



"...? Huh? Nothing in particular has changed?"

I was hit by the rat's magic, but I don't particularly feel any pain or whatsoever. However, somehow I feel like my line of sight has become awfully low...

"Cindy, you okay?"

"Yes... But, sensei, you are!"

"Me? ... Oh? I feel like you have suddenly grown, Cindy."

After all, I'm currently looking up to Cindy's face.  
Just what the heck is going on here?

"Sensei! You can't call that nothing!"

"How is your body's condition?"

Worrying about me, Agnes and Betty run up to me as well, but I feel like both of them have become quite big.

"Earl Baumeister, you need to take a straight look at reality. It is not that the three of them have become bigger. Try taking a look in a mirror."



ヴェンデリン (五歳)

「ああ、わかったよ」

俺は魔法の袋から手鏡を取り出して自分の顔を見てみた。  
というか、魔法の袋も、他の装飾品も、ローブすら随分と大きく変わったような。  
ローブに至っては、完全にブカブカではないか。  
そして、手鏡に映った俺の顔も……。

「まるで子供だな」

「パウライスター伯爵、いい加減、現実逃避をやめるのであるな」

I take a hand-mirror out of my magic bag, and look at my own face.  
Or rather, somehow I feel like the magic bag, the other decorations, and even my robe have become fairly big...

Speaking of the robe, isn't it way too baggy?  
And even my face as it's reflected in the mirror is...

"I totally look like a child, don't I?" (Format Blue)

I recall the time when I had just been reincarnated into this world.

"Earl Baumeister, will you stop escaping reality already?" (Arnest)

"Yeah, I got it." (Format Blue)

In fact I had mostly noticed it after I got hit by the rat's mysterious spell.  
However, so far I've never heard of a spell like this, leaving me with a feeling that it couldn't be true. Still, seeing my own body having actually become small like this is, you know...

"Your robe and clothes are too baggy, so it's probably hard to move in them?"

"There's that as well, but I wonder what Elise and the other are going to say after they see that I've become so small all of a sudden?"

Even though they are soon going to give birth, I don't qualify as a father like this, but rather as a big brother?

"That is what you call escaping from reality." (Arnest)

That damn Arnest...poking his nose into the business of other people...

"Sensei, I'm terribly sorry...but, you're cute."

"Sensei, while we've been with you...how adorable."

"Sensei, are you alright? You're really cute."

And then I end up getting surrounded by Agnes and the other two while being told that I'm cute.

"Little ladies, you have fairly nice characters." (Arnest)

For some reason I've become a child after being hit by the rat's magic.



"I am going to chase after the rat." (Arnest)

"Why?"

"Going by my estimation, the rat who has turned you into a child, is a cutting-edge magic tool of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era. It is an artificial rat using special magic that will change an adult into a child. I suppose that dispelling this spell is connected to the rat's destruction."

As I'm bewildered in my current state, Arnest suggests something outrageous. It looks like the rat, who has cast the spell, must be destroyed for me to return to normal.

"Won't the spell run out at some point?"

"That might normally be the case, but the artificial rat has continued its activity for a very long time while hiding down here. That means, it would be smarter to also consider the possibility for Earl Baumeister to remain a child. As long as the rat remains active by replenishing its magic through some kind of method, it is correct to assess that the spell will keep running." (Arnest)

Arnest explains his view when asked by Agnes.

"In other words, the rat mustn't get away?"

"Correct. If it remains hidden somewhere, Earl Baumeister will remain a child until his death."

That shitty demon says this as if he's talking about today's weather.

"Victory goes to the one who makes the first move! 『Flame Arrow』!"

In that case matters are simple. I shoot a fire arrow at the rat that's several meters ahead of me. It's impossible for me to miss at this range...

"No way!"

My 『Flame Arrow』 doesn't seem to carry the firepower it should upon impact. Even after directly hitting the rat, it didn't have an effect at all.

"Chu."

"It's totally making fun of me there."

Betraying its appearance, the artificial rat seems to be made quite sturdily. I couldn't destroy it with my spell just now.



"Earl Baumeister, artificial rats do not make fun of others. It is your imagination." (Arnest)

"..."

Don't tell me what I already know!  
It's just a figure of speech!  
Either way, for my magic's power to have fallen this far...

"At the same time as your body has reverted to that of a child, your mana has also reverted to what it was at that age." (Arnest)

In short, I have around as much power as back when I started to learn magic, I suppose.  
Estimating it from the 『Flame Arrow』, my actual power has completely deteriorated to an elementary level.

"That rat is storing mana. It will not be destroyed by something at the level of your current magic, Earl Baumeister." (Arnest)

"Don't say it so calmly!"

"What a mess! In that case, I will handle it!"

"Me too!"

"It's a waste since you're so cute, but...no, that's not it! You damn rat!"

Learning that I wouldn't be able to destroy the rat in my current state, Agnes and the other two try to shoot their own spells at the rat.  
However, before they can, the rat hides behind a stone pillar with dragon carvings.

"Waaaiitt——!"

"It's pointless to hide!"

"I'm gonna break you!"

Agnes' group quickly goes around the stone pillar, but they immediately return while not knowing what to do next.

"What's wrong, all of you?"

"The rat has escaped into a hole."

"What did you say!?"

I also confirm it in a hurry, but there's a hole big enough for a rat to pass through at the base of the pillar.  
It looks like the hole is connected to the underground.

"Hm——m, this is..."

"What's with the 『Hm——m』, Arnest?"

"It seems like this underground ruin is extending even further down."

"Did the guys, who investigated it before, sleep or something?"

Once you follow the hole at the base of the pillar, a new space extends at a lower floor...  
...Isn't kinda odd for them to not have noticed this?

"If you look at the hole, you will see that it is new. When all is said and done, I suspect the rat, which had lived further down, dug a hole and came out to check since it got noisy above its living place due to the previous investigation." (Arnest)

I see. I guess that means the rat started to become active due to the sounds of the previous investigations, and it just encountered us when we came to this place today.  
I feel sorry and reflect in my heart for having doubted my retainers who investigated this place before.

"Anyway, I guess we should join up with Erw first..."

If we don't destroy the rat after joining up with Erw, who's gone to the toilet, and searching for a path connecting to the place below, I will remain a child...

"Oohh! You will occasionally find them in the demon country as well, demons preferring to run around naked." (Arnest)

"As if that's the case here!"

Since my clothes have become too big after I suddenly became small, it just slid off now that I started to run around.  
Only the robe has barely remained on my shoulders, but it's quite heavy for a child's body...  
My mana has decreased, and I'm stark naked...can it actually get any worse?

"Anyway, we have to destroy the rat as fast as possible." (Arnest)

"How about capturing this underground ruin with the whole force of the Earl Baumeister House?"

At this rate it might be dangerous to head deeper down into the underground ruin with our current lineup.  
It's a bitter choice, but we'll retreat from here for the moment...just when I thought that...

"There's a further continuation of this underground ruin beneath this hole...we must destroy the rat as fast as possible."

"If you remain a child...we'll get scolded by our classmates, sensei."

"For the sake of catching that rat quickly...I'll widen this hole with magic!"

Seemingly believing that they had to save me, Agnes' group is about to widen the hole used as an escape route by the rat with magic.

That's quite hasty of them...they must be quite flustered.

Since it's a ruin with such a rat around, there's no doubt that we can expect other things outside our expectations, such as traps, awaiting us down there.

I try to stop the three, but...before that I notice how the eyes of the dragon carved onto the pillar light up.

"Arnest!"

"The carved dragon is reacting to the raising mana of the little ladies."

"So, what's going to happen?"

"I do not know the answer to that either."

However, the reply shows itself right away.

A magic crest, which I've kinda seen before, surfaces beneath our feet.

At the same time, I can't move my feet as if they've been glued to the ground.

"There was something like a magic crest here?"

"My guess is that the eyes of that dragon serve as something similar to a projector casting the magic crest. Sucking up the ladies' mana, it transcribes the crest beneath the feet of its target. This underground ruin is a winner." (Arnest)

"Is this the time to be happy about it!?"

I feel a deja vu from the magic crest surfacing at my feet.

It is resembling the 『Deadly Inversion Regulation』 we experienced back during our adventurer debut battle.

Since that was also a legacy of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era, it's very likely that we'll be flung somewhere just as it happened back then.

Moreover in a worrisome state of lacking combat power with me being a child, Erw being absent, Arnest being the wrong man for this, and Agnes' group being inexperienced.

""Sensei!""

"Now that it has reached this situation, nothing can be done about it anymore. You three, make sure to stay calm."

The instant I thought that this was the wrong way to give advice, the magic crest at my feet got even brighter, and I lost consciousness, being plunged into a deep darkness.

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