

Chapter 8 - Tunnel Opening

"The official opening of the large tunnel through the Greater League Mountain Range is going to start anytime soon!"



One week after I won the battle against Katia, the preparations advanced at top speed, resulting in the tunnel being opened safely.

As a matter of fact the construction work on the Baumeister Earldom's side finished at the bare minimum before the martial arts tournament as I had been exploited to the bones due to Roderich's discerning prediction.

All that was left was paving the ground with concrete and stones so that the entrances on both sides wouldn't be buried by a natural disaster and the roads which I had finished beforehand.

The relocation and constructions of carriage parking areas and lodging facilities matching with the structures in Paul's territory followed after that.

The preparations in the lodging facilities and such will continue for the next while, but that's inevitable.

I entrusted the following to Roderich and Paul, seeing as a problem I had to urgently resolve cropped up at this point.

『Say, the tunnel on the Eulenberg Knightdom's side will be completely managed by the Earl Baumeister House, right?』

『Well, I've been the one who defeated Katia after all.』 (Wendelin)

In the end it was decided that the Eulenberg Knightdom would be merged into the Baumeister Earldom. As for the new Eulenberg territory, the Earl Baumeister House had to bear responsibility and search for a new place.

Just as Veith-san had hoped, it has to be a place suitable for maroimo cultivation at the slopes on the southern side of the Greater League Mountain Range.

Moreover, we have to prepare a territory that's bigger than their old fief.

Given that the Savage Lands are barren, it's also necessary to help them with the relocation.

That's only natural seeing how they yielded such a profitable concession to us. Otherwise the nobles, who became a laughingstock for the commoners in the tournament, might voice complaints.

『Paul-san requires assistance, too. You also must take Margrave Breithilde-sama into consideration.』

『I guess you're right.』

He wasn't in time for the tunnel opening, but Paul is currently advancing the construction of inns for the people who are going to use the tunnel. However, his place still lacks residents, which means they can spare only few people to work on the construction.

We helped out by sending people over from our side.

As for the Margrave Breithilde House; they failed to obtain the tunnel rights this time.

Margrave Breithilde himself seems to believe that it's a blessing as it will allow him to evade the jealous of the other nobles, but there are many among his relatives and retainers who are unhappy about it.

Accordingly we considered the Breithilde Margraviate and didn't build too many inns and shops in the old Eulenberg Kingdom.

At present the construction of an inn town is proceeding in the area of the Breithilde Margraviate adjacent to the former Eulenberg Knightdom.

If it's the old Eulenberg Knightdom, it will become too small once we build the housing for the stationed royal army, the Earl Baumeister House's guard unit, and their families anyway.

It's a lot more efficient to entrust the business catered towards the tunnel users to the Margrave Breithilde House.

Since both sides will be able to become happy, it will likely avoid unnecessary disputes.

『I see. So that's why you had to hurriedly construct various facilities at the entrance on the former Eulenberg Knightdom's side with the goal of opening it after merely one week.』

『That Roderich is truly a demon.』 (Wendelin)

Yes, for the whole week until the tunnel opening, I continuously removed earth and stones in the tunnel's vicinity, reinforced the ground so that the tunnel wouldn't get buried by landslides, and prepared the soil for the sake of being able to build temporary checkpoints, a parking area for carriages, and houses for the stationed guards on the former Eulenberg Knightdom's side.
...Anyway, I labored my ass off.

『Ahahaha! For even this side to become part of the Baumeister Earldom!』

『It's not funny, really!』 (Wendelin)

Once I put off the former Eulenberg Knightdom's side as irrelevant since other nobles would scramble for it anyway, it became ours upon His Majesty's ruling.

Seeing how it turned out like this, the maintenance of the tunnel entrance and its vicinity has become the Earl Baumeister House's duty.

And since I'm the one leading the house, there might have been sentences like — 『Isn't it plenty if you have one week until the opening?』, 『That's right!』, and 『Earl Baumeister has magic after all!』

I don't know whether such conversation really took place, but I'm pretty sure that the tunnel's opening was sped up because of my presence.

『If it's milord, I'm confident that finishing the bare minimum of construction works and opening the tunnel is possible if you have a week.』 (Roderich)

I guess Roderich put the boot into it.

He wanted the tunnel to be opened as fast as possible.

Magic airships are fast, but their fare is expensive.

Even if the airships arrive at the port, it takes further expenses to distribute the cargo to various places by sending out carriages since the Baumeister Earldom is vast.

Crossing the mountains takes time, no matter what. If you move too many people and carriages along the mountain paths, the danger of being targeted by wild animals, wyverns, and flying dragons increases. In this aspect the tunnel was the most suitable for smaller merchants to do new

business.

Since even Roderich has been struggling until he began serving us, he probably wants to support tiny merchants who would start new businesses.



"At any rate, there's more guests than expected."

"Certainly, these numbers are amazing..."

The toll for a one-way trip was decided to be 100 cents, but many merchants with their carriages full of cargo came on the opening day.

In addition there were also many travelers.

I'm sure they are tourists who came to have a look at the tunnel.

I sure didn't expect for tourists to show up.

"It's time for the official opening!"

Opening events exist in this world, too.

Margrave Breithilde, Lord Eulenberg, and I cut a ribbon spanning across the tunnel entrance with decorated knives.

Given that I only saw such scenes in the news, I was slightly excited about being able to participate myself.

I guess it was the effect of having done my best with the construction works.

"I will be the first to arrive in the Baumeister Earldom!"

"I wonder, what should I procure in Baulburg on the way back?"

"What a cause for great celebration that even us small merchants have now the chance to earn some money!"

"Since we can also sightsee the tunnel, this might be a gain, even if we have to pay a toll."

"It should be safe with the guards patrolling the area."

At the same time as the ribbon was cut, many carriages began to travel towards the Baumeister Earldom.

Once I listen to the conversations between the people entering the tunnel, I could make out that it's apparently quite popular.

"That makes sense. It takes more time than a magic airship, but you can keep the expenses down. Of course there's no point in comparing this to crossing the mountains. It has become possible to do business with the Baumeister Earldom for everyone and not just the major merchants. The amount of transactions will go up noticeably."

Margrave Breithilde explained the advantages of the tunnel opening.

The economy of the Baumeister Earldom will be stimulated by the tunnel, enabling us to pay the maintenance of the tunnel and the costs of the 『Royal Army's Greater League Mountain Range Tunnel Guard Force』.

"Because it'll speed up the development of my territories near the former Eulenberg Knightdom, we have also benefits from it." (Breithilde)

The Breithilde Margraviate adjoining to the former Eulenberg Knightdom hadn't been developed by any standard.

It's an area dotted with farm villages, but thanks to it being close to the tunnel, large-scale development, including the construction of inn towns, has started.

As the trade with those using the tunnel will blossom, the population will grow, and the tax revenue of the Margrave Breithilde House should grow as well.

Once that happens, it should resolve the opposition of his relatives and retainers who are very unhappy due to the tunnel rights being taken away by the Earl Baumeister House.

As eighth son of the former 『Poor Knight House across the mountains』, I should prevent pointless strife with the prestigious Margrave Breithilde House.

"It looks like you found a new place for the Eulenberg House?"

"That part worked out relatively fast." (Wendelin)

I found the new Eulenberg territory right away.

I think one will immediately understand that land, which includes untouched slopes on the southern side of the Greater League Mountain Range and meets the conditions, exists plentifully, if you look at the progress of our development.

Among the proposed sites, it's a new territory that's relatively close to inhabited places and where it's easy to exterminate the wyverns and flying dragons.

Because Veith-san also gave his stamp of approval that it's a mountainous district suited for mass production of maroimo, we immediately began the relocation.

Given that the number of houses is still lacking, Veith-san and the residents prepare the fields while gradually changing residence, and the maroimo production has already started.

"That's quite fast, isn't it?"

"I mean, it's Veith-san's aspiration." (Wendelin)

『The houses can wait for later! First we have to build maroimo fields as soon as possible!』 (Veith)

Veith-san said that he wants to prepare new fields as he doesn't mind living in tents for a while.

Accordingly I moved all the soil in the fields of the former Eulenberg territory to the new territory as I did for the Knight Baumeister House in the past.

Since it's soil that will be removed during the construction of all kinds of facilities and the setting up of landslide preventions around the tunnel's entrance anyway, I transported all of it to the new Eulenberg territory.

『It's very appreciated since soil is the lifeline of farming!』 (Veith)

Veith-san was delighted because he can immediately expect a certain degree of harvest if it's like

this.

He feels more grateful for the soil than any riches.

He's a genuine farmer.

"For him farming maroimo is more important than the tunnel management, huh? But, if you look at the long-term, this might allow the Eulenberg House to survive."

"With the unfamiliar tunnel management, they would soon go bankrupt after failing at it, I suppose."

"If the Eulenberg House had at least been a Baron House, there would have been the option of them getting our help..." (Breithilde)

If they failed in the tunnel management as result of taking up something they are unable to accomplish, there would be the danger of the Eulenberg House being demoted by the Kingdom in worst case.

Lord Eulenberg and Veith-san, who managed to actually avoid that, are maybe not just the menial nobles they seem to be.

Well...it might be simply owed to them being completely frightened by His Majesty and the high-ranking nobles, whom they had never seen before.



"Various things happened, but it's great that the opening succeeded safely. It really was a hassle, after all." (Breithilde)

"Uuh...sorry..." (Katia)

There's a person who apologizes while hanging her head in shame in response to Margrave Breithilde's remark.

It was Katia, who made the tunnel rights issue more complicated than necessary in the end.

Since she's accompanying Lord Eulenberg today, she's wearing a dress.

It suits her since it had been coordinated by Elise and the others when she stayed in my mansion before the tournament.

Since Katia is a beautiful girl with a nice figure to begin with, she caught the attention of many people attending the tunnel's official opening.

However, being unaccustomed to such clothes, she herself seemed to be quite embarrassed.

"Is she Lord Eulenberg's daughter, who took that gallant action?"

"It appears she crushed all the sons of royalty and nobility?"

"I watched the matches. Only her last opponent was too difficult for her."

"Earl Baumeister-dono, right? As expected, even a remarkable adventurer can't win against the dragon slayer, huh?"

"I guess that means she became the next booty of Earl Baumeister-sama after the former Duchess Philip-dono."



It sounds like a quite rude way of speaking about women, but that's how the recognition of this world's people works.

Katia became mine after losing to me.

Everyone should be saying the same within the Kingdom.

"Do you understand now, Katia-san? If you had behaved obediently at that time, there wouldn't have been any need for you to be married and treated like spoils of war after losing to Earl Baumeister. You could have continued to freely act as adventurer, right?"

Margrave Breithilde admonished Katia, saying that there had been a suitable risk if she failed, even though she could have lived in her own way.

She caused him various troubles, but Margrave Breithilde had the kindness to give Katia his advice as the older one.

"I'm also reflecting about being too straight forward. But, well, me marrying Earl Baumeister after losing in the match might be fine in the end." (Katia)

"Hoh, why do you think so?" (Breithilde)

Margrave Breithilde seems curious about Katia saying that she's not against marrying me.

"Even though I might look like this, I have been working as reasonably famous adventurer so far. I believe that I'm an especially decent adventurer in regards to the subjugation of wyverns and flying dragons. As such I had been worried whether I would actually be able to get married at all..." (Katia)

I hear that female adventurers have difficulties to get married, especially if they are excellent at their job.

The method of them marrying male adventurers who are just as excellent doesn't work out in reality.

In their eyes there's no reason to expressly choose someone in the same trade.

Since they are earning money, they can simply choose as many beautiful, graceful women as they like.

"It would turn into a disaster if there was a matrimonial quarrel."

"There is a married couple among my acquaintances where both are adventurers with similar accomplishments, but once they fight, their neighbors run away as far as they can. After all they might get dragged into it." (Katia)

However, that's a rare case.

There are many unmarried, excellent female adventurers. It's not like all of them surround themselves with younger lovers.

"Earl Baumeister-sama won against me. He told me that I'm beautiful..." (Katia)

While saying that, Katia casts her eyes down with a beet red face.

It wasn't flattery, but she really has no immunity towards men, or rather she can deal with friends and fellow adventurers normally, but once she's conscious of them, she's a lost case.

"I guess you became skilled at flattering women, Earl Baumeister. That's good." (Breithilde)

As I'm wondering what Margrave Breithilde is on about seeing as even I'm capable of at least this much, Lord Eulenberg and Veith-san came over to greet us.

"Please excuse Katia for causing you trouble in this time's matter."

Both bowed their heads and apologized for their foolish daughter/sister, but since they were able to cultivate maroimo in their new territory now, both had very calm expressions.

"That very kind of you. I do understand the feeling of the young lady, but..."

In fact it's a logical move for the Eulenberg House to manage the tunnel... Margrave Breithilde answered with this as the gist of his words.

"I think for me and Veith the tunnel management would have been a bit too much. After all we like farmwork..." (Eulenberg)

People suffer if they work on things which don't fit them or are unfamiliar to them. That's why both consented to yielding the tunnel rights.

"I knew that Katia was seriously considering the Eulenberg House. It's not like Veith hates Katia either. It's just a problem of how we live." (Eulenberg)

"Father..." (Veith)

"Besides, our Eulenberg House can definitely slowly prosper through agriculture. After all people can't survive without food. Luckily Earl Baumeister-dono is also helping out." (Eulenberg)

"Earl Baumeister-sama, you will do agriculture?"

"Of course not professionally."

At present the popularity of maroimo is low, but since they have a monopoly on the cultivation techniques, they just have to advance the territory's development while capitalizing on that.

"Maroimo can be sold for more than sweet potatoes. In other words, it's possible to make good money with it."

There are many territories in the relatively mild Kingdom which cultivate sweet potatoes and make special products out of them.

Accordingly it would be difficult for the Eulenberg House to enter that market at this point, but if it comes to maroimo, which has special cultivation conditions and methods, it will turn into a decent business since there are no competitors.

"I will have Veith-dono increase the maroimo cultivation quantity while maintaining the quality. And, by handling the sales of the processed goods using those maroimo, the income will increase as well."

It might also be a great idea to make dried sweet potato, fried dough cookies, chips, candied sweet potatoes, and sake.

There are several regions that create those goods with sweet potatoes, but their taste is no match for maroimo.

Above all, the sweetness is completely different.

"You may as well sell maroimo as ingredient to confectioneries in the capital. If they become a fad in the capital, the price will go up due to being in great demand."

"Oh, I guess that method exists, too."

"I also happen to have advice how to bring up new industries and develop your new territory by using the earnings of the tunnel rights. Please don't worry as I will also introduce some merchants to you." (Wendelin)

Since the Earl Baumeister House will gain overwhelming profits under these conditions, I would feel guilty about not helping them at least that much.

"Veith got all fired up. It's quite difficult to maintain the quality, but since our territory became bigger, he harbors expectations towards the growth of the Eulenberg territory." (Eulenberg)

"So even brother had proper pride befitting a noble, eh?" (Katia)

"It's slightly different from other nobles, though. That's why you don't have to worry and can become a bride without any problems, Katia." (Eulenberg)

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

"Let me say something aristocratic for the first time in my life. If you don't marry Earl Baumeister, we will run into various troubles, Katia." (Veith)

'Marry him properly since his assistance will decrease otherwise.'

This might be his revenge for Katia prattling about his pride as noble earlier.

He's telling her: You certainly aren't going to turn it down, are you?

"I know." (Katia)

"Even though you always became sulky once we talked about formal marriage interviews when you came back home before, what changed your mind now?" (Eulenberg)

As expected, Lord Eulenberg repeatedly kept proposing marriage interviews to Katia. But, in case of this family, she would have to live in the Eulenberg territory after the marriage. Katia apparently declined the marriage interviews since she hated that fact.

"Father, finding a man who can defeat me with overwhelming strength ain't that easy." (Katia)

"I see." (Eulenberg)

So Katia apparently frequently measures others by their combat strength. That means she doesn't mind becoming my wife since she lost against me.

"Except for a few, most of the male adventurers are just useless guys. On that part Earl Baumeister-sama is a gentleman, even if adventuring is a side job for him." (Katia)

"Me a gentleman, eh...?" (Wendelin)

I really don't get her basis for a gentleman, but I guess there's no problems since Katia believes me to be one.

"I think that you could have gotten married a lot faster if you had stayed obedient, since you're beautiful, Katia, but...being docile is not you, is it?" (Veith)

"Brother, that would be a no go." (Katia)

"Martha said so as well." (Veith)

"Bringing up your spouse here is unfair, you know?" (Katia)

I think it's great that Veith-san and Katia mended their relationship to the extent that they can banter with each other.



"I ended up showing you a crude swordsmanship in the Colosseum the other day..." (Guido)

The one who came greeting us next was His Majesty's nephew, Guido-sama, who caused His Majesty to be worried about his future.

Since he's royalty, I wouldn't mind him talking casually with me, but he addressed me in a very polite manner.

That's probably an aspect His Majesty likes about him.

"I have taken over the duty as guard unit commander since yesterday, but it hasn't caused any major issues. I'm standing in close contact with Thomas-dono." (Guido)

In the end it was decided for Guido-sama to be in charge of the royal army that guards the tunnel. He has been appointed as Viscount by His Majesty, and the commander post has become inheritable.

Because their post is far away from the capital, the tunnel guards have to live here together with their families.

Therefore the position of commander had apparently been turned into a hereditary post and assigned to Guido-sama and his family.

There hadn't been overly much opposition against that.

That's owed to Guido-sama having been the only one who could persist in the battle against Katia for a long time. Thanks to this he could barely keep his dignity.

As result he hadn't been trash-talked by the commoners as much as the other young nobles.

"Well, I guess I agree with that." (Katia)

Katia highly evaluated Guido-sama, who diligently piled up swordsmanship training albeit having not that much of a talent for it.

Even if he isn't stronger than herself, she doesn't think badly of such an earnest man.

"Having said that, I still have a long way to go, thus I need to devote my efforts into swordsmanship from now on." (Guido)

I have heard that Guido-sama is the child of the king's younger brother, but his mother's social standing is low, and on top of it, he seems to be the fourth son.

For that reason he was in a situation of being given a stipend after dumping him into the royal army as he had no place to be, but he himself didn't feel discouraged at all and made an effort in his sword training.

The results of that have shown themselves now.

"Since the lodging houses haven't been built yet, I will live in a tent for a while, but in another year we will likely be able to send for the troops' families." (Guido)

Given that the tunnel opening took priority, the guard soldiers still stayed at hurriedly built huts and tents.

However, as the lodging houses should be done soon, they should be able to live together with their families if they endure for a little bit longer.

"We are hurrying the construction of the lodging houses, but it takes time no matter what we do. Once they are completed, it will probably become difficult for you, Guido-sama."

The tunnel rights were snatched away by the Earl Baumeister House, but Guido-sama became a noble who can pass on his post of guarding the tunnel.

Naturally nobles will consider marrying their daughters to Guido-sama.

It's always the same in this world, really.

"Have there been many talks about formal marriage interviews?"

"I won't say that there haven't been any, but I refused all of them." (Guido)

Guido casually replied to Margrave Breithilde, but is that really possible?

"Do you have a fiancée?"

No matter how much he might have been treated as unneeded royalty, he's still royalty. I guess it's only natural for him to have a fiancée.

"It's my childhood friend, but she's a woman that accepts even someone like me..." (Guido)

He's slightly embarrassed, but Guido-sama started to happily talk about his fiancée.

Even though he's His Majesty's nephew, he had been treated badly since his early days because of his mother's social standing.

Even so he diligently led his daily life without giving in at all.
The only one who got normally into contact with him during those days was the second daughter of the Viscount Peuss House.
She was the only one who understood him who had been mostly ignored by the other royals.

"I told her that we will get married if I manage to become independent. Kaya has been waiting for me..." (Guido)

"Congratulations." (Breithilde)

"That's great, congratulations." (Wendelin)

On the surface I extended my congratulations after Margrave Breithilde, but...
It appeared. Yet another appeared.
One that promised marrying his childhood friend, and will actually realize that.
It's the appearance of an enemy who once again stimulates my trauma after Veith-san did so before.
Or rather, I don't think that Guido-sama had bad luck at all.
After all he has become the commander of the guard unit and is engaged with his childhood friend who promised to marry him.

"Hee, pure love, you say? That makes even me jealous." (Katia)

"Since His Majesty has given his permission as well, I plan to make Kaya happy by doing my best from now on. I won't be able to meet her for a while, but it looks like she's running about for the marriage preparations." (Guido)

It seems His Majesty is too easy-going on his nephew.
No, he considered approving of the marriage between two that love each other, exactly because his nephew has been in such a position?
However, for some reason it irritates me quite a bit.
I consider Elise and the others to be great wives, but I feel like that's unrelated to this. I guess I can't explain this unreasonable anger within me.

"(Why are there only people, who accomplish such enviable things like marrying their childhood friend, around me?)"

There's surely no way for me to complain about His Majesty's decision, but the flames of jealousy were gradually flaring up within my heart.

"(Shit! I don't even have a childhood friend, you know!)" (Wendelin)

During my time at the Knight Baumeister House, something like a female childhood friend...or rather, I didn't even have a male friend until I met Erw.
As the child Wendelin apparently didn't talk with anyone besides Erich, I haven't taken over any coeval friends from him.
No, in my childhood the only friend I had was the nature of the Savage Lands.
Yeah, looking at it objectively, I've been quite the loner.
My previous life is...no good either.
No matter how much I think back, something like a female childhood friend didn't exist...

It's been only men, hasn't it!?

"The tunnel has been opened safely, and the guards will be fully organized soon, too. The construction of lodging houses and towns is progressing, which will result in both entrance areas to become lively soon. Well, it's really wonderful." (Breithilde)

With Margrave Breithilde's final comment, the uproar over the tunnel came to an end at last. The double childhood friend combo pierced my heart a bit, but I think I will quickly return to the mansion and get Amalie to comfort me.

That's how the tunnel opened and I got one more wife.