" (Erwin)

Refused as expected, huh?

I suppose tomorrow will sound the start of another round of appeals by those weirdos...what should I do?

While we were talking about this and that, the tournament began, but as expected, Katia would become tired out if they went with a round-robin. Thus qualifiers were held first in order to prune down the number of challengers.

In the end only eight can fight against Katia. The tournament qualifiers are carried out after an impartial lot-drawing, but...

"Master, it's terrible to watch, isn't it?" (Erwin)

"It's only people who normally don't need any sword skills, so what did you expect?" (Warren)

The matches develop into some kind of awkward dancing.

There's no way that they would be able to become masters in a week after not having decently practiced swordsmanship before.

The matches continue without even a shred of tension.

No, the contenders are probably extremely serious about this, but it doesn't look like it at all.

"That person is so-so, I suppose." (Haruka)

"Haruka-san, can he also win against 『Swift Katia』?" (Warren)

"Impossible..." (Haruka)

"If they don't reach a level where they can win against Katia-dono, it's meaningless." (Warren)

Warren-san is really merciless if it comes to swordsmanship.

"Ah!" (Wendelin)

"What's wrong, Earl Baumeister?"

"The sword held by that person over there." (Wendelin)

"It's a nice magic sword, isn't it?"

I can't judge the quality of swords, but I felt mana from the sword of a participant. It resembles the Empire's magic swords and the magic katana owned by Haruka, but because of its old design, it seems to be an item originating from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization. Given that they are nobles, it's natural for them to possess such weapons.

"However, just because the sword is good, it doesn't automatically mean that he's going to win." (Warren)

"Indeed, you have to properly master the usage of a magic sword." (Erwin)

"After all there's no meaning in an amateur holding onto one." (Haruka)

Warren-san, Haruka, and Erw bash the participant who's swinging the magic sword with a prone posture.

In Japan, there's the proverb: 『The cunning mason works with any stone』.

It means, between an amateur holding a magic sword and a master holding a wooden sword, the master will naturally come out victorious.

And, just as the three predicted, the magic sword user lost against a competitor with slightly better combat skills.

"There was no point in the magic sword!"

Even after that there were several participants with magic swords, but none of them got through the qualifiers.

"Well, it's a strategy of relying on the weapons exactly because they are unskilled. As a matter of fact, those who use magic swords tend to be weak."

"It's at least profitable for weapon shops, isn't it?" (Erwin)

"I guess so." (Warren)

Warren-san casually answered Erw.

The boring preliminaries continued after that.

Erw, Haruka, and Warren-san are diligently watching the matches, but there are also people who gave up on that.

"Puhaaa——! The capital's temperature is mild compared to the Empire. It might actually be better to not warm up the Mizuho sake." (Burkhart)

"All the troubles in the civil war had been worth it. It was a great blessing to find a good connection for obtaining good sake!" (Armstrong)

Burkhart-san has a drinking bout together with Doushi inside the exclusive box seat of the Earl Baumeister House.

Even the side dishes such as edamame, cold tofu, chilled tomato, salted squid, and dried mackerel are all imported goods from the Mizuho Dukedom.

The reward from the Empire has been split into instalments over twenty years, but this means that we can freely buy goods from the Mizuho Dukedom.

The bill will be covered by the Empire's government, once we procure the estimate, order, and consent.

Taking advantage of this, Burkhart-san and Doushi privately import many products from the Mizuho Dukedom, just as they please.

We are waved through since we're well known, thus we can freely buy things as long as it's not considerably precious goods.

But, if I ask Duke Mizuho, he would finance even precious goods.

In other words, a war buddy is a good thing to have.

"Philine, it's wrong to become an adult like those two." (Breithilde)

"Father, it's proper quantities of alcohol at evening, once I become an adult, correct?" (Philine)

"That's right. Today I bought a cake at a new store, so let's eat it together." (Breithilde)

"Yes." (Philine)

Margrave Breithilde dotes on his first daughter next to him while setting aside his son and heir. Today he's watching the matches while eating cake together with her.

"Doushi-sama, those are really unusual snacks." (Philine)

"Uh huh. It's produce from the far northern regions. You want some, Philine?" (Armstrong)

"Yes." (Philine)

And yet Philine still favored Doushi.

She starts a conversation with him, and receives dishes such as boiled edamame.

"There are many delicious things among the native products of the Mizuho Dukedom, but it's not good that they are so pricey because of the low amount of goods flowing in."

"As for that, it seems they are planning to increase the production since their territory has grown."

"Sooner or later I must go and greet Duke Mizuho, too."

For some reason, a Mizuho food hype was about to start around the capital and in some of the high-ranking nobles' territories under the pretext that those products are our favorites.

They are also famous among the women for being healthy.

However, since the amount on the market is extremely low, the prices have shot up to a frightening

degree.

Being able to procure them directly, we can enjoy the Mizuho food at overwhelmingly cheap prices.

"It was great that we struggled through the civil war." (Armstrong)

Another group in the exclusive box seats of the Earl Baumeister House isn't watching the matches at all. They enjoy snacks and tea while playing around.

"Karl, you have to take it carefully with a snap!"

"Brother, your fingers are trembling. You have to calm down." (Oskar)

"I really don't want you to take any more. Isn't it my turn next? Anymore is impossible! It will fall apart!" (Luise)

They were concentrating on a game while likewise not watching the matches.

Karl and Oskar, whom I brought here with 『Teleportation』 to let them meet Amalie, as well as Erich, Helmut and their families surrounded a certain table game. It's a game where you build a tower out of same-sized, rectangular building blocks, and then extract those building blocks in turns so that the tower doesn't collapse while stacking those extracted blocks at the very top of the tower. It's a game that didn't exist in this world, but I ordered the carpenters in my territory to make it. Elise and Amalie watch the progress of the game while taking care of the tea and snacks.

"Phew...I did it!" (Karl)

"Great job, brother." (Oskar)

"Next it's my turn, eh...?" (Luise)

"Luise, it might be better to give up."

"That's out of the question. According to my calculations, I have a chance of 30% to succeed. Next will be Wend, hence I have to concentrate here..." (Luise)

Luise begins to focus her mind in front of the mountain of building blocks that are tilting to the side while having stacked up to an unusual height. And then she pulled out a block with a speed that I couldn't follow with my eyes.

"Yay, it's a success." (Luise)

The mountain of building blocks slanted slightly, but as it didn't collapse, Luise has won her bet. And unfortunately it's now my turn.

"According to my calculation...you haven't even a chance of one percent!"

"Wend, freezing the blocks with magic is against the rules."

"If you do something like that, it kills all the fun!"

I carefully try to extract the block while my fingers trembling slightly, but before I manage that, the tower reached its limit and collapsed.

"As expected, it was no good, huh——!?"

"With this it's your fifth loss in a row."

"Erich, it's not that I'm weak. I'm just unlucky." (Wendelin)

"Either way, you don't seem overly happy..."

Even Erich, who should be definitely at disadvantage as a man, participates in the game with his eldest son Jörn sitting on his lap, but he hasn't lost once yet.
As expected, my luck might be somewhat special.

"As for me, I simply don't lose because I'm after you, Wend." (Helmut)

Even Helmut let his eldest son Alexis, who has been born not long ago, sit on his lap and hadn't destroyed the tower once so far since his turn always came after mine.
It's a very simple game, but since it's something that gets exciting by playing it with a large number of people, the workshop of the woodcrafter, who made it for me, has apparently started mass production.
I recall him being enthusiastic about selling a big amount before it's copied.

"Holidays like this are sure nice. It's easy for us to take a break since my father-in-law is still active, though."

"Given that I'm a governmental official and appointed noble, it's easy for me to take a break as well, I think? It would have been great if Paul and Hermann had come as well..."

Since his territory is close to the tunnel entrance, Paul is busy with constructing an inn town.
Hermann has genuinely started to sell the honey liquor that's being produced in his territory as local specialty. Because he was currently running around for the expansion of the production facilities, he was absent today.

"I'm sure we will all be able to meet up sooner or later."

"That's true as well."

"Umm...milord?"

Amalie, who's officially treated as Head Maid of my mansion, calls out to me.
Inside the mansion she calls me 『Wend-kun』, but since others are watching us out here, she referred to me as milord.

"What is it, Amalie?" (Wendelin)

"Is it fine for you to not watch the matches?" (Amalie)

Amalie seems to believe that it's bad for me to not watch the matches of the high-classed nobles who are earnestly duking it out.

"There's no merit in doing so."

That's why I only watched it at the beginning.

"Amalie, it's not like someone, who can win against Katia-san, will suddenly appear just because I'm focusing on the matches." (Wendelin)

"It's really not all that amusing if you actually spell it out."

Erich, Helmut and I thought that it would be preferable to play games with our children and nephews.

"Won't it serve as reference for Karl's and Oskar's swordsmanship?" (Amalie)

She's probably thinking that it would be best for them to watch the matches for such reason, as their mother.

"If it's Karl's and Oskar's swordsmanship..."

Once I turned my look in Warren-san's direction, he noticed it and spoke up.

"It will be for a short time, but I will check them out for a bit." (Warren)

"You're going to, Warren-sama?" (Amalie)

There aren't that many people who can receive Warren-san's teaching in swordsmanship, considering his schedule.

Knowing that, Amalie was surprised.

"I will somehow make it work by being flexible. It's Earl Baumeister-dono's request after all." (Warren)

Warren-san is really good at teaching.

After watching a training for around an hour, he can put together the optimal training and homework menu for a person to improve.

He earns a considerable amount of money as private tutor on the days where he's off work.

Since his regular customers are only high-ranking nobles, this turns into quite a nice sum.

This might truly be what's called 'Art brings bread.'

"One hour of training with Warren-san is overwhelmingly more beneficial than watching bad matches for many hours." (Wendelin)

It's the same with magic.

Coaching from master, Burkhart-san, and Doushi has been useful, but watching the magic of other magicians hasn't been much of a reference.

Hence it might have been a lot more educational to have read the books of past magicians.

"Thank you for doing this for Karl and Oskar." (Amalie)

"Don't worry about it." (Warren)

Aspects like this make it clear that she's a mother.
Amalie deeply bowed towards Warren-san.

"Warren-san, how's the situation at the qualifiers? Did a formidable dark horse unexpectedly appear as it happens in stories?" (Wendelin)

"Unfortunately no. Won't the opening of the tunnel remain impossible for a while? Even His Majesty sighed after seeing the list of participants. Ah, there were some imposters as well."
(Warren)

Several people were apparently disqualified after trying to have representatives, who seemed likely to win, appear as doubles after having them disguise themselves.
Their methods went from using magic tools to having theater make-up artists put on careful make-ups.
Of course all of it was found out, resulting in them being disqualified.

"Quite a number of renown nobles seemingly believed that they wouldn't be discovered. Even the officials were puzzled."

"There were also people that used magic tools, right?"

"If you use magic disguise tools, the magicians in the royal palace will see through it in one go. The cases where they requested make-up artists were surprisingly difficult to fathom out."

No matter how perfect the disguise with a magic tool, they will be in a state of continuously circulating mana in a surrounding with people that can't use magic.
Even if the circulating mana is minuscule, a magician with a certain level of skill will easily see through it.

"Come to think of it, you're right."

"Even if they had slipped through our inspection, it might be meaningless due to the issue of skill."

After around one hour, the eight winners of the qualifiers were decided.
Those eight contestants are going to challenge Katia in turns.
However, Warren-san declares that there's none among them who's likely to win against Katia.

"What will happen if they can't win?"

"Well, I wonder what kind of plan His Majesty has..."

Once the story gets this complicated, His Majesty's decision becomes important for the rest.
Since the king possesses a certain authority, there are many cases where everyone says 『Well, if His Majesty says so...』.

"My nephew is also among the eight people. I'd like him to win if possible, but..."

"Your Majesty!"

Once I wondered whether nobles traveling incognito had come to give their greetings, seeing how three hooded people entered our box seat, it was His Majesty and two guarding knights. I heard that he wouldn't come to the Colosseum today, but I didn't expect him to disguise and sneak into our booth.

"Your Majesty." (Warren)

"Warren, today's your day off, so rest. If those above don't take a break, those below won't be able to either." (Helmut)

As the two knights are Warren-san's subordinates, they quietly greet him with a nod, and then secure His Majesty from both sides.

"Your Majesty, you're traveling incognito?"

"I said so just now, but my nephew is making an appearance. It would be nice if he won, but if I officially visited to cheer for him, it would cause strange suspicions and people would take unneeded actions." (Helmut)

It's likely about the high possibility of nobles pressuring the Eulenberg House and Katia to lose on purpose after misunderstanding that His Majesty wished for his nephew to become Katia's husband.

"Probably predicting this, that stubborn tomboy announced the martial arts tournament in presence of the general public." (Helmut)

If there are rumors going around that His Majesty pushed through his own wish against a low-ranking noble in a peaceful society like this, his reputation might deteriorate more than expected. For a king in times of peace this would be quite terrible.

"Now then, I think I will have a look at the matches." (Helmut)

His Majesty sits down next to me and begins to snack on the native dishes of the Mizuho Dukedom which Elise had prepared.

"Elise's cooking skill might be good, but these are delicious, aren't they? The nobles in the royal palace are spreading rumors about them." (Helmut)

"Your Majesty, you have to drink this Mizuho sake." (Armstrong)

"Klimt, huh? Then please pass me some dry sake." (Helmut)

"Hoh...Your Majesty, you have already tasted Mizuho sake?" (Armstrong)

"If you're in my position, it's a trifle to obtain sake." (Helmut)

His Majesty drinks the sake offered by Doushi. Meanwhile Doushi moves to the seat on my other side, and starts watching the current match.

"First was someone of the Viscount Dindorf House?" (Helmut)

"If I remember correctly, that is so." (Armstrong)

Doushi answers His Majesty while looking at a paper that listed the profiles of the eight people that advanced to the next round.

"How is he?"

"He should be reasonably strong, but..."

Before Doushi can finish speaking, the first challenger loses after being hit by a sword slash of Katia, who accelerated herself with magic.

"It would be best to say...it's because he was the first?" (Wendelin)

"Let's pretend that to be the case, Earl Baumeister."

Next were young men with a reasonably good reputation considering their origin from high-ranking noble houses, such as the third son of the Earl Täufer House, the third son of the Earl Lisfeld House, and the fourth son of the Marquis Griebel House, but all of them didn't last even five minutes against Katia.

"Weak!"

"Nobles! Usually they are always bragging around, so they could at least do their best at times like these!"

The jeering and booing of the audience could be heard due to the matches being much more boring than the real martial arts tournament matches.

I feel like I also heard some lese majeste in-between there, but if they arrested and punished commoners for that, the reputation of the royal army would plummet, and thus they don't do it in the first place.

Though another reason is very likely that there would be no end if they arrested each and every single of them.

"I can't rebut it at all."

"Your Majesty, were there any applicants which were a lot stronger than them?"

"None..." (Helmut)

If it's such people, they won't enter the matches since many of them are already married.

"Considering the concessions owned by that tomboy's family, it's only natural to accept that person

as first wife. Hence it would be necessary to divorce the current first wife and drop her status to concubine for those who seem likely to win against that tomboy..."

If they did something like that, the first wife's family would naturally complain.
In most cases even the first wife's home are reasonably high-classed noble houses.

"So they would be blocked in all directions, huh...?"

"Therefore things would be settled in the smoothest manner, if thou defeat Katia, Wendelin."
(Therese)

"The retired lady, right...? But, that's right, it's certainly a proper view." (Helmut)

His Majesty praises the monologue muttered by Therese.
The reason for His Majesty to call Therese as 『Retired Lady』 is because it's known to the surroundings that she has already resigned from active duty.

"Nothing less of the former Duchess Philip, I should say?" (Helmut)

"Your Majesty, now I'm only spending my time as carefree, retired person who was defeated in a political strife." (Therese)

Considering all that, you seem to still offer your opinion to His Majesty by pretending to talk to yourself.

"In the case of the concerned parties, I have mixed feelings about it, no matter what. I wonder if a clear, simple and good plan will become apparent, if we look at it from an outside perspective. Exactly because you have already retired, this might be such a view."

"Your Majesty, it's not a good idea at this point in time." (Wendelin)

In such case, doing it like that from the start would have finished the whole matter with little problems.

"Having said that, what if there's no victor? That's right, Guido is the last one remaining. Let's decide after watching my nephew's match." (Helmut)

The last contestant was a young man called Guido, His Majesty's nephew.

"He's the son of my younger brother." (Helmut)

"I see. You're saying he has excellent sword skills as leader of the army?"

"No, he has been sparing time for sword training since he has some leeway, but it's not like he's as talented as Warren. I've been worrying what I should do about his future." (Helmut)

"Eh? Is that so?"

"Earl Baumeister, you might have had a fair share of trouble as eighth son of a Knight House in a

remote area, but even royalty doesn't have it easy." (Helmut)

The number of royals gradually keeps growing. Meanwhile the number of Duke Houses is fixed. If a Duke House is founded once, the right of inheritance will stay inside that Duke House. The sole exception are the cases where there are no successors, just like with the Duke Hertha House.

"My foolish uncle had the luck to enter the Duke Hertha House as son-in-law by chance. Afterwards that house was discontinued due to that person, though..." (Helmut)

If the number of Duke Houses kept growing in proportion to the increasing number of royals, the Kingdom's budget would never last.

"Since there's the method of marrying a daughter to a subject, that side is rather easy to handle."

For a high-ranking noble it's an honor since they will be able to receive a bride from the royal family.

There are as many families for a woman to marry into as she likes...but for some reason there are also some left over...

"However, as for young men..." (Helmut)

There seem to be many noble houses that really hate adopting a male royal into their family as son-in-law because the interference of the royal family would increase.

In Erich's and Helmut's cases both sides were low-ranking noble houses, therefore they came to an agreement without any such disputes.

I should add that it finished without any disagreement from the royal family, though

"For the time being I have assigned him to a harmless post in the army. Well, that means he has nothing to do." (Helmut)

It seems he simply practiced swordsmanship without doing anything in particular because he felt fretful just by getting in contact with his superiors and subordinates.

"Your Majesty...that..."

"He's being called sponger or good-for-nothing by various people behind his back." (Helmut)

His Majesty's answer is quite blunt.

"I think it's pitiful, but if show sympathy here and increase the number of Duke houses, it will negatively affect the public finances order. There are times when I have to harden my heart and drop excess royalty to commoner status. However, Guido is a diligent, obedient young man. As his uncle, I want him to somehow pull through." (Helmut)



"You're quite good for a royal!" (Katia)

"I can't give up here!" (Guido)

Warren-san gave up on him as hopeless, but Guido-san's sword skills are considerable. He's lasting the longest against Katia.

"I think that you're not bad, but I have my own plans for the future, too!" (Katia)

At the same time of saying that, Katia raises her own speed even further.

She apparently boosted the power output of 『Acceleration』.

Guido-san couldn't deal with this.

Just as they pass each other, his sword is being flicked away, spelling the defeat of all eight challengers.

"Can't even a single one win!?"

"Much too weak!"

"Not even the last guy!? Fight properly!"

"Worthless!"

The audience boos at the overly disappointing performance of the nobles.

Since no one was able to win against Katia in the end, the matter with tunnel is in a deadlock again.

"Is that lot going to come appeal tomorrow again?"

"I would really hate that."

As Erw and I were talking about the upcoming suffering tomorrow, His Majesty suddenly entered the arena together with his two guarding knights, and removed his hood.

"Certainly, even I, Helmut the 37th, consider it to have been disappointing!"

Due to the sudden entry of the king, the spectators, who had booed until now, start cheering. I see, this is a clever move.

"The matter in question had been subject to heated disputes up to this point. Thus, let me present a solution here!" (Helmut)

"Ooh!"

"Your Majesty!"

His Majesty declared to the audience that he would announce his decision.

Due to this theatrical way of politics, the audience's excitement and cheering became even more fervent.

With this method it's also difficult for the ministers and high-ranking nobles to oppose him.

So that's the reason why His Majesty came here incognito.

"Now that it has come to this, won't we entrust this to that man!? To that unbeatable man who obtained many achievements, be it for subjugating dragons or fighting for the royal army! Earl Baumeister!" (Helmut)

Being summoned by His Majesty, I reflexively jump down to the arena. My body moving on its own accord in response to being ordered by a person in high position is probably an habit from my time as salaryman that I cannot get rid of.

"The tunnel is something that had been discovered by Earl Baumeister. In that case it's only logical for the discoverer to manage it! And, Katia!" (Helmut)

"Yes." (Katia)

She was surprised by the king's sudden appearance, but Katia managed to somehow give a reply.

"For the sake of the Eulenberg House's development, you say? I understand your feelings, but this world isn't that easygoing. If you exclude exceptions like Earl Baumeister, noble houses grow big by steadily obtaining achievements over many years. You appear to be strong, but it's best for you to understand your own strength by being defeated by a genius." (Helmut)

"Earl Baumeister-sama?" (Katia)

"Everybody! You will be able to enjoy Earl Baumeister's magic!" (Helmut)

Once His Majesty finished persuading Katia, he returned to his seat after making such declaration at the end.

""Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Your Majesty!""

"Earl Baumeister-sama! Win this!"

As many cheers as for His Majesty are raised for me who was left behind.

"I guess there's no other option but to have a match..." (Wendelin)

"The recent dragon slayer as opponent, huh? Not bad. I might not be able to win, but I sure wanted to try fighting you once." (Katia)

Katia, whom I suspect to be a battle junkie, seems happy about the prospect of fighting me. While looking as if she had found a suitable prey, she faces off against me.

"You're not tired after a series of eight battles?" (Wendelin)

"Except for the last, Guido-sama, all of them were easy peasy, so it's no problem." (Katia)

"If you say so..." (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister-sama, make sure to not be careless while certain of your victory, okay?" (Katia)

"That's an unnecessary worry." (Wendelin)

Even as I wonder how it came to this, we once take distance from each other, and the last battle starts at the same time as both of us nod.

"Victory goes to the one who makes the first move!"

Katia suddenly begins to rush towards me after casting the highest level of 『Acceleration』. If it were the me from before, I would have immediately deployed a thick 『Magic Barrier』 out of nervousness, but after going through the battle against master in the civil war, I have become able to deal with such things very calmly. After likewise casting 『Acceleration』, I deploy a minimal 『Magic Barrier』 only at the side where I'm passing the saber held aloft by Katia, and dodge the attack with the least amount of mana.

"Hee, so you were able to follow my movements, eh?" (Katia)

"You're fast, but your dependence on only speed is still strong." (Wendelin)

It's the same for me as well, but Katia relies on her speed more than I do. She might have raised her ability substantially during the training last week, but she's still worse than me. If it's like this, I can surpass her with ability.

"But, offensive magic won't hit." (Katia)

Katia likely thinks that she can dodge my spells because of her speed. Previously I would have sealed off her escape routes with AoE spells, but that contradicts master's teachings who chided it as a waste of mana. Let's demonstrate my new spell here.

"Katia, your sabers look expensive, so I'm sorry, okay?" (Wendelin)

"Eh?" (Katia)

After creating two small 『Blue Fire Snakes』 on my fingertips, I make them fly towards Katia. Katia, who's confident in her speed, avoided them, but the 『Blue Fire Snakes』 moved while matching her movements, and finally coiled themselves around her sabers. Although small, the super-hot 『Blue Fire Snakes』 melt Katia's sabers into syrup in an instant.

"Ah, crap! My sabers!" (Katia)

"That's why I apologized in advance, you know?" (Wendelin)

"So you're saying that you will defeat me with magic to the bitter end, huh!?" (Katia)

"Of course. Do you see me holding a sword?" (Wendelin)

After all I'm a magician.
It's only natural for me to defeat an enemy with magic.

"You think an adventurer like me has no spares?" (Katia)

Katia swiftly retrieved her another set of sabers from the magic bag at her waist.

"It can't carry as much as yours, Earl Baumeister-sama. Even so, I have plenty sabers with me."
(Katia)

"Your stock might vanish in today's battle. Let me apologize while I still can." (Wendelin)

"Don't be so sure!" (Katia)

I try to melt her new sabers with 『Blue Fire Snakes』 once more, but this time Katia manages to dodge it skilfully with 『Chain Acceleration』.

I guess she raises her speed to the next level by casting 『Acceleration』 a second time after the initial 『Acceleration』.

"The same move won't work a second time!" (Katia)

Since 『Blue Fire Snake』 doesn't work, I let a softball-sized 『Fireball』 rise into the sky and hurl it in front of Katia.

"Something at the level of a 『Fireball』..." (Katia)

Immediately after Katia let her guard down, the 『Fireball』 burst open like a buckshot. I thought that she might have been fully hit by the buckshot, but Katia avoids it by repelling the shrapnels with a boisterous dance of her sabers and 『Acceleration』.

"You're really fast." (Wendelin)

If it's only speed, she might even rival Luise.

But, if you consider her mana pool, you can easily imagine how long she can use 『Acceleration』. I cast a chain of attacks with 『Rock Lance』, 『Ice Ball』, and 『Wind Cutter』 in succession, not permitting Katia to get close.

"Tsk! I guess you're a first-class magician after all. There ain't no gap!" (Katia)

Trying to somehow create an opportunity, Katia threw several of the knives hanging at her waist at me one after the other.

It seems she aimed for my face, abdomen and limbs, but by immediately forming a high-temperature 『Fire Wall』, all the knives melt and fall to the ground.



"My custom-made knives..." (Katia)

"But, they didn't hit, did they...?" (Wendelin)

I unleash several spells as if starting a counterattack, but Katia evades them successfully. Thanks to various spells fired by me, and Katia splendidly dodging those, great cheers reverberated from the audience. At present it looks like a close match. It was popular because of its showiness.

"Uo——h! Are we today here for this?"

"Teacher, you're drunk, aren't you?" (Katharina)

Since it had originally been a swordsmanship tournament, there were no magicians present to deploy a 『Magic Barrier』 to protect the audience. As replacements, Burkhart-san, who's already very drunk from sake, and Katharina, who rebukes him, deploy a barrier.

"However, nothing has flown over to the audience." (Katharina)

"I'm sure even Earl-sama considers that part. That's why it ain't no problem even if I'm drunken." (Burkhart)

"I think it is..." (Katharina)

It would result in a terrible disaster if the audience was hit by magic. Fortunately Katia can't move in all three dimensions. There's no tall tree she can climb either. As long as I control my magic skilfully, it's very unlikely for something to fly towards the audience.

"Are you taking it easy on me?" (Katia)

"Yes, I do." (Wendelin)

"Whaaaat!" (Katia)

Since Katia is a renown adventurer, she should understand as much. But she might actually gotten mad after being told that I'm taking it easy on her. She became enraged with her face bright red.

"If it's just swordsmanship, I won't be able to win against you. But, when it comes to the combined combat strength, it's impossible for you to win against me." (Wendelin)

"Ugh..." (Katia)

Once I calmly pointed out reality, Katia held her tongue as if being mortified.

"Would you be happy if I told you here that you're strong?" (Wendelin)

"I don't think so...rather, it would piss me off, but...it irritates me to no end!" (Katia)

While dodging my chain of 『Fireballs』, she once again readies her two sabers after slowly fixing her stance, and charges at me.

"As long as I can get close!" (Katia)

Believing this to be her sole chance at winning, Katia musters all her mana and sallies forth with an 『Acceleration』 that's unlike all the ones before.

"This is my trump card!" (Katia)

As Katia seems close to running out of mana, several of my spells graze her body and injure her. For just an instant she grimaced when injured, but Katia approached right in front of me without lowering her speed.

"It'll work!" (Katia)

Katia probably thought that she won her bet.

She smiles while certain of her victory, but I have a pile of countermeasures at hand.

Since I have already deployed a 『Magic Barrier』 atop my body long ago, the blow aimed at my torso was completely blocked.

Katia, who had her full-power slash repelled, backs off.

"Hard!" (Katia)

"Don't be unreasonable. It would have hurt if I had received that normally." (Wendelin)

"Isn't that robe sturdier than any low-quality armor?" (Katia)

"What, so you knew?" (Wendelin)

This time I take out the magic sword, which I rarely use, during the time when Katia stopped moving.

The magic I pour into the sword is naturally fire magic.

Without any feints, I swing down the blue-flamed blade with its high temperature at Katia from an overhead position.

She tries to block that slash by crossing her two sabers.

But, those sabers are only composed of steel with a bit mithril mixed in.

Her two sabers once again were melted by the hot flames.

"Once again, sorry about your sabers." (Wendelin)

"There's still much more!" (Katia)

Katia, who's bad at giving up, tries to take out spares from her magic bag, but even I'm not as generous as to allow her to do that.

At once I unleash a small 『Wind Cutter』, cutting off the magic bag affixed to her waist.

Knowing that she will fall prey to my magic if she tries to pick it up by crouching, Katia can't

move. With this she has completely lost her weapons.

"I'd really like you to surrender. You don't have any mana left either, right?" (Wendelin)

For me it was simple to know that Katia's mana has been almost used up. Seeing that she can't use 『Acceleration』 any longer, there's nothing left she can do. Several 『Fireballs』 were still hovering above her head. They have been set to attack Katia if she moves an inch.

"Shit...if it was only swordsmanship..." (Katia)

"You can't specify 'only swordsmanship' in a real battle either, can you? I'm sorry, but that's how it is." (Wendelin)

"I give up..." (Katia)

At the same time as Katia raises both hand, my victory is set. Many cheers are raised by the audience.

"He melted her swords with magic."

"Various spells were exhibited!"

"Even after being cut by the sabers, he came out without a single injury."

All the spectators seem satisfied as they were allowed to watch an interesting entertainment. For the residents of the capital this kind of martial arts tournament is merely amusement and a means to kill some time. Even the prize frantically desired by the nobles and royals has no relation to them.

"It's not like I never lost, but I feel an overwhelming difference between us. I guess your military achievements so far are not for show." (Katia)

"The majority of them were me getting dragged into it or being asked to do it, though. Ah, right." (Wendelin)

I approached Katia and cast healing magic after checking for places where my spells had grazed her.

"Scars will be left behind if you ignore these. You were born as a beauty, so you should treasure it." (Wendelin)

"Me? A beauty?" (Katia)

"It's no flattery, just my objective opinion. If you were labeled as ugly woman, the majority of the women on the world would be ugly as well." (Wendelin)

"I am...beauty..." (Katia)

Since Katia casts her eyes down for some reason, I approach His Majesty, who had watched the match, and speak to him.

"Your Majesty, I won properly." (Wendelin)

"I saw something interesting for the first time in a while. Since that stubborn tomboy was defeated by you, you should take responsibility and marry her." (Helmut)

"So it comes down to this after all..." (Wendelin)

Arriving at this point, there's no way that I can refuse any longer.

I guess that means it's safer for me to manage all the tunnel rights rather than complicating the situation by handing half of it to another noble.

Looking at it now, you can say that Therese's comment was right.

I suppose that means her prediction came true.

"Wendelin, I am no prophet. I just thought that it would be the most fitting solution." (Therese)

It was Therese, who had also watched the match, but as might expected of the former Duchess Philip. She reached the same conclusion as His Majesty.

"The organization of the tunnel's guard unit, and the financial responsibility. Since only the royal family and the Earl Baumeister House are concerned in this, we will split the military personnel half-half. That's a gain for the Kingdom." (Helmut)

The Margrave Breithilde House dropped out. Instead the number of soldiers provided by the Kingdom increased accordingly. Since the Earl Baumeister House will bear the expenses, it's a benefit for the kingdom as much as the number of posts increased. There's only one commanding officer, but since they can increase the posts of platoon, company leaders and below, they can assign work to the young royals and nobles.

I have no choice but to hope that the Kingdom will act as a shield against jealous nobles, who didn't get any benefit out of it this time.

"Earl Baumeister you have to open the tunnel as quickly as possible." (Helmut)

"Yes." (Wendelin)

My assets increased, but the number of my wives grew accordingly. That result was unforeseen, or rather this was also a destiny I couldn't avoid, I decided to believe.