

Chapter 2 - Wendelin's Ordeal

"This is an underground ruin that had been created during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization. Unfortunately, its degradation over-time is quite intense. There are only a few archaeological documents, too. Of course it does not hold any of the treasures you adventurers are looking for. Since it is located within Baulburg, it will be reconstructed into a guard garrison with a basement after you have inspected it today." (Arnest)

"No treasures, you say? That's bad luck."

"Cindy, even if treasures were here, I'm sure that they would have been carried out a long time ago."

"It's probably just as Agnes says. At a point in time when prep school fledglings like us can enter this place for training, it's obvious that the place will be cleared from treasures."

"So they've already been taken out...? That's really a shame."

"Limited to this place, there has not even been anything here that could have been taken out, little ladies."

The lessons of the prep school are basically carried out only within the school, except for a set number of events.

However, there are many underground ruins within the Baumeister Earldom. Among those, there are also some existing inside Baulburg.

The search and investigation of those ruins finished a good while ago. Same can be said about this underground ruin as well.

There are no treasures here, and we couldn't confirm anything of archaeological value as desired by Arnest or any traces of such because of the intense degradation, but since the underground part can be recycled, we've decided that it will be remodeled into a new garrison for the guards.

Given that the guard unit is an organization to keep up public order, having a warehouse or jail in the basement would be convenient.

The point of today's training is to allow the adventurer prep school's fledglings to take a peek at an underground ruin of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era before the reconstruction starts.

The one in the role of lecturer is Arnest who has hidden his long ears with a magic tool.

At first he was unwilling and acted all cheeky despite being no more than a freeloader, but once he learned about being able to investigate another, new underground ruin, he was all for it.

As Arnest had apparently also taught at a university, he gave faultless explanations to the students of the magician class.

Having said that, because this underground ruin is truly no more than a stone basement, the interest of the students seems low.

Seeing how they're aiming to become adventurers, it's only natural for them to desire finding treasures in an underground ruin.

"Everyone, since you can't enter places like this until you become adults, make sure to grasp the atmosphere of an underground ruin before going back today."

""Yes!""

There's like no way that prep school students would be allowed to enter an unexplored underground ruin. For now, a place like this is the limit.

"The atmosphere changes by just going underground, doesn't it? Even if it's simply learning about something like that, think of it as a good experience."

I explain to them that they should at least remember the atmosphere when going into the underground for the time being.



"Earl Baumeister, you will keep your promise, won't you?" (Arnest)

"A——ah, yeah, yeah."

Once that day's underground ruin field trip ended without any hiccups, Arnest strongly insisted on being allowed to help out in the investigation of new underground ruins as reward for having acted as temporary teacher.

For an earl like me, something like breaking a promise is an absolute no-go...just when I thought that, I actually had forgotten one very important issue.

"Elise and the others can't join right now, and if it's just me, it won't work, you know?" (Erwin)

"Come to think of it, there was that as well."

Until Erw pointed it out, I had completely forgotten about Elise and my other wives being on maternity leave.

Even though their bellies are sticking out pretty much by now...

Regretting to have made a promise that I couldn't keep, I suggest to Arnest to postpone it.

"Did you not say that nobles will keep their promises?"

"I haven't said that I won't go. It will be after Elise and the other give birth and recover their instincts as adventurers."

It might take two or three years, but it's not like I particularly lied.

Arnest can simply write plenty of thesis during that time.

"Therefore, it's not possible right now."

"Still that is not good. Because the Baumeister Earldom is dotted with countless underground ruins, I will be troubled if they are opened during that period of time."

What an unexpectedly hasty guy despite his longevity as a demon.

"Even if demons might live much longer than humans, that does not mean that they are particularly

patient either."

"But, you see..."

Since I don't want outsiders to know much about Arnest, I cannot afford entrusting him to other adventurers.

Because my retainers, who usually help out in the excavation, don't have the necessary combat strength, they are unsuited as companions, too.

"Humans and demons have to resign themselves to their fates at times."

"Ughh... Then I will change the request to a purely scientific investigation."

With those words, Arnest takes out a map and shows me an underground ruin located in a place that might as well be called just outside Baulburg.

"It's an underground ruin that has been discovered just the other day. Its safety has been confirmed through an investigation by the guards. Me and my disciples are in the process of applying for permission to enter that place. Thanks to the special trait of governmental offices to be always slow, I do not know when I will be given permission."

"You've just casually blamed me there, haven't you...?"

If it's an underground ruin next to Baulburg, it's not strange for the guards to block it off after an investigation.

Children might go in, or decorations and the building stones forming the ruin might be stolen, even if there's no treasures.

Recently we're lacking houses in Baulburg due to the rapid growth of the population. I've heard stories about the building stones in underground ruins being stolen as materials for such houses. Arnest's application not going through...is because only a few of my retainers know about this guy. There's absolutely no way for me to make a directive like 『Make sure to give him preferential permission to scientifically examine underground ruins because he's a demonic scholar sheltered by the Baumeister House』.

"Oh, the underground ruin over there, huh?"

"You know of it?"

Erw knows about the ruin Arnest mentioned.

"I think it's an underground ruin with only two floors and no treasures in it. The interior ornaments are very gaudy, so an archaeologist might like them."

In short, it doesn't have much of a monetary value, but its scientific worth is rather high.

"Then I'll go along with you to that place."

"With just us three?"

"Is that a problem?"

If the guards are watching that place, we just have to borrow some of their people.

"They have only stationed people to make sure that no one trespasses on the grounds there, so I think it would be a bit unreasonable to borrow those people. And even without that. The guards are already short on men as is, so it would be kinda pathetic if we increased their workload with something like that." (Erwin)

In that case, it'll be necessary to find personnel to guard me?

"It will not be a problem with those little girls." (Arnest)

"Little girls?"

"The three who are your pupils, Earl Baumeister." (Arnest)

Arnest is telling me to use Agnes and the other two as my guards.

"I am just going to do a preliminary investigation inside the underground ruin anyway. Since there will not be any danger, those little girls will be plenty."

Even though they're young, all three are magicians with a bright future ahead of them. It's not difficult to appoint them as guards, albeit only for form's sake. Since they are minors, it's actually not all that good, but I'm a noble and the lord of this land. Just as I had been assigned to the subjugation of Grade Grand as minor in the past, it won't be a problem even if I request them on my authority as a feudal lord.

"I think that will work. If we add those three, it won't be an issue."

Albeit minors, all three are magicians, and it's a guard duty in an underground ruin without any dangers at all.

If I were to ask other nobles I might be told that it's a luxury, or way too excessive.

"I guess I'll try asking the three..."

It'll be fine to do so in the afternoon when the prep school's lessons have ended, and if I add some extra part-time pay, I don't think that it'll be an issue for them.

Given that it won't be much of a work in the first place, it might please them as a good part-time job with a decent pay.



"Bodyguarding sensei in an underground ruin? I will take you up on that."

"Sensei, I will also do my best."

"I wonder what kind of underground ruin it's going to be."

Since the three gladly accepted the job when I sounded them out about it right away, we would head out to the underground ruin investigation, accompanied by Arnest.

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"I see...I guess that means it has a highly scholarly value."

"Oo——h! This is more than I had expected."

In the afternoon of the next day we dive into the underground ruin that has been discovered at the edge of Baulburg.

Two guard members have been keeping watch at the entrance. According to them, they are guarding this place in a shift system to prevent ruin looting.

Once we enter the ruin, the ceiling and walls are blanketed with three-dimensional, carved dragons. The ruin has a temple-like structure with many dragon stone statues of various shapes spread out. All statues seem to be made out of marble, and the engraved dragons are overflowing with impressions of being alive.

Arnest, who sees that, runs around all over the place and frantically takes notes while being in a very happy mood.

I'm deeply moved at first as well, but...if you look at such things for thirty minutes, you'd get bored of it, right?

"Sensei, is this underground ruin a temple?"

Agnes asks as she looks at the ruin together with me.

"I wonder? There could have really been an ancient religion worshiping dragons a long time ago."

"Such a religion really existed, but it is unrelated to this underground ruin." (Arnest)

Arnest answers Agnes' question in my stead.

"That's a bold declaration."

Making such a bold declaration must mean that he's quite confident in his own theory.

"The carved dragons in this place are magnificent, but they have a completely different design from the ones I encountered in religious facilities revering dragons during past excavations. I think they only have the objective to serve as ornaments."

"I see."

Decorating almost all of a two-storied basement with dragons, eh...? Just why was this underground ruin actually built then?

"That is something I plan to investigate scientifically in the future. By the way, where did Erwin go?"

"Huh? Now that you mention it..."

Even when I look around me, I can't find Erw anywhere, so I try asking Agnes who has been looking at a dragon carved into a huge stone pillar.

"If it's Erwin-sama, it seems he has gone to the toilet."

"He should have said something first, damn it...!"

It's not like we can urinate in this ruin, but fortunately it's close to the city. Given that it doesn't appear dangerous around here, he's apparently gone outside to borrow a toilet.

"Well, whatever. Arnest, are you about done?"

"Yes."

Because today is a preliminary examination for a full scientific investigation, it appears that Arnest has nothing left to do here after around one hour. Once I inform him about going back soon, he agrees without any complaints for a change.

"Agnes, Cindy, Betty, we're going home."

"Already?"

"I feel bad about getting paid for only this much."

"It's only been one hour so far."

Agnes' group ends up feeling guilty about receiving a bigger pay than usual for such a simple job.

"It has ended faster than expected, but you three have properly performed the duties assigned to you. Don't worry about it."

"But, we've just been looking at the underground ruin."

"Protecting me that nothing happens to me is your job. And in fact, nothing has happened to me. All that's left is to return to the surface. It's not necessary to worry about it since you have succeeded at your job."

Agnes is a diligent girl as expected, isn't she?
She feels that it's wrong to get paid for such a simple job.

"That's how it is, so let's go back."

"Sensei, what's that?"

Immediately after I give the order to withdraw, Cindy has apparently spotted something. Once I look in the direction she's pointing to check what it might be, I see a single rat over there. I think that's the first living being I see in this ruin since entering.

"A rat...?"

"Sensei, considering that it's a simple rat..."

"Huh? This is..."

Once I look once more closely since Betty has pointed it out, I notice that it's not a living rat. It has ingeniously camouflaged itself by properly growing out fur, but on a close look, I can see that its skin has a metallic sheen...

"It is an artificial product. Moreover, it is quite old."

Arnest declares that the rat is man-made.

"It is a valuable, scientific specimen. You can also use it for researching its magic technology."

After all it's an artificial rat with a size identical to a real rat. That means we can expect a development in magic technology if we research this after catching it.

"I will catch it then, okay?"

Understanding that, Cindy defenselessly approaches the rat to capture it. She probably thinks that it's not that dangerous since it's an artificial rat. However, that's a careless thinking for an adventurer, and moreover a dangerous conduct. I try to stop her in a hurry.

"Cindy! Don't approach it carelesslyyy..."

"Eh?"

In the instant when Cindy looks back due to my yell, I sense as if some kind of magic is shot out of the artificial rat's mouth.

Until now I couldn't sense any mana from the rat. Just what kind of trick is that...? No, right now is not the time to worry about that.

At this rate the magic will directly hit Cindy.

As a 『Magic Barrier』 won't be in time either, I unconsciously thrust Cindy away to the side, receiving the rat's magic with my own body.

Since it's no magic I can see with my eyes, it shouldn't cause any direct damage.

Still, I think Erw might have gotten angry if he had been here.

