

Intermission 1 - Enigmatic Magician of the Opposite Extreme, Kimbley of the Bursting Flame

"By the way, it's something I suddenly thought of, but..."

"What's on your mind, Earl-sama...is it about Doushi?"

"No, not him..."

Previously, when I had a duel with that retarded Duke, Burkhart-san talked with me about famous magicians.

One is the person quietly sitting at my table, eating breakfast right now, Lisa.

And the other famous magician Burkhart-san mentioned back then is 『Kimbley of the Bursting Flame』. Once I looked at Lisa, I got somehow curious about what kind of person he might be. I haven't met him personally yet, so I asked Burkhart-san, who knows him, about Kimbley.

"Ah, that guy, huh?"

"Is he a really scary person?"

"He's not a bad guy. Rather, he's actually nice. If you deal with him normally."

Somehow I feel bothered by something in the way Burkhart-san phrased it, but it looks like there are also people with a very common sense among the great magicians which have many eccentrics in their group.

"Among the famous magicians, he forms a matchless pair of people having plain common sense together with me."

"Eh?"

Our eyes gathered on Burkhart-san all at once because of his unexpected remark. Even Elise seems to share our sentiment. She's pulling a face as if having heard something surprising.

"Common sense? You, Burkhart-san?"

I wonder?

I don't think that it's wrong, but I might be only thinking so because Doushi, a pure cluster of irrationality, is next to him, causing me to compare the two with each other...either way, it caused the atmosphere in the room to become a bit difficult.

"I'm a very sensible man, no!? Earl-sama, you're a lot more eccentric than I am!"

"Uuh...being told that..."

I'm at a loss for words after having Burkhart-san point out that I'm an oddball.

If I take into account reasons I can't tell anyone else, I feel like it's not weird for me to be slightly treated as an eccentric...

But, I mean, since I'm doing my best as a noble in this world with its many ties of obligation, I shouldn't be that much of an eccentric.

"Earl-sama, let's drop this topic."

"Yeah..."

In the eyes of society, we are all oddballs as we handle the unusual superpower called magic. There's no real need for us fellow magicians to pointlessly belittle each other.

"Lisa is Blizzard, and Kimbley is Bursting Flames, right? Are they treated as one set with both countering each other in the magicians' society?"

It's not like both of them are forming a pair, but such an image certainly comes to mind here.

"Because it's ice and fire, huh?"

"On top of that, Kimbley is a man. Well, such rumors pop up every once in a while."

It looks like there's gossip going around that they might have a romantic relationship despite being rivals.

However, we know that those are merely unfounded rumors.

Men won't approach Lisa when she's wearing that outfit and make-up, and in her current, pretty onee-san mode, she can't talk with men.

"Those seem to be nothing but irresponsible rumors." (Katharina)

Lisa denies the rumors with Katharina as interpreter.
Her shaking her head energetically looks rather cute.

"It's because they are close in age, too. But then again, Kimbley is married. And additionally, he's renown for being a devoted husband."

"A devoted husband as Bursting Flames?"

For some reason I had imagined Kimbley to be a stuffy fellow like Doushi.
Even though Doushi looks like this, he also enters the category of devoted husbands.

"No, he's a very normal guy, basically. In the first place, I don't quite think that the magic you use is related to the character of the caster."

"Well, that's true as well...so, what's with the basically?"

It's a term that's weighing on my mind.

"It might be better for you to meet the guy himself. That would be the fastest way for you to understand."

Having said that, Kimbley and I are busy people.

Just when I thought that there might be no opportunity to meet, it was arranged that I'd meet him at a perfect timing.

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"Earl Baumeister-han, can't you help me out here?"

I had accepted a request from Baron Rembrandt, to whom I'm indebted, as adventurer, and Kimbley himself was participating in that request as well.

"It's a request from my wife's family."

It looks like it's a request of the Baron Rottner House, the family of Baron Rembrandt's first wife.

"It concerns the liberation of a small monster domain in the Rottner Barony..."

The Rottner Barony lies in the kingdom's north. It looks like they want to develop the territory while using the acceleration of commerce triggered by the peace treaty with the Empire. However, there was one problem.

"There's a very small monster domain right in the middle of the barony."

It's small-scaled, but because of this domain, the residential area has apparently taken the shape of a donut with the monster domain in the middle.

"This monster domain is small, and as it's not very popular with adventurers, it doesn't bring much revenue either. That being the case, talks have progressed into the direction of liberating it, and building a road connecting the Kingdom's areas with the Empire's border."

It will ease the transportation within the barony, and it will become possible to expand the potential living areas and develop farm fields on a larger scale.

That means, if they manage to develop the barony successfully, the barony will have the potential to have a higher harvest - and thus tax revenue - than a poor Viscount House.

Certainly, if there's a monster domain in the center of a territory, it's inconvenient for the efficiency of the development and the traffic access.

"Has it possibly been designated a barony because of the monster domain?"

"Earl Baumeister-han, you grasped the point here. Hence, if they develop after the domain has been liberated, it'll have the territorial scale of an average Viscount territory," Baron Rembrandt explained.

"As for monster domains, there's also one in the northern part of the barony, and many adventurers gather over there. So it'll be fine to just keep that one around. I will definitely pay you a request fee in accordance with the market price. Please help me out here."

If Baron Rembrandt promises that he will pay the reward, there should be nothing to worry about.

After all he's a rich man. He will probably lend the funds necessary to liberate the monster domain and develop the freed-up land to his wife's family.

"I will also be troubled if the domain isn't liberated."

Given that the Baron Rottner House will be able to increase the number of retainers if the liberation goes well, it's probably planned for Baron Rembrandt's sons to take up posts there. Okay, so it means he can't fail for the sake of his children,

"I'm indebted to you, Baron Rembrandt, so you can of course count on me."

It's only natural for me to answer Baron Rembrandt's request, seeing as he plays an important role in the development of the Baumeister Earldom which will continue for a good while.

"That's a big help. Earl Baumeister-han, thanks a lot."

Under such circumstances, Baron Rembrandt and us teleported to the Rottner Barony. Erw, Wilma, Katia, and Lisa accompany me.

『It's regrettable, seeing how it was a good opportunity for actual combat.』

『Make sure to not neglect your training.』

『I think I will follow thine advice as thou are my senpai, Wendelin. Please don't forget the souvenirs.』

Therese stayed home under the pretext that we want to hide the fact that she has become a magician as long as possible, and as it had been Burkhart-san's opinion that she's still too inexperienced. Given that she's become able to use quite a bit of magic, she probably wants to quickly test it out in real combat, though.

"Will the party be properly balanced without Elise and the others here?"

"Erwin, normally you don't have such extravagant parties like this one, you know?"

Katia rebuts Erw's question.

But she's right, since we even got two pure magicians with us, it might be an extravagant party.

"Besides, Bursting Flames is going to join in as well, no? I think it will be alright unless we're very careless."

"But, even if it's small, it's still a monster domain. There should be quite a lot of monsters in there."

"Ah yeah, because it's untouched, you mean. Those guys sure multiply like rats."

Katia had an understanding look towards the point Wilma made.

Since we have heard just now that it's not used much by adventurers due to its lacking popularity, it's possible that it's crowded with more monsters than expected.

Going by the fact that it hasn't been liberated so far, it might be an unexpectedly difficult request,

too.

That's probably the reason why Baron Rembrandt requested us to do it.



"Huh? Aren't there somehow many people here?"

We head to the monster domain in the center of the Rottner Barony with Baron Rembrandt as guide, but many adventurers have gathered to hunt there. Erw reports this fact to me after having noticed it.

"Don't tell me, they hired so many adventurers?"

"You see, Katia-han, that's because you don't have to pay any taxes to the Baron Rottner House in this monster domain."

Usually the tax paid to the Baron Rottner House and the fee paid to the adventurer's guild amount to 30%, but right now adventurers only have to pay the fee to the adventurer's guild for the harvested goods and game caught in this monster domain.

It's only natural for many adventurers to gather if you can increase the earnings by 20% with the usual loot.

It appears to be a strategy to have the number of monsters lowered by luring helpers with the chance to make a profit.

"As expected, the fee to be paid to the adventurer's guild hasn't been waived."

"Well that makes sense, Wilma-han. It ain't like the adventurer's guild will directly profit from the Rottner Barony's development progressing."

Even the adventurer's guild can't treat the Rottner House alone favorably.

"Are we going to join the subjugation as well?"

"No, the tax-free campaign has already been running for a month. As a result, the number of monsters has dropped significantly." (Rembrandt)

I don't really mind if we warm ourselves up by killing the few remaining monsters, but Baron Rembrandt explained to Erw that our main task will be to join up with Bursting Flames and kill the boss.

"Is the boss here a dragon?"

"Since it's such a small monster domain, there ain't anything like a dragon. 『Berserk Bird』 is the boss of this domain." (Rembrandt)

Simply put, Berserk Bird is a huge bird monster.

I think it's one of the weakest monsters among the bosses of monster domains.

However, I was taught at the adventurer's prep school that it's sometimes troublesome to subjugate it.

As for the reason: usually there's one, or at most two bosses, but only in the particular case of the Berserk Bird, you have to hunt down a big number of bird monsters because of its strong breeding over the course of a short time.

If you're unlucky, it's even possible that you will be tormented to death by a group assault of Berserk Birds.

"Several dozens of birds with a maximum span of five meters when fully grown out, huh...?"

Moreover, Berserk Birds seems to be unexpectedly clever.

A simple method such as rounding them all up after gathering them in one place won't work.

Berserk Birds are smart enough to torture their enemies to death with great numbers that would gather as necessary while at the same time not crowding together under normal circumstances to prevent their annihilation.

We only know those traits from having read about them in books, though.

"However, since its attribute is non-attribute, all kinds of offensive magic works against it."

"..."

"Eh? Ah, I see. According to Big Sis, it's certainly true that all kinds of magic work, but she says that the magic must be so powerful that it kills the bird in one blow."

It looks like Katia is going to work as an interpreter today.

Appropriate for a veteran adventurer, she provides us with information about Berserk Birds.

She might have had to subjugate them in the past.

"Moreover, she says it's not good to ignore the wounded birds."

According to Lisa's explanation...though Katia does the talking...if you leave the wounded birds alone for five seconds, they seem to go mad as its name suggests.

Once that happens, it will start attacking any living beings around it at full power without even fearing its own death.

It appears there are occasionally cases where unskilled magicians allow Berserk Birds to go berserk with half-assed attacks, resulting in them being killed.

"Because of this, it's said that it's necessary to gather several powerful magicians to definitely complete the request, which also connects to the reason why Bursting Flames is joining as well. Unfortunately, I'm bad at offensive magic..." (Rembrandt)

Given that Baron Rembrandt is a unique magician specialized in 『Relocate』 and 『Teleport』, he's not good with offensive magic.

His arsenal of offensive spells is close to zero.

"I suppose that's an opinion that makes sense. Very well, it will be a joint operation."

"Well then, let me introduce you to Bursting Flames-han."

Because we're trying to liberate the monster domain, the Rottner House is managing the big number of gathered adventurers with a temporary dispatch of their feudal army.

Once we move to the tent serving as headquarters, we encounter a male magician, who looks to be around 30 years old.

I think his face is normal, but he gives me a strong vibe of a family-oriented father. He doesn't look like an excellent magician bearing the nickname of Bursting Flames at all.

"Bursting Flames-han, I have brought Earl Baumeister-han."

"Baron Rembrandt-dono, please allow me to thank you for granting my wish."

Kimbley of the Bursting Flames politely thanks Baron Rembrandt.

However, I can't feel anything resembling Bursting Flames from his appearance, after all.

"So you are Earl Baumeister-dono. I have heard quite a few rumors about you."

Kimbley greets me politely, too.

Him adding -dono and not -sama towards a noble is owed to the position of high-ranking magicians in society compared to nobles.

It's not like he's trying to be rude here.

"Your friends look quite reliable as well..."

I introduced Erw, Wilma, and Katia to him, and Kimbley revealed an expression showing his admiration after having assessed their abilities.

Well, such measuring of abilities between fellow adventurers often takes place.

"So, as for the young lady over there...I feel like we have met somewhere before..."

Kimbley apparently can't identify Lisa, who has been compared with him frequently, because of her excessive change.

"But, this mana..."

"Kimbley-san, this person is Lisa the Blizzard."

"Hee, just when I thought that I remembered that particular mana...eh, wait! Ha——ah!?"

Kimbley raises his voice in surprise over Lisa who has stopped with the flashy outfit and make-up, now wearing the attire of a normal magician.



"That was certainly quite the surprise..."

Kimbley is startled once more while fixedly staring at Lisa.

Lisa seems to be capable of making eye contact with Kimbley whom she met relatively often so far.

As for talking...it's still impossible if it's men, or rather, me.

"Lisa and Kimbley-san, did you go out with each other in the past, after all?"

"Wilma-san, that's an unfounded rumor."

Wilma bluntly threw that question, which was fairly hard to ask despite everyone wanting to know the truth, at Kimbley.

I think she's actually quite gutsy.

"Your ages are almost the same, your amount of mana as well, your special magic attributes are fire and ice, and you are man and woman. There's some foundation to the rumors, isn't there?"

Certainly, if I were told that they have gone out with each other, I might have actually believed it.

"I have a wife, okay?"

Kimbley is earning money as a famous magician.

It's a world where it's rare for men, who have such high income and social standing like him, to stay single beyond an age of thirty.

It's likely difficult for him to reject formal marriage interviews, too.

"Hee, what kind of person is your wife?"

"It's great of you to have asked this!"

"Eh!?"

Once Erw asked him about his wife with the intention to have a light chat, Kimbley jumped at that topic vigorously.

It looks like he had quite the strong urge to talk about it to someone else.

"Mary is my childhood friend. She's two years older than I am, though."

What started all of a sudden now was a story of bragging about the beginning of Kimbley's love towards his wife.

Come to think of it, I heard that he's a devoted husband, but it looks like he really fits that description to a tee.

Even during my time as a salary man there was a guy who started long bragging marathons about his wife and children at drinking parties.

I remember how it caused a slightly difficult atmosphere to spread as it was definitely impossible to tell him to stop it.

Considering your social life, there was no way that you could bluntly show them that you don't care...

Once I look in Baron Rembrandt's direction, he has 『I failed!』 written all over his face.

He's probably regretting about not having warned us to not touch on that topic beforehand.

"(Earl Baumeister-han, now that Bursting Flame-han has started to brag about his wife and daughters, it's going to take a long time...)"

We ended up endlessly listening to Kimbley's bragging about his wife and his two daughters for around two hours after that.



"Let's see how it goes and kill as many monsters as possible before facing the Berserk Bird?"

After Kimbley's bragging came to an end, we finally entered the monster domain together with him. Baron Rembrandt, who would be no combat asset here, stayed outside.

"It looks like most of the monsters have been killed by the other adventurers."

Erw, who is acting as scout and advance guard, keeps walking through the monster domain which is almost emptied out of monsters.

Wilma and Katia follow behind him, searching for presences.

"Since they don't have to pay taxes to the Rottner House, the majority of the adventurers in this area have gathered here...there are a few monsters left, but..."

My 『Detect』 reacts to the presence of a medium-sized monster around a hundred meters ahead of us.

"I will kill this one." (Kimbley)

"In accordance with your nickname?"

"No, the monster materials would get burned then."

Kimbley steps forward and creates a small flame on the tip of his finger.

Once he lightly blows at that flame with a "Pheew," the small flame leaves his finger and flies toward the monster which is still a good distance away. Looking at it closely, it resembles a bear. The flame leaps into its mouth, and immediately after, the monster writhes around with smoke escaping from its mouth.

A few dozens seconds later, the monster convulses and stops moving.

"Eh? What kind of magic is that?"

Katia is surprised by Kimbley's magic and its behavior. We others are also surprised. He easily defeated a monster while using only a very small amount of mana.

"Do you know, Big Sis? ...Oh, I get it. That flame apparently burned the monster's lungs."

Kimbley is a fire magic master.

Since fire magic causes extensive damage to monsters, it's called a disadvantageous attribute for adventurers.

On the other hand, it's the most reliable attribute in a war, though.

"Given that there are only few monsters where the lungs are used as material, I make it impossible for the monsters to breathe by burning them."

Meaning, he efficiently burns only the monsters' lungs.

There's also the trick to it that the oxygen in the lungs is used up by the fire, increasing the effect even further.

The monster won't be able to avoid dying from suffocation.

If you defeat them in such a way, the majority of their raw materials will remain unharmed. If you have as much mana as Kimbley, you will be able to kill many monsters with this method.

In other words, you can make good money with it.

"That's no bursting flame." (Wilma)

"Wilma-san, the bursting flames spell is my strongest technique, but I do know when to use it."

The reason why Kimbley got the nickname Bursting Flames is apparently because he blew away a mountain with explosion magic when he was summoned to a strife between fellow nobles and watched the two armies there.

Because of its overwhelming firepower, the soldiers of both armies naturally started to call Kimbley with 『It's Bursting Flames!』.

Ever since, his nickname has apparently been Kimbley of the Bursting Flames.

"I think we should take on the Berserk Birds tomorrow."

Following Kimbley's opinion, we devoted ourselves to hunting as many monsters as possible for today.



When we returned to the headquarters since it had become evening, we were greeted by Baron Rembrandt.

"Earl Baumeister-han, everyone, are you alright?"

"Yes, did something happen?"

"Well, it looks like there were adventurers who picked a half-cocked fight with the Berserk Bird..."

He said that they suffered an unforeseen accident of losing more than twenty adventurers in just one day.

"A young adventurer party apparently inflicted an injury on one Berserk Bird."

Wounding a Berserk Bird half-assedly is the worst you can do.

The wounded bird will go berserk and attack those who attacked it until death. There were many of them.

Adding the attacks by the unwounded birds that got provoked by all this, there were many casualties outside the party which triggered it all recklessly.

"Therefore, I have no choice but to ask you, Earl Baumeister-han, Kimbley-han."

"Baron Rembrandt-sama, do we know the estimated number of Berserk Birds?"

"I've been told that they are probably exceeding fifty."

Baron Rembrandt answers Erw.

"That's a lot..."

Not all of them are adult birds, but even the young ones become a nuisance once they go berserk. That's because the Berserk Birds stop caring about their own safety unlike other animals and monsters.

Since they keep attacking as if having their limiter removed, no matter how broken their bodies become, their threat level is high.

"The majority of this monster domain consists of forest. Even if they are monsters, it'll be impossible for birds with such big bodies to launch attacks in an agitated state of mind."

"Well, they would likely crash against the trees, so yeah. But, doesn't that depend on where we fight them?"

"Wilma-han, Erwin-han, Berserk Birds are the weakest bosses, but they are still domain bosses. Something at the level of a tree will be simply mowed down during their flight."

This is yet another reason why it's so troublesome to subjugate Berserk Birds. Even if it might be the weakest among the domain bosses, it's still overwhelmingly stronger than any normal monster.

"I guess we will go to sleep in preparation for tomorrow's battle..."

"Yes. Let's take an early rest to be ready for tomorrow."

On that day we stayed the night in an outdoor tent provided by the Rottner House. The Berserk Birds subjugation operation together with Kimbley would finally start on the next day.

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