

Chapter 8 - An Unusual Job

Today a highly anticipated, new novel would be sold at the biggest bookstore in Baulburg. In reality the author of this novel lives in the capital, but me not having to expressly go to a bookstore in the capital is likely owed to the growth of the Baumeister Earldom. I, Ina Susanne Hildebrandt, had adjusted my day off, and lined up in front of the bookstore early in the morning.

『Ina-chan, you really like books, don't you...?』

Luise treats me as some kind of rare animal, but I think she's exaggerating as people reading books as a hobby aren't all that rare. She is saying that she always falls asleep once she reads a printed text for more than three minutes, but I wonder whether such people actually even exist in stories? Say what you like, I think three minutes are kind of short.

"It's great that I made it in time." (Ina)

Just as I had expected, many people were lining up at the bookstore's entrance despite there still being some time until opening hours.

That's a popular author for you.

I think that many copies of the book have been delivered, but if they were to be sold out, it would become impossible to read the book until the next delivery date.

Even if it takes some time, properly lining up has a high probability that I won't regret anything.

"We're now opening. Those wishing to buy the new novel, please do so in turns."

After waiting for around one hour, the bookstore opened.

Following the guidance of the bookstore employee, we lined up and bought the book in order.

"Huh? The number of delivered copies is lower than expected."

I might not be able to buy one.

That worry crossed my mind, but...

"Okay, that's it. The delivered copies cover up to the lady over there."

Phew, I got one.

It looked like I was just able to buy the last copy. I paid the money and safely secured a copy of the new novel for myself.

"No way...for me to not be able to buy it... why is my luck so bad...?"

"There were too few copies delivered. Do the bookstores in the capital get priority after all?"

"The other bookstores...I guess I will try to have a look since I got nothing to lose anyway..."

The people lining up behind me felt disappointed.

There were also some who quickly ran off towards the other bookstores, but if they don't have plenty of luck, it will be impossible to obtain a copy at this point in time, won't it?

However, I can't concede my copy to someone else.

I mean I lined up in front of the bookstore after adjusting my day off quite a while ago.

As Earl Baumeister's wife, I'm busier with helping Wend than some people might think, even after getting pregnant.

"I'm going back home at once and read it." (Ina)

"Excuse me."

When I was about to return to the mansion after buying the book, someone suddenly called out to me from behind.

"How can I help you?" (Ina)

Once I turned around, I found a handsome, young man standing there.

He had a height of around 185 cm, looked like a young noble, and possessed a refreshing, dazzling smile.

Even the trimming of his silky, light brown hair was perfect. Looking closely at him, he must be a noble.

The clothes he was wearing looked plain at a first glance, but the fabric and sewing techniques used were magnificent.

He wasn't one of those vulgar nobles dressing up with clothes that were plastered all over with strangely glittering ornaments.

The man with that good fashion sense seemed to be a 『noble in the truest sense』 if I were to go with Margrave Breithilde-sama's words.

But, what kind of business would such a person have with me?

Is he possibly trying to pick me up?

"Oh lovely lady, I just just saw your pretty face and became unable to contain myself."

Ehhh!

He's really trying to pick me up?

But, there's Wend for me...or rather, I'm a pregnant, married woman...since my belly doesn't stand out yet, I guess it's not obvious, though.

No matter how attractive this guy might be, it's impossible for me to along with his seduction.

"Umm...what business do you have with me?" (Ina)

If he's hitting on me, I will definitely turn him down...or rather, even though this guy is a noble, he's picking up girls in Wend's territory?

Hitting on girls in another noble's territory; is he actually a weirdo lacking common sense?

I put myself on guard, becoming overly alert.

"Actually I have an earnest request."

"Request?" (Ina)

Because he's a noble, he might use his position and demand something unreasonable from me. I have to be cautious, but he shouldn't do anything strange if I bring up Wend's name here. Going by his looks, he seems like an agreeable youth with a proper common sense. Given that we're in front of a bookstore, he might have reading as a hobby, just like Margrave Breithilde-sama.
Maybe he wants me to yield the book I bought to him?

"However, I don't know whether I will be able to help you." (Ina)

I won't give you my book!
Definitely not.
I mean, it's a new book I bought after especially lining up.

"That makes sense. However, I'd like you to accept it if possible."

"What kind of request is it?" (Ina)

I waited for an explanation of the young man standing in front of me.
My heart was throbbing in anticipation of his next words.

"To be honest, I'd like you to insult me."

"Wut?" (Ina)

For a moment I couldn't process what this noble was talking about.

"As I said, I'd like you to verbally abuse me. Something along the lines of 『Aren't you old enough to know that you shouldn't hit on girls? Isn't it normal to have a lover or wife at your age, you gross noble pig!?』."

"..."

"I'd like to get harshly insulted by someone like you. Please do me that favor by all means."

"Haa——h!?" (Ina)

Without caring about the trouble I was causing to my surroundings on the street, I yelled loudly at the young noble who was spouting outrageous nonsense, contrary to his good looks.



"That's what happened..." (Ina)

Once I shook off that weird noble and returned to the mansion, I immediately informed Wend about this.

If that guy had been calling out to other women in the same way, he might be a case for the guards. When I reported that it was a handsome, young noble who begged me to insult him, Wend revealed

an indescribable expression.

"What a strange way of hitting on girls..." (Wendelin)

I think even Wend had no other way to describe this.
After all, even I didn't know how to deal with it.

"That's quite the odd story. He was a very handsome man, wasn't he?"

Luise asked about the noble's appearance, looking very interested.
Certainly, there aren't that many men who are as handsome as him, if he only hadn't opened his mouth.
However, I believe any woman would lose all her romantic feelings when she heard what he was talking about.

"Suddenly asking to be insulted...even if everything else about him was perfect, that would be an insta-fail as a pick-up line."

"What a weirdo. Even though he should stick with a straightforward seduction, seeing as he was born with such a beautiful face." (Erwin)

"Erw-san, it's improper to call out to unknown women throughout the city." (Haruka)

I thought that Erw would say something like that, but as sad as it is for him, he can't go pick up girls anymore.
Haruka, who seemed to hate such behavior, was always at his side.

"That man was a noble?"

"Going by his outfit, I don't think that I made a mistake. But, why did he come to Baulburg?" (Ina)

If he's a noble who has business with Wend, he should visit the mansion without hitting on women in the city.

"Actually he came with me. Given that he had apparently accumulated a bit of stress, he went for, well, a change of pace."

With a timing as if to answer my question, Margrave Breithilde-sama and Burkhart-san showed up. Wend not knowing about him means the three of them boarded a magic airship and came here?

"We made an air trip to get a little break. Since Baron Garland recently looked exhausted in body and mind..."

The three used an airship together with their guards, but after arriving in Baulburg, they went their own ways for a little while before planning to join up at this mansion.
It looks like he chatted me up during that time.
Baron Garland is 23 years old. It looks like he's a countryside noble who inherited the Barony in a hurry due to the sudden death of his father last year.
His territory appears to be wealthy for a Barony.

"Just like me, he lacks physical strength, but he's quite capable in ruling a territory despite his young age. As he's the same type of person as I am, and since he's a friend visiting the same salon, I give him advice from time to time." (Breithilde)

In case of countryside nobles, there are many nobles who keep close relations to the nobles in their neighborhood as relatives, vassals or patrons.

However, there are also some who fight over territory and concessions like cats and dogs because their territories are next to each other.

And, there's one more category. It looks like there's also a division between military and administrative nobles.

Margrave Breithilde-sama isn't an appointed noble who has inherited a post in the central government, but his house is known to have an orientation towards internal administration instead of military arts.

I heard from dad that the Breithilde House itself hasn't produced a family head strong at military arts for many generations.

That's the reason why my and Luise's homes are regarded so highly.

The present Margrave Breithilde-sama isn't any good at military arts and doesn't possess any interest in that direction either.

He has naturally become familiar with reading and writing poems, resulting in him getting along with Baron Garland who shares the same hobbies.

It's a relationship you'd call hobby buddies.

Because such hobby buddies associate with each other, surpassing the walls of blood relationships, vassals, patrons or factions, it sometimes turns into a connection that shouldn't be taken lightly.

That means a noble's hobby isn't just all play either.

"I understood that Baron Garland-sama is a noble who loves literature, but that has absolutely nothing to do with him asking others to insult him, does it?"

"His wish to be insulted and his literary hobby don't have any point of contact. If I had to say, then it would be an issue of his masochistic streak."

"It sounds as if it's better if I don't ask any further..."

For that noble to be a guy who gets his joy out of being insulted by women...
There are obviously ways to become happy in this world I know nothing of.

"Ina-san, please wait a moment and listen. He has been struggling through hardships since his early days."

He's still quite young, though.

"Struggling through hardships?"

"Indeed. His deceased father had a weak constitution for a long time..."

The real power over the Garland Barony had apparently been switched to the young heir and son before he became an adult.

"He had talent, but since around the time before or after he became ten years old, he had actually managed the Barony all by himself."

When I was ten years old... Considering that, it must have been a rather heavy pressure.

"I gave him advice before he became an adult in the book review salon. After all, I also had my fair share of troubles when I inherited the territory and peerage twenty years ago. I couldn't leave him to his own devices, seeing how our situations resembled each other so much." (Breithilde)

They met under such circumstances. They are slightly apart in age, but Margrave Breithilde-sama and Baron Garland became close friends thereafter.

"He had to shoulder the lives of his retainers and 20,000 residents in his teens. This does pressure one."

"20,000, you say...?"

If I were told to do something like that, I might have run away.
People, who aren't nobles, are jealous of nobles, but such hardships exist as well.

"In his case the population and his assets increased as he succeeded in developing his Barony. He gets tremendous support from his residents, but if you put in strenuous efforts to answer their feelings, stress will accumulate on a daily basis. Even among nobles, there are some arrogant ones, who don't care an ounce about the feelings of other people, once in a while, right?"

I heard about nobles occasionally losing their peerage or getting demoted after inviting a rebellion or an exodus from their territory because they treated their residents as cattle.

"The education by the parents and the person's own qualities play into this as well, but please try imagining that you were suddenly told to be the leader of a few thousands or ten thousands of people. There are young heirs who go crazy after losing sight of their own standing."

It sounds like Margrave Breithilde-sama is complaining, but in short, it means he has the same stress as Baron Garland.

"Wend is also doing it for several years now..."

There might come a time when he will be exhausted by the stress of being burdened with ruling over many people.

"Earl Baumeister's case is probably grave because he's going to continue for his whole life to be put to work like a cart-horse thanks to his magic."

Roderich-san does push Wend around mercilessly.

As a result of that, the earldom is growing just like the support of the residents which triggers him to develop it even further for their sake. And because of that the support grows again...

If it reduces his stress to occasionally fuss over food, I think it's less objectionable than what Baron Garland does.

"Ugh...that's something I can't deny at all..."

"I would do the very same if I were Roderich-san." (Breithilde)

Being told about the harsh truth by Margrave Breithilde-sama, Wend's face cramped up. Wend has it difficult in another sense.

"Let's leave Earl Baumeister's situation aside for now. Right now we're talking about Baron Garland. In the process of earnestly ruling his territory, he feared that many residents would obey him without questioning what he's doing."

Certainly, even if their social position is a different one, the residents are still human. Why do they obey my orders without any hesitation? They can't voice even a single complaint. Maybe they are harboring unexpected dissatisfaction. The more he thought about such things, the more scared did he become, but he couldn't afford to make his retainers worry by talking about it. As leader of the Garland Barony, he was occasionally insulted by women to not go crazy and to reaffirm his own standing. This seemed to be a method for him to vent quite a bit of his stress.

"Is it something similar to a king keeping a clown at his side?" (Ina)

I feel like there was such a depiction in a story I read before...
The one with the highest authority, the king, allowed a clown to criticize him so as to not lose sight of his own position.
I wonder whether the case here is something similar to that?

"It's something similar. There's a clown serving His Majesty as well. However, he never shows himself in front of us..."

I guess the king can't allow his retainers and family watch him being criticized by a clown...or maybe it's because the clown has been executed since 『Good advice is harsh to the ear』?

"Such an idiot won't become a clown. Clowns are the top elites within the Kingdom."

They criticize the king.
Moreover they have to be logically correct and clever enough to not offend the king.
Let alone there being no point in their presence if they get executed because they pissed off the king, they will also be evaluated as unable to do their work properly.
A clown has to be highly educated, including politics, as they will criticize a king while not angering him.
That's not possible with insufficient ability.

"Given that it's difficult for nobles to have their own clowns, they have to look for other methods, and Baron Garland chose the method of getting insulted by women."

"Why women?"

"Simply put, because he's a man. Even I would only get angry if a man was to shout at me. But that's a bit hard with a young, beautiful woman, isn't it?"

Even if he asks me here with 『isn't it?』, it puts me on the spot to be honest.
I have heard about insulting someone as a job for the first time in my life.

"Given that I'm Wend's wife, it's only possible if Wend gives his permission." (Ina)

I'm a married woman, so I can't do something like insulting another...completely unrelated... noble without the permission of my husband since it might develop into an issue afterwards.

"So she says. How about it, Earl Baumeister?" (Breithilde)

"There are all kinds of people in this world, aren't there? Maybe being insulted by Ina will work as stress relief for me as well. How about testing it out?" (Wendelin)

"Eh? You have that kind of preference, Wend?" (Ina)

"No, but I just felt like saying it." (Wendelin)

Wend, who had listened silently so far, accepted Margrave Breithilde-sama all too easily, and eventually started to think up insults.

"You wheedling pervert Baron who loves being verbally abused despite acting like a good young man! A noble, who possesses a sick disposition like you, is... Erw, did you come up with some stabbing words that would pierce the other party's heart?" (Wendelin)

"No, you know, it's disrespectful for me to think about something like that." (Erwin)

Being asked about ideas for insults by Wend, Erw looked like he hated it from the bottom of his heart.

I think he's reluctant about being blamed by Baron Garland if it's exposed that some insults were his ideas.

"You can think up something since it will be treated as my idea." (Wendelin)

"This country has really many weird nobles, doesn't it?" (Erwin)

"The Empire isn't all that different in this regard either." (Therese)

Therese immediately retorted at Erw's statement.

I don't think that there's any benefit in knowing about something like that, though.

"Let's come up with something quickly since Baron Garland is also going to arrive at this mansion sooner or later."

I don't think it was in response to the words of Wend, who seemed all enthusiastic about it for some reason, but Baron Garland, who had acted independently, conveniently showed up at this point. As expected, it's the young man I encountered earlier.

"You're the one from before...I'm terribly sorry. I didn't expect for you to have been Earl Baumeister's wife." (Garland)

"No, don't mind it." (Ina)

Baron Garland exchanged such a greeting with me, but he immediately shifted his attention to another person.

His expression looked as if he had just found a treasure. The one he was intently staring at was Lisa. I see. For him to zero in on Lisa means that Baron Garland must be a hardcore masochist. Even without her wearing her flashy attire, he must have noticed her peculiarity.

"You are perfect!"

"..."

Having said that, Lisa with her flashy make-up and rough way of talking was no more than an extension of her acting.

However, for him to see through her being skillful at such acting...as might be expected of Baron Garland...

Currently Lisa had no make-up on and wore a normal dress. Moreover, being scared by Baron Garland's intensity, she hid behind Amalie-san.

"I'd like to request it from you as well, by all means!" (Garland)

"(I know how he feels, but I wonder whether Lisa is going to take him up on this?)" (Ina)

Baron Garland, who eagerly requested Lisa to insult him, and Lisa who was hiding behind Amalie-san in fear, unable to say anything.

Thanks to Baron Garland it has developed into a quite strange situation.



"There's one thing I'd like to ask, why me?" (Ina)

"Why, you ask. I felt the jitters when I spotted you in the city. The kind of "Yeah, I want to be insulted while being coldly looked down at by this person."" (Garland)



Baron Garland answered my question without hesitation, but with his answer being what it is, I didn't know how I should react to it.

As for me insulting him, I got Wend's permission with the words, 『Consider it as service for our future relationship with him』.

At such times, Wend chooses the safest approaches to deal with such situations, doesn't he?

"Good gracious, first I will be insulted by Ina-san, and the real deal will be Lisa, huh? What a supreme bliss." (Garland)

"Yeah..."

Even though he's such a handsome, fine man, Baron Garland had an ecstatic expression as he was looking forward to being insulted by Lisa and me.

What a waste, but everyone has their own preferences, I suppose.

It's meaningless to warn him about it anyway. If the Garland House and the Baumeister House form friendly ties with this as a trigger, it will become a benefit for Wend.

As his wife, I have no hesitation to cooperate on this.

I guess that's how people become adults.

Lisa has left the room for the moment together with Amalie-san to put on her previous, flashy outfit and make-up.

Lisa isn't Wend's wife, but right now she's a freeloader here.

The debt of gratitude for a night's lodging and a meal...what a disagreeable debt of gratitude...

Elise and the others looked relieved that they hadn't been nominated.

"I think being scolded by Saint-dono will be wonderful as well, but since she's usually a gentle person, it will lack thrill when getting insulted by her. As for Luise-san, I guess it wouldn't result in any more than a heartwarming feeling as it would be like getting scolded by a cute, younger sister."
(Garland)

Leaving aside Baron Garland's queer commentary, he began explaining the ideal situation for being insulted.

His expression was very serious, emphasizing his handsomeness, but the feeling of disappointment was remarkable, given the contents he was talking about.

Even though it would be much better if he were to use that passion for something else...

However, he's a good feudal lord, right...?

"Please go ahead then."

It looks like the insulting time starts right away.

Since the one directing it is Wend, I just have to do as I'm told.

"Ina, did you remember what to say?" (Wendelin)

"Yes..." (Ina)

"Since I have a bad short-term memory, you're much more suited anyway, Ina-chan." (Luise)

What cheeky thing to say just because you haven't been nominated, Luise...

I completely memorized the insults Wend had come up a little while ago.

It looks like it would be a kill-joy if I were to read them from cue cards or similar.

Baron Garland himself hadn't said anything like that, but when he learned about Wend's instruction, he praised him with 『Earl Baumeister-dono, you do understand well』.

I wonder whether Wend was happy about being praised like that?

"Well then..."

"Eh!? Why dogeza?"

"I'm going to be insulted. Wouldn't it be odd for me to act arrogantly and self-important?"

Baron Garland insisted with a serious look. He's not wrong about it, but the feeling of disappointment in me has grown even stronger.

"I'm starting."

I tossed the insults I had memorized at Baron Garland who was prostrating in front of me.

"Even though you're always pretending to be a baron who's loved by his people, you're no more than a fuckin' male bitch who indulges in his lowly, sleazy desires of wanting to be insulted! Being happy about getting insulted by a lass like me while miserably prostrating in front of me suits scum like you well!" (Ina)

I feel like it was slightly short, but according to Wend, it's not good for it to be too long either. Also, it wasn't limited to just insults, I got some training in acting how to look coldly and how to stand, too.

In addition, Margrave Breithilde-sama apparently acted as supervising director as there existed some taboo insults as well.

It really doesn't matter at all, but did he actually supervise anything?

"How was it, Baron Garland-sama?" (Ina)

When I suddenly felt curious and looked at him, he repeatedly trembled while casting his face downwards.

"Was it maybe a failure?"

Did I possibly mention a word I wasn't supposed to use?

As I was worrying, he stood up and grasped both my hands.

"It's been a long time since I last felt such shudder at the core of my body. Ina-san, thank you very much!" (Garland)

Baron Garland thanked me while looking overjoyed, but for some reason I couldn't feel delighted about it.

"I must say, this was magnificent as an opener! The next one will be the main act, Lisa-san, at last, right!?" (Garland)

It's scheduled for Lisa to insult him in her acting outfit and make-up, but Baron Garland was looking forward to that from the bottom of his heart.

For him to consider me to be an opener was quite rude, but it didn't upset me in particular.

Rather than that, Lisa would have it difficult as she was treated as the main act.

I wonder whether she can return to her previous acting since she has spent her time here exposing her true nature of being meek and fearful of strangers after taking off her make-up and her outfit.

It looks like she has accepted the call for the sake of returning the favor of being taken care of in the mansion, but Lisa might become a bit pitiful if she were to fail here...

Those were my thoughts, but it looks like it was unnecessary for me to worry about her. After all, Lisa, who had finished putting on her outfit and make-up, entered the room with the same impact as when I met her for the first time.

"Are you there, you perverted noble bastard?" (Lisa)

"I'm hereee——!" (Garland)

As soon as she entered, Baron Garland answered her question in delight. For him to be happy about being called a perverted noble bastard...people really do have various kinds of tastes. Moreover, Lisa has placed her foot on the back of the prostrating Baron Garland and was drilling in the end of her heel, but is that truly okay? Since Margrave Breithilde-sama isn't saying anything, it must be fine...

"The folks over in the Garland Barony have quite the bad luck to be ruled by a pervert like you! Right? What do you think? You perverted piece of shit." (Lisa)

"Yes! The residents are very pitiable. I'm sure they are crying about it." (Garland)

"There ain't no point in you crying about it, is there!? Repent, you low-life!" (Lisa)

"Yes! I shall repent from the bottom of my heartt——!" (Garland)

Baron Garland looked very joyful as he was insulted by Lisa. If it's like this, it's inevitable for someone like me to be treated as opener and impromptu skit. I'm totally not vexed about it, though... Baron Garland was continuously abused by Lisa for ten minutes after this, but he looked happy over the whole period.



"Truly, thank you very much." (Garland)

Seemingly relieved of his stress through being insulted by Lisa and me, Baron Garland returned to being an agreeable young man, and left the mansion at once. The stress-free Baron Garland was truly a noble amongst nobles.

"Even if it doesn't go as far as Baron Garland or Lisa-san, humans possess two sides. Isn't it important to have a heart that accepts this fact?"

Margrave Breithilde-sama skillfully summed it up with in an agreeable way, but having been shown two very extreme examples, I couldn't quite approve of his words. And, a little while after that, Lisa, who played a major role in the insulting, ended up being dragged into unforeseen troubles.



"As a matter of fact, we have heard about it from Baron Garland-dono."

"That we will be able to hear insults here which will make us tremble at the core of our hearts."

"Please insult me with 『Gluttonous pig bastard!』."

"『Weak-looking bean-sprout』 for me, please."

"..." (Lisa)



It seems like quite a number of kindred souls with the same tastes as Baron Garland exist. They visited the mansion uninvited, and begged Lisa to be insulted in the same way as Baron Garland. Lisa, who didn't want to do something like that anymore, hid herself behind Amalie-san while being frightened.

"To the bitter end we only accepted this upon request by Magrave Breithilde-sama, but we have no plans to treat it as normal routine. However, it's not like I don't have any connections to young women who verbally abuse gentlemen with such preferences behind the scenes in absolute secrecy..."

""""Please introduce us by all means.""""

The one who rescued Lise in this predicament was Roderich-san.

"When I worked at the nightlife entertainment industry, which also included being a bouncer, I have encountered several such men..." (Roderich)

It appears that he worked at stores catering towards men who enjoyed being teased and insulted by women during his time as ronin. He saved Lisa by introducing the men to women through connections from there.

"Such stores exist as well, huh...?"

"There are many types of humans."

Roderich-san brought the topic to a close in a curt manner, but Lisa, who had been urged by the nobles to insult them, was still hiding behind Amalie-san.