









マルク

「殿下、私と殿下がいちゃいちゃなどすることはあり得ません」  
「あはは、エメラは恥ずかしがり屋さんだなあ」

ペーター

エメラ

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## **Chapter 1 – Attracting People as we start moving southwards**

"This is more intense than expected, isn't it? Even I have grown old." Burkhart sighs

"It's the same for me, too." (Armstrong)

"Though, you do look fine to me, Doushi."



The special magic training held every morning.

Today's menu included a lot of actual combat-related parts. Burkhart-san, who participated as well, was out of breath and even Doushi was drenched in sweat. It's the same for me as well. It's not really as though I've cut corners until now, but either way, I have to do as much as I can. The reason is that we have to definitely defeat Alfred Reinford, my master who was resurrected all of a sudden.

Us three lost to master alone. No matter how much he made use of the Ancient Magic Civilization's inheritance, those are no more than simple tools. Putting aside Doushi, for Burkhart-san to also participate in the severe special training was because his pride as a magician was deeply hurt when he was deemed to be the easiest one to handle by master who was his pupil in the past.

"The best method to defeat Alf is to become as strong as possible through intensive training anyway. There's no simple method to defeat that guy." (Burkhart)

Wiping the sweat away with his hand, Burkhart-san explains to Doushi and me while drinking maté tea from a canteen.

"I suppose master hasn't anything like a weakness? There's none, right...?" (Wendelin)

The scary part about master is his skill in counter-attacking while dodging his opponent's attacks. No matter how great Doushi's offensive ability might be, it serves no purpose if it doesn't hit, and that applied to me as well.

My mana that exceeds master was completely useless.

"Having said that, although the first fight was hard, that guy made a mistake." (Burkhart)

"Mistake?" (Wendelin)

To me it didn't seem as if master made any mistakes, but...

"He wasn't able to kill us in that battle. We are not idiots either. We can come up with countermeasures." (Burkhart)

We will oppose that particular attack, which penetrates 『Magic Barriers』 by thickening the 『Magic

Barrier』 the instant we sense it. Right now we are in the middle of having special training for that. Its effectiveness is apparent and the success rate is gradually rising.

On the other hand, it's a mana-efficient attack that breaks only a part of the enemy's 『Magic Barrier』. This has been successful in its use against enemy magicians who came challenging us after master. I got the hang of it while fighting with master.

"Hmm, in that case, I guess you forcing the rebel army to withdraw by burning down their supplies has been an unexpected accident if seen from Alfred's standpoint, Earl Baumeister." (Armstrong)

"After all, Alf has shown up in this world by using the body of the magician kept by Duke Nürnberg, Talrand or something like that, correct?" (Burkhart)

Kept is a cruel way to phrase it, but for an enemy, who mocks the dead, this level of assessment is plenty.

"It's Talrand who is lending his body while keeping control, not master." (Wendelin)

It might have been possible to defeat us if he kept attacking us, but there was no way that Talrand would defy the rebel army's order to withdraw after the majority of the supplies went up in flames. Master's weakness is the existence of Duke Nürnberg and Talrand.

"Even so, just what is that magic?"

"I know that it's holy magic. It allows the dead to possess your body. That's how much I understand."

"If it's that kind of magic, it's better to ask Elise!" (Armstrong)



When we headed to Elise's location following Doushi's suggestion, she was preparing breakfast together with my other wives.

"Wend, the special training has already finished?" (Luise)

"The target is high, but overdoing it too much is unreasonable as well." (Wendelin)

"Oh well, the path of training won't be completed in one day. Wend, properly wipe away your sweat." (Ina)

Once I sat down at the table while having my sweat wiped by Ina, Luise and Wilma immediately started to line up the breakfast dishes on top of the table.

"Huh? What about Erw?" (Wendelin)

"Just like you, Wend, he's doing a special morning training with Haruka, I think, but he should be back soon."

"They are practising as a married couple."

"They aren't married yet though?"

"Essentially they are like a married couple."

Certainly, it's just as Wilma says. It has reached the point that those two are always together.

"I'm back." (Erwin)

"I have come back." (Haruka)

With the return of Erw and Haruka, breakfast time began. Meals are provided in a batch within the liberation army, but I could never be like a soldier and regard quantity being the most important quality of a meal.

Since we are treated as mercenaries, to begin with, there have been no complaints about us taking care of our own meals. There are also some among the nobles who are preparing their own meals as they are fed up with the same kind of meals being served every day. It resulted in Elise and the others now making the meals for us.

"It's that magic."

While eating, I ask Elise to explain the magic used by Talrand.  
Until now I never heard about having the dead possess one's body.

"The person called Talrand used holy magic without a doubt." (Elise)

"So it's holy magic after all...?"

It's kind of difficult to explain it with the magic of other attributes.

"It's rare, but there is a method that allows one to convey the words of the dead residing in Heaven through magic." (Elise)

Convey the words of the dead? Does that mean he's like a necromancer of Osorezan? 1

"Never heard of that."

"That's because the church doesn't wish for it to be used." (Elise)

The church thinks badly of calling the dead who have ascended to Heaven, as it's not good for the living to depend on the dead.

The church hates this kind of magic.

"It does seem like a fraud, doesn't it? Like scamming a large reward by saying that they can listen to the words of the deceased, despite being unable to use the magic."

"Yes... or rather, the majority consists of such kinds of people."

Even if it's the church, they probably can't ignore its believers getting deceived by fake mediums. The donations to the church would decrease as well, wouldn't they?

"As a rare exception, that gentleman is the real deal." (Elise)

The real deal for a change... let alone 『The majority consists of such kind of people』; doesn't that mean that it's mostly nothing but imposters?

"Are you saying that it's something that has evolved even further from the magic to hear the words of the dead?" (Armstrong)

"Yes, uncle-sama." (Elise)

"It might be unique to not only be able to convey the words of the dead, but also to take those spirits into his body," Elise added.

"The presence of that gentleman is weak, but Luise-san, you are more of an expert regarding this matter, aren't you?" (Elise)

"Elise, it's completely different to erasing one's presence in martial arts, you know?" (Luise)

"No, the basic principle should be the same." (Elise)

"Luise, has that guy been erasing his presence?" (Wendelin)

"Hmm... it doesn't feel as if he's doing it consciously." (Luise)

"That's true. If he was able to switch it on and off like that, he probably wouldn't get others to forget him in such manner." (Burkhart)

Having that pointed out by Burkhart-san, we nodded all at once.

"It might be the same as me." (Wilma)

"The same as you, Wilma-san?" (Katharina)

Katharina tilted her head wondering how Wilma is resembling Talrand.

"I have constantly been maintaining my superhuman strength due to the Hero Syndrome. Even without me doing anything, my mana is still consumed little by little, causing my stomach to be very empty." (Wilma)

While saying so, Wilma plasters ample amounts of butter on a bread that's bigger than her own face and starts stuffing her cheeks.

"I guess that's how it is." (Haruka)

The one who understood Wilma's simple explanation first was Haruka. She's enjoying the standard breakfast menu of a Mizuho person, namely rice balls, miso soup,

grilled fish and pickled vegetables.

"What do you mean, Haruka-san?" (Erwin)

Eating the same menu as Haruka, Erw asked her about the meaning of her words.

"It's something like Wilma-san casting 『Superhuman Strength』 at any time. The person called Talrand might be doing something similar, always staying in a state of casting magic that erases his presence." (Haruka)

So he continuously has no presence because he can't cancel the magic by himself? That means he has been erasing his presence since his childhood, but it doesn't mean that he can't be seen by the people around him. He simply doesn't stand out. As a result, he doesn't leave any lasting impression of what kind of person he is, despite being present.

"Does that have a relation to the previously mentioned magic? Not having any presence and taking the existence of the dead into his body feels different though."

"No, Erw-san. It has a good affinity with 『Channeling』 that adopts the speech and conduct of the dead." (Elise)

"Does that mean that's it's easy for the dead to descend into his body by themselves since his own presence is weak?" (Wendelin)

"That's the feeling I have." (Elise)

According to Elise, the majority of those, who use the real 『Channeling』, seem to be plain, inconspicuous people.

"(That's magic most unsuitable to Doushi, isn't it?)" (Erwin)

"(Indeed...)" (Wendelin)

It's just as Erw says. For Doushi, who has a big presence, 『Channeling』 is probably impossible. But even before that, I think no spirits will approach him.

"As well as being able to erase his presence automatically with magic, he also so happens to possess the talent for 『Channeling』. That means, not only the speech and conduct, but he can even take the dead into his body."

"I believe it's mostly as you say, Ina-san."

Although it's by coincidence, he's quite the troublesome enemy.

"He's cut out for being a spy or such, isn't he?"

"That's right. Easy assassinations or such..."

..... ..

Listening to the conversation between Burkhart-san and Katharina, all of us sink into silence.

Why did Duke Nürnberg hide Talrand?

Did he hide him for the critical moment since he isn't the type of magician you can announce to society like the idiotic four brothers? It should have a high success rate if he uses him behind the scenes because the powerful people will likely watch out for him in fear of assassination if they learn of Talrand's existence.

"Even the death of the previous emperor, His Majesty Wilhelm the 14th..."

"But, I have heard that he had heart disease."

There's a poison that causes such condition."

"Wend-sama, wouldn't it be better to warn Therese-sama just in case?" (Wilma)

"I guess you're right." (Wendelin)

There was no proof for the opinion of doubting whether the previous emperor hadn't been assassinated, but even so, it would be troublesome if Therese ended up dying at this point in time by any chance.



After breakfast, I went to Therese's place and roughly recounted the conversation we had during breakfast.

"His Majesty the Emperor has been... I'd like to believe that it has not been the case, but... I will reinforce the guards. At any rate..." (Therese)

"Yes? What is it?" (Wendelin)

I'm surprised because Therese showed a bright smile all over her face suddenly, even though she had a meek expression at the beginning.

"Thou might be saying this or that, but Wendelin, thou can't bear worrying about mine well-being, can you? Have a peace of mind. I will stay in good health until I give birth to thy child." (Therese)

"That story and this story are different, but..." (Wendelin)

I must admit that I have no other official reason but me worrying about her.

"If thee like, thou can immediately with me..." (Therese)

"Hey! Supreme Commander!" (Luise)

Therese tried to embrace me, but that was prevented by Luise who suddenly forced her way between the two of us.

"Therese-sama, your guards still have a lot to learn." (Luise)

"Ugh, although I really have strengthened my guards..." (Therese)

Therese revealed a frustrated expression due to Luise having been able to get right in front of her just by herself.

"Therese-sama, do your best and establish a tight security net. Well then, I will go back home with Wend." (Luise)

I watch Therese seeing us off while grinding her teeth after looking at Luise and I leave the tent with our hands connected.

\* \* \*

"I'm terribly sorry. The responsibility for the defeat lies with me."

"No, it's my fault. There's no need to worry about it, Talrand." (Nürnberg)

It was an unexpected defeat.

Although he had the assistance of the Ancient Magic Civilization's magic tools, Talrand overwhelmed Earl Baumeister, Burkhart and Armstrong-doushi. It should have been easily possible to defeat the three of them. And yet, for them to choose the strategy to burn our army's supplies... It looks like I underestimated Earl Baumeister as a man who's only good at magic.

By no means did I expect him to target our food.

Even if we had defeated Earl Baumeister and the others then and there, Therese's military forces would have been in perfect shape. The field encampment located in the Great Sorbid Wastelands was sturdier than I expected. There would have been the danger of our army collapsing due to lacking provisions if we had a hard time attacking that location. As the one leading the troops, making the soldiers starve would be an unspeakable disgrace.

Even if we had tried to procure food locally, there are only a few places where people live in the vicinity of the Great Sorbid Wastelands. We wouldn't have been able to secure the necessary amount of food at all. In that case, I can assume that a gracious retreat was the best option.

"Talrand, I have something to talk about with that man." (Nürnberg)

"As you wish, Sir." (Talrand)

That man is the extremely skilled magician Alfred Reinford who drove Earl Baumeister and his group into a predicament. Even without being detailed on my order, Talrand guessed what I asked for and summoned him with 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』.

"Oh my, oh my, if it isn't Duke Nürnberg-dono who likes to handle his dead roughly." (Alfred)

This man was more excellent than I thought. However, he still doesn't obey me fully. It seems that Talrand is struggling to make him listen to what he's telling him as well.

"The dead won't get tired, right?" (Nürnberg)

"There's a feeling of tiredness, but a spirit body is similar to a cluster of mana. It won't recover unless some time passes." (Alfred)

"Is that why you let Earl Baumeister and his friends get away?" (Duke Nürnberg)

"Isn't it odd for you to say that? Even if it was a failure, I only loyally followed your order to retreat after the food ended up getting reduced to ashes, Duke Nürnberg-dono. Or would it have been better if I stayed behind and finished them off?" (Alfred)

This man intends to defy me to the bitter end, doesn't he? We might have been able to defeat Earl Baumeister's group if Talrand had continued to attack. However, there's no way for that Therese to let the exhausted Talrand get away. I'm sure she would have killed Talrand with all her magicians. Given that Talrand cornered the three magicians of the kingdom in the last battle, there should be many people who consider our side to be superior. In reality, on top of not having taken the field encampment, our army suffered losses beyond expectations. Moreover, a large quantity of our supplies ended up getting burnt. Several magicians, who protected the supplies died as well. I deployed them in order to strengthen the protection of the food as magicians that would become intermediate level sooner or later, but... as a result that backfired into harm to our side.

That means my perception is still insufficient. What if Earl Baumeister's group came aiming for our army's supplies once again?

I have to dispatch advanced-levelled magicians to the defence of the food. That will lower the number of such magicians I can send out to the frontline, won't it?

"All things considered, Wend isn't half bad, I guess. To come up with the idea of burning the supplies in that situation." (Alfred)

"Are you happy about your pupil's growth?" (Nürnberg)

"Yes, after all, I'm his teacher." (Alfred)

Bah, for this damned man to reply cheerfully from the bottom of his heart without any shred of hesitation. It's not hard to imagine how much Talrand is struggling just to make this guy fight normally.

He's capable, but difficult to handle.

"Next time you will be able to win, right?" (Nürnberg)

"Who knows?" (Alfred)

"What do you mean with 'Who knows'?" (Nürnberg)

There are also some of the previous magic tools left, so he should be able to kill those three as long as he's not careless, as a prerequisite.



"Since this was an order, it couldn't be helped, but it was a huge blunder that we weren't capable of defeating those three at that point." (Alfred)

"Meaning?" (Nürnberg)

"They survived a hard fight that brought them close to death. That experience will likely have a big influence on the next battle. Since I'm a dead man, I can't grow any further." (Alfred)

"Hmm, can magicians get stronger so quickly?" (Nürnberg)

"No, not at all. I'm just not taking them lightly. To begin with, the amount of my mana doesn't measure up with Wend's and Klimt's. Now that they gained experience in that battle against me, the next battle has become uncertain." (Alfred)

"I see." (Nürnberg)

I guess this guy doesn't plan on yielding to me no matter what. However, it's unlikely that he will be able to go against Talrand.

If there are no uncalled-for outsiders, Talrand should overwhelm Earl Baumeister's group next time for sure.

Once Earl Baumeister and his friends die, the biggest hindrance when I attack the kingdom will be gone.

"You are free to think whatever you like, but Talrand will definitely defeat Earl Baumeister and his group." (Nürnberg)

Indeed, a puppet is at most good at flapping its mouth impudently.

"My goodness, what a lovely relation between master and servant. Though it has nothing to do with me." (Alfred)

This bastard, he's really pissing me off.

I was an idiot for considering even for a moment to have him become my retainer if he stays alive. Your master, best friend and favourite pupil; I will make sure to have them killed next time by all means, for the sake of realising my ambitions.

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In the end, the first decisive battle between Therese and Duke Nürnberg finished without a clear conclusion.

"Tsk! There were only a few losses among the proteges of Duke Nürnberg. You can't call it a victory like this."

Many of the troops in charge of inflicting damage, who were left behind when the elites led by Duke Nürnberg withdrew, were killed or became prisoners due to Therese's order for pursuit. If you go by the loss ratio, it's probably our side's victory, but it's hard to say that we delivered fatal

damage to Duke Nürnberg's trusted military forces.  
Even Philip, who is leading the kingdom's forces, was grim-faced.

"There were many who surrendered. Thus it looks like their management has become troublesome, correct?"

"Therese-sama was at her wits' end with their management."

"Certainly there's no way that she can simply execute all of them. Humans will die if they don't get anything to eat. Securing the food necessary to feed them is what troubles Therese-sama."

Because they were used as disposable pawns, they ended up surrendering easily once Duke Nürnberg pulled back his army. There are also many nobles among them who are angry at Duke Nürnberg, but it's hard to treat them as allies just because of that. Given that their territories and families have been taken hostage, it's possible that they will betray us once again as soon as it turns into a battle.

"So even the prisoners are a trap...?"

"To make such far-sighted judgement in that instant, huh? It seems Duke Nürnberg is an excellent soldier."

"Though, honestly you can't admire him as a human," Philip added in a self-deprecating manner.

"I wonder what we are going to do from now on? Will it turn into a standoff once again?"

"No, we have no other choice but to advance ahead."

"Isn't that dangerous?"

"It might be dangerous, but if we let Duke Nürnberg act as he pleases, the empire will only become barren. In order to defeat him and assert the legitimacy of her political power, Therese-sama has to set out."

"I see. Then why did you make such big blunder in the dispute the other day despite having an understanding of political decisions?"

"Don't talk about that. There's a difference between stating one's opinion from the sideline and making the right decision as a concerned party."

Having that pointed out by me, Philip's expression becomes even more bitter.



"We will take Alhans." (Therese)

"Isn't that an important military position?" (Wendelin)

"That's why we are going to take it." (Therese)

Both sides keeping staring at each other will just ruin the empire. She especially seems to have the impression that it's dangerous to leave the imperial capital in Duke Nürnberg's palms any longer. Since I had roughly checked the map of the empire, I knew the location of Alhans.

It's located around the halfway point between the Great Sorbid Wastelands and the capital. It's a major military base of the imperial army.

It's a huge citadel and military base with an adjoining city boasting a population of over 30,000 residents.

Although it's not official, it's a major city treated as the secondary capital by the empire's people. If we take this place, it might become possible to take a peek at the imperial capital.

"Won't that be harsh on our military power?"

"It's also a move to bolster that military power."

There haven't been that many losses on our side in the battles so far. Rather, the losses on the rebel army's side are bigger. However, if we talk about the distribution of military power, Duke Nürnberg's side is still ahead of us. It's doubtful whether we would be able to win against him at the moment.

"If it's the current forces of arms, they've increased."

Therese explained that she addressed my concern by adding the aforementioned prisoners of war.

"Are you tempting the nobles north of Alhans to turn their back on Duke Nürnberg?"

"They feel animosity towards the way Duke Nürnberg does things. If their territories enter the liberation army's sphere of influence, the necessity of worrying about a possible betrayal will vanish, too. Fresh reinforcements from the rear will arrive as well. That should also lower our numerical disadvantage." (Therese)

"That might be the case, but..." (Wendelin)

"Duke Nürnberg lost a great number of provisions and supplies. It's highly unlikely for him to go on the offensive with his whole army for a while." (Therese)

Apparently, it's because I burned down the rebel army's large-scaled supply point in the previous battle.

"Once again gathering the supplies allowing him to move an army with more than 100,000 soldiers will take time. He should withdraw to the neighbourhood of the capital after taking his supply routes being cut off into consideration." (Therese)

"Won't it be fine if they resupply with magic bags?" (Wendelin)

"Aren't thou the one who burned those magic bags along the magicians carrying them, Wendelin?" (Therese)

Since the amount of goods consumed by an army is large, magic bags and normal wagons are used at the same time.

Not depending on just one of those methods is a simple security measure.

The supplies that had been transported with conventional means and the general-purpose magic bags had been placed at that storage location.

A majority of those went up in flames due to my magic.

"Even Duke Nürnberg is likely struck by terror due to thy quick-wittedness and magic that burned down the supply point and the supply unit which were both located quite far in the back, Wendelin." (Therese)

"Are you sure?" (Wendelin)

He might have considered it as unexpected, but it's not really as though I'm excelling as a soldier. I think he probably won't be that cautious of me.

"Either way, I'd like thou to depart alongside the advance guard." (Therese)

"Understood." (Wendelin)



Receiving Therese's order, we start heading south with a military force of around 60,000. However, our kingdom's forces of 1,500 will take independent actions, being treated as flying squadron.

"Captain Erwin-dono, right now it's fine for you not to be so tense."

A middle-aged veteran commander called out to Erw with a banter.

Erw, whom I had left in Philip's care, commanded around 500 soldiers from the kingdom's army that he had been entrusted with as company commander. Erw with his mere 16 years in age has become frozen stiff on his horse because of nervousness due to this heavy responsibility.

"E-Erw-san, relax." (Haruka)

"Haruka-san, please relax as well. You are also too stiff."

The middle-aged royal army soldier, who's acting as vice-captain, pointed out Haruka's own tension as she was trying to ease Erw's nervousness.

Haruka is accompanying Erw not only as his fiancée but also in her job as Erw's assistant.

"I'm not nervous or anything like that." (Haruka)

"I have also experienced the same in my early days. For now, let's calm down by taking a deep breath. After all, there won't be any battle for a while."

Feeling doubts towards the prediction of the vice-captain who helps Erw, I try asking Philip, who is

confidently riding his horse next to mine, his opinion.

"He's saying something like that, but... will it be alright?" (Wendelin)

"Duke Nürnberg forced the troops of the nobles, who aren't his own proteges, to take such unreasonable actions. Those nobles, whose territories are around here, are likely raging within their hearts at Duke Nürnberg. Thus I don't expect them to be hostile towards us but rather to cooperate with our side due to their hatred of Duke Nürnberg." (Philip)

"That's why there probably won't be that many battles until our objective, Alhans," Philip and the middle-aged vice-captain predicted.

"The majority of the 60,000 troops currently spearheaded by us are nobles who possess territory north of Alhans. They will surely announce their participation in the liberation army after returning to their territories." (Philip)

Even though many of their allies were killed by the liberation army in the previous battle, they will only be treated as disposables again if they join up with the rebel army once more at this point in time.

Until now they had no other choice but to obey Duke Nürnberg out of fear.

I can understand the grief of those nobles.

"We will leave the negotiations with the nobles around here and matters regarding the military government after the occupation to Alfons-dono, and simply advance onwards, right? It's not like we will move to the very front anyway." (Philip)

"Are we going to deal with guerilla warfare trying to sever our supply lines?" (Wendelin)

"Of course we will do that, but there's a limit to what we can do with 1,500 soldiers. Besides, this unit is treated as an assembly of mercenaries and outsiders, right? Christoph." (Philip)

"Yes, nii-san." (Christoph)

"Show that map to Earl Baumeister." (Philip)

"Here you go." (Christoph)

Christoph hands a map over to me.

The roads in this area had been drawn in quite a detailed manner on it.

"We have secured several supply routes usable by wagons, but it's very likely that these will be cut off. However, since we are doing on the assumption that they will be cut off, we will immediately know the enemy's position once it happens. Even if they attack or run away, it's useful for the securing of supply routes. That's why we entrusted a large number of goods that don't need to be replenished to you in advance, Earl Baumeister." (Philip)

"Making use of our past experience, escape routes have been prepared at five locations. They are perfect as they are mountain routes that aren't used overly much by people."

"I guess we can feel relieved in that case."

I agree with Philip's and Christoph's explanations.  
It's because I completely consented to their policy of quickly running away if things go west.

"Though it would have been great if you could have used that ability of yours in that dispute, don't you agree?" (Wendelin)

"We told you, don't talk about that!"

I ended up getting retorted by both brothers at the same time.



Our advance continues after that.  
However, each time we pass through the several noble territories and cities along the way, we make a stopover.  
That's because we are asked to sell them some food since they don't have much.

"There's no food?"

"Yes. It was completely bought up by the emperor's forces after and before the rumoured battle that took place a few days ago..."

Though we are in a civil war, even Duke Nürnberg is probably avoiding openly pillaging in imperial territory. But, it appears that he bought the food forcibly at a price that's much cheaper than the market price.

"If you have some food, even if it's just a little bit, please sell it to us, so that we can barely last until the harvest..."

"Isn't that a questionable scorched-earth strategy...?"

Christoph turned my way with an expression as if asking me 『What are we going to do?』.  
I can't consider it as anything but sabotage against the advancing liberation army.  
Duke Nürnberg is probably aiming for the liberation army to provoke the residents' opposition by making it forcefully procuring its food locally.

"Sorry, but we don't have any food to spare either."

We advance forward while continuing to refuse their pleas.  
There are many territories that joined the liberation army after the feudal lord's army returned, but there were also places where the feudal lord has died in battle or is still missing, and nobles who came attacking us while still allied with Duke Nürnberg this late in the game.  
They tried to launch surprise attacks against us by capitalising on their locational advantage.

"We cannot afford to have too many losses, okay?"

A few dozen soldiers have launched an ambush from the mountain road's side, but they were swiftly dealt with as I had sensed them long ago.

"A knight peerage, huh? Erwin, you are in charge of the left-wing after we have surrounded them."  
(Philip)

"Roger." (Erwin)

Even their carefully planned-out surprise attack comes to nothing due to me discovering them in advance. They end up getting surrounded by us easily.  
Receiving help from his vice-captain and Haruka, Erw moved his unit as ordered by Philip.

"Are we going to wrap it up in one go?" (Philip)

"No, there's the proverb 『A cornered rat will bite the cat』, right?" (Wendelin)

"Are they really going to surrender without even fighting once?" (Philip)

"I will make them." (Wendelin)

Philip was sceptical, but I go out in front and cast a very weak 『Area Stun』 against the enemy army lying in wait. Since the power is at a level of a low-frequency medical device, they yell in surprise and easily give away their positions.

"In case you don't surrender, I will have all of you die without even the time for you to swing your swords at us..." (Wendelin)

"We surrender!"

Once the ambush ended in failure, the commanding noble immediately threw away his weapon and surrendered.

A low-ranking elderly noble, seemingly a Knight, and soldiers wearing shabby equipment. It seems he formed his feudal army by recruiting peasants.

"If I don't at least pretend to fight..."

The elderly noble was grandly toyed with in this civil war as a poor Knight.

Apparently, he announced his participation in the rebel army in the beginning and was ordered to guard the road without departing to the frontline since his rank is too low.

Thanks to that, he suffered no losses since he didn't attack the liberation army's field encampment.

"You will likely think badly of someone like me, who surrendered, asking something like this, but what's going on with the civil war?"

"Umm..."

It's probably the sorrow of a small feudal lord living at the boundary between both powers.

It's because there's the possibility of not only him, but even the fief's population getting annihilated if he makes a mistake in joining the wrong side.

"Since we are still continuing our advance south, this place should also soon enter the liberation army's sphere of influence."

"..." He sighs and asks "Alhans, is it?"

"I can't tell you because we are in the midst of a military operation."

He's an old man with a strangely good perception.  
I tried to dodge the issue, but I guess anyone with a bit of military knowledge will realise that Alhans is our current target.

"For that reason, please stay in your territory without scheming anything unnecessary."

"Umm... Can't you take us along?"

"Huh?"

Advancing while adding the military forces that just surrendered is a pattern that often comes up in military history records, but I don't know whether we can trust them.  
If we were betrayed after advancing even further south, we will end up getting attacked from behind.  
Since I can't come to a decision, I shift my look towards Philip, seeking his advice.

"We won't get anywhere if you don't make the decisions as supreme commander." (Philip)

"The number of our troops is going to grow, and they will also serve as guides. Once we take Alhans, the area around here will turn into a safety zone, so it's probably alright, I think?"

"That's what I believe, too." (Philip)

"Guiding you it is, right? Please leave it to us. Let me introduce myself properly. I'm Bernal Günther von Popek. I serve as the family head of a humble, poor Knight household. By the way, about those accompanying me..."



A few hours after that we continued our march to the south again.  
The elderly Knight called Popek followed us in his role as a guide. After briefly taking his initial troops back to his territory, he brought a new group of soldiers that only consisted of old people with him for some reason.

"Our surplus food was beaten down to a low price by Duke Nürnberg, so the young folks have to toil away on the fields." (Popek)

The majority of the thirty-soldiers-strong army was made up by elderly.

"Earl Baumeister-dono, I'd like to make the lords in my neighbourhood join up with us." (Popek)

"Philip-dono?"

"As long as those gathered cause no problems." (Philip)

Due to Philip's approval, the neighbouring lords join us one after the other while taking their troops along.

"He's a governor of an area under the direct control of the empire. Since he's the governor of a small area split into small pieces, it's almost like hereditary nobility, but..." (Popek)

His appearance is that of a normal old man, but Popek seems to be surprisingly well-connected. In a week after his participation, many nobles and the governors of the areas under the empire's direct control joined us while leading their troops, and our military force increased by almost three times of its original number to around 4,000 soldiers. However, the majority of the soldiers were elderly. I don't think it's an issue since those who can't move aren't participating, but Christoph's prediction was in the process of coming true.

『Since their food is barely enough, the elderly have apparently taken the initiative and are serving as soldiers.』 (Christoph)

Certainly, I can't say that it doesn't feel as if it's his diplomatic way of saying that they are reducing the number of mouths to feed.

But, as all of them participated several times in disputes during their early days, they walk in orderly ranks, allowing one to grasp their experience from their bearing. And, it doesn't look as if they are just weak either.

"As planned the supplies are arriving from the rear, so there probably won't be any problems since they are functioning as a military force." (Philip)

The increase of our military forces stands out and accordingly lures other nobles to participate as well.

However, once those nobles see that our side has a lot of elderly, they only bring along old soldiers as well.

"There's no choice but to pray that there won't be any battle, is there?"

"I don't know about that. However, they are much more useful than new recruits."

The old soldiers were very familiar with things such as setting up sleeping tents and preparing food on a march.



At the time when we arrived at the eastern side of Alhans after continuously advancing south for around two weeks, Popek, who has become the leader of the old soldiers, starts saying something outrageous.

"Let's take Sakart." (Popek)

"Sakart? Where's that?" (Wendelin)

Once we spread the map in a hurry and search, we discover a city with that name in the south around 10 kilometres from here.

"What's the point in taking such a city?" (Erwin)

Erw's question was reasonable.

Rather, stopping to march south any further and taking part in the attack against Alhans would be probably much easier.

Since our side has nothing but old people, we will likely be placed on standby in the back.

"There's an abandoned fortress next to this city, you know?" (Popek)

"Abandoned?"

"Look, it's the recent trend nowadays. In order to save on the budget, they consolidate military installations..." (Popek)

The fortress adjoining to the city of Sakart is very old. At the time when the empire was still a small country, it apparently served as an important defence base against the enemies in the central-northern area.

Afterward, the empire advanced north and the value of the fortress decreased drastically.

Then talks about a complete demolition came up. The consolidation was carried out after negotiating for several hundred years with the imperial army's top brass who held onto its vested rights. That seems to be something that took place 30 years ago.

"Did the imperial army resist the cost reduction for such a long time...?" (Wendelin)

"That's because all of them hate a decrease in the number of posts that might be appointed to them." (Popek)

This old man is remarkably well-informed about the circumstances of the imperial army, isn't he? The consolidation of army facilities was something often mentioned in the kingdom as well, but feeling an impending sense of danger due to the gradually declining military, he participated in Duke Nürnberg's rebellion. But once he did so, he personally came to the conclusion that it was a petty-minded suspicion.

"But then it got completely demolished, right?"

"It's being lent to merchants as there's no budget or something like that." (Popek)

Since it has excellent storehouses made out of stone with sturdy security, these have been rented out to the city's merchants.

It seems they are managing it and have guards periodically patrol the area so that homeless and criminals don't loiter around there.

"I'm aware of it because I'm occasionally shopping in the city of Sakart." (Popek)

"One question!" (Luise)

"What is it, Luise-dono?" (Popek)

"The city of Sakart didn't flourish like Alhans?" (Luise)

"Since it should have a population of 50,000, it's mostly a commercial city. I hear their prosperity was snatched away by Alhans for various reasons."

"Wend, what will we do?"

"Ina, what do you think?" (Wendelin)

While looking at the map, I was troubled about what we should do next.

Since it seems that Therese will leave the attack against Alhans to the main force according to her own words, it doesn't look as if it would be much of a problem even if we observed from the rear while ignoring the fortress.

There are close to 50 nobles following me, so this should be more than enough of an achievement.

"How about scouting it out and going to Alhans if it's no good?" (Ina)

"Well, I guess that's the safest approach..." (Wendelin)



Deciding to try doing that as a test, we advance towards the city of Sakart while sending a scout unit, consisting of old soldiers provided by Popek's group and soldiers of the kingdom's forces, ahead.

The scout unit returns on the second day and informs us of the situation on-site, but the rebel army apparently had left a garrisoned force of around 100 soldiers and completely retreated to the rear.

"It looks like there has been yet another purchase of food, doesn't it?"

"Probably, but if it's Sakart's merchants, they are likely skilled at hiding things. It's impossible to force them."

"They might have been extorted by the rebel army."

"Isn't that impossible?" (Erwin)

Erw seems to agree with Popek's opinion.

"Why do you think so?"

"In order to raise their food supplies reliably, the rebel army likely aimed for the small-scaled

territories of Popek's group, but there are 50,000 residents in Sakart. Wouldn't they run into resistance if they tried to forcefully buy food with only 1,000 or 2,000 soldiers?"

"Half of the 50,000 people are male. Even if you exclude the children and elderly, there are still 10,000 remaining, right? They are consuming a large amount of food anyway, and there would be people standing in their way. I guess they left them alone after stationing only a small number of guards."

Philip reinforced the view of these two, and the opinion within the unit was in favor of an attack against Sakart.

"I pray that Sakart's residents won't become our enemies."

"Earl Baumeister-dono, in times of such civil war, the common people will simply and calmly join the winning side." (Popek)

If the rebel army remains, they will follow them, and if we drive them away, they will attach themselves to the liberation army.

"That's all there is to it," Popek asserts.

"It's wrong to call that cowardice. After all, they have their own lives to live."

I don't particularly harbor any unpleasant feelings towards that.

It's 『We will be loyal if you win』. That's probably because they won't do something as troublesome as recklessly challenging soldiers.

"In other words, you are saying that we just have to win?"

"If we hold out while repairing Sakart's fortress, we will be able to apply pressure against the imperial capital in line with Alhans."

"Popek-san, you are..."

Considering that he tried to make a stupid surprise attack, he has now quickly turned into a capable staff officer after surrendering.

He seems to be well-informed about military matters, and he's a character that really triggers a feeling of being out of place considering he's a rural Knight.

"I'm merely a poor Knight. Though I did serve in the imperial army in the past."

Since he's a second son, he served in the imperial army, but because his elder brother died early, he returned to his territory, he said.

"Given that my elder brother had a daughter, it means that I will have her marry my son and let them succeed the territory. Even though things may appear this way, I joined the elite course in the past."

After briefly talking about himself, Popek puts both his hands on my shoulders.

"In the beginning, I wasn't able to avoid joining the rebel army, but you came at a good time, Earl Baumeister-dono."

"Eh?"

"With all the other nobles and soldiers being old geezers, there are heirs even if we die after failing. Therefore, let's do our best in taking Sakart, okay? It will be a nice present for Her Excellency Duchess Philip, won't it?" (Popek)

Originally he was an elite of the imperial army, but Popek, the man who became a poor Knight due to his elder brother dying from a disease, apparently intends to earn some achievements, and become successful and well-known with a final battle.

All the nobles behind him seem to share his feelings.

It's probably because all of them are old people who think that they won't have any regrets even if they die here.

"What we'd like to ask of you, Earl Baumeister-dono, is to depend on you for an impartial report of our achievements." (Popek)

"..." I sigh.

I barely managed to give them a reply due to their pressure.



We finally arrived in close proximity of Sakart, but there was no change in the number of stationed enemy soldiers in the city.

With the city's public order being under control of the guards to begin with, they seem to be in a situation where they don't have anything in particular to do.

I think it would have been better for them if they had secluded themselves in the fortress with its very high defence power, but with that being refused by the merchants as there would be the possibility of them embezzling the goods and food inside the storehouses, they had no other option but to freeload in the city.

"Though I believed this to be an important military location..." (Elise)

Elise had a stunned expression due to the rebel army's stationed soldiers.

"They are probably thinking that they can get it back immediately even if it were to fall into our hands."

"Is that really the case?" (Elise)

Looking at the river flowing next to the southern side of the city and fortress, Elise seems to believe that a recapture won't be that simple.

"After all, it won't hurt the rebel army, even if one or two cities are taken by the liberation army."

What matters the most for Duke Nürnberg is his protege army of 110,000 soldiers. As long as he has those, he will entice the liberation army to proceed south while aiming for a liberation of the imperial capital. That means he considers it to be no problem at all as long as he can defend the area around the capital and the south to the last, since it's likely possible for him to crush the liberation army in the vicinity of the capital.

"He can receive supplies from the south and the circumference of the imperial capital. In contrast, the liberation army will lose time by putting the supply lines in order for a while since he has taken all the surplus food, right?"

He's probably planning to increase the military power of his usable proteges by conducting training during that time.

"Even though you are young, you are doing a good job in seeing through Duke Nürnberg's tactics, aren't you?"

Philip seemed to have the same train of thoughts as me and praised me for my adequately conjectured tactical outlook for a change.

"He will try to cut apart the liberation army after its long march in one go while raiding the northern area of the imperial capital. Going by the battle array of the liberation army, he will lose unless he challenges the liberation army with almost all of his forces. So he's probably thinking that the rest of the army will fall down like domino pieces if the rebel army can kill Duchess Philip-dono and the main staff of the army."

Certainly, a liberation army that lost its leader and the top brass will easily be subjugated by the rebel army.

"He doesn't spare any thoughts about the empire's domain after the victory, does he?"

"That's because Duke Nürnberg tends to lean towards the thinking of a soldier no matter what... While resolving the central and southern area's discontent by giving them a favorable treatment through exploitation from the north, he will plot the unification of the empire, and after restoring the economy to some extent, he will try to head south or something along those lines. I think that's his general idea." (Christoph)

Everyone, including myself, nods while agreeing with Christoph's prediction.

"Rather than matters in the distant future, I think we should first make the military base in front of us our own."

Having said that, the plan has already been set in stone.



"Rebel army soldiers! Hand over Sakart and the fortress at once!"

Popek-san took a selection of the best old soldiers with him and started to provoke the stationed enemy soldiers at the entrance of the city.

"What's up? Geezer, what's your business with us?"

Once they show up, they provoke the rebels with soldiers that surpassed an age of 70. There's no difference in their numbers, but the enemy soldiers started to pursue them after leaving the city while fuming in anger and shouting 『As if we'd lose to such old geezers!』.

"Don't run away, you old farts!"

"Aren't you acting overly proudly despite being abandoned dropouts? Even the city treats you as parasites!"

"Old man! I will definitely kill you!"

Apparently being pricked where it hurts, the stationed soldiers lost control of themselves and chased Popek-san and the others.

The game of tag continued for a while, but at the moment they entered a rocky area, they noticed that they have been surrounded.

"Nice to meet you\*. Guests, I will make sure to entertain you courteously." (T/N: Gokigen'yo ... greeting of rich/noble girls)

Katharina, who showed up in front of them, cleanly cut apart a huge rock with her 『Wind Cutter』. Due to the excessive power of the spell, the stationed soldiers froze while keeping their mouths wide open.

"I won't stop you if you tell me that you wish to fight, but all of you will have to bid an eternal farewell to your heads and bodies at that time." (Katharina)

Daunted by Katharina's threat, the stationed soldiers tossed away their weapons and surrendered.

"Although it should have been quite an important military base..."

Haruka, who directed their disarmament, felt as if she couldn't believe it, but even so, we succeeded in safely capturing the fortress and the city of Sakart.



"A declaration as a neutral city?"

"Correct. Since we will barricade ourselves inside the fortress during wartime, we won't be able to worry about your side. We will leave the public order to the guards and the administration to you, governor-dono."

"..." He sighs.

In the governmental office of Sakart, which we occupied without a single loss, I informed the governor that we won't set up a military government.

That's because I would rather reinforce the fortress with construction works if I had such spare manpower.

There's a river flowing south of Sakart, and the fortress' state wasn't as bad as we thought either. Even so, it was necessary to increase its defence capability by working on the repairs and reconstruction as fast as possible.

Furthermore, the name of this city's governor is Penz. He seemed to have an elusive character.

"The rest concerns the merchants."

"You mean the goods and food in the warehouses?"

"Yes, if possible, I'd like you to sell them. At market price."

"At market price?"

The merchants were reluctant.

That's likely because they are thinking that they will be able to sell above the market price if they wait, given that it's a time of war now.

"Though I don't believe that there will be that much of a rise in prices once the supply route between this city and the liberation army has been established."

Since the nobles, who have territories in the rear, are our allies as well, the deficiency of food should disappear.

Besides, even if they temporarily obtain a profit by selling the food to us at a high price, there's no point in that if Therese keeps an eye on them later on.

Given that it's not like we are buying it at a low price like Duke Nürnberg, I strongly hope that they will sell at market price.

"However, we won't pressure you into it."

"..."

I got the merchants to sell the surplus food at market price with expressions that showed their unwillingness.

"And, I think you already comprehend, but..."

After threatening them that they will get death penalties if they provide information to the rebel army or shelter spies, our military forces that had swollen up to 4,000 people enter the fortress. The scale of the fortress is large, so the entire army was able to get inside without any issues.

"It would be best if we destroy only the unnecessary parts so that they can be used for the expansion of the city."

"It looks like they were told to stop such recycling and remodelling works because the fortress

might be used in a case of an emergency, according to the emperor's wish."

Popek-san, who became the leader of the elderly before I noticed, gave me the details on the circumstances behind the scenes.

"Let's get quickly started on the work?"

"The average age of the soldiers is high, isn't it? They work well, but..."

Erw expresses in a whisper, but as a matter of fact, the old soldiers were really very useful. Although it's at the level of disputes, all of them possess campaign experience. Since they have been living in rural areas, they are capable of doing various tasks.

At once they voluntarily started to reinforce the walls and fences, which were in the process of breaking down after being neglected for many years, with mortar or managed the prisoners.

"They look to be more useful than me and you, Erw." (Wendelin)

"I guess we will leave the interior to them." (Erwin)

Philip let the kingdom's forces patrol the area and requested the remaining old soldiers to repair the fortress.

Katharina and I set out to a nearby rocky mountain to secure usable building stones.

"Now I got the reason why the city of Sakart wasn't able to expand." (Katharina)

Even if the southern river was a plus, the vicinity was dotted with small monster domains, wetland belts and rocky mountains making it probably difficult to expand the city any further.

Of course, it would likely be possible to develop the area if they felt like it, but it seems that it's something that was neglected after prioritising Alhans.

"It looks like it's an area that can be reclaimed in a short time if it's you, Wendelin-san." (Katharina)

"Guess that's because there's no sediment here. On top of not being able to use movement magic while we are on the way to get the stones now, this place is a different country, you know? I will pass on that since it would be a hassle." (Wendelin)

After collecting the building stones, we strengthen and expand the fortress.

Since the majority of the workers are old men, I pile up the building stones with my magic. Given that the other tasks were carried out by the old soldiers who are used to that kind of work, the work progressed faster than expected.

"Their old man power is awesome!"

Just like in the Japan of my previous life, it looks like there are many lively elderly in this world as well.

"Anyway, we don't know when the rebel army will attempt to recapture this place. Let's work while continuing to stay vigilant."

Since the leaders reached an agreement, we eagerly advance the work in order to finish the fortress' reinforcement quickly.  
However, given that there are many old people, we do it while having proper breaks at fixed intervals.



"Hey, the rebel army isn't coming."

One week after we put Sakart's fortress and our battle formation in order, we couldn't see the rebel army on the other side of the river for some reason.  
Despite continuing a lookout for 24 hours every day, it's been a huge disappointment.

"Wend, is this really an important base?"

"Going by the map, it is, but..."

The path to the capital is interrupted by the river, but if you consider the direct distance, it's not that different to the one to Alhans. I explain to Luise while showing the map.

"Rather than that, the city's governor has come yet again."

"Again...?"

In the direction where Ina was looking, I could see Governor Penz.  
I have declared that the military government won't take a position in the city of Sakart, but since the trade with the south came to an end, he came to complain after a few days. For that reason, I have entrusted the construction work of the fortress to Philip, Christoph and Popek-san, and got stuck with maintaining the road towards the north.



"Earl Baumeister-sama, if we don't start trading with the north, we will starve to death." (Penz)

"Understood. I will handle it." (Wendelin)

A road already exists, but there's actually a huge wetlands belt north of Sakart.  
Since it was a road that bent and twisted to avoid the wetlands, trade with the north was as troublesome as was the detour.

"Seeing that the trade with the south has stopped, we have to trade a lot more with the north. If we don't hasten the trade with Popek-sama's alliance of feudal lords, who are in the fortress, we will..." (Penz)

"I suppose it can't be helped if there's such a reason." (Wendelin)

I construct a road that extends directly north from the city of Sakart.

"Why is there a wetlands belt in such a place?" (Wendelin)

"It looks like the water of the river is flowing into that region." (Katharina)

I have started the construction with Katharina, but there's no way for us to make something like a road if we don't handle the wetlands belt one way or the other.

It was necessary to start from making sure that the water of the river won't flow into the wetlands belt by constructing levee protection and river flood controls first.

We create an embankment and harden the soil at the river, then reinforce it with the stones we gathered.

Next, I fire successive shots of 『Fireball』 into the wetlands belt, forcing the ground to dry quickly. If a pro-environment group on Earth saw this spectacle, it would likely turn into a huge issue with them screaming 『It's a destruction of the wetlands' ecosystem!』.

"That's not really an elegant method." (Katharina)

"Are you going to do it with a method that will take a heap of time and labor then, Katharina?" (Wendelin)

"Well then, let's continue with the construction?" (Katharina)

Katharina starts to forcibly dry out the wetlands with a chain firing of 『Fire Balls』, too.

We only dry the sections, where we will build the road, very carefully, spread out stones there after stripping off the surface soil and complete it with this.

The ground might sink in after a while, but the group from Sakart has to somehow handle that later on. We don't have any responsibility to go that far for them.

"Ohhh, it's a far more magnificent road than I expected!" (Penz)

Penz praised us, but what bothers me much more than his praises are the workers digging ditches at both sides of the street.

"We are just raising the road's level of completion while we are at it." (Penz)

"While you are at it, eh...?" (Wendelin)

Penz apparently hired the workers personally and has them do construction works.

"Who are they?" (Wendelin)

There are also farmers who are tilling the wetlands that dried to some extent and sowing seeds of assorted grains.

"Given that the reason for this wetlands belt isn't underground water, we can easily advance the development of a residential district thanks to the river construction work you did, Earl Baumeister-sama. It's a welcome occasion. However, as I believe that it will take time for the ground to dry out completely, I have told them to cultivate grains after considering the viewpoint of securing food.

The moisture will also be absorbed by the crops." (Penz)

"I see." (Wendelin)

This governor seems to be unexpectedly knowledgeable about agriculture.

"We won't trouble you with this, Earl Baumeister-sama. After all, it's something we are doing for our own convenience." (Penz)

"..." I sigh.

Situations like this took place. In around one week, we completed a stone-paved road continuing towards the north.



"... So, what's your business today?"

"Actually..."

This time he apparently wants to request an adjustment of the road to the west which is pointlessly detouring because of a wetlands belt.

"Earl Baumeister-sama, it would strengthen the connection to Alhans which lies in the west, and also serve as line applying pressure on the capital, right?" (Penz)

"I can't answer you since it would touch on military secrets", is what I try to tell him, but even a child would understand our strategic objective if it had a bit of knowledge. There's no way for Penz to not have noticed it.

"Yes, I certainly understand. Earl Baumeister-sama, you are the commander, who has been entrusted with the military forces in this area, after all. I'm quite aware that you are keen on concealing military information." (Penz)

Calling me the commander of this area is probably an exaggeration. The main force is the large army for capturing Alhans, and we are treated as something like a flying squadron. Even us coming to the city of Sakart was only due to Popek-san's suggestion.

"In short, you are asking me to also build a road leading straight towards the west?"

"In truth, the city's residents are hoping earnestly for the development of the western side... The trade with the south was likely severed. Since a nice road was completed in the north thanks to you, Earl Baumeister-sama, the trade will probably improve as well, but..." (Penz)

"Yeah, yeah, west it is then."

"If trading with Alhans is accelerated, it will also raise the strategic value of this city, right?"

"..."

"Wendelin-san, we are discreetly taken advantage of, aren't we?" (Katharina)

"Katharina, don't voice it out." (Wendelin)



Once again I take along Katharina and we head to the west of the city.

"Now I understand the reason why he pushed the work on us." (Katharina)

On top of the city's west being a hilly area, rocky hills protrude out of the ground all over, like spikes, and there didn't exist even one square meter of flat terrain.

"I suppose it will be easier than the wetlands..." (Wendelin)

Katharina and I expand the road to the west while levelling the ground. We used the soil, which was left over after whittling down the hills, for the western embankment of the river and strengthened it with stones we procured from the protruding rocks. Also, as there's demand for building stones in the city, merchants bought some of them.

"The second construction stage of the fortress?"

"Why?"

"Because the number of people grew."

Right after we completed the northern road, the northern lords, who didn't send their troops to the liberation army, apparently dispatched their soldiers to us. In addition, it seems like volunteer soldiers from the city of Sakart joined us as well.

"Volunteer soldiers? Isn't that unwise?" (Wendelin)

I thought that it would be a bad idea if the city of Sakart announces its neutrality during a battle and then sends soldiers over to our side.

"That's why they are called volunteer soldiers. Since they have applied by themselves, it's unrelated to the city. That's the stance they will adopt."

Because of those circumstances, Christoph accepted them and reported to me after the fact.

"Given that their handling will be troublesome, they will participate in the defensive battle if the rebel army comes to attack this place. However, after we move on, they will be reorganised as a defensive force protecting this place. It's the same for the elderly, too."

The old soldiers are certainly more useful than expected, but we can't use them in the decisive battle against Duke Nürnberg's elites. Even they shouldn't do anything reckless since they have obtained plenty of achievements on this occasion.

"If Therese dispatches a military official, they will entrust the defence of this place to that person and let them give the commands."

"Before that, you have been splendidly used by the governor of this city, Earl Baumeister, but please let me use you for this place just as much. It's for the sake of our safety." (Popek)

"Damn! I'm perfectly aware of that myself!" (Wendelin)



Such being the case, Katharina and I established a magnificent stone-paved road in the west of the city within a week.

As expected we haven't completely constructed it up to Alhans, but we should have decreased the unnecessary detours and shortened the distance greatly.

In addition, there's a large plain spreading in the west of the city. The river bank stretches out to the west as well. Penz ordered carpenters to build a residential district at a place adjoining to the city that had its ground evened.

"The creation of a residential district?"

"Most recently the shortage of houses has become a problem in this city. We were troubled as there was no place either, so your help was very appreciated." (Penz)

Penz delightfully told us that it's thanks to Katharina's and mine construction work.

The carpenters immediately started on their work.

By the way, the stones we sold after quarrying them became the main materials for the houses.

"As a token of appreciation, I have sent volunteers to the fortress since I have been told about the fortress' expansion work by Philip-sama and Christoph-sama." (Penz)

I have been freely used by Penz without even being told about that by Christoph, but thanks to that I could get them to sell me food at a fair price. The daily wages of the labourers are also covered by the city.

I'm not involved in the governing and labor either, so I probably should continue the construction work through magic for the sake of both sides.

"Now that it has come to this, I will go at it steadily—!" (Wendelin)

"Dear, please don't force yourself too much, okay?" (Elise)

"How kind of you, Elise. But since it's not a battle, it's no big deal at all." (Wendelin)



After the north and west, the next is the eastern part of the city.

This direction also had bad terrain. It's a region with tall rocks, up to heights of 20 meters, protruding out of the ground in large quantities that continued until it clashed against the river. I forcibly whittled these down with magic and level the ground. Afterwards, we established a road and constructed a riverbank on the eastern side.

For some reason, the rebel army hasn't come attacking to retake the place in the month it took to finish all of these works.

Because of that, the construction works completely finished as planned.

The sounds of construction hammers were resounding in the city of Sakart that became opened up on three sides. Many people from the surrounding territories that submitted to the liberation army gathered to work at the house constructions and to trade.

And around that time, the latest news, which was regularly sent by Therese, reached us.

『Alhans is in the middle of besiegement. Wait at that city of Sakart for a while.』 (Therese)

They are not Duke Nürnberg's proteges, but since around 20,000 soldiers of the rebel army are holing up in Alhans, she's apparently trying to force them to surrender by besieging them. However, a detached force formed by Duke Nürnberg has started to meddle with the liberation army during the siege. Because they are obviously stalling for time, Therese wrote in her letter that she will participate in the siege battle of Alhans while leading the reinforcements.

『As Duke Nürnberg is too fixated on this side, he won't be able to meddle with thee, Wendelin. Make sure not to get careless. I entrust the strengthening of Sakart to thee.』 (Therese)

"Strengthening, eh? What would be the best to do here?"

"Haven't we already done that?"

"Indeed, we have."

"Earl Baumeister-dono, the governor-dono has come to request the demolition of the former lower city."

"That shitty governor. I'm pretty sure his real intention is to use me until I drop!" (Wendelin)

I'm enraged on the surface, but accepting his request is also connected to my own safety. Once I consider it very carefully, it's not that different from what I've done when I was in Baumeister Earldom.

Since I'm leaving the management of the nobles and the army to Philip, Christoph and Popek-san, there's nothing for me to do except to eat, take baths and flirt around with my wives.

"The townsfolk is thankful and greatly cooperates with us. The fortress' expansion and the establishment of a river wharf have been finished, too. Our troops increased to 6,000 soldiers. We have met the expectations of Her Excellency Duchess Philip. Isn't that great? We will be able to receive plenty of rewards afterwards."

Philip and the others are probably happy about that, but I just want to quickly return to Baumeister Earldom.

"By the way, where's Erw?"

I ask Philip about Erw's whereabouts.

Nowadays he had reached the point of being able to lead the troops reliably while getting Haruka's assistance.

"That guy is off-duty today. He went on a date in the city with Haruka-jou."

"Whaaat! That Erw did!"

Even though others are working on construction untiringly every day, he goes on a date with his fiancée?

I think that's an unforgivable offence.

"A wife accompanying you at the construction work and at night you are making out with your wives. I think you are definitely the unforgivable one here, Earl Baumeister."

"I agree with nii-san's opinion." (Christoph)

"It's to the extent of making one jealous, isn't it? If I were a lot younger, I would probably put in some effort as well." (Popek)

"Uguh!?" (Wendelin)

I ended up at a loss for words after being told that by Philip, Christoph and Popek.



One week after that, we received the message that Alhans' rebel army has finally surrendered. We have secured a line connecting Alhans and Sakart. Afterwards, it resulted in us successfully having the rear fall into the liberation army's sphere of influence, but once Alhans' merchants restarted their business and came to Sakart, all of them had flabbergasted expressions.

"The western road is straight and paved with stones. The city's expansion has made progress! How come!?"

"The reason is simple. It's because I was in charge of the construction work and Sakart's governor's handling of his workers is really rough."

The governor Penz is an imperial bureaucrat. As such he will likely do anything if it's for the sake of making Sakart, where he holds a hereditary governor post, prosper no matter whether the rebel army or the liberation army wins.

"Dear, you are a hardworking one, aren't you?" (Elise)

"Yeah, I did my best in someone else's country."

While listening to the astonished voices of the merchants, my wives and I finally took a holiday and set out to go shopping.

## **Chapter 2 – The Prolonged Big Battle and the Showdown against Master**

Having finished turning the city of Sakart into a military base, we were summoned to Alhans, which fell into the hands of the liberation army, by Therese. Given that we obtained a military position that allows us to safely stay in range of the imperial capital, she apparently wants me, an excellent magician, to be at her side.

I don't think that she was lonely as Burkhart-san and Doushi served as her guards during our absence, but in the end, Therese might be fixated on me.

Leaving Sakart, that had the majority of its construction work completed, to Popek and the others, I arrived at Alhans while taking Philip and Christoph along.

As might be expected from a city that's treated as an auxiliary capital, its scale is even larger than that of Breitburg.

I have heard from Therese that she forced their surrender in the capitulation negotiations after cutting off their supplies with a siege strategy. Thanks to that there wasn't any apparent damage to Alhans.

"I heard that you captured a nice place?" (Alfons)

"You might say I just went with the flow of events?" (Wendelin)

Alfons, who came to greet us, thanked us for securing the fortress and city of Sakart. It was a place that wouldn't really be all that useful, but thanks to me doing construction work to expand the city and the fortress, it seems to apply plenty of pressure on the rebel army.

"But, for it to be the city of Sakart... Since the fortress has been used as a storehouse for the local merchants for 30 years now, none of us realised its existence until we received the report." (Alfons)

Given that its defence was doubtful as long as it wasn't repaired, they probably wouldn't have felt any necessity to go out of their way to take it. But before even that, there was apparently no one among the soldiers and nobles who was aware of it.

According to Therese and Alfons, it's a fortress that was abolished before they were born. So in the first place, it would be even a problem for them remembering it.

"It was a great help since we can apply pressure on the capital and the front line if we connect the road to Alhans. It looks like you serviced the roads quite a bit as well, doesn't it?" (Alhans)

"I guess I had the spare time since there was no battle." (Wendelin)

I haven't had to fight almost at all in this time's march.

It was limited to threatening Popek and his army with the 『Low-frequency Medical Device』 spell to make them surrender.

No, if I think back now, they surrendered under the jurisdiction of the liberation army while pretending to act like idiots, and then assisted in the reinforcement of the fortress and the city of Sakart. This will restore their own territories, which form an economic bloc... they may have predicted it up to this point. If they really did, they would be outrageously skilled people who can't be measured with just the scale of being former imperial army elites.



"Thou put forth great efforts, didn't thou Wendelin?" (Therese)

"Great efforts?" (Wendelin)

Therese struggled with a mountain of documents in the government office of Alhans. Since the city is a metropolis under the direct control of the empire, it has turned into a huge workload to govern after the occupation. Because there's also the management of the prisoners that surrendered, a huge amount of documents has piled up,

"Burkhart-san, you are sorting documents?" (Wendelin)

"I suppose that's because you and your group were absent, Earl-sama..." (Burkhart)

Since Elise and Ina went with us as well, Burkhart-san, who served as Therese's guard, apparently ended up doing a part of our job. Given that he's an intellectual who received a proper education, he can accomplish this kind of work as well. That's only obvious for a capable person who was cordially welcomed by Margrave Breithilde.

"Umm... what about uncle-sama?" (Elise)

"Elise-sama, do you really believe that Doushi can do something like handling documents?" (Burkhart)

"Well... once in a long while, he probably does it as well..." (Elise)

Elise answers Burkhart-san's question without confidence. He's certainly the type that runs away after pushing it on someone else. The person, who had it forced upon them, probably can't complain about it either.

"Isn't he Therese-sama's guard?" (Erwin)

"That should be the case, but..." (Haruka)

Due to Doushi not being at Therese's side despite being her guard, Erw and Haruka showed expressions full of uneasiness.

"If you are looking for me, I'm here!" (Armstrong)

"It came out—!" (Erwin)

Erw was apparently startled by the sudden appearance of Doushi.

"I was on standby in the room next to this. Erwin-lad, I'm properly carrying out my job as a guard!" (Armstrong)

"Oh, were you? But why aren't you at Therese's side then?" (Erwin)

"That's obvious. It's because I hate paperwork!" (Armstrong)

"To state that so boldly..." (Haruka)

Haruka became speechless due to the words of Doushi who always lives by his own instincts. She might have suffered a culture shock after seeing a human similar to Doushi for the first time.

"At any rate, it's great that you have come. I suppose we will first split into groups and clean up this large amount of documents?" (Therese)

"We have to do it as well!?" (Wendelin)

As she seems to be really at her wits' end, we are given the documents that we can understand to check.

Of course, doing the last check and signing them was Therese's job.

"Alfons-san isn't here." (Wilma)

Wilma notices that Alfons is gone without any of us realising.

When she asks the guards in front of the office, it looks like he went out to the city on business.

"As expected of my soul mate. He's truly fast at running away..." (Wendelin)

I praised the quickness of Alfons' escape while checking documents.

That's because I believe this to be a skill that the current me desperately needs.

"I'm just wondering, but is it alright for us foreigners to look at these documents?" (Wendelin)

"Do thou plan to leak the information?" (Therese)

Therese apparently heard my mutter and poses a question back to me.

"Well, that's what I mean." (Wendelin)

"Even if thou hand the information of these documents to the kingdom after the war, it won't be of any use as the information will be out of date. Even I wouldn't hand thou any documents that must not be leaked." (Therese)

As expected, she apparently takes at least this much into consideration.

"But then again, if thou remained in the empire as mine husband, Wendelin, the opportunities for thou to come in contact with highly confidential information would likely increase." (Therese)

"Therese-sama, this part here is wrong." (Elise)

"Therese-sama, the budget entries of this document don't add up. Also, this receipt is suspicious. You should give a warning to the person who handed it in." (Ina)

Because Therese tried to seduce me once again, Elise and Ina interrupt her by thrusting inaccurate documents in front of her nose.

"Thee two are unusually excellent." (Therese)

Given that Elise is a perfect superwoman, her paperwork is perfect as well, and it has become common knowledge during this civil war that Ina is also quite good with this kind of work.

"Let me see... after adding 7 and 5, it moves up by one digit here... Huh? That's correct, isn't it? Somehow I feel unsure. Once more..." (Luise)

On the other hand, Luise, who mostly lives by intuition, was in dire distress in front of the huge amount of documents.

In the end, everyone has things they are good at and things they are bad at.

"Katharina, this place is wrong." (Wilma)

"That's odd!" (Katharina)

Katharina can work through the paperwork quickly to some extent, but she makes quite a few mistakes.

On the other hand, Wilma is slow but accurate. She often pointed out Katharina's mistakes.

These two might have contrasting characters, but their compatibility might actually be very good.

"I guess this kind of work is necessary as well, but..." (Erwin)

"Erw-san, let's do our best. I will make daifuku as a snack later." (Haruka)

"Okay, I will keep at it, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

Erw and Haruka created their own little world.

Basically, Haruka skillfully incites Erw to do his work.

He's already being dominated, but since Erw himself doesn't think that to be the case, it's no problem.

"(So this is a woman who wisely controls her husband while treating him with due respect...?)" I end up admiring her.

Since we finally put the documents in order after around one hour, we decided to have a talk with Therese while having a little snack.

"I'm not really skilled at it, but..." (Haruka)

The snacks were the daifuku Haruka had promised before.

The person herself, who made them, is humble about her own creation, but they weren't inferior in any way to those sold at stores.

"They are delicious with their moderate sweetness, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

"Really? I'm happy." (Haruka)

"Since you are skilled at cooking and sweets, I wasn't worried at all." (Erwin)

Looking at the two of them, it's almost like a newly-wed couple sitting around the dining table. When I incidentally look at Therese, she had an expression full of envy. I pretend not to have noticed.

"The bean daifuku and the salt daifuku are tasty, too."

"I wondered whether it would be alright to put salt into sweets, but the salty-sweet taste is addictive."

Luise was apparently also pleased with the salt daifuku she ate for the first time.

"By the way, what about strawberry daifuku?" (Wendelin)

"Eh?" (Erwin)

"Strawberries and daifuku?" (Haruka)

Erw and Haruka became speechless due to my remark. In their minds, the combination of strawberries and daifuku is probably impossible.

"That's an odd combination, isn't it? Is it going to be alright?" (Ina)

Ina is worried about the taste, but as a matter of fact, I have already experienced that taste. In other words, the combination of strawberries and daifuku is the best possible combination. The strawberries in this world are smaller and sourer than the ones in Japan, but in contrast, that should bring out their refreshing taste.

"If you order me to do it like that, Earl Baumeister-sama..." (Haruka)

There are still ingredients for daifuku remaining and I have put several strawberries into my magic bag. In accordance with my order, Haruka started to slowly make strawberry daifuku.

"I'm anxious about the taste." (Armstrong)

For a change, Doushi was worried about the taste, but since it's extremely unlikely for him to get an upset stomach even if he eats something disgusting or rotten, I think that it's a pointless concern for him.

"I'm done." (Haruka)

"Wendelin-san, are these really alright?" (Katharina)

Katharina puts one into her mouth while looking anxious, but since it was something sweet, she would never reject it entirely.

I wonder though, is that okay with your diet?

That's the only worrisome matter here.

The others all begin to sample the food simultaneously, but their initial worries were blown away immediately.

They started to give the strawberry daifuku high praise.

"Dear, it's very delicious." (Elise)

"Huh? Even though it's a strange combination, it's tasty, isn't it?" (Haruka)

Elise and Haruka, who are good at cooking, gave the strawberry daifuku a high evaluation.

"You did well to come up with that, Wend." (Luise)

"Really. How strange." (Wilma)

"Hah, I'm blessed by a food god." (Wendelin)

Luise and Wilma ate the strawberry daifuku while admiring it.

It was a simple rip-off, but as long as no one knows that, it's no real rip-off.

Besides, if you tell the people of this world that it was the revelation from God, there's a high probability you will be believed.

It's just the right cover to give them the slip.

"Leaving that aside, don't we have to talk about the future from here on out?" (Burkhart)

Upon having that pointed out by Burkhart-san, who doesn't have much interest in sweets, it was decided that we would finally hear the future plans from Therese.

"This sweet is tasty." (Therese)

"Therese-sama." (Burkhart)

Therese herself was too focused on the strawberry daifuku. She had completely forgotten anything else until she was called out by Burkhart-san.

"We will march in the direction of the capital with the largest army as possible. Duke Nürnberg will likely be ready and waiting for us on the way." (Therese)

Duke Nürnberg apparently wants to grasp victory by bringing the battle into the open field that suits him so much. It seems a written challenge was sent to Therese after the capture of Alhans.

"I wonder, is Duke Nürnberg bad at siege battles?"

"Rather than that, it's because battles on the open field tend to finish faster."

Since it will be spring soon, he probably wants to finish the civil war as fast as possible and start the reconstruction of the nation.

Both sides share the same opinion in this regard.

"If he thinks that, it would have been best if he hadn't started a rebellion to begin with!"  
(Armstrong)

Doushi complains about Duke Nürnberg while stuffing his cheeks with strawberry daifuku.

"It can't be helped now. There are several plains near the capital where a large-scale battle is possible. He will probably wait for us on one of those." (Therese)

For that reason Duke Nürnberg likely forced Mizuho's national army and the Philip Dukedom's feudal army, which are the main battle forces of the liberation army, to use their soldiers without wasting the combat forces of his proteges.

"Thanks to that he's hated by the nobles whom he used as sacrificial pawns though."

I guess it's only natural for them to bear a grudge against Duke Nürnberg since they suffered losses from being treated as disposable.

However, it's very likely that they will be crushed if they criticise him openly. Duke Nürnberg assembling his elites in the vicinity of the capital probably also serves as a restraint against them.

"Just so thou know, our side has been advancing various schemes as well. Expecting to be betrayed, Duke Nürnberg shouldn't depend on anyone except the combat forces of his proteges." (Therese)

"Well, I think that we can't speak for others either though." (Burkhart)

It's as Burkhart-san says. Due to the lasting impact of the civil war, there are many opportunistic nobles on both sides. They probably want to make sure of the winner as it concerns the life and death of their households, but the result is that more than half of the nobles, who have joined the liberation army, can't be relied upon. Our numbers have grown to be greater than those of the rebel army, but depending on the progress of the war, it wouldn't be strange for some of them to betray us on the battlefield.

"Even if that's true, we have to advance the reorganisation of the liberation army and push for the capital." (Therese)

That's the obvious choice since we have to settle the war sooner or later.

"I see. Please do your best." (Wendelin)

"Wendelin, thou will support me, won't thou?" (Therese)

"I will participate in the battle, but Doushi, Burkhart-san and I will have our hands full with opposing master." (Wendelin)

Seeing that Duke Nürnberg is coming for us for real, there's no way for Talrand not to participate. He has no reason not to summon master, who forced us into a dilemma, through 『Heroic Spirit Summon』.

"We have to defeat him, as we can't leave it to the others." (Wendelin)

"Thy master, huh...? He's a dreadfully formidable enemy, as he can't defy Duke Nürnberg."  
(Therese)

"That's why we will kill him next time. It will be troublesome if he escapes once again." (Wendelin)

We cannot afford for master to be used by Duke Nürnberg any longer.  
For that reason, it's necessary to defeat master and have him return to heaven.

"I will leave the command of the kingdom's forces to Philip and Christoph. We will settle things with master." (Wendelin)

"That's right. The next time is our best chance to defeat Alf." (Burkhart)

"The previous time their side was overwhelmingly superior. As expected of Alfred, but you can't say that he didn't show any openings at all!" (Armstrong)

Given that we are setting up countermeasures, it shouldn't turn into a hard battle like the last time, but if we don't defeat him this time, master might use some kind of magic that will overpower us again. It's also possible that Duke Nürnberg has prepared new magic tools. It will be pointless unless we go at him with the goal to definitely kill master.

"If master intrudes on the battlefield, it will become a disadvantage for the liberation army. The three of us will make sure to defeat him no matter what. We won't have the leeway to help out the others." (Wendelin)

"Got it. I guess average magicians won't stand a chance at all. It's fine for thou to go at it to thy heart's content, Wendelin." (Therese)

Therese permitted our independent action.

"Sorry."

"What, he's the benefactor of my precious person and yet is getting used against his will. Moreover, for that to be Duke Nürnberg's doing... I didn't expect Max to go this far." (Therese)

"..."

I was grateful for Therese's feelings, but I sensed a slight feeling of discomfort.  
If someone defies the head of a nation to the extent of causing a rebellion, it's natural for them to use anything they can. My irritation towards Duke Nürnberg is something attributed to him personally. It's obvious for a statesman to adopt heartless strategies as necessary.  
Does Therese have no readiness as a statesman?  
I ended up thinking about something like that all of a sudden, but currently, it doesn't matter. I stowed away that doubt within my heart for now.

"Once we finish the preparations, we will depart towards the imperial capital!" (Therese)



And then, two days later, the liberation army that had departed with almost its entire force of 150,000 soldiers, confronted the approximately 90,000 soldiers of the rebel army led by Duke Nürnberg on the Sheena Plains, the empire's biggest grain-producing area.

"That idiot! Is he telling us to battle in the biggest grain-producing region of the empire!?"  
(Therese)

Therese was enraged at Duke Nürnberg who challenged her to a large-scale battle at this time when the harvest of the winter wheat still hasn't finished. That's because it was inevitable for the farmers to raise their voices full of resentment due to the decline in the amount harvested.

"Duke Nürnberg... just what is that man thinking?" (Therese)

Therese looks towards the troop headquarters of the rebel army.



"So you assembled here, did you Therese?" (Nürnberg)

Aren't they well in order for a completely disorderly mob?

In that case, I guess we will go with the second plan?

Just when I was thinking this, that man spoke up to me with a voice that was bright to an unpleasant degree.

"Are we going to lose?" (Alfred)

That Earl Baumeister and his group are in that liberation army or whatever it was called.

I made Talrand summon Alfred Reinford, who cornered them in the previous battle, but his way of talking is as sarcastic as ever. Even while he follows our orders, I hate it that he intends to disobey me whenever he has a chance to do so.

"I have prepared a move so that we won't lose. The same back at you; are you going to be able to win against Earl Baumeister's group next time?" (Nürnberg)

"What will be will be." (Alfred)

This bastard, doesn't he know whether he can or cannot win in this situation?

"What do you mean?" (Nürnberg)

"As I'm unable to go against Talrand's orders, I will fight with all my power, but I told you before, I don't improve since I'm a dead man. Since I'm dead, I don't have any memory except that I was superior in the previous battle." (Alfred)

"I suppose the memories of the dead are vague. I heard so from Talrand." (Nürnberg)

However, I also heard that there are people who remember things clearly. It's also possible that this guy is lying.

"For that reason, I can't learn any combat teachings. I can only fight while relying on the experience from the time when I was alive. Wend and the others should have become stronger, using their previous defeat as a lesson. That's why I can't declare that I will be able to win without fail."  
(Alfred)

"It's an order. Win." (Nürnberg)

"If I can win due to affirming that, I will do so as many times as you like." (Alfred)

You are a dead person, so it's no problem even if you die. But, Talrand is an important, trusted retainer for me. I will never permit you to lose.

"Retreat depending on the progress of the battle." (Nürnberg)

There's no need at all to force a final showdown here. As long as I have Talrand, he will serve as a restraint against Earl Baumeister who is in the process of increasing his influence within the liberation army. Trying to do the impossible and losing Talrand will be a huge loss.

"Withdraw before it's too late. You are saying something absurd to someone who is about to enter a struggle to the death. There are situations where you can and cannot pull back." (Alfred)

"Shut up! I'm a soldier. I'm different from you magicians and adventurers." (Nürnberg)

Did you think that I understand the personal feelings of you guys?

"I will do my best. Well then, with this... ah, is that man doing fine? He has been adjusting the 『Puppets』, the excavated items, so—" (Alfred)

"Shut up! Go!" (Nürnberg)

I unintentionally raised my voice.

At any rate, just when did he learn about the existence of my trump card?

Having been summoned, this guy was absorbed into Talrand, so-to-speak.

Is that why he also knows the things Talrand does?

I'm not well-informed about magic, so I don't quite get those kinds of circumstances.

"Don't prattle about unnecessary things. You just have to concentrate on defeating Earl Baumeister and his friends." (Nürnberg)

"I will try and do what I can. Well then, I guess I will return to Talrand for now..." (Alfred)

"Why do you return each and every time?" (Nürnberg)

"A battlefield filled with close-combat is scary. There are times when you suffer an unexpected,

embarrassing defeat. It's easier to move while being Talrand who has a weak presence." (Alfred)

Once Alfred says so, he returned to Talrand's appearance. No, it was Talrand who made that call and said so.

"I shall excuse myself with this then." (Talrand)

Saying so, that guy... no, Talrand left to the front line to search for Earl Baumeister's group.

This isn't the final, decisive battle, but a battle in the midst of a campaign.

I will leave the rest to Talrand. I have to focus on the command of the troops in order to achieve my goal.

\* \* \*

"Philip-dono, Christoph-dono, I will entrust the command of the kingdom's forces to you." (Wendelin)

Seeing that it's very likely for master to appear at the front once again, I won't have the spare time for something like commanding the troops.

I entrusted the two of them with the command of the kingdom's forces.

"Are you going to depart to the front?"

"Yes... Burkhart-san?" (Wendelin)

"Yeah, I have that throbbing sensation. This weird response where Alf's mana and a strange mana are intertwined. He has come out to search for us after all, I guess." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san senses master's mana. With this, it has become impossible to avoid a battle.

"Wend, are you going to be fine with just the three of you? If you like, I can..." (Erwin)

"I appreciate it, but we can't devote any more valuable combat forces to master alone. Erw, please follow the instructions of those two." (Wendelin)

"Understood." (Erwin)

Declining Erw's help, us three went out to the front line.

◆◆◆◆◆

Both the liberation and the rebel army have taken up position in a huge wheat field that still hasn't been fully harvested.

The wheat will be cruelly trampled down, so it will probably be necessary to reimburse the farmers later.

The bad-tempered expression of Therese, who will shoulder those expenses, pops up in my mind.

"It looks like Duke Nürnberg will fight this time."

Burkhart-san drops a sarcastic line about Duke Nürnberg not having escaped this time. Both armies split their forces into three parts. They were about to crash into each other with almost the same deployment

"The right wing is under young Duke Baden and his group, and the left wing is led by Earl Lärmer. There are concerns about their cooperation, but we won't have any spare time to worry about that!" (Armstrong)

Young Duke Baden shouldn't mess up a second time. Earl Lärmer is apparently a former imperial army general. It appears that he resigned from the army and returned home in order to inherit the peerage.

I think he's an excellent soldier and that's why Therese entrusted him with one wing. The central block is directly commanded by Therese. Mizuho's army is located there as well. Although Philip and the others are there as well, the number of the kingdom's forces is low. The unexperienced Erw is with them as well, so they shouldn't do anything too reckless.

"Charge!"

"Fight back!"

The battle of both armies begins, but as they first start with a wait-and-see approach, there are few movements.

Among this, that man once again calmly walks our way from the enemy army.

Identical to before, there wasn't anyone among the liberation army's soldiers who makes a move against Talrand.

He's an excellent magician who possesses a bizarre eeriness. If they attacked him poorly, a common soldier would simply die after getting counterattacked. They can't make any unreasonable moves.

"Earl Baumeister, Burkhart, Armstrong-doushi, there won't be a next time." (Talrand)

"I think that applies to you more than to us." (Wendelin)

"I guess only your impudent talk is that of an adult. Well then, I will summon that man once again." (Talrand)

Talrand is wrapped up by a bluish-white light and master showed up once more.

While both armies are fighting, master and we are again facing off against each other right in the middle of the battlefield.

"Teach, you have become quite muscular." (Alfred)

Master noticed Burkhart-san, whose face became toned after going through the intense training.

"It's the futile struggling of an old man. It ain't nothing a genius like you has to mind, Alf." (Burkhart)

"Unfortunately I have to be cautious. Since it's you, Teach, I can't be careless. Klimt and Wend as well, huh...? Let's bring it to an end with a quick attack this time. Those magic tools have been replenished as well. Since they are rare, I don't have any more than two once again, but..." (Alfred)

Master tossed two 『Puppets』 on the ground. Just like before, the puppets take the shape of master and square off against Burkhart-san and Doushi respectively.

"Earl-sama, Doushi and I will keep these puppets company. I don't know about Doushi, but for me, it will probably take all my effort to counter with Alf's puppet as the opponent. Just like before, there's no other option but to go one-on-one." (Burkhart)

"That's more than enough." (Wendelin)

"This time I won't suffer an embarrassing defeat!" (Armstrong)

Even Doushi, after suffering an unexpected and embarrassing defeat last time, repeatedly committed to training. In the next moment, he starts the battle against master's puppet. Right in the middle of the battlefield where both sides' armies clash against each other, an area, where no one except us existed, was created. As for the reason, if they approach imprudently...

""""""Uwaaah!""""""

"I'm sorry, okay? It's a stray bullet."

Burkhart-san shoots his spell towards the puppet, but the puppet avoids it easily... once it does, the spell exploded among the soldiers of the enemy army located in the back.

"... Teach? Is that on purpose?" (Alfred)

"Alf, I'm sad. For you to doubt your master. I'm a magician that's inferior to you, Alf. My spells won't even hit the puppet." (Burkhart)

No matter how much he trained himself, the possibility of Burkhart-san to be able to win against master, even if it's his puppet, is low.

Accordingly, the plan is for him to stall for time and wait for the puppet's time to run out.

Last time we confirmed that the puppets have a time limit.

And, moreover, master has another weakness.

Strictly speaking, master isn't master.

Since he has to prioritise Talrand's orders above all else, he won't be able to allow damage to be caused to Duke Nürnberg's feudal army in the rear.

"Puppet! Block it!"

Once it becomes intolerable for that many shots of attack magic to explode at his allied forces, the puppet started to block Burkhart-san's spells with a 『Magic Barrier』.

"It's a random firing of 『Fire Snake』!" (Armstrong)

"Klimt, you as well, huh?" (Alfred)

"I only hit the enemy army in the rear with spells by chance." (Armstrong)

Doushi fires 『Fire Snake』 randomly as well. It exploded at various places of Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

"They are in disorder! Fire the arrows!"

Philip, who leads the kingdom's forces, didn't miss that opportunity. They fire arrows at the confused enemy army, expanding the damage.

"Puppet, continue to block it." (Alfred)

He fell for it.

Since Talrand's orders are given priority, master can't demonstrate his true ability properly. If master was able to act freely, he should have thoroughly and efficiently cornered us while ignoring something like Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

In other words, thanks to Talrand, master has become weaker.

Once it turns into a situation where the two puppets block all the magic attacks released by Burkhart-san and Doushi with their 『Magic Barrier』, the mana consumption increases unnecessarily, and it reaches the point of being wasteful.

『Alf's weakness is that it's not just himself.』 (Burkhart)

『He has to prioritise Talrand's orders, doesn't he?』 (Wendelin)

『Talrand is Duke Nürnberg's dog! A dog is loyal to its master!』 (Armstrong)

As a result of us three discussing it, the battle took the current shape.

"And Wend, that means it has turned into a one-on-one battle against me. But, do you think you are able to win?" (Alfred)

"I will win. I have no other choice. If I don't win, I will lose and die. That's all there is to it." (Wendelin)

With master as the opponent, it's unnecessary to hesitate.

And there's one more thing.

I must avoid fighting at master's pace by any means possible.

In what do I excel master?

Yes, it's the amount of mana, so I have to fight while capitalising on that.

The more I try to fight technically, the more I will be led around by the nose.

If master tries to pour calm attacks on me, I have no other option but to answer with a dense barrage of spells so that I won't get overwhelmed. Even if I go for a frontal attack, it will only extend the time until I'm defeated.

"Here I come!"

First I release a large amount of 『Fireballs』 towards Duke Nürnberg's feudal army situated behind master.

If it was just master, he could probably save on mana while evading all of these, but Talrand won't allow for any losses to appear among Duke Nürnberg's troops. In addition to a 『Magic Barrier』, he offset the 『Fireballs』 by releasing a huge amount of 『Ice Spheres』.

There are a few 『Fireballs』 that had their penetrative force increased, but master dealt with those by thickening his 『Magic Barrier』.

There's also the trick of saving on mana by thickening only a part of the 『Magic Barrier』, but he has to also cope with the large amount of 『Fireballs』 released in the direction of his allies. So even for master it was impossible to execute the precise action of boosting only some parts of his 『Magic Barrier』.

"That's the way."

Anyway, I can't allow master to seize the initiative.

I keep attacking and master keeps defending, gradually stealing his mana.

It would be best if I don't give master the chance to replenish his mana by using the magic crystal of the huge magic airship.

The puppets that would likely interfere are kept in check by Burkhart-san and Doushi.

It's the second time, so both of them fought against the puppets skillfully.

"That's a somewhat reckless move, isn't it Wend?" (Alfred)

Although I was addressed by master, I ignored it and continued firing large amounts of 『Fireballs』.

It might be reckless or high-handed, but this shows the best result against master right now.

In order to protect his allies behind him, his mana, which would be consumed much less if he had only to evade the spells, is gradually decreasing.

If I can deplete master's mana completely in this way since I have a lot more mana... no, I probably shouldn't be that overly optimistic.

"Ugh!"

When I twist my body promptly because I sensed bloodthirst, a sharp pain penetrated my flank.

Master, who had moved directly in front of me all of a sudden, pierces through my 『Magic Barrier』 with a magic sword.

I prevented the thrust from hitting my vitals, but my flank ended up being gouged out.

"Movement magic? Why?" (Wendelin)

This intense pain at my flank is a pain I have already experienced once. While stalling for time by asking master, I covered the wound with one hand while casting healing magic.

"I guess it worked by chance?" (Alfred)

"There's no way for that to be true." (Wendelin)

Currently movement magic should be unusable thanks to that device. And yet master moved in front of me instantaneously. Normally that's impossible.

"It's a spare 『Canceller』, but I suppose it will break after one or two more uses." (Alfred)

Going by its name of canceller, it's likely a magic tool that cancels the magic jamming of the movement and communication spells. Master clasped the chain of a necklace with a pitch-black jewel in his hand.

That's probably an excavated magic tool of the Ancient Magic Civilization Era as well.

"..."

"Have you spend more mana than expected, master?" (Wendelin)

Even while speaking with him, I continue to release waves of 『Fireballs』.

My 『Magic Barrier』 is in perfect shape, and the wound at my side is in the process of healing.

It was the effect of me having practised deploying several spells during combat while having mock battles with Burkhart-san and Doushi. I have definitely greatly improved in comparison to the time when I fought against the bone dragon.

"I guess you were taught by Klimt and Teach-san, Wend?" (Alfred)

"Yes." (Wendelin)

"I'm slightly jealous. After all, it was me who found you and gave you a basic training. It feels as though my cute pupil was stolen from me." (Alfred)

The 『Ice Spheres』 shot by master grew tremendously bigger and were about to break my 『Magic Barrier』.

Even though I had completely blocked them until now, several of them penetrate my 『Magic Barrier』 and injure my body.

However, it doesn't turn into a serious injury like before. It's because I also trained to avoid at the last moment.

Apart from that, I also noticed a certain something.

"(Master has stopped conserving his mana? Has he lost control of himself due to the anger of having his pupil stolen?)"

No, that's not it. It's unlikely for master to lose his cool over something like that.

Then, why?

"I got it!" (Wendelin)

I made one 『Wind Cutter』 that had its penetration power increased pierce through the 『Magic Barrier』 deployed by master.

It's impossible for master to not dodge that, but a certain behaviour prevented it.

"... So you found out, huh?" (Alfred)

Just like last time, master took out a huge magic crystal from his magic bag and tried to replenish his mana.

There wasn't the slightest change on his expression, but for just an instant, he turned his eyes

towards Burkhart-san and Doushi.

The reason being that the puppets, which handled the two skillfully in the previous battle, were getting completely overwhelmed this time.

"In the end, a puppet is a puppet. I suppose it's nice that they were useful at least once... no, if it's an average magician, they shouldn't be able to see through their fighting strength in one fight...?"  
(Alfred)

Master's 『Ice Spheres』 that flew about between us until now completely stopped.  
I continue to fire 『Fireballs』. As expected, even my mana was approaching its limit, but I have more leeway than master. The amount of my mana had increased as well, though only slightly, in comparison to last time.  
There's no way for me to lose against master in the amount of mana. The rest is...

"Kuuuh!"

I release another 『Wind Cutter』 and deliver a blow to master.  
The 『Wind Cutter』, which once again pierced through master's 『Magic Barrier』, lightly injured the back of his right hand. It's no considerable injury, but it's enough if I can prevent master from taking out that huge magic crystal from his magic bag.  
I finally cornered him up to this point, even while getting wounded all over.  
Now all that's left is the final showdown with master.  
If I allow him to run away now, Talrand will replenish his magic tools and probably also strengthen his countermeasures against us.  
I will get closer and release a finishing blow before he escapes by using the 『Canceller』.  
I'm bad at emission magic. Making use of my entire remaining mana, I will deliver a blow with a magic sword while harbouring the intention to clash with master.  
There's no other option left. Although I might get stabbed as well, I cannot afford to let him get away.  
When I was planning to take the magic sword out of the magic bag at the last moment and then materialise the sword blade... while also using my mana to the utmost limit to get closer..., master smiled at me.

"Master?" (Wendelin)

"A final duel after using the remaining mana?" (Alfred)

"(He figured it out...)" (Wendelin)

"It's a nice idea. I believe it to be fine with this, too. Wend, the final match! 『Don't be an idiot! Retreat!』"

Just now two conflicting opinions came out of master's mouth.  
Is master possibly opposing Talrand's order to withdraw?

"『Follow the order...!』 It's just as I thought."

"What do you mean?" (Wendelin)

"There's no way for magic that can call and manipulate the dead to exist without any kind of risk. The stronger the person summoned, the looser the control over them becomes. Talrand himself also wasted a lot of mana in the battle so far. I discovered that his control will weaken with the decrease of mana. I was troubled as I had no knowledge about 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』. But, it looks like I can't defy an order by the stronger side. Therefore, let's put an end to it here." (Alfred)

『Alfreed~~~!』

"I don't think that we have such a good relationship that you would call my name familiarly. Please have peace of mind. I will fight against Wend with all my strength. That's because this isn't a fight where the master measures the abilities of his pupil. It's because I, Alfred Reinford, want to experience Wendelin von Benno Baumeister's strength. You just have to lean back and watch. Though you will die if I lose, Talrand." (Alfred)

『Alfreed~~~!』

Talrand cursed at master using master's voice.

"Well then, shall we get started since time is valuable? Even though I overwhelmed you last time, the tables have already been turned, huh?" (Alfred)

『Alfred, you bastard!』 (Talrand)

"The previous fight gave me a strong impression. Even though I'm dead, I have my memories fully remaining. Though I didn't have any obligation to tell you that." (Alfred)

Master deliberately fought with the same tactics as last time. By doing that, our chance to win would go up.

『Immediately use the 『Canceller』 and get away!』 (Talrand)

"No way. Earl Baumeister and his friends are formidable enemies who are in the process of increasing their influence within the liberation army. I fight for the sake of cutting the rebel army's threat by eliminating them."

『Shiit~~~! Puppets~~~!』 (Talrand)

"It's futile. There's no way for something at the level of a copy of me to win against Teach-san and Klimt." (Alfred)

Talrand apparently tried to call the puppets over as shield for the time of escape, but the all-important puppets were already releasing smoke. The countermeasures of the two bore fruit. The puppets' operational period became shorter than last time.

"What a piece of junk. I will stop it at once!" (Armstrong)

"It goes unexpectedly well for me once I held out." (Burkhart)

The fuming puppets will apparently cease to work any time soon. That would make it difficult for

Talrand to escape.

『Alfreed~~~!』 (Talrand)

"Your hearing is bad, and your vocabulary is lacking as well. What a let-down. Well then, let's get started?" (Alfred)

I retrieve my magic sword from my magic bag and materialize a sword blade with a fire attribute.  
I use a Mizuho katana as reference for the sword blade shape.  
Master draws the magic sword affixed at his waist and produces an ice blade.  
We continue squaring off against each other while readying our swords.

"It will be really the end with this. Whoever might lose or win, no hard feelings." (Alfred)

"Yes." (Wendelin)

Even though master's mana is low, I seem to be pressured by his intensity.  
But, I must not retreat at this point. Pointless feints and camouflaging spells are meaningless.  
Wendelin, step forward! If you withdraw here, it's your loss.  
Even if my body is penetrated by master's strike, I will push the sword blade forward.  
It's unrelated to something like techniques. After having come this far, there's no other option left anymore but to pierce master's vitals with willpower.

"Here I come!"

"I shall accept your challenge!"

I put all my remaining mana into speed and charged at master while holding out the magic sword in front.



It's as if I'm once again allowed to measure my skills against master.

"Still, such speed is!"

"With this, I'm really out of mana."

"I see... me too."

Both our bodies clash and a sharp pain once again travelled through my left shoulder. It looks like I luckily avoided a thrust to the heart. And, I feel feedback in both my hands. Once I check where I had stabbed master's body...

"Wend, it was splendid." (Alfred)

My last thrust has pierced master's heart and he collapses in my direction just like that.

"Master!"

Having a vital spot pierced through, master apparently can't move his body anymore. I hurriedly lay down his body on the ground.

"I'm sorry, Wend." (Alfred)

"Master!" (Wendelin)

"Actually I don't feel any pain. The one dying is Talrand. After all, I'm already dead. It's true that I can't move, but..." (Alfred)

Surely, master didn't seem as if he was tormented by pain, but as if noise was interfering at times, his appearance changes into that of Talrand. Those intervals became slowly shorter.



"You are a nuisance! You piece of trash!" (Armstrong)

"So the puppets can't move independently? ... It's the end!" (Burkhart)



After destroying the puppets that stopped moving because Talrand had died, Doushi and Burkhart-san ran up towards us.

"Talrand-sama was defeated!"

"Bah! Attack Earl Baumeister's group!"

""""""""Roger!""""""""

After Talrand's death, Duke Nürnberg's feudal army was about to advance on the place no one approached out of fear of getting hit by spells until then.

If they can defeat us who are exhausted after killing Talrand, the war situation will turn advantageous for them.

"I won't let you!"

""""""""Uwaaah—!""""""""

But, that plan fell through because of Katharina's 『Tornado』 spell.

"Philip-san!"

"Aye! Royal Army! Advance and close the hole! If our sponsor dies in battle, we will once again lead scanty lives!" (Philip)

The space that had unnaturally opened up due to our showdown with master is filled up by the kingdom's forces led by Erw and Philip.

"Step out in front! Protect Earl Baumeister's group!"

"Pressure them!"

Because High Earl Mizuho and Therese also sent out reinforcements, the front line moved up and our surroundings became quiet once more.

"Dear, hurry, you have to be treated!" (Elise)

"Wend, you alright?" (Ina)

"It's no good if you are too reckless. Wend, you aren't as strong at close combat as I am." (Luise)

"Wend-sama, such things are my job." (Wilma)

Elise and the others gathered and all the main members surrounded master.

"Wend, you have to get your wound healed quickly."

"What about master?" (Wendelin)

"Dear, it's not possible to heal the dead..." (Elise)

Elise told me with an apologetic expression.

"Wend, don't pull such a face towards a beautiful woman. I guess I was never able to teach you about these things... Well, you were a child after all. Very soon the effect of the 『Heroic Spirit Summoning』 will disappear and I will once again ascend to heaven. As a dead person, I will

immediately vanish once I receive healing magic." (Alfred)

As Talrand has died, it was just a matter of time before master disappeared.

"It's nothing but pretty ladies." (Alfred)

Master says while looking at Elise and the others.

"They are my wives." (Wendelin)

"That's amazing. You bested me in this regard." (Alfred)



"Master..." (Wendelin)

Joking around at such time was master's way of consoling me. I couldn't say anything further. That's because it looks like my tears will overflow if I open my mouth.

"Wend, I'm someone who already went to heaven more than ten years ago. I'm full of regret for having you and the others pushed close to death, but I was very happy that I was allowed to see how splendid you have become." (Alfred)

"..." (Wendelin)

It's impossible. It appears that I will cry if I don't put my utmost effort into enduring.

"Teach-san, Klimt, thank you very much for training Wend." (Alfred)

"Don't mind it. That doesn't suit you at all. I lacked a good work-out recently anyway." (Burkhart)

"It allowed me to reevaluate my shortcomings! It's not something you have to worry about, Alfred!" (Armstrong)

Burkhart-san and Doushi seemed to be just as usual, but to me, they looked as if they would burst into tears any time soon.

"There's no time left anymore, huh...?" (Alfred)

"Are you going to vanish already?" (Armstrong)

"Klimt, even though you are a noble, your lack of delicacy is the real deal. Well, I became your friend because of how you are..." (Alfred)

For master, who doesn't like royalty and nobility overly much, Doushi seems to be the sole exception.

"At least at the end we have to drink some high-quality wine!" (Armstrong)

Saying that, Doushi unplugs the cork of the wine he took out of his magic bag not by extracting it, but by sending the upper part flying with a hand strike.

"That's typical of you. How about Teach-san as well?" (Alfred)

"It's a precious invitation. I will gladly partake in it. I guess I held back on the booze recently." (Burkhart)

"That's unusual." (Alfred)

"Shut up." (Burkhart)

Doushi dribbles a little bit of wine into master's mouth and then drank a mouthful directly from the

bottle.

Next Burkhart-san takes a gulp as well, and then I drank it as well since he passed it on to me.

"How about it? Do you recognise the flavour?" (Armstrong)

"For some reason I do. If you are talking about a good year isn't that one right on the spot? Or rather, isn't this wine from my collection?" (Alfred)

I don't know how it works, but even though Talrand has died, master precisely assessed the taste of the wine.

"You are right! I received it from Earl Baumeister!" (Armstrong)

It's true that I sent it to him as thanks for receiving his favours all the time, but it was also the truth that I was coaxed into it.

"Wend make sure that my collection isn't snatched away by the greedy Klimt. Also, the same applies to Teach-san as well." (Alfred)

"You are a terrible friend!" (Armstrong)

"Really, you are an awful pupil." (Burkhart)

The three of them laugh. Being enticed by that, I laugh faintly as well.

I was able to reunite with him after a long time due to some kind of fate at work. I want to at least send him off while smiling at the end.

Imitating Doushi and Burkhart-san, I showed a smile.

"I'm reluctant to part, but I will disappear very soon." (Alfred)

And at last the final moment came. His body has already become completely transparent.

"I wonder whether I will take lessons in magic from Wend next time after a few decades? Everyone, please treat Wend well." (Alfred)

Leaving those words behind at the end, master ended up vanishing completely. Only the corpse of the expressionless Talrand with his thin presence was left behind in the wake.

"Wend, I don't know what's best to say at such times, but..."

"I believe your master was satisfied after having seen your grown appearance, Wend."

"Thanks, Ina and Luise. I won't mourn any longer." (Wendelin)

Rather than that, currently my rage towards Duke Nürnberg was outweighing everything.

A new empire to the extent of mocking the dead? That's no more than a bad joke.

I take the spare magic gems out of my magic bag and replenish my mana.

I don't manage to replenish more than 25%, but that should allow me to stand at the front line once again.

"Right now we are in the middle of a battle. The burden on Erw and Philip's group is great. Let's head out to the front." (Wendelin)

"Yes, I shall accompany you." (Katharina)

"Me as well." (Wilma)

Ina and Luise nod. Katharina and Wilma gave their acknowledgement.

"I will devote myself to healing." (Elise)

Elise declares that she will return to the rear to continue healing. At the time when I thought 'Well then, it's time for a counterattack', some disturbance apparently occurred at the frontline. That unrest reached even us.

"Earl Baumeister-sama!" Haruka rushed over to us as a messenger.

"Haruka, what's wrong?" I ask.

"Duke Nürnberg made a big move! He has reorganized his entire army and simultaneously launched an attack against the left wing led by Earl Lärmer." (Haruka)

"Tsk! Is it because Talrand died?" (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san reflexively clicked his tongue. That's because it dampened our momentum to start a counteroffensive.

"We will head out to support the left wing! Please order Philip to reorganize the kingdom's forces." (Wendelin)

"Understood." (Haruka)

With the death of Duke Nürnberg's trusted retainer, Talrand, the war situation was about to undergo big changes.

\* \* \*

"Talrand died?" (Nürnberg)

"Yes. He was defeated by Earl Baumeister."

"Now you've done it, Earl Baumeister!" (Nürnberg)

No way!

Why didn't you escape, Talrand?

Even though you staying alive would have threatened Earl Baumeister and the liberation army...

There's no point in lamenting over things that have come to pass. My feudal army is fighting against

the liberation army with its overwhelming superiority in numbers on equal terms. I was worried since I substituted one third with disguised imperial army forces, but the imperial army is quite elite as well. They are fighting more than equally against the liberation army by cooperating. Talrand's death is painful, but it's not fatal.

It was good that I left one-third of my elites in the capital, foreseeing such development. I guess I will immediately send a messenger and have them do as planned.

Let's retreat for now.

However, it doesn't suit my nature to escape while simply showing my back to the enemy.

"Raise the big flag of the Duke Nürnberg household!" (Nürnberg)

"Lord, the big flag, it is?"

"Yes! It's time to hoist the big flag depicting the family crest of the Duke Nürnberg household! My elites will demonstrate their true worth!" (Nürnberg)

Therese, you have accumulated victories thanks to Earl Baumeister. It looks like you got slightly ahead of yourself by gathering a slightly big number of soldiers, but I will show you the true ability of my Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army.

"Reorganize the entire army and assault the enemy's left wing. It's not like our Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army doesn't know the words retreat and withdrawal, but by advancing forward in this situation, the losses will be lower instead." (Nürnberg)

"It's not the right wing?"

"The youngster of the right wing has already suffered a painful experience once. His preparations are likely rigorous." (Nürnberg)

"But, Earl Lärmer is originally an excellent general..."

"How many years have passed since he returned to his territory to inherit the peerage? There should be chances we can use with his judgement having rusted. Hurry with the reorganization of the entire army." (Nürnberg)

We carry out a reorganization of the entire army while battling. Even the imperial army forces are elites who went through my harsh training. Right after finishing the reorganisation, we attacked the left wing in one swoop with the entire army.

"No way! The enemy is coming this way with their entire army!"

The frontline commander of the enemy's left wing became flustered, but they were immediately greeted by a downpour of arrows.

The front line troops of the enemy's left wing thrown into chaos after the loss of their commander are demolished in one go. Widening that hole, we aim for the supreme commander Earl Lärmer.

"My lord, our right side is in danger of being attacked by the enemy's centre..."

"There are countermeasures set up for that as well. Perhaps the Mizuho army will turn up,

intoxicated by their feelings of wanting to use their new toys." (Nürnberg)

My forecast is correct. Therese, who leads the central forces, apparently ordered the Mizuho forces to attack our right wing.

"It's that magic gun?"

"Prepare the shields!"

It will be fine if we aim for the capital with a counterclockwise movement after pulverizing the enemy's left wing.

The Earl Mizuho Country has magic guns, but we are no scarecrows either. Did you think that a professional soldier has no countermeasures in stock?

If they really think so, the Mizuho army consists of idiots that are beyond help.

"Fire!"

"Shield unit, you just have to defend."

It's still impossible for us to produce a magic gun, but we have deployed huge shields to block their bullets.

The magic gun unit, which is weak at close combat, won't draw near anyway.

All we have to do is to block the shooting with shields.

At any rate, currently the attack against the enemy's left wing takes the highest priority.

If we stumble by stopping here, we will be caught by Therese.

"Gah, Magic Katana Unit!"

"They made an appearance after all, Earl Mizuho Country's trump card. But..."

I have also prepared as many countermeasures as possible against the magic katana, the other trump card of the Earl Mizuho Country.

"Magic Sword Unit! To the front! Just defend without trying anything unreasonable!"

Even the empire has magic tools called 『Magic Sword』 that boost their cutting edge with mana.

Their abilities are far behind those of magic katana, but we continued to improve them.

We will handle it one way or the other as long as it's a defensive battle. Besides, the numbers of our Magic Sword Unit are far greater.

"Defeat Earl Lärmer while the Magic Sword Unit is doing its job!"

If we focus our attacks on the left wing, they will turn into a disorderly mob. That's likely why Therese entrusted the command to Earl Lärmer with his exceeding ability to lead troops, but that will lead to your death, Earl Lärmer.

"Just aim for Earl Lärmer's head!"

As expected, except for the unit under his direct command, the wing is fragile. They have fallen

apart easily.

Earl Lärmer seems to defend frantically while waiting for reinforcements, but seeing that we stopped the Mizuho army, they won't be in time.

"Die! Earl Lärmer! An old noble like you is not needed in the new empire!"

My army's vanguard cut already into the elite forces protecting Earl Lärmer.

"Duke Nürnberg household's retainer Ogot Fang! He has killed Earl Lärmer!"

My retainer apparently finished him off successfully.

The shock of having lost its commander spreads throughout the entire left wing. By now they are not forming the orderly ranks of military forces anymore. Each of the feudal armies belonging to separate nobles scattered away.

"All that's left is to advance!"

A major commander of the enemy was defeated. This likely made up for Talrand's loss a bit. After this, there's only escape without being too greedy here. The unit back in the capital should be properly carrying out its task as I've ordered them to.

"The enemy's left wing has already fallen apart. Remove only those standing in the way of our path!"

Just as I predicted, the enemy's left wing that was still in chaos didn't come attacking my army. Even the offensive of the Mizuho army has been blocked with few losses while focussing on defence.

"So it's one way or another a draw?"

"Lord!"

"What's wrong?"

"Defend yourself!"

"...!? What are you!"

No sooner than being called out by the magician next to me, he deployed a firm 『Magic Barrier』 all of a sudden. The instant I wonder why he's doing that, a torrent of bluish-white light assails me. The bluish-white light clashes against the magician's 『Magic Barrier』 and shone even more intensely.

"Kuu! Help me out! It's impossible for me myself!"

All magicians on my side step out in front of me and deploy strong 『Magic Barriers』, trying to defend against the torrent of bluish-white light.

"This is?"

"It's void magic! For it to be so mighty!"

With just this I understood. Since it came from the rear, it's definitely the deed of Earl Baumeister. I guess he hates me for having ordered Talrand to summon his dead teacher.

At any rate, what frightening power. Moreover, only I have been set as a target.

The 『Magic Barriers』 deployed by the magicians with their full power are smashed apart by the bluish-white, spear-like light and it's about to pierce my body.

"Gnah! Call for more help!"

"Uwaah—!"

The light erases our officers and men that stood in its line of fire. Several of the magicians, who stepped in front of me and were eagerly defending, had their 『Magic Barriers』 penetrated and died. Earl Baumeister, you pest! My household's precious magicians!

"No matter how you look at it, there's no way for void magic with this much power to continue forever! Block it if you don't want to die!"

Twenty seconds after that the bluish-white light, supposedly fired by Earl Baumeister, ceased.

"It seems it came to an end without me dying."

"Yes."

In exchange, several dozens of soldiers that stood in the line of fire and six of the magicians, who protected me, died.

Without their devotion, I would have been killed by Earl Baumeister, I'm sure.

"Lord?"

"Don't panic! Our Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army doesn't need anyone who gets shaken by something of this level!"

Luckily Earl Baumeister released his spell on a small scale, only targeting me. Thanks to that, there haven't been as many losses as expected. If he had tried to kill me and annihilate our military forces, it would have been easily blocked, even with the one firing it being Earl Baumeister. He's probably angry over the matter with his master, but he's acting quite composed.

"The spell came flying from a high altitude... Does that basically mean that Earl Baumeister fired the spell while floating in the air? Ah, I see, the 『Cancellor』 he stole from Talrand, huh?"

In order to definitely kill just me, Earl Baumeister apparently used the canceller and sniped at me with magic from high in the air.

His mana has lasted for quite a while. Though he probably made use of the huge magic crystal he took from Talrand...

"So many dead with just that...? But, even Earl Baumeister should have run out of mana."

It's best to withdraw from here as fast as possible.

The dead magicians were only at intermediate level. The grandly disturbed left wing of the enemy can't move with their commander, Earl Lärmer, having died in battle. The enemy's central block, which had the elite Mizuho army and the power of the magic gun, their new weapon, sealed away, and the right wing, led by that brat who has already lost to me once, is moving sluggishly as well. If we retreat at this point, it won't turn into a defeat at least.

Though I was scared out of my wits by Earl Baumeister at the very end.

"Lord, our cherished big flag has..."

"How dare you, Earl Baumeister...!"

The traditional big flag of the Duke Nürnberg household was torn to shreds by Earl Baumeister's spell.

He didn't take my head, but I suppose he succeeded in declaring war against me.

"Hoist the spare flag and retreat speedily."

Even though it was a big flag that we put to use for many years. There's nothing that can be done. Something like a big flag can be replaced anytime, either way.

"The Duke Nürnberg household will be indestructible as long as I stay alive! Don't get disturbed over something like a big flag. We will withdraw as planned!"

"Certainly!"

My trained army was able to safely withdraw from the battlefield by taking a detour while showing absolutely no further discomposure.

"Lord, after all the imperial capital is..."

"They have done it properly just as planned, right?"

"There was no oversight."

My retainer answered my question.

"Then it's fine. It's a temporary cease-fire, but it will allow us to store some strength. It will be nice for Therese to suffer from having to deal with the capital and the trash living there."

Tough luck, Therese. Only the most worthless garbage is left behind in the capital. It will be wonderful for you to lose power as you will be forced to quarrel with them to the utmost.

"Let's retreat to the Nürnberg Dukedom then."

Everything is going according to my plan. Talrand's death is painful, but Therese, Earl Baumeister, I will have you allow me to realise my ambitions without fail.

And I will definitely kill you. So you better get ready for it.

\* \* \*

"... It failed, huh...?" (Wendelin)

As expected, directly sniping the supreme commander of a big army is difficult.

If it was possible to do it so easily, winning a war would be simple.

After replenishing my mana with my spare magic gems, I used 『Flight』 with the canceller owned by Talrand. I sniped at him from high in the air with void magic. Although I raised its power by also making use of the mana of the huge magic crystal I stole from Talrand, the layer of magicians around Duke Nürnberg is dense after all. It was completely blocked.

And once the effect of the canceller vanished, the black jewel broke into small pieces.

"Doushi!" (Wendelin)

"Leave it to me!" (Armstrong)

The falling me was caught by Doushi.

"It failed?" (Armstrong)

"I killed a few soldiers and magicians that were near Duke Nürnberg." (Wendelin)

"It can't be helped." (Armstrong)

It's inevitable for the protection of the supreme commander to be firm. The same applies to Therese as well.

"Wend, it doesn't look like we will be able to pursue them."

At that point Erw appeared, leading a part of the kingdom's forces, and informed me of that.

"Even if it's just one wing, the death of a commander hurts, eh?" (Wendelin)

"It was the number 3. I suppose Earl Lärmer was a famous soldier."

That means there were many nobles thinking that they don't want to suffer any unnecessary losses by pursuing Duke Nürnberg's feudal army that had managed to kill Earl Lärmer so quickly.

"The losses among the Mizuho army are insignificant, but it ended with them being unable to attack Duke Nürnberg's feudal army."

Haruka showed a mortified expression. She likely didn't expect for the consecutive victories of the Mizuho army, she considered to be strong, to be stopped by Duke Nürnberg in such way.

"Either way, we are stuck with wasting time on the reorganization of the collapsed left wing. A pursuit is impossible."

From his view as professional, Philip also judges a pursuit to not be viable.

Like this, the direct showdown between both armies came to an end with an outcome resembling a draw.

### **Chapter 3 – A Dark Horse Appears!**

"It was unexpected that he would use this move." (Armstrong)

"Now then, with this we are completely stuck here, aren't we?"

"Yeeeeeah, we missed the chance to run away."

Not just me, Doushi and Burkhart-san appeared to be bewildered as well.



The mortal combat against the main force of the rebel army led by Duke Nürnberg came to an end with a draw.

We succeeded in allowing master, who was summoned by Talrand, to go to heaven once more, but the liberation army lost Earl Lärmer, an excellent commander, and the left wing led by him suffered massive losses as well.

We caused considerable damage to the rebel army, but it was far away from being fatal.

Taking advantage of the chaos triggered by Earl Lärmer's death, Duke Nürnberg skillfully withdrew his soldiers.

The liberation army finished its army reorganisation and continued to advance carefully, but before long we learned of an unforeseen event.

According to a report, Duke Nürnberg abandoned the imperial capital.

When Therese hurriedly entered the capital, the emperor, who had been put under house arrest by Duke Nürnberg, arrogantly awaited her there.

『The crime of arbitrarily assembling the northern lords and advancing on this capital is heavy, but I won't question it given the circumstances.』 (Emperor)

『...』 (Therese)

『Duchess Philip, do you have some issue with me, the emperor?』 (Emperor)

『No, I was very glad to see that thee are safe and sound Thy Majesty...』 (Therese)

According to Alfons, being told that by His Majesty the Emperor, who stayed in the imperial palace, was a disaster with Therese completely losing her temper afterwards.

Well, that makes sense.

It's not like she desired the throne for herself, but even though she resolved herself and dealt with the civil war against Duke Nürnberg, Duke Nürnberg had allowed for the emperor to be reinstated as if it was a final, desperate tactic.

Why did Duke Nürnberg do something like that?

The reason is simple.

By splitting the anti-Nürnberg faction apart, it gives him the chance to crush each of the parties

individually.

『The other prince electors were all killed. Yet only the imperial family was kept alive. The members of the prince elector households probably suspected there was some kind of backdoor deal by the members of the imperial family. The emperor, who was clumsily caught in the coup d'etat, was released out of pity by Duke Nürnberg. The emperor lost most of his authority.』 (Alfons)

That means it was more useful for Duke Nürnberg to oppose Therese by allowing the emperor to be reinstated instead of killing him.

『Therese couldn't make a decision either... to drag down the emperor from his throne or not. I advised her to do so, but she rejected it.』 (Alfons)

The emperor being reinstated in this situation isn't anything good either.

He should abdicate allowing him to take responsibility for the coup d'etat with an extra legal measure... No, I guess it's impossible for the emperor, who lost face due to Duke Nürnberg, to step down by himself.

In other words, it was necessary for Therese to forcibly get rid of the emperor and to consolidate the anti-Nürnberg faction into one group.

『Therese... is it because she's a woman? Either way, we will return to our territory for the moment. His Majesty the Emperor plans to gather a large army and subjugate Duke Nürnberg after the harvest.』 (Alfons)

『After the harvest? That late?』 (Wendelin)

『That's only natural. After all, there's nothing left in the capital.』 (Alfons)

While the liberation and the rebel army fought, another part of Duke Nürnberg's army apparently finished taking away the empire's assets and a huge amount of goods, including food to the Nürnberg Dukedom on Duke Nürnberg's order.

In short, the current empire is as poor as a church mouse.

『So, even if he gathers a big army, the supplies won't last?』 (Wendelin)

『The national treasury is empty and there's no gold either. Do you actually think he would get any loans from merchants? Besides, we won't participate in the subjugation of Duke Nürnberg. No, I guess it's more correct to say that we aren't allowed to.』 (Alfons)

If Therese once again raised achievements during the subjugation of Duke Nürnberg, the emperor would be forced to take Therese into consideration after the war. There's also the matter of his own position being extremely weak. The emperor wants to defeat Duke Nürnberg while standing alone at the head of the army.

『Hah, that means we are leaving the capital no sooner than liberating it.』

I wonder whether that's not a case of a split forming, but it's impossible for Therese and the emperor to form a common united front.

Be that as it may, for him to have abandoned the capital after having thought ahead so far...

Duke Nürnberg really isn't an ordinary man.

『It looks like you will be summoned by the emperor as well, Wendelin.』 (Alfons)

『I wonder whether he will give me my reward?』 (Wendelin)

『It's better if you don't put too much hope into that.』 (Alfons)



Alfons' prediction was right. After the audience with the emperor, Urquhart the 17th, we spent our time idling around in the city of Sakart.

"Earl Baumeister, what's that?"

"A very appreciated reward!" (Wendelin)

"Isn't that a simple piece of clothing?" (Philip)

"What are you saying! Philip-dono! Look at this, this is a beloved piece of clothing of Urquhart the 11th, an ancestor of the Holy Empire Urquhart Restoration!" (Wendelin)

"In other words, you didn't get a tangible reward." (Christoph)

"Christoph-dono, does it make you happy to talk about the reality?"

Once I went to the imperial palace after being summoned by the emperor, I was given an old article of clothing, which was used by a past emperor, as a reward, and that was all.

It resembles the acts of daimyo in the Edo period, who took a loan from merchants, handing out honourable items (i.e. articles used by those daimyo) because of their inability to return the money. The emperor, who's trying to pay the soldiers with loans as the national treasury is empty, didn't have the leeway to hand me my reward.

"It's just an old piece of clothing."

"Maybe it has some special effect... No, I guess not... Burkhart-san, what do you think?" (Wendelin)

"I also couldn't find such a magical feature hidden within. Doushi, you think so too, right?" (Burkhart)

"It's only a piece of clothing!" (Armstrong)

"Elise, what about it actually having a fairly high value as a work of a famous past designer?" (Wendelin)

"No, dear. Its make is good, but I'm afraid to say, it's just an old piece of clothing." (Elise)

So the reward for me having done my very best so far is a single piece of clothing? If I hadn't mined in the abandoned mines, we would be deep in the red by now.

"I guess we have to cut our losses at this point. We already rescued all citizens of the kingdom."

All members of Earl Schultz' Friendship Visit Group were safe except for several magicians who were killed.

It was probably good that they didn't resist. They had been put under house arrest and so were able to safely join up with us.

There were also some different soldiers of the royal army who were now safely present (this group, led by Marquis Läger, was originally crushed by Duke Nürnberg near the beginning of the rebellion and were unable to escape together with Philip and Christoph).

These captured troops were put into a POW camp and then released after the capital's liberation.

Duke Nürnberg probably didn't want to go out of his way to take along prisoners who would only consume his food.

For this reason, more than 5,000 people of the kingdom were now gathered in the city of Sakart.

"I suppose calling it house arrest is the diplomatic way..."

From now on the emperor will be busy with his preparations to defeat Duke Nürnberg. So I suppose he won't allow any foreigners to stay at his side. Come to think of it, a part of the Mizuho army was also stationed in this city.

Though the bulk of their army and the nobles who had supported Therese had returned to their respective territories

『For him to be able to set up countermeasures against the magic guns and the magic katana. There's no other option but to get our war preparation in even better order until autumn.』

Earl Mizuho Country believes Duke Nürnberg to be an irreconcilable enemy.

There's also the matter of their state-of-the-art weapons not showing much of an effect in the previous battle. So the majority of their military forces returned home with the goal to strengthen their war preparations.

"Therefore it's probably no problem for us to go back as well."

"That's what you think, but we do have more than 5,000 people with us, you know..."

Since we can't use magic airships, our travel methods are limited. That's because that jamming device still continues to operate.

"And in addition, there is a message from His Majesty!"

Just as we were talking about our future plans, a "Speedy Priestess Girl" plunged in.

"It's been a while, Yulfa-san." (Elise)

"Elise-sama, you seem to be doing fine as well. Yulfa the Gale makes her entrance once again!" (Yulfa)

"I have a bad premonition..." (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister-sama, that can't be. Even though we met after so long." (Yulfa)

The message she brought will be bad because I'm almost 100% certain that it's an order to stay here.

"Is it by chance fine to return to the kingdom?"

"That's unlikely. 『The empire's situation still hasn't settled down. You shall stay and work in order for it to head in a direction advantageous for the kingdom while striving to gather intelligence.』 That's all of the message from His Majesty. Bye then!" (Yulfa)

"Hey!" (Wendelin)

Before I could stop her, Yulfa ran away at a frightening speed.

"She's sure quick, isn't she?"

"It's because she's a messenger of the church."

"That place employs good personnel, doesn't it?"

"Even if he tells us to gather intelligence, there are too many restrictions for us."

After all, we have been detained in Sakart.

I guess it's because it will be troublesome if rumours spread that I have been put under house arrest. It seems I'm allowed to go as far as shopping in the imperial capital, but while I'm under such groundless suspicion it will be dangerous to be in contact with Therese.

"Bah, under these circumstances gathering information or whatever is impossible."

"They are probably especially cautious of people heading north from Sakart. They suspect that you and Duchess Philip are conspiring together, Earl Baumeister."

I'm being watched by the emperor who's ought to be my ally.

"Luckily there are monster domains near the city of Sakart, so I think we can at least earn the costs of our own food."

"Umm... Earl Baumeister, it's extremely difficult for me to tell you, but..." (Christoph)

"What is it, Christoph-dono?" (Wendelin)

"I discussed it with Earl Schultz as well, but we don't have any money. Since Earl Schultz and his followers are nobles, they do intend to return the money they borrowed from you, but even that will only happen after we return to the kingdom. There are the soldiers to worry about as well."  
(Christoph)

"..." (Wendelin)

I must support more than 5,000 companions until the harvest in autumn.  
With there being no chance of getting our reward at the moment, I only hope that the civil war will come to an end as soon as possible.

\* \* \*

We decided to immediately go hunting in a small-scale monster domain near Sakart in order to support our companions while at the same time having some combat training.

Philip and the commissioned officers of the royal army took command and taught Erw how to manoeuvre troops.

It's in-service training and education with Erw's future in mind.

"I see. Using military forces to exterminate monsters, such a method exists as well." (Erwin)

"If monsters attack in a group, you'll have to start with amassing troops to make it possible to deal with. You split them into several smaller units, then have them invade and attack from different locations while leaving the hunted monsters to a team of collection specialists. But even if it's only small groups, the monster activity will intensify if they stay in the monster domain for too long, so you have to make sure that they don't stay longer than a set time. It's also important to avoid losses by controlling the troops fatigue through the periodic replacement of the platoons." (Philip)

"Having a great number of smaller units moving in concert is difficult." (Erwin)

"You will get used to it. The command of a platoon will be taken by the platoon leader, several platoon leaders will be led by a company commander, several company commanders will be led by a battalion leader... well, that's the rough idea... leave the command on-site to your subordinates. It's fine for us to only give broad orders." (Philip)

"I see..." (Erwin)

"It's no use being so impatient. It's alright to get slowly accustomed to it." Philip told Erw.

"The reorganisation and improvement of the kingdom's forces is going well. The sole worry is that Wend... ah sorry, master is only making losses." (Erwin)

"I think they feel guilty about it, but if you put it in aristocratic terms, everyone owes big favours to Earl Baumeister. These kind of invisible obligations are very important for nobles. Aside from us, who have already failed, I think that Earl Schultz and his group are regretting it." (Philip)

"Because they created a debt towards master?" (Erwin)

"Yes. Well then, withdraw the forces slowly. There's still the dismantling of the hunted monsters left." (Philip)

"Yes." (Erwin)



"... I'm boored." (Wendelin)

"It won't serve as training if you fight, Earl Baumeister. It's plenty enough for the supreme commander to just stand there."

Just in case I participated as well, but as it wouldn't be much of a training session if I fight, so I had only spare time, unable to do anything.  
Though it looks like Erw and Philip spent their time meaningfully...



Duke Nürnberg has retreated to his territory and the emperor is completely devoting himself to the preparations for the subjugation of Duke Nürnberg.  
Naturally, the situation shifted into a cease-fire.  
The problem was what would happen after the autumn harvest was finished, but as I was thinking about such things, a messenger from the capital visited me.

"An inspection? They are sure on guard against you, Earl-sama." (Burkhart)

"An inspection or whatever else, I feel like telling them to do as they please." (Wendelin)

Even if they investigate us, they won't find anything incriminating, but the emperor likely fears me joining with Therese to oppose him.  
But, please don't worry. Currently, Therese and I have completely stopped contacting each other. We aren't even exchanging letters. After all, it would only serve to make the emperor suspicious. Therese has probably also been told by her retainers to stop getting in touch with me.  
Without doing anything in particular, I spend my days calmly.  
Though the money just keeps decreasing.  
While those quiet days carried on, the inspection team was finalized and sent enroute to us from the capital.

"An inspection group? What kind of people will come?" (Elise)

"Who knows?" (Wendelin)

Elise asked me while pouring tea in my cup during our mid-afternoon snack, but now that she asks, I wonder who will come?  
Though I feel like it doesn't really matter.  
Today it's a cake hand-made by Elise? The moderate sweetness is really delicious.

"You should worry about who's coming."

"Even if I worried, there's nothing I can do about it, right? Those who come will come." (Wendelin)

"That's true, but..."

"Erw-san, even if that inspection group schemes to do something strange, it will be fine as we are here." (Haruka)

"You are right there, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

He's properly doing his duty as my guard, but Erw looks very joyful whenever Haruka is nearby. He reveals a slovenly smile as he has her pour him some tea.

"Stay on guard! But since half of the reason for the inspection group is for harassment, I believe the danger to be manageable." (Takeomi)

Takeomi-san, who is even now serving as my guard, instantly vented his anger at Erw like a fierce fighting demon and then stated his own opinion.

"Since Haruka and I will be there as your guards, you can meet them with complete peace of mind." (Takeomi)

"You know, I will be there as well." (Erwin)

Due to Erw's casual words, Takeomi-san vented his anger once more at Erw, but it seems that Erw is already used to it by now. He doesn't seem to mind.

"It's because Haruka and I will be there." (Takeomi)

He said it twice because it's important, that's the impression I get.

"Umm... Takeomi-san, what about me?" (Erwin)

"I guess we need a meat shield in case something bad happens." (Takeomi)

"..."



And then, several days later, the rumoured inspection group arrived. Information about the leader of the inspection group came in slowly as well, and to our surprise, it seems that to be the third son of the emperor.

"Don't get fed up meeting him just because he's the emperor's third son."

I really wonder what kind of person he is?

"What type of person is he?" (Elise)

"He has commoner-like parts because of his commoner mother. Since he often spends his time

playing around in the capital, he's called 『Disgrace of the Imperial Family』, and also 『Commoner Prince』." (Penz)

In addition, he has been leading a group of commoner children, and noble children of third or lower rank. They are apparently treated as a gang of hoodlums by the emperor and the high-ranking nobles. Sakart's governor Penz, who is going to greet him together with us, informed us about the emperor's third son. Since he's a man, he gladly answered the question of the young and beautiful Elise.

"Good grief."

As we were waiting for the inspection group in front of the mansion where we are staying, Erw, Haruka and Takeomi-san became tense. And then, at almost the same time, Doushi, Katharina, Burkhart-san and I became tense as well.

"Erw?"

"That's an interesting idea, isn't it? If it's the empire's prince-sama, he has his guards scatter bloodthirst?"

"Looks like it. Haruka, don't be careless, okay?" (Takeomi)

"Yes." (Haruka)

Does the emperor's third son belong to the armed struggle faction unlike his father?  
It's unpleasant as he seems to test our side.  
Moreover, us magicians felt another provocation.

"So there are magicians who can properly measure up to Katharina-jou. Right, Doushi?" (Burkhart)

"If one is the emperor's third son, he will have excellent magicians as guards!" (Armstrong)

Right, we began to be cautious after noticing the existence of a magician, who emitted their mana into the surroundings in a provocative manner.

"This isn't a pissing contest, so can you stop with these kinds of tests?" (Wendelin)

I didn't have any intention to butter up to someone like the emperor's third son. Even if we were to have a dispute here, I don't really feel anything, besides maybe that this will give me a reason allowing me to return to the kingdom.

"As expected of the kingdom's cream of the crop. You aren't lacking in excellent personnel either, huh...? Mark, Emera, you can stop."

A boy of around the same age as me with a rough appearance showed up in front of us. Behind him were people that seemed to be his subordinates. Among them are a young swordsman, whose capability can indeed be sensed – albeit he looks meek with his black hair at first glance, and a young female magician, who has her light green hair cut short and looks to be around 20 years old. These two should be the offenders who provoked us.

"Mark, Emera, you've put him on guard."

"Your Highness. Earl Baumeister-sama is famous as a magician who's on equal terms with Armstrong-doushi, the kingdom's ultimate weapon. There's no way he wouldn't perceive this level of provocation." (Emera)

The female magician answered the boy with an expression as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

"A magician knows about magicians, eh? No wonder that he killed those four idiotic brothers."

If one is the emperor's third son, they will have access to a reasonable amount of information, huh? Though to be precise, it wasn't only me who killed them.

"Those morons were highly appraised for having a large amount of mana. They were really full of themselves and even began to meddle with my Emera, so thank you for having killed them."

"It's not like I killed all of them though." (Wendelin)

"You are an honest one, aren't you Earl Baumeister?"

The stupid quadruplet changed sides to the rebel army. Even if I admit to us having killed them, I don't think it's possible for the emperor to blame us for that crime.

"(Hey, Wend.)" (Erwin)

"(What's up?)" (Wendelin)

"(I don't think that I can win against that guy?)" (Erwin)

"(I wonder? It certainly looks like he's amazingly strong, but...)"

Erw whispered into my ear that he can't win against that young swordsman called Mark.

"(If it's us three, there's no way that we will lose.)"

"(In short, you just have to accomplish your duty as master's guard.)"

Is that swordsman's skill in swordsmanship possibly even higher than that of Takeomi-san and Haruka?

If that's the case, they have employed an amazing guard there. Is it for the sake of preventing an assassination because he's a prince-sama?

"I don't think there's any swordsman in the empire who can win against Mark. Since he's protecting me, I have lent him my cherished sword."

Certainly, the swordsman called Mark has an orichalcum-made sword equipped. I guess that's only natural for a prince, despite his mother being a commoner.

"Well, given that the shitty old man's calibre isn't high enough to entrust me with an orichalcum sword, I had to obtain it through my own means."

The emperor's third son spits that out as if having read my thoughts. Although he just looks like a spoiled young master, he seems to be quite sharp.

Even so, calling his own father, the emperor, 『shitty old man』, won't that become a problem? (ED: Even if it makes everyone feel better?)

"Earl Baumeister... Hmmm, that's way too stiff for me. Since you're around my age, I'm gonna call you Wendelin. Wendelin, just call me Peter. I don't like being addressed with Your Highness."  
(Peter)

And then the emperor's third son, Peter, becomes friendly with me. Is there something behind that? Does he maybe intend to betray me after drawing out a rebellious spirit towards the emperor from me?

"Huh? Even if you ask me why, I really just want to be on friendly terms with you though, Wendelin..." (Peter)

"Isn't that difficult, if you consider your position, Your Highness?" (Emera)

The female magician Emera quietly whispered into the emperor's third son's ear.

"It's not like I'm nearly as important as Wendelin thinks though... Because my mother was a commoner, I'm treated like a disease by the shitty old man and my elder brothers. Aha! I get it now! They think I came to keep an eye on Wendelin's group, right?" (Peter)

The emperor's third son displayed a sudden expression of comprehension.

"I'm not going to do something useless like monitoring you guys. My shitty old man doesn't have enough help so he asked me to go on an inspection, but I don't have any spare time to deal with anything other than my own stuff. But, when I was ordered to Go to Sakart, I guess I felt How lucky. Plus, you know..." (Peter)



What did the emperor's third son come here for if it's not for watching us?

"I mean, it's not like it's necessary for me to fuss about people looking to be crushed by Duke Nürnberg, right?" (Peter)

.....!!.....

We received a big shock due to the emperor's third son's remark. Even Doushi couldn't say anything and stayed silent.

"Huh? Isn't it obvious? Don't you think the same, Wendelin?" (Peter)

I expected that the emperor will lose, but it was truly unexpected for his own blood-related child to say that.

"Even in the imperial palace, the rumour is going around that my shitty old man split up Duchess Philip and you, Earl Baumeister, because he's afraid of having his throne stolen if you two join forces. To top it off he's told you that you aren't allowed to participate in the Duke Nürnberg subjugation. I wonder what he's planning by lowering his own chances to win? I mean, even I was told to stay away since my poor achievements are overshadowed by my elder brothers, but I think I'm lucky that I don't have to fight a losing battle against Duke Nürnberg in my first campaign. There's no way that the shitty old man, who's never even led any military forces, and my ass-kissing elder brothers will be able to win anyway." (Peter)

This guy seems to be quite unhappy with his father and his elder brothers. No, has he given up on them after getting fed up?

"I might report to the emperor that you are planning to cause unrest, Your Highness." (Wendelin)

"Hahaha, that's a good one. Even though you hate my shitty old man as well, Wendelin." (Peter)

I guess this level of threatening won't disturb him.

"Your Highness... no, Peter, what are you scheming?" (Wendelin)

"I suppose I'm aiming for the next emperor's position with a BAAAAANG here?" (Peter)

Due to the unforeseen reply, everyone except for Peter surveyed the vicinity. If someone close to the emperor had heard that, it would have been a serious issue.

"It's alright. Penz keeps such people away after all. Isn't that so?" (Peter)

"Yes." (Penz)

Penz, who had introduced us, answered Peter's question curtly. I thought that he was a man who is just good at begging me to do public works whenever I had free time, but he was connected to Peter?

"Wendelin, that's a misunderstanding. Penz' family is inhering the post of Sakart's governor for

many generations now. And because he does love this city, he's unhappy with the shitty old man."  
(Peter)

"Really?" (Wendelin)

"Is that why you formed a connection to Peter?" I asked Penz.

"The current Emperor is penniless and only treats those who obey him favourably, by appointing them to important offices. He keeps at a distance those who give him advice he doesn't want to hear. There's no future for him." (Penz)

I guess that means there's discontent smouldering amongst the areas under the direct control of the empire because the emperor is busily advancing the subjugation of Duke Nürnberg. Even though they wish for a budget to begin reconstruction, since their condition isn't really good due to the civil war, the emperor spends all the money on military preparations. It will be alright if he succeeds, but bystanders like Penz doubt that the emperor will win.

"That's why Peter?"

"Her Excellency Duchess Philip gave away the victory by herself." (Penz)

"I know, right? It would have been fine if Duchess Philip had dragged the old shitty man off the throne right after entering the capital." (Peter)

"That probably wouldn't have ended well for you either, Peter."

"You're wrong. It would've been dangerous to suddenly destroy the imperial family, but a likely scenario would have me, the third son succeed the household after trimming down its scale. In that case, even if I tried to oppose Duchess Philip, someone at my level wouldn't be able to serve as a figurehead, right? The high-ranking nobles are particular about blood, so they wouldn't be able to use me who's a half-commoner. Thus, I would have led the life of an insignificant noble with Mark and the others while making out with Emera, or some nonsense like that." (Peter)

I guess Peter always thinks about a plan that allows him to survive, no matter the situation. It's quite likely that Therese would have given her approval if she had received such a request from Peter.

"Your Highness, it's impossible for me and Your Highness to make out." (Emera)

"Ahaha, you're still quite shy, aren't you Emera?" (Peter)

"I'm not shy." (Emera)

Being told that frigidly by Emera, it looks like even Peter is unable to have his way with her.

"For me even that is also fine though... If I know have a chance, it makes me want to struggle. Once the shitty old man has been defeated by Duke Nürnberg, the capital will be without a ruler for a short while. Even if Duchess Philip, who is staying in her territory due to the paranoia of the shitty old man, rushes over, she won't be in time. It's set in stone that the capital will be occupied by Duke

Nürnberg first. If that happens..." (Peter)

Therese might lose. Or the civil war might be prolonged.

"Accordingly I will grasp the capital, which will be in a daze due to the old shitty man dying, in one go. Sakart is the perfect location for that." (Peter)

If he schemes something like that in the capital, he might be discovered.  
On the other hand, I suppose it's a disadvantage to be as far away from the capital as Therese currently is.

"I'm going to ask something rude, but Peter, do you have the power to do that?" (Wendelin)

"Since I still have some time until the shitty old man sends out his soldiers, I will plan with this place as my base. You will help me as well, right Wendelin?" (Peter)

"Why do you think so?" (Wendelin)

Normally you wouldn't request something like that from a foreign noble.

"After all, you feel disappointed with Duchess Philip after she made such careless mistake, no? Even though you wanted to receive your reward and return to your own territory, Wendelin. Do you think that the king, who's making you stay here, wants something like an imperial territory that's a lot of trouble to govern? You want to focus on the development of the Savage Lands, don't you?" (Peter)

Even while he says that he has no power, Peter is skilled at gathering information and predicting the thinking of others.

"The empire is exhausted due to the civil war and thus it won't have the leeway to look elsewhere for a while, you know? I guess an investigation of the northern area would be the limit?"

If I became emperor, I would put stress on reconciling with the Helmut Kingdom and devote myself to the domestic affairs for a while.

All right. If it goes on like this, we won't be able to return to the kingdom anyway.

I will bet on Peter's possibilities and pray that the civil war will end as soon as possible.

Of course, in preparation for the time when Peter fails, I will keep the possibility called Therese in stock.

"Though, even if it's a very unlikely event, the emperor still might win." (Wendelin)

"No, no. No matter how big an army, it's meaningless the moment it's commanded by an amateur. It would still be fine if the other side's commander was an amateur as well, but we are talking about that Duke Nürnberg here. No way. My shitty old man can't ride a horse after all. Plus it's not like he has extraordinary command abilities or charisma either. The shitty old man's death is a done deal." (Peter)

Is he droll or cruel? I'm a bit troubled here how to assess the man known as Peter.

"I think we'll associate with each other for a long time to come, Wendelin, so best regards." (Peter)

He doesn't seem to be a bad guy as a human. He has ability, but just hasn't been blessed by his environment.

I decided to try betting on Peter, the third candidate, in order to return to the kingdom as fast as possible.



"Wendelin, let's go together." (Peter)

"Are you a child!?" (Wendelin)

"What does it matter. We're going to the same place anyway. Let's go while having a friendly chat as close buddies." (Peter)

Peter had been sent by the emperor to monitor us, but he was a treacherous son for the imperial family. He has predicted the death of his father and elder brothers, and is aiming for the position of next emperor by being the one to fill the vacuum of political power when they die.

Today I was scheduled to go to the encampment of the section of the Mizuho army that was stationed in Sakart.

To put it simply, it will be a backdoor negotiation, but Peter turned up at my mansion as if he was a grade schooler inviting a friend to go out with him. A few days after they had confiscated an inn in the city of Sakart, we have been hunting together and are also sharing our meals. Publicly it looks as if he's watching us, but since Peter himself is in reality the one who's the most disobedient towards the emperor, I can only laugh about it all.

"(Say, is that Highness really alright?)" Erw asked me with a quiet whisper.

However, Erw seems to distrust Peter.

"(His Highness is certainly skilled at talking, but I suppose he's a bit shady.)"

"(That's certainly true.)"

"(Can you live with that?)"

"(While we are at it, I guess he's shameless, too.)" (Wendelin)

"(Wend, you are going that far with your words?)" (Erwin)

"(That's why he's fine.)" (Wendelin)

Therese and Peter, both possess qualities suitable for an emperor. Then why do I believe Peter to be the more suitable as emperor from among those two?

The reason is because Peter is shameless and headstrong.

"(For that reason?)" (Erwin)

"(These attributes are important.)" (Wendelin)

If I tried to name Therese's weak points, it would be her noble birth and her uprightness. Even though she decided that she will have to become the next empress, she would abide by the law and wouldn't get rid of the emperor as long as he's alive. Although she should have steeled herself to remove him, and thus bear the stigma of regicide, she couldn't do so. Certainly, Therese had her own share of troubles in order to obtain an autocratic authority in the Duke Philip household, but in the end, her basis is that of a pure ojousama. The fact that she doesn't come to visit me currently also supports that conclusion. If she really desired me, she should have come to meet me even if she had to travel incognito. She once said that she's bad at giving up, but that was all talk since the one who actually gave up quickly was Therese. On the other hand, Peter is bad at giving up. When he thought that there was a possibility for Therese to become empress, he planned to negotiate with Therese to be allowed to get a house and keep his comrades without opposing the removal of his father and his brothers. Even though he approved of Therese's ruling power at one moment in time, he approached me in the next moment as if seeing a chance once she failed.

"(He hasn't any integrity, has he?)" (Erwin)

"(I'm telling you, that's why he's okay. Although he would be no good in a peaceful era, the empire is currently in a civil war. If he hasn't at least this much spunk...)" (Wendelin)

"(Since I don't understand such things, I will trust you on it, Wend. Surely, that Highness doesn't appear to be one that will die that simply.)" (Erwin)

"Wendelin, Erwin, what are you talking about?" (Peter)

"That it looks like you won't die even if you're killed." (Wendelin)

"Don't embarrass me. You don't have to praise me so much." (Peter)

"Eh!? That was praise?" (Erwin)

"Those are no words of praise, are they? If humans die, it's the end."

We arrived at the Mizuho army's encampment while having such a conversation.



"Earl Baumeister, I heard that you have an interesting offer today." (Mizuho)

High Earl Mizuho had come incognito to the headquarters of the Mizuho army stationed in Sakart. It was a secret we even kept from Therese.

For that reason, he has travelled until here with Hanzou and the minimum amount of guards.

"The rumoured commoner prince-dono, huh?" (Mizuho)

"I'm glad to meet you, High Earl Mizuho. Let's get along well with each other." (Peter)

"Get along, huh...? Hmm, very well. I won't cut my connection with Therese-dono though."  
(Mizuho)

"After all she still holds a lot of power. I also have things I failed at, so I think it's only natural to have connections with both sides." (Peter)

I promised Peter to cooperate with him as much as possible in today's meeting behind closed doors with High Earl Mizuho.

The emperor, of course, but even getting exposed by Therese would be terrible, however High Earl Mizuho accepted my proposal. As expected, Therese not having removed the emperor had an effect on him.

"I guess first I will deepen the exchange with the Mizuho army stationed in Sakart. I will request from the shitty old man that I also need some troops to intensify the surveillance." (Peter)

"Will you get a permission to form a military force?"

"I think I will. My shitty old man is on guard in regards to you two, Earl Baumeister and High Earl Mizuho. On the other hand, he doesn't doubt me. It's because he sees me as worthless hanger-on... I guess there's also the fact that I'm his son." (Peter)

For the sake of not being doubted by his father and his elder brothers, Peter took actions that were inappropriate for a member of the imperial family even while gathering excellent personnel. Especially from the viewpoint of his elder brothers, they would have to get rid of him as a rival if Peter had been rumoured to be suitable as next emperor.

That means Peter's typically casual behaviour had such an aim as well.

"Well, as for me, I'm troubled by Duke Nürnberg and the current emperor as well." (Mizuho)

While saying so, High Earl Mizuho made an eye signal to a guard standing in the rear. Thereupon, that guard took out a worn-out helmet from the wooden box he held.

"Have a look, Earl Baumeister. This is the reward for me having cooperated in the liberation of the capital. I hear it was the favourite helmet of a former emperor." (Mizuho)

I remember having heard a similar story somewhere.

"Huh? Isn't this pieced together?" (Peter)

"You have good eyes, Your Highness. As expected, I got slightly angry. I cut it into two with a katana after letting my anger get the better of me. Afterwards I had Kanesada repair it though."  
(Mizuho)

Kanesada-san is also capable of repairing armour?

"It's nice to have technology, isn't it? But you don't have to mind it that much? You know, I wore this helmet during my childhood and crashed into a pillar while playing. The dent here is my doing. Also, the imperial family didn't keep it stored that securely. Saying this is a reward is pretty cruel."  
(Peter)

"Hahaha! Aren't you a bold one, Your Highness?! I like that." (Mizuho)

It looks like High Earl Mizuho was pleased with Peter.

"The rest is getting everything prepared as far as possible until the Duke Nürnberg subjugation starts after the harvest."

"The beginning of the end, huh?"

"Indeed, it's better you don't entertain the impossible dream of my shitty old man winning and sorting out the empire. You'll just end up in the same nightmare that he will." (Peter)

Peter succeeded in his secret talk with High Earl Mizuho and settled down in Sakart for the sake of taking action to be the next emperor.

## **Chapter 4 – Punitive Force, Departing to the Front**

"Given that the harvest finished, the punitive force against Duke Nürnberg is going to depart at last, right?"

"Seems so."



Several months passed since Peter's group came to the city of Sakart. The season changed to autumn and it was time for harvesting the crops. Finishing the harvest and tax collection, the emperor will finally lead the big army he prepared and invade the Nürnberg Dukedom. Combined with the logistical support personnel, the punitive force amounts to 500,000 in total. Since it's an overwhelmingly large army, the emperor probably feels quite confident. Advance parties seem to be departing the capital almost daily now.

"It looks like my elder brothers have departed first. Dressed up in sparkling armour and together with the high-ranking nobles following the emperor. After having been seen off by a great number of citizens, they probably feel like they have already won." (Peter)

If they watch military forces led by extravagantly dressed nobles departing to the front every day, even the most cynical residents of the capital will believe the victory of the punitive force to be set in stone. As a matter of fact, the most reliable method to win in a war is to amass a bigger army than the enemy. It's quite normal for an ordinary person to think that they won't lose if they see an imperial army of 500,000 soldiers.

"If you raise a big army, it will boost your chances of winning, but you can't win with just that, right? Since Duke Nürnberg is ready and lying in wait for them, I wonder just how many of them will actually be able to come back home safely? Elise-san, seconds please." (Peter)

"Here you are." (Elise)

"Elise-san, you're quite the chef, aren't you? But, my Emera won't lose to you in that regard. It's a shame I'm so busy now, otherwise I'd get to enjoy my gorgeous wife's cooking." (Peter)

"I believe I won't cook for you even in the future, and before that, I'm not your wife to begin with, Your Highness." (Emera)

"That's a talk for the future." (Peter)

"Even later on, the possibility of that happening is zero." (Emera)

Peter came to eat with us while bringing Emera and Mark along, but Emera's attitude towards Peter is just as usual. Even so, because she's energetically working for him as his retainer, she's probably giving Peter a high evaluation as lord. On the other hand, Mark is silently eating his meal. It's odd... although he is just eating his stew, one can easily feel his competency through even the simplest of actions. It seems no wonder that even Takeomi-san can't win.

"Mark-san, how about another helping?" (Elise)

"... Thank you." (Mark)

When asked by Elise, he silently held out his empty stew plate; rather I feel it's been a while since I heard this person talk... Amongst our group, the image prevails that he only talks once per month.

"Wow, that's rare. For Mark to want a second helping..." (Peter)

"Is that so?"

"Mark's really particular about the taste." (Peter)

"Taste is important. The clarity of all of your five senses is also related to your sword skills."  
(Haruka)

"Yeah, that idea. Mark told me the same thing a while ago." (Peter)

Peter approved of Haruka's remark and even Mark quietly nodded his head in consent.

"If Mark has a single issue with the food, he usually won't eat it. Though I've heard he never has a problem with his wife's cooking." (Peter)

Is there actually a wife that can meet the demands of such a picky eater? I wonder what kind of person she is?

"I know there's a bunch of people who want to quickly get back to their families, but you'll have to be patient for a little longer." (Peter)

"Were you told by the emperor to protect the capital?"

"That part's a bit complicated, I guess. There's a separate garrison in the capital, right? We've been stationed in the capital's outskirts so we'll be ready to handle any emergencies and maintain public order – or at least that's the 'official' reason." (Peter)

The reason why Peter and the others came to our mansion today is because he had been summoned by the emperor.  
It looks like he was given some kind of duty which is why he came to consult with us.

"In reality, he's just worried that the stationed troops of the Mizuho army and your kingdom forces will enter the capital during his absence, isn't he Wendelin? That paranoia is also the reason why he ordered me to raise an army." (Peter)

It appears that the emperor wants to restrain my movements no matter what. Even though all he had to do was to tell us to go back to the kingdom.

Originally Peter was dispatched to Sakart in order to monitor us, but he got the emperor's permission to build an army.

During these months, he gathered a military force surpassing 5,000 soldiers. Since the emperor has no leeway because of the preparations for Duke Nürnberg's subjugation, there were barely any funds or goods provided to Peter; somehow I ended up being the one to lend these to Peter.

Peter also assembled some very capable personnel, including his leading staff. He welcomed Popek, a former imperial soldier, as his chief of staff. Many other ex-soldiers then joined in with Popek acting as an intermediary.

Particularly of note was the participation of a person called Associate Baron Gilbert Kättern von Bonnhof, who retired from the imperial army in order to succeed his territory.

He was so excellent as a soldier that he even possessed the nickname 『General of Monstrous Strength』, but with his peerage being low, he wasn't regarded well by the commissioned officers originating from high-ranking noble households. Then his elder brother, who had succeeded the peerage, and his family fell victim to a plague. Making use of the opportunity, he retired from the imperial army.

Being a great warrior on the level of Doushi, he was entrusted with command over the troops Peter had mustered because of Popek, who had been the Associate Baron's senpai in the imperial army.

The organisation and training of Peter's army advanced well and in order to ascertain their progress, a few days ago, they carried out a military operation to liberate a monster domain in the vicinity of Sakart, alongside the kingdom forces and the Mizuho army.

The boss, 『Rainbow Assault』, that possessed a rainbow-coloured shell which blocked all attacks, was killed by Wilma's special sniper rifle. Peter's army played an active role in the mop-up battle with the monsters left in the region of Sakart, and succeeded in making its name known to the citizens of the empire.

Though it seems that the emperor looked very sullen when Peter reported the outcome to him.

He probably was unable to stomach Peter obtaining deeds of arms before his cherished elder brothers who have a good lineage. Even so, there's no way he could have spoken ill of that. I hear that the Emperor praised Peter with a stiff expression.

He apparently announced that he will assign the liberated monster domain as Peter's territory once the subjugation of Duke Nürnberg is over.

He's making Peter, whose blood was stained with commoner blood, become independent as a noble. The emperor seems to believe that doing this much is a kindness.

"Camping, huh? I don't particularly mind, but somehow it's a little..." (Erwin)

Erw, who is advancing the preparations in the encampment in Sakart's outskirts in order to head to the capital, grumbles, but I have the same feelings about it. Just what does that emperor think people are?

"We have to deal with it for just a bit longer. He won't come back anyway." (Peter)

"Your Highness Peter, what about the slim possibility of the emperor managing to escape?" (Erwin)

"No chance in hell. Duke Nürnberg is going out of his way to carefully and thoroughly pull that shitty old man into his own territory after all." (Peter)

I suppose it means that Duke Nürnberg will focus on a defensive battle with the killing of the

emperor and his sons as the first objective. It won't be any problem if the other soldiers disperse and escape. Or rather, there's no need to pointlessly kill them since he can use them as his own soldiers when he reorganises his troops afterwards.

"You are that confident of it?" (Wendelin)

"Duke Nürnberg is excellent as a soldier. On the other hand, the shitty old man's military abilities are non-existent. The more time the other side had, the more thorough their preparations will be. I don't think there'll be any oversights. Wendelin, let's hurry our own preparations for the outing, okay?" (Peter)

"You're right." (Wendelin)



The next day, we departed to the capital while leading our military forces.

Peter's forces are commanded by Associate Baron Bonnhof, who was most of the time called Gilbert-san. The kingdom's forces are under Philip's command with Erw leading a unit of 1,000 soldiers.

The stationed troops of the Mizuho army were led by a chief vassal of the family called Munekazu Tachibana Mizuho.

Since Doushi, Burkhart-san, Elise and the other wives travelled together with me, the management of Sakart has been left to Penz and Earl Schultz. The command of the troops staying behind won't pose any problem as we entrusted it to Popek and a person scouted by him.

"Everyone will come to the capital soon anyway..." (Peter)

Peter mumbles by himself in the headquarters established in the outskirts of the capital.

"The shitty old man is probably cheerful that his special palanquin has been completed. It's pretty shabby to show off like a big shot when he's the last one to leave." (Peter)

"That's harsh, Your Highness." (Armstrong)

"Doushi, the ones standing at the top need to have qualifications befitting that position." (Peter)

"Hmm, I guess that's true..." (Armstrong)

Having been allowed to enter the capital, we watched from a distance as the emperor, on his luxurious palanquin, and his troops depart for the front.

"That luxurious palanquin will immediately change into a coffin!" (Armstrong)

"Doushi, don't be so blunt." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san gave an honest retort to Doushi's statement.

Given that I hate the emperor, I entered the headquarters after throwing a short glance at the display

without any kind of interest.

The spectacle of these splendid military forces departing one after another caused the capital's residents, who hadn't had much of any uplifting news since the rebellion started, to kick up a fuss as if watching a festival parade. If they wait a bit longer, there will likely be an uproar after receiving notice of the big defeat, but there's no need to tell them ahead of time.

Let's work hard at keeping the public order around the capital as ordered by the emperor, for now.



"Those with minor injuries, this way." (Katharina)

"I mended the bone, but please take a rest for several days." (Elise)

"Is there no one who will accept my healing?" (Armstrong)

At the same time of maintaining public order, Katharina, Elise and Doushi carry out a Healing Tour around farm villages and similar.

"Being a crop thief is not allowed. You have to buy it. Hah? You are going to resist? Then I will have you faint."

"Crop thieves are treated as scoundrels among us."

"Why, us by these two wenches?"

Since most of the imperial army has departed, gangs planning to carry out misconduct have appeared.

Luise and Wilma work diligently at exposing criminals.

"My skills went up considerably." (Erwin)

"That's correct, Erw-san." (Haruka)

Erw and Haruka are earnestly making an effort in the training of their unit under Philip.

"Erw, this food request document has a mistake in its calculation." (Ina)

"Eh? Really?" (Erwin)

"If you make a mistake in the final totalling, it all comes to nothing. Look, here." (Ina)

"It's true..." (Erwin)

Ina helps out with the army's administration.

"And I'm doing secret manoeuvres to lay the foundation for my time to rise." (Peter)

Peter sent out his retainers as messengers all over the capital.

"With whom are you negotiating?"

"Decent soldiers of the imperial army." (Peter)

There were many excellent imperial soldiers who followed Duke Nürnberg, but there were just as many who detested him.

Being quite capable, they raised objections to the emperor's simplistic strategy of trying to win with just numbers. Because of that, there are many who were demoted to rear supply units or the units left behind to guard the capital. Peter was busy getting in touch with them.

"Did you induce their demotion by having them protest against the emperor?" (Wendelin)

"Never! I just hate to see capable people dying in vain. Since there are many who are lower-ranking nobles and commoners, they won't say something like 『To a death full of glory!』. Having said that, I'm not completely unrelated to all of this; I go around and advertise my presence to those who also dislike Duke Nürnberg. Since Popek and Gilbert are with me as well, the connections are flawless." (Peter)

I guess that means he has taken in excellent on-site officers while he can.

"The rest are... coming soon, I think?"

"It's been a while, Your Highness."

"Oh my, Earl Baumeister-sama. Are you taking it easy after being released from Therese?"

Peter's collaborator showed up along with one more person. As it turns out, the collaborator is the boss of the slum quarters located in the capital's west, and an excellent healing magician who bears the nickname 『Mister Baron』. The likely theory for his nickname was that he got it for being an offspring of a certain noble household, but the truth remains unknown.

He runs a hospital in the slums and gets heavily supported by the slums' residents.

The one who accompanied him was an elderly man called Randolph, who set up a vigilante corps in order to protect 『Mister Baron』, and was actually a member of the Lan tribe. A long time ago, when Therese and her elder brothers had a power struggle, he was exiled from the Philip Dukedom as a consequence of him backing her elder brothers.

Randolph, who was exiled together with his family, drifted into the slums, and due to their poor life, his child fell ill. Feeling a debt of gratitude to Mister Baron who saved his child then, he formed the vigilante corps from there. Randolph was apparently a chief retainer, and so he trained the slums' volunteers up to a skill level that they won't lose to a feudal army.

The emperor didn't see their value, but they possess a scale as a combat force that one shouldn't take lightly.

Mister Baron has a deep connection with the Catholic church, to which 30% of the capital's residents belong. Peter succeeded in landing him as a retainer. Their first negotiation ended terribly after Peter was asked 『Is there any benefit in following you?』, but he ended up joining Peter with the condition that he will be given the liberated monster domain as his territory.

"Yo, Mister Baron. How's the situation over at the western wall?" (Peter)

"Thank you for the assistance with the materials, funds, food and arms. The repairs are going well."  
(Mister Baron)

The western wall, where the slum is located, was originally broken in several places. It's because the slums' residents can't survive if they don't go outside through these gaps to go hunting or farming. Since it will be broken down again if they repair it, the empire has left it as is. As that place would definitely become a weak point upon Duke Nürnberg's attack, Peter requested Mister Baron repair the wall on the condition that Peter provides aid for the slums.

"Your Highness, you are quite the rich person, aren't you?"

"Hahaha, my sponsor is wealthy." (Peter)

Right, the materials, arms, food and funds sent to the slums were provided by merchants who are Peter's friends, but the one covering the bills was me.

By spending money here and there, Peter has taken up quite the hefty loan from me.

Peter reported 『I have deceived Earl Baumeister and piled up loans to weaken his financial power. Since, he comes from low-ranking nobility, he happily lent me the money after hearing that I'm a prince.』 to the emperor to lull him into relief. He's quite the schemer.

"There's probably no one in the empire who's drowning in higher debts than me." (Peter)

"I guess it will be alright if you have borrowed such a large amount of money." (Mister Baron)

Even after learning of Peter having an enormous debt, Mister Baron didn't show the slightest hint of worry.

"Borrowing that much is the reason."

"Usually one will get flustered if it's a debt of around 100,000 cents, but if you end up borrowing more than one hundred million cents, you can't do anything about it no matter how much you struggle."

"Won't it be fine if you shirk the payment in the worst case?" (Randolph)

"And why would I do that, Randolph?" (Peter)

Peter sharply rejected Randolph's suggestion.

"See here, it's something I have privately borrowed from Wendelin, okay?" (Peter)

If a prince of the empire has borrowed money from an Earl of the kingdom, the future of the empire will be influenced by the kingdom. That's why it has taken the form of Peter privately borrowing money from Wendelin.

"If I can't pay that back after I become emperor, I would be even more pathetic than the shitty old man and it would make me a guy who can't even return the money he borrowed from a single Earl of the kingdom." (Peter)

It will be tough sailing for such a pitiful emperor. Peter has to definitely pay the money back.

"That sounds tough. So? How much longer?"

"It depends on my shitty old man, but I'm pretty sure 'that time' will arrive in less than a month."  
(Peter)



Twenty days later, Peter's prediction came true.

A spy, who had been secretly dispatched to join the punitive force, rushed in that evening to Peter's location with a fast horse.

"It's a crushing defeat! His Majesty the Emperor was killed!" (Spy)

"As expected... so, what about the details?" (Peter)

Out of breath, the spy is about to give a detailed report inside the tent where all leaders gathered in a hurry.

"Umm, this..." (Elise)

"Thank you, M'Lady." (Spy)

The spy began his report after quickly gulping down the maté tea Elise made.

It's just a minor detail, but – as might be expected of Elise – she deliberately made a lukewarm tea at such time.

"The enemies were few, and when our allies charged with the entire army..." (Spy)

Duke Nürnberg had his troops gather and pulled the whole army back to the area around his stronghold. He even had the nobles, who are allied with him, abandon their territories temporarily. The punitive force entered the empty territories of the southern nobles, but with the area being cleared out except for the docile civilian population, they continued to advance while occupying the territories without bloodshed. Gradually, the rumour 『Duke Nürnberg, who runs away without fighting out of cowardice, was a military genius in name only. At most he was a genius at fleeing.』 spread among the punitive force. Additionally confident because of their numerical superiority, the punitive force became increasingly careless.

When they finally approached Duke Nürnberg's stronghold, the entire enemy army awaited them.

"There were worried voices asking whether we hadn't been lured there by Duke Nürnberg, but His Majesty announced that Duke Nürnberg's military forces would collapse all at once if we gave it another push..." (Spy)

Given that they had advanced without any issues so far, it seems the emperor became completely careless as well.

He valiantly charged with the entire army and was immediately crushed by Duke Nürnberg who

had all possible preparations in order.

"But you know, no matter how negligent they might have been, it was still a military force with twice the enemy's size. They got defeated that easily?" (Erwin)

If I remember correctly, the punitive force had 500,000 soldiers in total. Even if you deduct 200,000 for things such as supply and maintenance of the occupied territories, they still had more than twice the number of the military forces led by Duke Nürnberg.

It's just as Erw says, I wonder whether they would be defeated so easily.

"Duke Nürnberg used various plans."

Why did Duke Nürnberg stick with defending his stronghold?

The answer to that became clear after the emperor gave the order for the entire army to attack.

"Exploding golems and metal dragons? He used excavated items again, eh!?"

"Correct." (Spy)

That bastard Duke Nürnberg, he got his filthy hands on a large number of treasures dug out from the ruins of the Ancient Magic Civilization.

Assured by their numerical superiority and having been ordered a charge with all their forces against Duke Nürnberg who deployed his army in the rear of his stronghold, the punitive force was roasted alive by the breath attacks of several, cleverly hidden, metal dragons. Even so, the emperor ordered a second attack, but this time animal-shaped golems rushed at them.

Once they attacked those golems, they exploded and scattered splinters into a wide range. Many commanding officers lost their lives to these and the entire army fell apart. Seeing that, Duke Nürnberg ordered an attack with his entire army.

In the end, Duke Nürnberg's army had almost no losses. In contrast to that, the punitive force fell into a state of annihilation, the spy reported. (T/N: why add this after several paragraphs of narration, just make the spy talk ... how sloppy)

"Since the kingdom has also unearthed items from underground ruins, it's not strange for the empire to have done the same."

"The metal dragons especially exhibited their might. Several thousand soldiers of the punitive forces that closed in on them died after simply melting due to several shots of their breath attacks," the spy says.

"They sound like the ones we encountered in that underground ruin, right?" (Ina)

"I think they're the same kind." (Wendelin)

Ina apparently recalled the metal dragons we fought before, and I believe they're probably the same ones.

Although it was a big army of 300,000 soldiers, only collapse awaited them after things had gone this far.

After the collapse of the entire army, Duke Nürnberg closed in on them all at once and the palanquin with the emperor on it was knocked over.

Covered in mud, the emperor pleaded for his life to Duke Nürnberg who thrust his sword towards him. After calling the groveling emperor 『Disgusting』, Duke Nürnberg ruthlessly lopped off his head with a single swing.

"You did well to find out so much."

"I was in the rear. A single follower of the emperor came escaping in my direction with a ghastly pale face." (Spy)

Since that follower was a noble, he said he would stay back to somehow gather the forces that were in the process of completely falling apart after the emperor's death. The spy immediately jumped on a horse and escaped to this place.

"You did a splendid job to escape and come report as swiftly as you did. Gatora, your techniques of handling a fast horse deserve to be praised." (Peter)

The spy's name appears to be Gatora. Of course, he was also one of Peter's retainers.

"What about my elder brothers?" (Peter)

"It seems each took control of an army as second-in-command, but they have probably met the same fate as the emperor." (Gatora)

"Makes sense. They don't have the experience and ability to rally the troops in such situation." (Peter)

It wasn't enough to cause a problem for Duke Nürnberg. Him temporarily withdrawing his soldiers from the capital was owed to his confidence that he can win using the relics of the underground ruin, as long as he manages to lure the enemy to his home turf. Metal dragons... dragon golems are heavy, so I suppose he used the manpower of his home territory for their construction and set up.

"To have held these back until his battle against the emperor... He completely deceived us!" (Armstrong)

"Such new tools often display their best results when they are used for the first time. He apparently thought that they might have not shown the same effectiveness against Therese-sama and us, as we would have been more cautious. Using them against the emperor was effective." (Burkhart)

It's just as Burkhart-san says.

As a result of that, the 300,000 troops collapsed and the emperor himself died as well. There was no better way for Duke Nürnberg to use his trump card.

"The outcome is as predicted, it's a crushing defeat for our allies. Still, it does leave quite the bad aftertaste..." (Peter)

It looks like Peter is human as well. Did he suffer a shock from the death of his father and elder brothers, no matter how much he usually slandered them? No, he's probably feeling sorry for those who got dragged in and died because of those three fools.

"Now then, thanks to Gatora we learned the news before anyone else. It'll still take some time until the news about the shitty old man's defeat and death reaches the ears of Duchess Philip, who returned to her territory. The capital will soon be plunged into chaos. That means we'll have to kindly clean up the mess created by my incompetent father." (Peter)

Having said that, as expected of Peter, he declares to everybody that they are going to move immediately.

If he hadn't this much cheekiness, he might not be suited to become emperor.

"Although they were defeated, there's no need to be too pessimistic about it. The military forces can be reorganised." (Peter)

It's unrealistic for all of the 500,000 troops to have been annihilated. Especially the 200,000 troops in charge of rear support should have almost no losses. I'm pretty sure that none of them has stayed behind to take revenge for the emperor.

"It's very likely that Duke Nürnberg will advance his troops upon the capital in high spirits after having won. Or rather, I think he'll bust his ass to recapture the capital." (Peter)

To begin with, Duke Nürnberg's territory is closer to the capital than the Philip Dukedom. Therese has to call her entire army together from now on, so she won't be in time to rescue the capital.

"There were many amongst the nobles and the imperial army who felt a sense of danger from the Duke Nürnberg subjugation this time, and thus had their best subordinates stay away or had them placed in the rear support units. And..." (Peter)

Peter places both his hands on my shoulders.

"Your kingdom forces and my forces that were raised in Sakart. There's also the Mizuho army to count on. I think there'll be many idiots who will kick up a fuss because those are military forces of foreign countries, but right now it's a race. We'll announce the shitty old man's death and grab the power in one go." (Peter)

As expected, it looks like we cannot afford to wait until tomorrow.

Marching orders are passed down to the entire army by Peter, and the encampment quickly becomes lively.

"Gatora." (Peter)

"Sir!!" (Gatora)

"Enter the capital and give the same report to Earl Bayerlein and Earl Lanzberg." (Peter)

"At your command." (Gatora)

"Wendelin, are you curious? Since those guys my comrades, they'll open the currently closed main gate of the capital." (Peter)

They seem to be members of the imperial army, but since it looks like Popek, Gilbert, Emera and

other retainers moved in places I'm not aware of, I guess they repeatedly went through negotiations. The plan is for us to enter with the entire army at the same time as the capital's main gate opens. Then we will occupy the imperial palace and the imperial army's facilities, allowing Peter to quickly grasp the real power of the empire.

This was also a kind of coup d'etat, but, in this case, it probably can't be helped. Seeing that the emperor has died, the capital will be stolen by Duke Nürnberg once again if no one succeeds the emperor's authority.

"Wendelin, all you've got to do is to watch next to me. As expected, this kind of work has to be done with us in the lead." (Peter)

"You are saying something like that, but you are fully intending to use me." (Wendelin)

Even without doing anything, my presence will serve as a figurehead.

"I want to have several hands to play if we actually run into trouble. When dealing with important business, you have to use whatever and 'whoever' is available, right?" (Peter)

Without any shyness, Peter declared that he will make use of me.

"I'll cooperate for the sake of getting my money back, though I will charge you for that." (Wendelin)

"Of course, buddy. Let's go then?" (Peter)

Only a few guards remain in our encampment in the outskirts as we head towards the capital's main gate with the entire army.

"(What a pity... old shitty man.)" (Peter)

"Did you say anything?" (Wendelin)

"Nope you're hearing things. Well then! My time to shine starts now!" (Peter)



The pitiful emperor Urquhart the 17th, who got manipulated by Duke Nürnberg from the coup d'etat until his death, finished his short reign that lasted around half a year.

The history books would later specify that his rule only lasted 178 days.

It's the second shortest reign of an emperor in the country's history.

The emperor who had the shortest reign was Urquhart the 3rd, who suddenly died after a reign of 70 days, around 1,100 years ago.

## **Chapter 5 – We Witness History in the Making... but, basically Don't Do anything**

The emperor, who led the punitive force, was killed by Duke Nürnberg as predicted by Peter. Having obtained that information first, Peter schemes to enter the imperial capital with almost the entire army stationed in the capital's outskirts. It was for the sake of forcefully stealing the political power before chaos over the emperor's death spreads.

"No! It's impossible to allow people to enter at night!"

"Actually it's an emergency though." (Peter)

"Your Highness, no matter how much of an emergency it might be..."

The gatekeepers and the defence commander leading them stated that it's not possible to get inside according to the rules, fortifying the defence of the gate. Given that they are soldiers and at the same time civil officials, they are loyal to orders from above. No matter how much Peter might beg them, it's unlikely that they will open the gate readily. After all, every one of them hated the idea of getting punished over this matter.

"Haven't your comrades, who promised that they will open the gate, come yet? Time is precious, you know? Are we going to force our way through?"

"We can't use force on these guys when they're just doing their jobs. Of course, I've got another card to play." (Peter)

Since Peter says so full of confidence, we wait for a little while and then a military man, who looks more important than the defence commander, appears from the other side of the gate.

"Please open the gate and let His Highness and his party enter."

"Bayerlein-sama, is that really alright?"

"I will take responsibility for it. Therefore hurry up and let them in." (Bayerlein)

The defence commander sighs and says after a short pause, "Yes, Sir!" Upon the order of the person called Bayerlein, who feels really soldier-like, the defence commander opened the gate, albeit unwillingly. One of the characteristics of soldiers and civil officials is to follow the orders from those above them. Bayerlein asserting, "I will take responsibility for it," played a big part as well. After all, humans generally try to avoid bearing responsibility.

"Let's go then, Your Highness?" (Bayerlein)

"I will go to the Imperial Palace first. I entrust the seizing of the imperial army's headquarters to

you, Gilbert." (Peter)

"Please leave it to me." (Gilbert)

Peter entrusted the capture of the imperial army headquarters to Gilbert who is leading the army on Peter's behalf.

"Bayerlein, please help out as well." (Peter)

"At your command, Your Highness. It's an honour to be allowed to serve under you again, Your Excellency." (Bayerlein)

Gilbert and Bayerlein apparently had a boss-subordinate relationship in the past. Both of them gladly accepted Peter's order.

"I still haven't returned into active duty." (Gilbert)

That's because the current Gilbert is no more than a soldier that has been personally hired by Peter.

"It seems to be the same for His Excellency Popek as well, but it's probably only a matter of time. Oops, I guess we have to hurry and get started on the job." (Bayerlein)

"Philip-dono, please follow Gilbert's command alongside the Mizuho Army." (Peter)

"As you wish. I will take Erwin with me as well." (Philip)

"Don't be so tense."

"Erw-san, I will assist you, too." (Haruka)

"Thank you, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

It's splendid for fiance and fiancée to be on good terms.

The majority of the military forces led by Peter and me will come under Gilbert's command, their objective is to arrest the imperial reserve units and then to set out with Bayerlein to gain control of various places in the capital.

"I will assign Gilbert as the imperial army's highest general as soon as possible. I'm going to need him to fight against Duke Nürnberg after all. I think only Gilbert is capable of dealing with Duke Nürnberg's talent as commander." (Peter)

"Is that fine?"

"You mean his pedigree? There will probably be fellows kicking up a fuss over it, but as it's an emergency right now, we can face down that opposition. If I can establish a precedent, the rest will go as I imagine. Fortunately, all the fussy ones were killed by Duke Nürnberg. I think I'm grateful to him only for that much?" (Peter)

Peter says something quite scary, but it was ironic that the upper brass was eradicated so resulting in

a meritocracy, which emphasize true ability, to be approved.

"We will go to the Imperial Palace, okay?" (Peter)

Splitting apart from the majority of the military forces, we head towards the Imperial Palace with merely a few dozen troops.

It seems to be forbidden to bring a big army to the Imperial Palace. It has no strong defence installations either. Since the number of guards is low as well, there's no point in bringing a large number of soldiers.

"Now then, I suppose I will go to see the face of that woman, whose head is filled with fresh cream and bavaois." (Peter)

"Your Highness, if you speak of such a weak-headed woman, who might you refer to?" (Burkhart)

"My stepmother. The woman who gave birth to my elder brothers." (Peter)

"You sure are merciless."

"No matter how much she glosses it over, she's a damned, stupid woman who's beyond saving." (Peter)

Peter boldly answered Burkhart-san's question about who it is without any scruples. To treat the first wife of the current emperor as a damned woman... Although it would turn into a big problem if it was heard by the surroundings, he probably hates her quite a bit.

"I suppose you aren't harbouring overly good feelings about her." (Armstrong)

"Doushi-dono, let alone not overly good feelings, I absolutely hate her. Her foolish character is detestable. If she has spare time, she nags and boasts about the merit of pedigree. If you listen to the talk of that woman, it's only a waste of precious time. I will put an end to her ahead of time." (Peter)

"(Wend-sama, there was something similar to this situation in the past.)" (Wilma)

"(There sure was...)" (Wendelin)

I instinctively agree to the words whispered into my ear by Wilma.

At the time of the dispute with the Margrave Browig household, the first wife of the late Margrave Browig also gave such impression, didn't she? Though I can't say it out loud since it would be evil towards Christoph.

With Peter in the lead, our group of several dozens heads towards the Imperial Palace. The sentries over there readily allowed us to enter the palace.

"Did they hear about the operation in advance?" (Wendelin)

"Yes, I think Earl Lanzberg told them." (Emera)

Emera provides a concise explanation to my question.

Well, Peter did say that he has collaborators in the palace as well.

"What kind of person is he?" (Wendelin)

"Umm... a person who is very fond of women..."

"Ooh! If this isn't Your Highness!? Just as we planned for some time now, you came to seize the Imperial Palace. By the way, you are accompanied by so many beautiful women besides Emeraldono. My sweet ladies, I'm called Hartmund Kaiser von Lanzberg."

Earl Lanzberg himself was a person one could describe as young noble in the first half of his twenties.

His blue hair, which has a deeper hue than Luise's, is growing out in a simple manner, but the trimming is attentive, making it release a lustre. His clothes also looked plain on a first glance, but as they seem to have been sewn while using fairly good fabric, their unique design stood out.

Even his face might be better-looking than that of master and Erich-nii-san.

It's probably appropriate to refer to him as flawless, refreshing young noble with long hair.

"After having received Your Highness' message earlier, I locked up the noisy ones in their rooms. Especially one hag smelling of perfume kept kicking up a fuss though." (Lanzberg)

"It must have been a nuisance." (Peter)

Even Earl Lanzberg, an ikemen who loves women, refers to Peter's stepmother in a demeaning manner.

Her regular speech and conduct has likely been quite terrible.

"Yes, Your Highness. However, five wonderful ladies have arrived here. By all means, do I wish to hear your lovely voices in order to learn your names." (Lanzberg)

It was flattery that would normally make me sick, but for some mysterious reason, I could agree with Earl Lanzberg saying it.

In the end, an ikemen will stay an ikemen, no matter what they do or say.

That became clear with master and Erich-nii-san, therefore...

"I'm called Elise. I'm Earl Baumeister's wife."

"I'm Ina. Likewise, I'm Earl Baumeister's wife."

"I'm Luise. Same as the ones before."

"Wilma. Me as well."

"My name is Katharina. I'm also Earl Baumeister's wife."

Because of the current place and time, the five omitted quite a bit in their self-introduction.

It seemed that Earl Lanzberg didn't really care about Elise and the others shortening their greeting.

"Ooh! For all the five beautiful women that caught the attention of the one generally accepted as the sole love hunter of the Empire, to be the noble wives of Earl Baumeister! This Lanzberg has reached a new height of astonishment."

"Haa..."

Earl Lanzberg expresses his surprise audaciously as if acting in a play. If a normal person did that, it would likely result in them being ridiculed with scornful laughter, but strangely it fits his image if he does it.

"I'm full of deep regret, but meeting with so many wonderful women tonight became a healing for my eyes. I'm a love hunter. I'm a person always wandering and looking for new love, but I won't do anything as inelegant as making a move on the cherished people of someone else. Please forgive me for leaving it at greetings tonight." (Lanzberg)

I didn't comprehend what needed forgiveness there, but Earl Lanzberg kneels down on one knee and gave a light kiss on the backs of the five girl's hands as greeting in accordance with courtesy. That conduct was extremely refined and I didn't feel anything unpleasant from it. If I had, Elise and the others would have likely denied the greeting as well, but going by the fact that they accepted it obediently, they probably don't harbour a bad impression of Earl Lanzberg.

"Earl Lanzberg, just so that you know, I'm here as well." (Peter)

"Your Highness, please forgive me. It's because my eyes had been polluted by that person's poison. I planned to recover through the beauty of the women present here, including Emera-dono." (Lanzberg)

"You really don't change, Earl Lanzberg." (Peter)

"If you allow for Emera-dono to become my wife, I would be able to stop being a love hunter at any time though." (Lanzberg)

"I doubt it." (Emera)

"How harsh. Well then, let me guide you." (Lanzberg)

Emera seems to be liked not only by Peter but also by Earl Lanzberg. Though there didn't seem to be any difference in her treatment towards him and Peter. The room, to which we were led by Earl Lanzberg, was the private chamber of the current emperor's first wife.

"Uwaaah! There's plenty of dresses and accessories."

Many expensive accessories were placed inside the room with its size of around 50 tatami mats. Luise raises her voice in surprise due to their great quantity.

"It's the result of wasting money. Since she's unable to restrain herself with the inside of her head being fresh cream, she ends up buying things as soon as she spots them." (Peter)

It's probably not only because she's his stepmother, but Peter spoke in a very demeaning way of the empress.

"Uuh... I remember having heard of such people, but..." (Ina)

"You do?"

"Indeed, the aunt of Margrave Breithilde comes to mind..." (Ina)

Ina mentions Margrave Breithilde's aunt, a spendthrift woman with a few loose screws in her head, who is troubling her nephew, Margrave Breithilde.

Now that she mentions it, there was such a person too...

Since it was at the level of me having only caught a glimpse of her during my marriage ceremony, I don't know her though.

"I guess it's a story you will find anywhere..."

"There's a fixed number of such people in the Empire and Kingdom, isn't there?"

Peter told Ina that it isn't a particularly rare occurrence.

"Peter-dono, what kind of disturbance is this tonight?"

A middle-aged woman, appearing to be the empress, who was locked inside this bedroom, approaches from deeper inside while expressing her anger once she discovers Peter.

"Didn't you receive the report, dear Stepmother?" (Peter)

"I don't want to be addressed as stepmother by a vulgar man such as you. This uproar during the absence of His Majesty; no matter how much you might be his son, it's not something that will be forgiven. You shall receive plenty of punishment later."

I guess you can call it fortunate? The empress seems to hate Peter as well.

I end up thinking that it's a good thing since it would be pitiful if it was a relationship of only one side harbouring positive affections.

Seemingly believing that Peter, who caused such a disturbance, would receive a punishment from the emperor later on, the empress acts overbearing in delight.

"(A hag with thick makeup.)"

"(Pfft!)"

Wilma spews her venom in a whisper after seeing the empress. I'm about to unintentionally burst into laughter due to that.

In the past, she might have been a beauty, but the current empress wears thick makeup, gaudy clothes and accessories... there are birds coloured like her in the southern countries... that's the impression I have of her.

It makes sense for Earl Lanzberg, who's strict on aesthetic sense, to hate her.

"I also have various thoughts about having to call a woman, who has no redeeming worth except for her parentage such as you, as stepmother at official occasions. Ah, I guess I will be fine afterwards. His Majesty the Emperor was defeated by Duke Nürnberg after all. My elder brothers are missing as well, but it's probably okay to regard them as having been killed." (Peter)

"Something like that is impossible. I guess you intend to start a rebellion by lying about it in such a way. This is exactly the reason why children of low birth are such a hassle."

Unable to believe in the death of her husband and her own two children, the empress begins to rebuke Peter's words as imprudent.

"I don't really care what you think about it, but this is nothing but the truth. Or rather, I already talked about this possibility several months prior." (Peter)

"I won't go along with your reckless words!"

"Reckless words, huh...? I guess it's fine then. Hasn't any report from Earl Areil come in? I wonder just what he's doing albeit being the top of the intelligence department? According to the information of a certain source, he appears to be busy with the former number one of a brothel after having made her his new mistress. With no report coming in during this emergency, I suppose he's busy shaking his waist." (Peter)

"Are you filthy child insulting my elder brother!?"

The empress, who's the typical snobbish old woman, got enraged like a demon after her own brother was criticized.

Her elder brother has received a responsible post due to his family ties after he pushed his younger sister into the position of the imperial family head's first wife. In society you'd call that nepotism.

"It's a waste of time to keep talking with you any longer. The reports will likely reach you anyway if you wait two or three days. Please put the empress under surveillance." (Peter)

After a glance at the empress, Peter ordered the soldiers he brought along to make sure that she's placed under house arrest in her room. After watching that being carried out, he immediately moves to the throne hall.

Arriving there, a few dozen nobles and military staff awaited us.

"Now then, where's the 『Emperor's Quill』?" (Peter)

"Here you go, Your Highness."

One of the imperial court nobles, who supported Peter, presents a quill with extravagant ornaments added to it.

"Quill?"

"It's a special magic tool. If you sign a document with this, it will become legal."

It appears to be a magic tool, which was created in the past, in order to prevent decrees from fake emperors.

Once a person becomes emperor, they will be the only one who can use it and it will generate an official effect on the documents signed with it.

Documents signed with other pens will be immediately found out once they are examined with simple magic tools.

By the way, it seems to be set in law that a person who forges a signed and official document of the emperor will receive capital punishment.

"It's an amazing magic tool, isn't it?"

"Yes. It's said that it can't be made ever again. I think I will use this for a little while... no, for a long time to come?" (Peter)

"That's fine and all, but what are you going to do about the existing cabinet ministers?"

"For the time being, I will summon them. Though I will fire them anyway. I will call together the parliament first thing in the morning, too. For starters, it will be fine with just the people who can attend." (Peter)

Peter, who casually sat down on the throne, gives one order after the other to the gathered nobles and military staff. As it seems that they had a preliminary meeting about the details, the tumult within the Imperial Palace died down at once.

With the capture of the imperial army's headquarters succeeding as well, it's probably fine to call this a bloodless coup d'etat, isn't it?

We are only observing the course of events.

I wonder whether I should note down in my diary afterwards that I witnessed history.

Though there's no precedent of me being able to stick to something like a diary for more than three days.

"My friend Earl Baumeister, who possesses five lovely wives." (Lanzberg)

"Umm, Earl Lanzberg was it, right?" (Wendelin)

"Those close to me call me Hart. Albeit the countries are different, both of us are fellow Earls. Let's be friends." (Lanzberg)

While everyone's busy, only Earl Lanzberg seems to have nothing to do for some reason, and as such, he concentrated on forging a friendly relationship with me.

"Umm... Earl Lanzberg-sama, is it fine for you to not help out?" (Elise)

"Elise-dono, for me, a hunter of love living in the Imperial Palace, military affairs and politics are impossible." (Lanzberg)

The Earl Lanzberg household seems to be appointed nobility that has been entrusted with work around the Imperial Palace for a long time.

It's completely unrelated to work in military affairs, domestic affairs or financial affairs. It's nothing more than a mixture of various miscellaneous tasks inside the Imperial Palace and in its vicinity.

Because he gets in touch with many people, ranging from the servants to the ladies, in the course of his duties, his communication skills are high and he's well-informed in culture and arts as he's keeping high-classed people company.

And, it appears that he's a family head popular with many women.

Certainly, as anyone could see, he was a fascinating, handsome man. If I had been born like this as well, I might have enjoyed my life a lot more.

"I'm a man living in the sphere of the Imperial Palace's influence." (Lanzberg)

I think Peter has pulled over a good, capable person with him.

Surely, he was someone very irrelevant in regards to politics and military matters, but his ability to skillfully restrain the rampaging of that hysteric empress was magnificent.

He knows well about the circumstances within the Imperial Palace where many women and children, as well as a great number of maids and servants, are coming and going. To win over such person strategically makes a lot of sense.

And while we are at it, he also knows the whereabouts of the aforementioned quill.

Even if it's about persuading the nobles and soldiers protecting the imperial capital, he would likely exhibit his powers freely.

"It looks like His Highness and the others are busy. Wend and friends, the reception hall is this way." (Lanzberg)

Before I noticed it, I was called Wend by Earl Lanzberg, but for an odd reason I didn't feel uncomfortable about it.

"I wonder, is that okay?" (Wendelin)

"No problem, tomorrow we will have to borrow your strength again, but it would be best for your mana to be full and for your bodies to be well rested at that time." (Lanzberg)

After all, tomorrow will be the talks with the summoned ministers and parliament members. There might be some among them who will send their soldiers after protesting against Peter's actions.

That's why magicians will be useful as countermeasures against them.

"Then we will gladly take up your offer to take a break." (Wendelin)

"That's fine. After all, there will probably be many people who will unnecessarily make a fuss tomorrow." (Lanzberg)

"In the end we got used by His Highness, didn't we?"

"Well, it can't be helped."

It's because Therese made a mistake.

If we don't cooperate with Peter's rise to power, we won't be able to go back to the kingdom, no matter how much time passes. Once I explain that to Ina, she was apparently able to agree with it.

"Ina-dono, how about thinking about it in this way: It's difficult to not be homesick, so you are going to cooperate with His Highness for the sake of fixing that." (Lanzberg)

"It's certainly correct that I want to return to Baumeister Earldom as soon as possible." (Ina)

"I believe that it will likely cause many troubles for the Kingdom later down the road if the Empire stays in a state of chaos. I think it's advisable to tie a friendly relationship with the Empire, which had been unified by His Highness, and to start colonizing and investigating the western and

southern parts of the continent after the anxiety about the future has been resolved." (Lanzberg)

"Earl Lanzberg, you are..."

"Ina-dono, I'm an inhabitant of the Imperial Palace and a love hunter." (Lanzberg)

If he felt like it, Earl Lanzberg actually owned the quality to become an excellent politician. If he really was a mere inhabitant of the Imperial Palace, it would have been impossible for him to have chosen the option of following Peter.

"Then, we are going to take a rest for a short while."



The next morning we head to the throne hall once again after getting out of bed and taking a breakfast.

Once we arrived, many ministers and soldiers had already assembled there.

"There's no way that I will approve of such illegal act!"

The empress, who made a racket last night, is present as well. She hurled jeers at Peter who was sitting on the throne.

He listens to her without even trying to hide that he doesn't care about what she's saying.

"It's an emergency after all. Leaving that aside, Duke Areil, haven't you received any news about the defeat of the punitive force?" (Peter)

"Umm... It's unclear why, but the periodic reports have stopped coming in..." (Areil)

After revealing an expression clearly stating 『This stupid brat!』 for an instant, he answered Peter's question in a flustered manner.

Since the majority of the military in the capital obeyed Peter, he probably didn't have the courage to openly criticize him.

He was given the post related to intelligence matters by the emperor with the reason that he can't entrust someone else with it. However, since he has neither the ability nor the aptitude for that position, he still hasn't been able to grasp the reality of the punitive force's annihilation.

He replies to Peter while wiping the streaming sweat away with a handkerchief.

"That's why I'm telling you, according to our information, the whole army is in the process of escaping after suffering a crushing defeat and losing His Majesty as well as my elder brothers! Why can't you understand that? Minister Krenperal of Military Affairs, naturally you get what I'm saying, right? After all the imperial army has its own intelligence agency as well." (Peter)

"Up to the point where the whereabouts of His Majesty and the princes is uncertain..." (Krenperal)

"So, how many of the 50,000 soldiers, including the logistical support personnel, are going to return by the time Duke Nürnberg closes in on the capital? Duke Nürnberg won't be fixated on cleaning up

the remnants of the defeated punitive force. He will likely try to gain control over the capital as fast as possible. He's probably thinking that his enemies, who are in the middle of escaping, will immediately surrender as long as the capital falls into his hands." (Peter)

Due to Peter speaking about what will likely happen from now on while showing a sadistic smile, almost all of the gathered ministers and military staff members turn pale. They probably think that they don't want to have anything to do with this.

"By the way, Duke Nürnberg's army has suffered almost no losses." (Peter)

Elite soldiers surpassing a 100,000 in numbers are going to advance on the capital right away. Due to that fact, it seems that something like Peter seizing the power doesn't matter anymore as there is no other choice anyway.

That's because they probably think that they won't have any prospect for victory at all if they are told 『Then you take command in the counterattack against Duke Nürnberg's army!』 after nitpicking at this point.

"I got it, His Majesty died in battle. So, what are we going to do next?"

"That's obvious! Alexander or Julian! It's clearly a lie that those children have died!"

"It's pointless for me to lie about something like that at this point. Even if they were alive, they would lack the legal foundation to take command in the counterattack, just like me." (Peter)

"..."

Because the emperor is decided in an election in the Empire, his children don't hold any authority at all, even if the emperor dies.

In order to gain that authority, they have to win in the emperor election.

"I think, even if the information was wrong and they had miraculously survived, they wouldn't have the time to deal with the approaching military forces of Duke Nürnberg..."

Someone has to fight against Duke Nürnberg by consolidating the existing military forces.

Peter inquired about the intentions of all those gathered, asking whether there's another candidate besides himself.

"How about you, Stepmother? It'll be a battle of revenge for your killed husband and sons. But then again, if you lose, you will follow them right away. No, I'm sorry. I forgot that the members of the Duke Areil household don't fear death. By all means, please borrow the power of your elder brother and defeat Duke Nürnberg." (Peter)

"Me, you say?"

"Yes. It will be alright if you borrow the strength of your onii-sama." (Peter)

"Mine?"

The empress and her brother, Duke Areil, became pale due to Peter's suggestion. Even though they

were full of composure thinking that it will be a fight that's easily winnable until now, they lost their confidence to defend the capital due to the punitive force's annihilation.

If they were to lose while leading the troops, Duke Nürnberg would doubtlessly execute them.

They probably don't want to undertake that task since they understand all that.

Especially the empress had suddenly become frail after her previous stirring attitude.

"I will return to my room for the sake of mourning for my husband and children."

"I will take responsibility for being unable to accomplish my duty as head of the intelligence department and resign..." (Areil)

Leaving with just these few words, the two of them exit the throne hall as if running away.

"Me too..."

"Suddenly my health is..."

The majority of the nobles gathered here are those who shook their tails at Duke Nürnberg at the time of the coup d'etat and kept their positions after buttering up to the emperor. Of course, they want to escape a sinking ship. Almost all ministers expressed their wish to resign and disappeared from the throne hall.

"Wendelin, they are terrible, aren't they?" (Peter)

"I don't know if it wouldn't be the same in the Kingdom if the situation was similar." (Wendelin)

Even if they are excellent during peaceful times, there will be many people who will break apart in this kind of crisis.

"It's convenient for the idiots to voluntarily hand in their letters of resignation. That lot will never be able to get an official position while I'm alive. There won't be any problem if I entrust it to excellent personnel providing them with executive wages, unrelated to their peerage. Then, next is the parliament, I guess." (Peter)

Once Peter headed over to the parliament building, less than half of the parliament members had gathered there.

"Ladies and Gentlemen of the parliament! Let me first explain the current situation to you." (Peter)

When Peter explains the course of events until now to the parliament, almost all of them sink into silence.

In truth, they probably don't know what they should say.

Even if they try to carry out an emperor election, they will get attacked by Duke Nürnberg's army before the candidates gather.

"Accordingly, how about the idea of this Peter Oswald Derius von Urquhart leading the counter attack after ascending to the position of prime minister?" (Peter)

The parliament members stayed silent towards Peter's question.

Since they didn't foresee such kind of situation, they likely don't know the best legal option to choose.

"I don't mind that. Right now we should prepare the countermeasures as quickly as possible."

At this moment the head of the Meyer Company states his approval. He was a merchant close to Peter.

"That's right! Right now isn't the time to worry about formalism."

"Time is valuable. We have to get the capital ready as much as possible."

With his statement as a stimulant, several more supporters appear. As there was no other solution, Peter was inaugurated as prime minister with the vote of the parliament members. As such he has become the top in reality, resulting in him facing Duke Nürnberg who's approaching the capital.



"It went well up to this point."

Having been inaugurated as prime minister, Peter worked busily. He entrusted the command of the imperial army to Popek and Gilbert who had returned into active duty. The newly assigned ministers, who were chosen by stressing actual ability, are toiling away too. Requests for reinforcements and reports about the current situation have been sent to various places, including the northern area. Earl Mizuho Country, with whom he had negotiated in advance, apparently has dispatched military forces of 20,000 soldiers right away, making them head to the capital at a rush.

"The Mizuho army will be barely in time."

That means it was correct to hold a secret conference with High Earl Mizuho in advance.

"How about the northern lords?"

"They won't be in time. Or rather, Duchess Phillip won't allow them to be in time." (Peter)

There's no way that Therese, with the northern lords at her side, will let the reinforcements get here in time. After all her rank as the strongest contender for the next emperor had suddenly been stolen by Peter.

In that case, it would be better to send the reinforcements after Duke Nürnberg took the capital. If she sent soldiers from the field encampment in the Great Sorbid Wastelands, they would be in time, but rather than having her soldiers crushed after sending only a half-baked number of reinforcements, she should head over after preparing her entire army. That's because Peter is an enemy, who competes for the seat of the next emperor, in the eyes of Therese.

"Putting aside the reinforcements, what about the imperial army?"

"Their reorganisation is progressing favourably."

The number of soldiers that had stayed behind in the capital amounts to around 30,000. Since there are many soldiers among the staff and commissioned officers, who had been removed from the frontline for opposing the operation of the Duke Nürnberg subjugation, likely carried out in order to obtain achievements, the talented people have stayed together. Even from among the punitive force, soldiers, who have succeeded in running away with their units, started to appear in places close to the capital. If we reintegrate them as well, we will probably be able to put up somewhat of a fight.

"We will manage one way or another. After all, even for Duke Nürnberg my existence is beyond his own expectations." (Peter)

"Say Peter, are you an acquaintance of Duke Nürnberg?" (Wendelin)

"Isn't it at the level of us knowing each other's names? Since he's a typical high-ranking noble in a certain meaning, he likely won't do something like associating with me whose blood is half that of a commoner." (Peter)

If I remember correctly, I have heard that Peter and his group were waiting for a chance while continuing to camp and hunt in the vicinity of a monster domain at the time when Duke Nürnberg occupied the capital.

Duke Nürnberg thought that it's unnecessary to expressly dispatch troops to catch them, but seemingly that will trip him up.

"Because Duke Nürnberg will be careless, thinking that there's no one in the capital left to lead the military forces that have stayed behind, it will give us a slight advantage, even if it's only that much. We will prepare various other things in addition, too." (Peter)

Except for the gathering of personnel and the reorganisation of the military forces, he tells us to exhibit the carapace of the boss of the subjugated monster domain, Rock Turtle King (Rainbow Assault), in the central plaza of the capital as a measure to suppress the turmoil of the people. As there's a history of many imperial army soldiers and renown adventurers having failed in its subjugation until now, it is a full success in making the name of Peter, who commanded its subjugation, known.

Moreover, by exhibiting the result of that in a public place, he restrains the agitation of the people and shows his will to defeat Duke Nürnberg in the same way as the big turtle. It was one of the plans to boost the people's fighting spirit.

"Your Highness, 『Mister Baron』 is requesting a meeting."

"Let him in." (Peter)

And then another pending matter of defending the capital was resolved as well. The master of the slums located in the capital's west, who is an excellent healing magician, commonly known as 『Mister Baron』, and the male Lan tribe member Randolph, who is unifying the vigilante corps under Mister Baron, showed up.

"Your Highness, let me first congratulate you for your success in usurping the political power."

Being rumoured to be an illegitimate child of a noble as well, he respectfully greeted Peter.

"It matters from now on. Your side is going well, I guess?" (Peter)

"The repairs of the western wall finished successfully. Randolph also trained the vigilante corps properly." (Baron)

"Within the range of what's possible." (Randolph)

Randolph, who was next to Mister Baron, added humbly. However, his talent as a soldier was indisputable.

Exiling such an excellent man for the reason of having supported her elder brothers' side, Therese sure did something wasteful.

"I think my place will become tense once the battle against Duke Nürnberg comes to pass, but outwitting Therese gave me intense pleasure."

Randolph harboured reservations towards Therese, who exiled him from his home. For that reason, he had turned into a supporter of Peter, who stole a march on her.

"If we manage to win, I will give you the liberated monster domain as territory. I will be expecting your strenuous efforts."

"Your Highness, you kept all your promises until now. We will give it our best for the sake of a new place to live."



A prince with the blood of commoners flowing through his veins, the commoners, the lower-ranking nobles and the inhabitants of the slums.

Peter advances his preparations well without obsessing about blood. The decisive battle against Duke Nürnberg, who was aiming to retake the capital, would begin very soon.

## **Chapter 6 – The Decisive Defense Battle of the Imperial Capital**

"Maaan, we got all worked up since Duke Nürnberg moved faster than expected. It feels as if we made it barely in time, doesn't it?" (Peter)

Peter, the highest authority of the defence battle, gazed at the approaching feudal army of the Duke Nürnberg household from atop the wall in the capital's south.

The group that surrendered to Duke Nürnberg thinking the Empire is already done for with the emperor's death, and the survivors who linked up with the liberation army after successfully managing to get away. Influenced by those two groups, there isn't much of a difference in military forces between both armies.

Since we are the defending side, I believe us to hold an advantage, but once I looked properly, the wall was more worn-out than I thought.

In reality, we should have repaired all the other areas besides the western side, but there's no time left for that anymore.

Duke Nürnberg's army owns exploding golems and metallic dragon golems and it seems that these can also be used as siege weapons. In Duke Nürnberg's eyes the existence of Peter might have been outside his calculations, but, even so, our side wasn't in a situation where we could take it easy.

"Those exploding golems, was it? The wall will get blown away easily with those. I guess even the breath attack of the dragon golems might be enough for that?" (Peter)

On top of it, the wall surrounding the huge capital from all sides is long. For Duke Nürnberg it means that he can invade from wherever he likes.

"Given that the dragon golems are heavy, they will be left at the troop headquarters or such. I don't think that they are such convenient weapons...?" (Luise)

"Luise-dono, I'm sorry, but it looks like they can be moved with manpower." (Peter)

Once I peeked through the binoculars following Peter, I could see metallic dragon golems, placed on huge wagons, being positioned at the frontline one after the other. They are smaller and their materials are inferior to the dragon golems we encountered in the underground ruins a while back. They feel like cheap, mass-production units to bolster the numbers. Even so, if it's the brittle wall of the capital, they will be able to break through it without any issues. After all, they already accomplished killing many soldiers of the punitive force.

"Even though it's ironic, the western wall that had been diligently fixed up has become the most secure one."

All of it was Peter's loan, but Mister Baron, who received the support, properly repaired the wall. He has gone as far as making it sturdier than the walls in the other directions which haven't received any maintenance.

"It's better than nothing, but the people are more important than the wall."

"By sacrificing the wall, it will be possible to buy time as long as we kill as many enemies as possible. And if they break through, the imperial army, which has the locational advantage, will deploy defensive strategies using the houses near the wall as shields." (Popek)

That means it's dangerous to only rely on the wall. Popek came up with a two-staged defence plan.

"Also, I'd like to request your group to participate actively as well, Earl Baumeister." (Popek)

"You handle your workers roughly, Chief-of-Staff-dono." (Wendelin)

"Please don't worry. In this battle you won't find anyone not being busy." (Popek)

"I got it." (Wendelin)

"I will later offer you some of the wine created in my territory, so please forgive me for now." (Popek)

"I want some of it too!" (Armstrong)

Though it's probably not like Doushi and Burkhart-san are aiming for the wine produced in Popek's territory. At any rate, it's certain that they think they have to win by cornering Duke Nürnberg. Since Talrand's death should have served its role as a jab, all that's left is to drive in a body blow. I never did something like boxing, but I inadvertently ended up using such a metaphor.

"There's also Therese's movements to consider."

"It appeared as if she would come leading her troops in high spirits with you in a pinch, Wend, but..."

"She has her position to consider as well. Not like she can send reinforcements just for my sake." (Wendelin)

"I wonder, is she thinking that you won't die anyway?"

"Ina-dono, either way, Duchess Philip is too dependent on Wendelin." (Peter)

If she felt like it, she could have dispatched several thousand soldiers as reinforcements from the Great Sorbid Wastelands, but Therese didn't do that. Even if the reinforcements were in time and managed to win here, it would be seen as them having won while fighting under Peter. She's already regarding Peter as a rival. The northern lords, who won't profit in any way unless she becomes empress, will follow suit as well.

"Therese-sama has to wait for later. For now we have to somehow handle the battle against Duke Nürnberg." (Katharina)

"That's true. It's exactly as Katharina says." (Wendelin)

The looks of everyone face the army of Duke Nürnberg which is in the process of approaching the

capital in orderly ranks.



"I guess, at last, the elite feudal army of the Duke Nürnberg household has sortied at almost full strength."

In addition, after absorbing the soldiers, who betrayed the punitive force, the numbers of the enemy army have grown into a considerable size.

Since we have also absorbed the imperial army that retreated, there's no real need to worry about a difference in numbers though.

"Wend, it looks like there are also many nobles who betrayed us." (Erwin)

"First they shook their tails at Duke Nürnberg, then they followed the emperor after the liberation of the capital and at last they have gone back to Duke Nürnberg again, huh? Nobles have it difficult as well, don't they?"

Humans who want to die without any relation to their social standing don't exist. It's not strange for them to continuously betray others in order to stay alive. Erw is fed up with that, but surprisingly Takeomi-san seems to have a clear opinion on this.

"But, they will be used as the advance guard again." (Takeomi)

Haruka had an expression as if asking "Again?"

Moreover, the previously mentioned dragon golems have been deployed behind them. If they try to run away, they will be erased with breath attacks. It's a situation that could be well described as "Whether it's advancing or retreating, hell awaits them."

"It's gradually becoming tough for them. Well, if there are many casualties, it will cause much damage to the Empire, but... Why is Duke Nürnberg in such a hurry? Oh well, who cares. First comes winning." (Peter)

Upon Peter's signal, the whole army raised flags showing that their preparations to fight back are completely in order.

The morale of our allies, who will lose their home if they lose here, is far higher than I expected. Since Peter, Gilbert and Popek have chosen commanding officers based on their abilities, the soldiers seem to believe that it will come to an end without them dying in vain.

"Prepare to intercept! I will leave it to you from the get-go!" (Gilbert)

Immediately after Gilbert's order was handed down to the entire army, the enemy's advance guard charges towards the southern wall.

Once they closed the distance to some extent, both sides hurled large quantities of arrows and spells at each other.

If they were lucky, they were protected by shields or magicians, but otherwise all of them got hit and collapsed.

The victims on the attacking side were numerous.

"This late in the game he's still setting his elites aside? Well, it doesn't matter." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san, who's on standby next to Peter, the supreme commander, this time as well, blocked spells and arrows with a timely 『Magic Barrier』.

"Magic Gunner Squad! There's no lack of targets!"

One of the big reasons why our allies' morale was high was owed to the 20,000 elites – in addition to the troops from Mizuho that were stationed in Sakart – led by High Earl Mizuho himself barely arriving in time.

When the soldiers of the Mizuho army entered the capital, big cheers erupted among our allies.

"I guess I won't be looked upon well by Therese-dono, though." (Mizuho)

High Earl Mizuho disregarded Therese's opinion and dispatched reinforcements.

To be accurate, Therese can't complain though since Mizuho isn't one of the northern lords but just a collaborator. After all High Earl Mizuho was dissatisfied with her not dragging down the emperor off his throne.

"Randolph, how is it going?"

"The wall they believed to be broken was repaired, apparently causing them to be surprised." (Randolph)

A part of the enemy rushed the western wall as well, but they were skillfully blocked by the vigilante corps led by Mister Baron and Randolph.

"Randolph, eehh...? Duchess Philip did something regrettable there. To have exiled such an excellent retainer." (Peter)

Peter praised Randolph's talent as soldier, saying that he'd like to have him for himself. Certainly, no one would have likely expected for such excellent person to live in the slums.

"Your Highness, Randolph-dono feels obligated to Mister Baron. I think it's a wasted effort even if you were to invite him." (Emera)

"Guess so... Oh well, I suppose it's fine as he's our ally." (Peter)

Emera stated that Randolph definitely wouldn't leave Mister Baron and Peter agreed with that line of thought.

I also think that he has no intention to be anything else but the Junior Commander of Mister Baron.

"Wendelin, something creepy appeared." (Peter)

"Looks like it..." (Wendelin)

"He still had some on stock left!" (Armstrong)

Once the enemy's advance guard began struggling, Duke Nürnberg immediately used his first trump card.

It's probably with the intention to destroy the wall. He's sending out suicide-bombing, metallic golems in the shapes of wolves, deer and bears in succession.

"Those were the reason for the punitive force's annihilation..."

"He still had some of them...?"

Comotions occurred among our allies when they saw the suicide-bombing golems closing in one after the other, but Peter wasn't disturbed at all. As a matter of fact, it was the same for us as well.

"I guess that's the rest of the excavated golems that were used against the punitive force?"

"Very likely. I don't think that he has that many on stock anymore."

The approaching metallic golems with their various animal shapes headed our way with quite the speed.

"Why is he using them here?"

"Yeah, why."

According to our information, people apparently won't die unless they explode quite close to them. As a weapon with the main goal of increasing the number of injured soldiers and paralyzing an army's functionality, I think they would have a bigger effect if they were deployed into the capital after the wall was destroyed.

"There's something I want to try!" (Armstrong)

Suddenly saying so, Doushi took out big rocks from within his magic bag.

"Your Highness, have a look!" (Armstrong)

Doushi enhances his bodily functions with mana and throws the prepared big rocks at the approaching suicide-bombing golems.

The suicide-bombing golems, which were hit by the huge rocks, explode one after the other, easily triggering further explosions due to their splinters clashing into the other suicide-bombing golems around them.

"Their response is too sensitive!" (Armstrong)

"I see. Since they will explode easily, the ways to use them are limited."

Unless they are used in flat, huge areas, they are weapons with remarkably bad cost-effectiveness. Unexpectedly the Ancient Magic Civilization might have stored them away since they were useless to them.

"In that case, it's easy to deal with them." (Luise)

"Indeed." (Ina)

"Many targets." (Wilma)

In addition to arrows and spells, Luise throws stones, Ina throws old spears she considers as disposable, and Wilma snipes with her magic gun.

With explosions occurring all over, the enemy apparently gets wrapped up in it as well, but Duke Nürnberg doesn't seem to mind. Of course, since there are several thousands of suicide-bombing golems, it's impossible to stop all of them. One after the other crashed into the southern wall and exploded. The old wall crumbles at one part, causing casualties among the soldiers returning fire.

"Good grief, this keeps one very busy."

"Please carry the injured to the rear."

Peter swiftly sends the injured to the back and deploys new soldiers. The wall didn't collapse completely, but here and there you can find sections of the wall that can no longer be manned, causing the defensive strength to plummet accordingly.

"Nice one, Duke Nürnberg. But, is that wise?"

"What do you mean, Your Highness?"

"The southern wall was so brittle that anyone could see it. Going by human logic, it makes them want to focus their attacks on this place."

Even if they actually manage to cross the wall, a defensive battle in the urban area is possible. Gilbert had the residents evacuate to get ready for that. Given that we haven't relied on the wall much to begin with, it's well within the range of our assumptions.

"A messenger from Randolph-sama who is defending the western wall! 『The world isn't that easy!』 That's all!"

"Tsk, so it comes down to this. But, it's a way of talking befitting him." (Peter)

Hearing the words of the messenger who came from the western wall, Peter put up a disappointed expression.

As a matter of fact, Mister Baron sent a secret message, stating 『I will open the western gate and let the Duke Nürnberg's army win it over. In exchange, I will get peerage and territory』, to Duke Nürnberg, but since the wall had been repaired, Duke Nürnberg apparently realized that it was a trap.

"As expected, he won't fall for it, huh?"

"If it had gone well, I planned to have their army beaten up by the military forces I had secretly stationed in the slums, but..." (Popek)

Popek, who was standing next to Peter and Gilbert, who took command of the defensive encampment that used the urban area, showed his regret through his expression.

"Now then, this is the crucial moment, right?"

It's still around one hour since the battle began, but at last Duke Nürnberg's army made a big move. They started to prepare to move the dragon golems that had been deployed at the front.

"They are going to destroy the southern wall that became brittle due to the attacks of the suicide-bombing golems and will have their troops invade from there. If it turns into a melee, it will become advantageous for Duke Nürnberg who possesses many elites, I guess."

There's another very important point in defending the capital for our side. We can't use our soldiers for just the southern wall. After all, there's no definite guarantee that there are no other detached forces of the enemy.

"If we were to call reinforcements from the other walls, the detached enemy forces would appear at those wall sections. It will be a nightmare." (Katharina)

If it went as Katharina feared, it would be horrible to look at. Because the capital is too wide, it's unsuitable for a real defence.

"Then, I suppose we will use our trump card? Wendelin, Doushi, go and destroy the dragon golems."

"You, that's a really casual way of asking this of us." (Wendelin)

"I don't particularly mind, but..." (Armstrong)

Doushi looks in my direction, but if we don't destroy the dragon golems before the walls are destroyed by their breath attacks, it will inevitably turn into a harsh battle, so his real opinion is that we have no other choice but to accept it.

"It's the most simple way, isn't it?" (Wendelin)

If we destroy the dragon golems now, Duke Nürnberg will lose a trump card for capturing the capital. Rather than pointlessly wasting time on a battle of offence and defence, it's the method with the least casualties for our allies.

"Doushi and I are fine with this. But, Peter, are you?" (Wendelin)

I ask Peter only that. No matter where Doushi and I go, there's not much difference in danger. Elise, Ina and the others will likely try to ensure their safety after being given a sign by Burkhart-san if push comes to shove. However, there was no way for Peter to escape from here since he's necessary to preserve morale. I tried asking him whether he would be fine with me leaving his side.

"It's fine. If I die here, it means that my luck lasted only that far. This is likely a moment I have to overcome with confidence." (Peter)

"If that's what you want, it's okay with me." (Wendelin)

"It will be alright. After all, Emera is here as well. You know, with the power of love..." (Peter)

"There's no power of love, but I will take care of His Highness." (Emera)

"Don't deny that part!" (Peter)

It was the usual back and forth between the two of them, but it's Peter's decision.  
I resolved myself as well.

"Ah, yeah, I prepared nice horses. Even with Doushi's huge build, they will run quickly." (Peter)

"I guess the preparations are in order then." (Wendelin)

"Let's go!" (Armstrong)

Doushi and I mount the horses prepared by Peter and begin galloping towards the dragon golems.  
However...

"Earl Baumeister, as usual your horse-riding sucks!" (Armstrong)

"I didn't have any time to practise it!" (Wendelin)

Because I concentrated on the special magic training to defeat master, I didn't have any time at all to practise horse-riding.

"Didn't you have time when we were in Sakart?" (Armstrong)

"..." (Wendelin)

Sorry, because I'm not getting any better at it, I skipped out on it as it's painful.

"That's no good, Wendelin." (Peter)

"Shut up, Peter!" (Wendelin)

I can at least mount it normally!  
This is all because of Duke Nürnberg sealing off all movement magic!

"If you insist, I will ride together with you." (Luise)

At this point a helper appeared. Luise jumped off the wall like an acrobat and landed on the horse I'm riding. I don't know how she managed that, but even with Luise jumping down from such a high place, the horse apparently didn't feel her weight at all. It didn't buck or get surprised.

"Well then, let's go?" (Luise)

"Luise-jou, I leave taking babysitting Earl Baumeister to you!" (Armstrong)

"I'm on it." (Luise)

I wanted to complain to Doushi, but as expected of someone whose family is an authority in the military faction. He managed his horse skillfully.

"Put one hand around my waist. It's fine for you to grope my butt under the cover of the turmoil, but keep it moderate... Huh?" (Luise)

Curled-up paper hit the head of Luise who said something stupid.  
The one who threw that was Ina.

"Since time is of value right now, hurry and go!" (Ina)

"Ina-chan, you're scary!" (Luise)

"If it's a horse, I'm also skilled at riding it."

"Uuh...if only the task of protecting His Highness Peter didn't exist..."

Noticing that Wilma and Katharina have become angry in the same way as Ina, Luise immediately spurred on the horse.

"In total there are ten dragon golems. Earl Baumeister, head or tail?" (Armstrong)

"Tail." (Wendelin)

As we are galloping towards the golems at full throttle, Doushi suddenly came next to us and asked this.

At the same time as I answer "Tail," Doushi skillfully tosses a coin, in spite of being on the back of a horse, and lets it drop on his palm.

The copper coin showed tail.

"Right or left, choose any side you like!" (Armstrong)

"Right since that's where my dominant hand is." (Wendelin)

"Then, I will go left!" (Armstrong)

"It's the enemy!"

"Time is precious, so excuse me!" (Armstrong)

The soldiers of the enemy's advance guard rushed over to us who were getting closer on horseback, but their attacks were repelled by the 『Magic Barrier』 that covered Doushi and his horse.

Moreover, when they fell, they were sniped with spells and arrows from atop the wall, causing them to lose their lives.

"Luise, you just have to attack the dragon golems." (Wendelin)

"Roger. Otherwise it would be a waste of mana." (Luise)

No matter how many of these advance guard soldiers we defeat, it shouldn't cause even the slightest effect on Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army.  
Destroying the dragon golems they are preparing is the most important objective in this time's charge.

"I will go in a straight line!" (Luise)

Luise increases the speed of the horse even further.  
Many enemy soldiers obstruct us on the way, but all of them were sent flying due to my 『Magic Barrier』.

"Wend, is it fine for me to destroy the dragon golems as well?" (Luise)

"I would warmly welcome it since it would be more efficient that way." (Wendelin)

"I feel like I can finally use my fists after a long time. Until now I only threw stones." (Luise)

Because Luise, who specialized in close combat, had her 『Flight』 sealed, she was almost only allowed to throw stones in this civil war. Her weapons were pebbles with the fearsome power of almost instant death if they hit an enemy, but she might have felt dissatisfied due to being unable to participate in close combat.

"It's great that I can destroy them with all my power as they are man-made anyway." (Luise)

Luise whipped the horse strongly, increasing the speed even further as we approached the golems.

"Aren't we a bit too fast?" (Wendelin)

"Really?" (Luise)

I reflexively bend back atop the horse.

"Stop them!"

The rebel army tries to hinder us as we continue our mad charge, but all of them are flicked off by the 『Magic Barrier』.

I didn't have the spare time to look, but Doushi should be closing in on the dragon golems in a similar manner.

"It's the first one." (Luise)

The first golem appears in front of us.

It should be operating, but seeing as we are close to it, it won't spit its breath against us. After all, it would drag its allies into it.

Or so I thought optimistically, but I sensed a huge amount of mana from the golem's mouth.

"You don't say!" (Wendelin)

Immediately after I reinforced my 『Magic Barrier』 in a panic, the dragon golem spits out a massive

flame.

"It has amazing firepower, hasn't it?" (Luise)

Luise and I were safe because of the 『Magic Barrier』, but the rebel army's advance guard that was nearby was roasted mercilessly by the golem's flames. Due to it unexpectedly killing its allies, Luise and I only urged on the horse without saying anything.

"I guess the advance unit is treated as disposable from the get-go..."

Since the majority of them are soldiers who surrendered, Duke Nürnberg seems to think that it's no loss even if they are killed. I felt a chill travel down my spine due to his cruelty.

"Hurry." (Wendelin)

"Gotcha." (Luise)

Until we got close to the first dragon golem, we were hit by breath attacks from several golems many times. The breaths' elements are flame, blizzard, rocks and windcutters. Unlike the dragon golems we defeated before, there seem to be differences between the individuals.

"Say, can you break this?" (Luise)

"Yeah." (Wendelin)

As it seems that mass-production was stressed with these golems, the intensity of their breaths were lower than the ones from before. Even their materials consisted of iron with only a bit of mithril added, according to the results of 『Detection』. These golems seem to have had their production costs lowered by keeping their breath power and defensive power low for the sake of churning out the numbers.

"Then I will go ahead and demolish it without holding back." (Wendelin)

I remove the 『Magic Barrier』 for an instant and hit a dragon golem with a 『Fireball』 that had been compressed to the utmost limit. The golem, which had the 『Fireball』 driven into its mouth, melted like syrup after its head became bright red due to the heat, and created a pile of melted iron that became a puddle on the ground.

"Hot!"

"Put out the fire!"

Due to that melted iron, the weeds in the vicinity caught fire and people injured by burns among the soldiers pulling the dragon golem appeared one after the other.

"Let's go to the next." (Wendelin)

"Got it, Wend." (Luise)

Once we are about to head to the second one, we hear the sound of some huge object crashing and the sound of metal breaking from the side Doushi is in charge of.  
It seems that Doushi also succeeded in destroying his first dragon golem.

"Next is my turn." (Luise)

"Alright. I leave it to you." (Wendelin)

We boldly cross the area between the advance guard and Duke Nürnberg's main force with our horse.

Spells and arrows come flying at us in succession, but all of them are firmly blocked by my 『Magic Barrier』.

When I was wondering how long the barrier is going to last, I feel a pain in my stomach, but persuading myself that it's still alright, we continue to gallop.

"Wend!" (Luise)

"Yeah." (Wendelin)

I undo the 『Magic Barrier』 for a few seconds and Luise jumps off the horse. She destroyed the dragon golem with one blow of her fist that was charged with mana. The terrifying sound of its destruction and the fragments scattering into the vicinity all at once fell upon the escaping soldiers.

"Next!"

After that we continue the task of destroying the golems in turns.

My mana is decreasing due to the constantly deployed 『Magic Barrier』, but Doushi has already destroyed two, and Luise and I three each. If we destroy the remaining two, we won't lose this battle at least.

"Wend, look." (Luise)

In the middle of crossing the battlefield, Luise discovered the headquarters of Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army.

I also turn a piercing look that way and find the figure of Duke Nürnberg there.

"So that's where he is...?" (Wendelin)

In spite of being toyed with by a mere three people by having almost all his dragon golems destroyed, Duke Nürnberg looks at us calmly.

I don't know what he's thinking, but he probably can't lose his temper in front of his subordinates.

"Duke Nürnberg!"

At last your time has come. I hurled a 『Wind Spear』 that was compressed as much as possible in

his direction.

If I can defeat him here, this long civil war will come to an end.

"Uwaaah!"

"Gyaaaaahh!"

The 『Wind Spear』 flying in a straight line towards Duke Nürnberg mows down many enemy soldiers.

And at the moment I thought it would hit Duke Nürnberg,

"Milord!"

A single magician stood in front of Duke Nürnberg. The male magician, who has the air of a veteran about him, looks capable, but he should be inferior to Talrand.

That's because...

"Lerjure! Don't!" (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg shouted.

It seems he realized my intention. Suddenly the 『Wind Spear』 changed its trajectory, pierced the magician's 『Magic Barrier』 from his blind spot and finally penetrated his body.

"Earl Baumeister!" (Nürnberg)

Indeed, Duke Nürnberg wasn't my target. That's because the magicians would have protected him with their lives even if I did something like that. As expected, Duke Nürnberg saw through that. However, unfortunately, he can't use magic. The magician, who stepped in front of him, didn't realize my aim. He probably never expected himself to be the target. That's why his countermeasures were too late, resulting in his death.

Next I fire another one of the same spells and as expected another magician stood right in front of Duke Nürnberg in order to protect him. Since I easily predicted that move, it was extremely simple to take him by surprise.

A second and then a third magician, on whom Duke Nürnberg was relying, died.

"Kill him!"

"Stop, Bildoll!" (Nürnberg)

A retainer, who misunderstood his own lord being targeted, took along his soldiers and tried to attack us, but I mercilessly flooded them with spells until they were all dead.

Finally I succeeded in damaging the elites preserved by Duke Nürnberg.

"Wend, it's about time." (Luise)

"You're right, I suppose." (Wendelin)

It was a mere few seconds, but as expected, staying any longer to attack is dangerous.

We distance ourselves from Duke Nürnberg and once again attempt to crush a dragon golem.

Given that it would be troublesome if even a single one of them was left intact, we have to accomplish this.

"That's why we will prioritize the dragon golems." (Wendelin)

"True. Playing the hedgehog here is a bad idea." (Luise)

Like that we cut across even Duke Nürnberg's headquarters at maximum speed and almost at the same time as Luise destroyed her fourth golem, Doushi also destroyed his third.

"The mission is a success!" (Armstrong)

"You bastard! How dare you!"

An elderly knight, seemingly leading the soldiers pulling the golem dragon, came attacking us with his sword on top of his horse while raging.

"At this rate, you won't even have an excuse for Duke Nürnberg. I shall show at least some mercy!" (Armstrong)

Doushi reduced that elderly Knight with his 『Fire Snake』 to ashes.

"Earl Baumeister, you are just at the right spot!" (Armstrong)

"I suppose, even if we return like this, the war situation won't progress much..." (Wendelin)

Having finished the destruction of the dragon golems, we were right in the middle between the enemy's advance guard and Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

"We are at the perfect location!" (Armstrong)

"Perfect location, you say? I have still mana left as well." (Wendelin)

Doushi and I immediately kneaded our mana and fired a barrage of 『Fire Snakes』 and 『Fireballs』 towards Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

The enemy magicians immediately deployed their 『Magic Barriers』 and defended, but making the spells deliberately explode outside their range, we increase the damage.

"He has wasted too many magicians."

As the losses of magicians were too high, the remaining magicians didn't have the margin to cover the entire army of Duke Nürnberg's household with 『Magic Barriers』. The ranks of their army, which boasted an iron discipline, become misshapen like a puzzle missing pieces. I'm pretty sure Duke Nürnberg is exploding in anger about now.

"Shit! With only three people!"

"I will slay them!"

Once the spells stopped exploding within their own army, mounted knights headed our way one after the other.

"Wend, handling the reins by holding them lightly is no good, okay?" (Luise)

Luise, who became aware of them, jumps up high, lands on the horse of an enemy knight and kicks him off his horse.

Due to her exceeding swiftness, the knights dropped off their horses without even being able to counterattack.

"I'm back. Don't pull the reins forcefully. Good boy, good boy." (Luise)

"Am I a child...?" (Wendelin)

"It's dangerous to have you pull the reins of a horse on a battlefield, Earl Baumeister! Listen well to what Luise-jou is saying!" (Armstrong)

"Boo-hoo-hoo..." (Luise)

I'm thoroughly chewed out by Doushi, who continuously fires 『Fire Snakes』 next to me and apparently considers my horse-riding as unskilled.

"Wend, there are no attacks from the enemy's advance guard in the back." (Luise)

"They originally are from the imperial army after all. They are thinking that they don't have the duty to go that far in saving Duke Nürnberg, I suppose?" (Wendelin)

The group close to the wall is busy with the capture of the capital, but the military forces in the back of the advance guard didn't come attacking us. As Duke Nürnberg's feudal army didn't have the leeway to give them orders in their chaotic state, they probably didn't feel any obligation to step up by themselves.

"This is a good opportunity! We will inform the imperial army soldiers who surrendered to Duke Nürnberg, who has been deserted by fate!" (Armstrong)

Even though he didn't even use magic, Doushi's voice carried across quite the extensive area.

"A message from His Highness, Peter! If you defeat a single soldier of Duke Nürnberg's feudal army from now on, you will be allowed to return to the imperial army! Those who raise achievements will be able to obtain rewards and status! The person, who takes Duke Nürnberg's head, will be given a peerage! Those are His Highness' commands!" (Armstrong)

"Eh? I haven't heard anything about that..." (Wendelin)

"That's definitely Doushi lying, right?" (Luise)

I also thought that it's a lie, but the soldiers of the enemy's advance unit apparently believed in it. Even if they continue attacking the capital, the resistance will be intense, making it difficult to even overtake the southern wall. That's because their trump cards, namely the suicide-bombing golems

and the dragon golems, are already gone.

"I can't stand it any longer!"

"We are no disposable pawns!"

"If I'm going to die anyway, I might as well take Duke Nürnberg, that damned asshole, with me!"

The majority of the enemy's advance unit complied with Doushi's persuasion, turned around and attacked Duke Nürnberg's feudal army which was disordered due to our magic attacks.

"Uwaaaah, they are rushing this way!" (Wendelin)

"Earl Baumeister, we will advance forward so that we don't get trampled to death!" (Armstrong)

Because Doushi hit the butt of my horse with his wand, the horse started to gallop at full throttle in the direction of Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

"Doushi! That's pushing it too far!" (Wendelin)

"Even I had already enough of the Empire! We are going to bring it to an end quickly and return to the Kingdom!" (Armstrong)

Doushi makes his horse gallop at full power as well. He started to ride next to the horse with Luise and me on top.

At his back the former enemy advance guard runs as fast as it can, trying to kill Duke Nürnberg.

"You have stirred their spirit, but can that bunch really win?" (Wendelin)

I mean they aren't elites and that's why they have been turned into disposable tools by Duke Nürnberg.

"Of course we can't win with just that group! But, this is a good chance! My close buddy Gilbert will definitely make a move!" (Armstrong)

We advance while tearing apart and killing Duke Nürnberg's feudal army with magic. Immediately after the former enemy advance unit swooped down on Duke Nürnberg's army, which hadn't yet fully recovered from its confusion, a big change took place on the side of our allies.

"My close buddy Klimt! You did well!" (Gilbert)

"My close buddy Gilbert! How admirable of you to have noticed!" (Armstrong)

Even though it's not like they had arranged it in advance, Gilbert, who commands the defense unit, attacked Duke Nürnberg's army leading the entire army.

Even if it was Duke Nürnberg's feudal army, they couldn't endure this blow. The officers and men of the Duke Nürnberg's army, who had incurred almost no losses so far, fall one by one.

Now that it has turned out like this, even Duke Nürnberg is likely in distress over the battle situation reversing.

"That Doushi, is he actually an amazing person?"

"I guess he's good at reading the flow of a battle. I think he's probably doing it completely by instinct." (Wendelin)

The royal army group led by Philip and Erw also joined in on the attack and united with us after spotting us.

They probably thought that leaving 1,000 or 2,000 behind in the capital for defence doesn't really matter.

"It's not our turn."

"We are only going to push."

Without drawing their katana, Haruka and Takeomi-san watched the imperial army led by Gilbert as it pursued Duke Nürnberg's feudal army.

"Erw, what about Peter?" (Wendelin)

"As expected, His Highness can't sally forth, can he? Making Ina and the others guard him, he had even the soldiers protecting the headquarters participate in the pursuit." (Erwin)

"No way, for them to fall apart so quickly."

"Partly it was owed to Earl Baumeister-sama and Doushi-sama being strong, but he has used the soldiers besides his own proteges too much as disposable pawns."

If there wasn't a gap in Duke Nürnberg's army, they would have likely had no choice but to resign themselves to their fate since they couldn't have opposed Duke Nürnberg, but once Duke Nürnberg's army fell apart once, there was nothing but hate left in the abused soldiers. That state after being betrayed in a flash, huh?

"Huh? The pursuit came to a stop?"

"He's tenacious, that Duke Nürnberg."

"What do you mean, Philip-dono?"

"If it was a normal army, they would have already collapsed long ago. Around half of them stayed back, standing in the way. There should be some retainers left in order to let Duke Nürnberg get away. At present, it's likely his trusted retainer, Zauken. He's a troublesome opponent."

"Erw, we will chase as well."

"Are you going?"

"If we can defeat Duke Nürnberg here..."

It's only natural since we will be able to return to the Kingdom earlier. Including the matter with my

master, I don't have any reason to let that guy escape.

Once we go ahead together with the royal army group, it looks like a formidable commander is serving as a rear guard after all. Even Gilbert couldn't advance the military forces any further. With mine and Doushi's magic as a lead, the royal army group plunged into the enemy army. There we ran into a middle-aged man who was apparently a veteran commander.

"A slash scar at his right eye...so I was right. It's Zauken, Earl Baumeister."

"You know him well, don't you?"

"He's a decorated soldier after all. He's a known face among the main commanders of the enemy army."

We were told by Christoph that same applies to us as well.

"Zauken-dono, are you fine with it?" (Wendelin)

"To have my name remembered by the famous Earl Baumeister-sama, that's the height of honour." (Zauken)

"Zauken-sama!"

His subordinates try to have him fall back, but the one who stopped that was Zauken himself.

"Are you going to stay behind by yourself in order to let your lord escape?"

"Good grief, you and Armstrong-doushi are beyond any kind of common sense." (Zauken)

"Even so, a defeat is a defeat." (Wendelin)

"Defeat? As long as milord lives, we will definitely make a comeback again. Rejoice over your victory while you can." (Zauken)

"I see...there's nothing more left to say, is there?" (Wendelin)

Zauken drew his sword and tried to slash at me, but I immediately beheaded him by releasing a 『Windcutter』.

"I killed the general!" (Wendelin)

With Zauken's death, the rear guard collapses. Many of them are killed or taken prisoner. Duke Nürnberg got away, but more than half of the elites on whom he relied were lost in this battle. Duke Nürnberg, who probably didn't even predict Peter's rise to power at all, had the carpet pulled from under his feet. With his plan to capture the capital having failed, he was cornered into the defensive.

The battle surrounding the capital comes to an end with an overwhelming victory of the imperial family's third son, the 『Commoner Prince』.

It was a battle that could surely be called a struggle to the death.

## **Chapter 7 – Peter and Therese and...**

In the battle over the capital against Duke Nürnberg, Peter defended successfully after being inaugurated as Prime Minister of the Empire and thus gained a victory. Due to this defeat, Duke Nürnberg has scurried back to his own territory after losing a great number of his elites, who depended on his trusted retainer, the famous Zauken.

With this major victory, him becoming the next emperor was basically set in stone.

After the victory, Peter's rule over the central area, including the capital, went smoothly. Even the nobles announcing their support for him grew in number. The reorganisation for the next Duke Nürnberg subjugation was progressing as well. With this, the civil war's end should...yeah right, the world isn't such a nice place.

"She turned up again with a detestable timing, didn't she?" (Peter)

As if observing the capital, a big army led by Therese and the nobles under her occupied the capital's outskirts.

"Even if the whole army would have been unreasonable, reinforcements for the previous battle should have been in time. Them coming here now without having done so means..."

"That's how it is. At this rate, Duchess Philip-dono probably can't afford to stay silent either."  
(Popek)

Peter and us, who went to inspect the repairs of the walls that had been damaged in the previous battle, can't deny Popek's predictive opinion.

"But Therese might also think that her not becoming empress will be fine as it will allow her to approach Wend or something like that." (Luise)

"Even if she herself thought that, I don't believe that her will matters in this situation any longer."  
(Elise)

Elise gently refuted Luise's statement.

"Well that makes sense. Even though it should have been set in stone for her to be the next empress, it was snatched from her through a big and unexpected winner<sup>1</sup> called His Highness Peter."  
(Burkhart)

"Burkhart-dono, I think there's a slightly better way to phrase that..." (Emera)

For a change Emera rebuked Burkhart-san who worded it as if making light of Peter.

"Sorry, sorry. And yet, aren't you quite nice there towards His Highness Peter, Emera-jou?"  
(Burkhart)

"Currently you have to consider His Highness's position. I only thought that this statement of him sabotaging others isn't appropriate." (Emera)

"Certainly, you are right with what you are saying, Emera-jou. I stand corrected." (Burkhart)

"Burkhart-dono, nice. See? Emera cannot help loving me." (Peter)

Indeed, since Burkhart-san was able to pull out a protective statement from Emera, his own rude words are inconsequential, I suppose?

"Your Highness, right now the countermeasures against Duchess Philip are the most important, no?" (Emera)

"Even if you say countermeasures, she certainly won't attack the capital with that big army, will she? I mean, she's only here after being dragged into it by the people around her. I think that much should be Therese's limit." (Peter)

Peter stopped addressing Therese as Duchess Philip. He's probably not regarding her as rival anymore.

"I see, so you are saying it won't turn into a battle?"

"As I said, that's her limit. If she attacks now, our side will be exhausted after having just finished a decisive battle against Duke Nürnberg, so we are full of openings as we are in the middle of reorganising our troops. At the moment she's unable to do that, you can safely declare that she isn't suited for being an empress during wartime. Even though she would have been a good empress during peaceful times, but I guess she just has bad luck. Ah, maybe..." (Peter)

"Maybe what?" (Armstrong)

Doushi suddenly brought his face close to Peter, looking very interested.

"Is it love? She doesn't want to kill the man she loves." (Peter)

"I see." (Armstrong)

This time Peter and Doushi suddenly brought their faces close to me.

"Umm, you know..." (Wendelin)

"First she will come here with the intent of congratulating us on repelling Duke Nürnberg's army. The real deal comes after that." (Peter)

Peter's prediction was on the spot. A messenger from Therese arrived, asking for permission for her to enter the capital for the sake of expressing her congratulations for the victory.

"As expected, she has been strung along by the people around her." (Peter)

Peter muttered in a whisper while waiting for Therese in the throne hall.

"After all it's a group that would lose its glorious future as supporters of the new empress, Duchess Philip-dono. Maybe they are going to try having you, Your Highness, recognize Duchess Philip-

dono's superiority by threatening you with their military force?"

"I wonder, do they really think that such a plan will bear any fruit?" (Peter)

"They have no other choice but to believe so. That's how far they have been cornered after all."

They received so much of a shock by Peter's brilliant triumph.

"Christoph-dono?"

"In the end, people prioritize their own matters. Because she's supported by such people, they are trying to force something unreasonable to the top. Do you understand if you look at mine and Philip-nii-san's fate? In the eyes of society, we were fools. But, no matter how many proper policies a leader tries to implement, there are times when they are compelled to implement poor policies due to being pressured by those below them." (Christoph)

Since it's a statement by Christoph who actually failed in the inheritance power struggle of the Margrave Browig household, everyone listened to him sincerely.

"I guess we will first have them show us what they've got." (Peter)



That evening Therese visited the Imperial Palace while bringing only a few attendants along. It seems to be under the pretext of a courtesy call.

"Peter-dono, first I shall congratulate you for your great victory." (Therese)

"I think I was just lucky. Wendelin was with me as well. Though it wasn't only that either." (Peter)

Upon Therese's greeting, Peter handled it with his usual attitude. He demonstrated an attitude that told her to obey him already and indirectly declared 『I won't yield to your threats』 and 『Earl Baumeister, on whom you have been relying, is my close friend』.

"(Wouldn't it be better for him to handle her a bit more politely...?)" (Ina)

"(You're right, the other party is a duchess after all.)" (Katharina)

Ina, Katharina, that's not correct.

If he compromises here by abasing himself unskillfully, the other party will only get carried away. If he accepts them as is, the possibility of yet another civil war occurring after Duke Nürnberg's subjugation can't be factored out. That's why Peter is trying to have the other side accept that they are below him.

"It's been a while, Earl Baumeister." (Therese)

Without saying anything to Peter, Therese greeted me next, but her expression looks slightly

gloomy. She was accompanied by two young males in the latter half of their twenties in addition to Alfons.

Since they are wearing extravagant clothes despite not being Lan tribe members, they are probably Therese's elder brothers.

"It's been indeed a long time, Your Excellency Duchess Philip." (Wendelin)

"No matter where you go, you make a great impact, don't you?" (Therese)

"It's because I'd like to be able to return to the Kingdom as soon as possible." (Wendelin)

"I guess you're right. The civil war will come to an end soon." (Therese)

Therese's expression is dark after all. Though I might not have noticed it if I didn't know her. At any rate, Earl Baumeister, huh? She's probably taking the surroundings into consideration. I guess there's no way for her to address a traitor by name, huh? Her elder brothers behind her look at me with expressions that didn't hide their negative feelings about me.

Because the civil war dragged on for too long, it seems like these guys are plotting to make a comeback. Therese's despotic authority has declined.

"For the punitive force, which had three times more troops than their enemy, to lose and for His Majesty to be killed, by no means...did we imagine for that to happen. Since we waited with the mobilization until the harvest was done, it took time for our feudal armies to assemble."

One of Therese's elder brothers says something that appears to be an excuse, but in that case, it would have been fine if you had sent the 10,000 soldiers stationed in the Great Sorbid Wastelands' encampment.

At the moment they didn't do that, the suspicion that the northern lords wouldn't send any reinforcements became reality.

"There's no use in talking about the past. You will be able to work for the Empire from now on, right?" (Peter)

"Of course."

Peter, who assumed the position of the Empire's Prime Minister, openly treated Therese and those with her like his subordinates.

Therese's group cannot afford to get angry over that.

After all Peter's inauguration as the Empire's Prime Minister had been approved by the parliament. If they were to complain about this, it would turn into a question where the responsibility lies and they would be told 『You people have no right to complain after not being even in time for the decisive battle against Duke Nürnberg's army!』.

『Seeing that the capital had been re-captured by Duke Nürnberg, they would use the opportunity and stab into the openings to defeat him. It's not a bad strategy, but it looks like you overthink things a bit too much, doesn't it Duchess Philip?』

Gilbert clearly saw through the plan of Therese's group.

There's no such capable soldier in the liberation army after it lost Earl Lärmer. Given that Alfons is

an able organisation manager rather than a capable soldier, he probably wasn't able to meddle in this time's matter.

"Right now we are reorganizing the Duke Nürnberg punitive force. I will inform you about your deployment later. Well then, I'm busy." (Peter)

The audience ended after a short time and Therese's elder brothers left the throne hall without even hiding their displeasure.

"Looks like those guys are the key people. I have no doubt that they are up to no good." (Peter)

"They are?" (Elise)

"Correct, Elise-dono. As expected, Therese-dono was calm and composed. Well, she's thinking that it can't be helped even if she doesn't become empress herself. But you know, her elder brothers are no good." (Peter)

There's also a shortage of servants, but Peter favored the tea made by Elise since the time when he was stationed in Sakart.

He answers her question while enjoying the maté tea made by her.

"So it's the rank and territory of the Duke Philip peerage..."

"Yes, they can't resist its appeal." (Peter)

Meaning, it's not only Therese's problem whether she becomes empress or not.

"If Therese-dono becomes empress, the Duke Philip title will naturally become available. Since she has no children of her own, the next Duke Philip will be chosen from among her elder brother's sons, in other words, her nephews." (Peter)

The skin colour decides in the Philip Dukedom, so her elder brothers can't directly succeed the peerage, but if it's her nephews, there's no problem with skin colour. Since they are still very young, the real power should be in the hands of her elder brothers. If it goes smoothly, they might be even able to aim for the position of next emperor after Therese.

The number of Prince-electoral households has decreased. It has become doubtful whether the rule that people of the same prince-electoral household can't be chosen as emperor in a row can still be applied.

"The situation taking a drastic turn is inevitable!" (Armstrong)

"That means it will be more comfortable for us if we clean up first before attacking Duke Nürnberg. A drastic turn would be very welcome. Ah right, can you please call Gatora?" (Peter)

Peter summoned his trusted retainer Gatora who became the new head of the intelligence department.

"Does it look like the situation will take a drastic turn?" (Peter)

"Yes, she got secretly in touch with the elder brothers of Duchess Philip." (Gatora)

"After all." (Peter)

"After all?" (Wendelin)

"Well, there's a woman who has her head full of fresh cream." (Peter)

Does that mean that Peter's mother-in-law, the wife of the dead Emperor, has joined up with Therese's elder brothers and is trying to remove Peter?

"Didn't that person escape earlier!?" (Katharina)

In spite of being forced to join the counterattack by Peter while being scared of Duke Nürnberg, who was approaching the capital, she's going to try to restore her rights once Duke Nürnberg is defeated. There should be a great number of nobles, who gave up on their official position out of fear towards Duke Nürnberg, including her own elder brother, Marquis Areil, behind the empress. Katharina got angry that it was an act unbecoming of a noble.

"Well, it's because they are nobles that they use such underhanded tricks, right? But, they are stupid. Did they really think that I wouldn't watch out for them?" (Peter)

As if seeing through the true character of those people, Peter laid a trap for the empress and her supporters.

And they were completely caught in it.

"Katharina-dono, I have compassion. Even though they could have spent their lives in luxury due to their annuity alongside their territories and peerages, if they had stayed obedient, they are unnecessarily greedy. Katharina-dono, you should be careful as well." (Peter)

"I guess you are right..." (Katharina)

Katharina actually regarded Peter as a frivolous person. Although that's not wrong either, he's capable of making a cruel decision like this, if push comes to shove. It's not like I clearly perceived that either, but I might have guessed so with my intuition. That's why I bet on Peter.

"Are you going to take measures in advance?" (Wendelin)

"No way, having them make a move first will give us a just cause. It appears like those two are moving in secret behind Therese-dono's back. Otherwise she would stop them." (Peter)

"Even if it's Therese, doesn't she need to form an alliance with them now that she has been cornered?" (Emera)

"Emera, even if you increase the number of incompetent allies, it won't lead to anything but hindering your supporters. Well then, let's go sleep for today?" (Peter)

"Haa..." (Emera)

Emera looks like she doesn't agree, but with Peter cutting off the discussion at this point, it's time for bed.

"Though I don't think that it's the time for us to go to sleep without any care..."

"Because it's a time like this, getting your sleep is important."

With the situation being what it is, only I...couldn't fall asleep. Upon Peter's order, Katharina and Wilma are sleeping next to me as guards.

I couldn't quite fall asleep, but just when I started to doze off...

"Gahaa!"

"Uh!"

I heard people groaning from the ceiling and the sound of two objects falling on the ground.

"What happened?"

Once I turned on the lights in a hurry, two men, who wore black clothes and had their faces hidden, had fainted on the floor. Two fist-sized stones are lying next to them.

"Thieves?"

Just like me, Katharina isn't sensitive to an opponent's bloodthirst. She got up from the bed slightly after me.

"Since rats were peeping on us, I exterminated them."

The one who defeated the two thieves by hitting them with stones was Wilma. She also gets up from the bed and ties the two fainted thieves with ropes.

"Wend-sama, let's go." (Wilma)

"Yeah, I couldn't sleep much anyway..." (Wendelin)

"Let's sleep together afterwards."

"Okay."

Once we enter the throne hall while yawning, Peter and the others had already gathered there as well. Four bound thieves were scattered on the floor.

"I wonder, can't she use her head a bit more? Guess that's the limit of the Fresh Cream Woman." (Peter)

『Fresh Cream Woman』, that's likely the empress' nickname. She sent assassins after Peter and me, failed miserably and ended up giving Peter a just cause.

"Gatora, do you know them?" (Peter)

"Not all of them, but one of them harbours dissatisfaction over the fifth son of a Baron becoming his superior." (Gatora)

The thieves were people of the intelligence department. Being displeased with Gatora, an upstart department chief, it was arranged as a raid by the empress' elder brother Marquis Areil, the former department chief.

"There wasn't even a shred of an element of surprise either. Gatora, you seized the evidence, so please punish them without any reservations." (Peter)

"Your Highness, does that apply for Her Majesty the Empress as well?" (Gatora)

"It will be pointless if you don't get rid of that person, right? Make it fit with her main supporters, calling it 『Death from illness』." (Peter)

If Peter announced that it was an execution since they intended to assassinate him, the unrest among the capital's residents would be big.

He probably has decided to put it off for another time and called it death from illness.

"I will handle it quickly." (Gatora)

"Your Highness!"

At the same time as Gatora exits the throne hall, the one in charge of the Imperial Palace's guards plunged in.

"What's wrong?" (Peter)

"That is, an unexpected visitor has arrived..."

"Who is it?" (Peter)

"It's Alfons-sama, the head of Duke Philip household's branch family."

"Alfons."

Did he come in panic for an explanation after noticing this time's attack?

"It's not really unexpected for me though. He is slightly late, but let him through." (Peter)

"As you wish, Your Highness."

With Peter's permission, Alfons and young Duke Baden showed up in the throne hall. For me it was rather unexpected that he was accompanied by young Duke Baden.

"Yoo, Alfons-dono. Looks like you weren't in time, eh?"(Peter)

"I'm very sorry." (Alfons)

Without his usual air of joking around, Alfons apologized to Peter with a meek expression.

"So, I guess this was initiated by Therese-dono?" (Peter)

"No way! My cousins got in touch with the empress on their own accord!" (Alfons)

"Hmm, I see. But, it's unbelievable for someone of Therese-dono's calibre to not have noticed anything, right?" (Peter)

"That is..." (Alfons)

Alfons is really panicking quite a bit. If it was the usual you, you should have been able to play the fool by saying "Therese truly hasn't noticed anything." Or maybe Therese noticed it, but couldn't say that she would give up on the seat of empress and pull back next to the nobles supporting her and her retainers.

If she had stopped her elder brothers unskillfully, she would have been killed or imprisoned, and in the worst case, there would be the risk of both armies attacking each other.

"Did she become unable to make any moves...?"

I recalled the situation with Philip and Christoph here. Those two probably didn't want to start something like a dispute either, but being pressured by those around them...

"High-ranking nobles are scary, aren't they?"

Peter replies to my murmur.

"It's a story I can sympathize with. I have to be careful as well. So, Alfons-dono, having come here I guess you were able to resolve yourself?" (Peter)

"Yes." (Alfons)

"Then let's review the details? You are going to participate in my new administration as Duke Philip after I become emperor. And, although I don't feel overly good about it, I will have the three people, who are the ones responsible, die from illness..." (Peter)

"Please wait!" (Alfons)

"No good?" (Peter)

"For my cousins that's fine. After all their nature of offence deserves that punishment. But, I'd like you to conclude it with a forced retirement for Therese." (Alfons)

Alfons used a strong voice making it clear that he can't yield on that.

"Though I believe her to be the one most responsible. She's the leader after all. I believe those responsible exist for the sake of taking responsibility." (Peter)

"I understand that. I'd like to request for you yield on that part." (Alfons)

Alfons was fixated on clemency for Therese. Due to his overwhelming intensity, even Peter seems unable to state that it's impossible.

"The reason?" (Peter)

"I owe a big debt to Therese. When the previous family head died, there were talks about me assisting her after becoming Therese's husband. But at that time I hadn't even turned 15 years old yet. Since there was also the matter with the branch family, I ended up running away. She conducted herself properly as Duchess Philip so far. She even supported me, but the fact of me running away at that time still weighs on my heart after all. If Therese was to die at this point, I would regret it for my whole life!" (Alfons)

Usually Alfons was a bottomlessly cheerful person, but seemingly he had such worries as well.

"A guilty conscience, huh...? It's not like I don't have one either. I guess it can't be helped." (Peter)

I wonder, just what is it that Peter is feeling guilty over?

"I think you understand, but this is a story that could cause a big chaos. We cannot afford to give Duke Nürnberg an opportunity to counterattack." (Peter)

Even though we finally managed to deliver substantial damage to him, it would be meaningless if a civil war between Peter's and Therese's factions broke out.

"I know, if I can't have them kill themselves obediently, I won't have any other option but to kill them myself." (Alfons)

Alfons declared that he won't spare his own cousins, even if he has to slay them himself.

"You will, Alfons-dono? I know of your skill with the sword. Will you be alright?" (Peter)

Does Peter even know about Alfons' skill with the sword? This guy's intelligence network is really amazing.

"Of course there are also sword masters among my retainers." (Alfons)

"Mark, Wendelin, can I leave it to you, just in case?" (Peter)

"As you wish, Your Highness." (Mark)

"Got it." (Wendelin)

"Huh? Considering it's you, it's unusual for you to agree with it so obediently, Wendelin. Did you actually like Therese-dono?" (Peter)

"You know, it's not like I refused most of your troublesome wishes, Peter! If I'm the one performing their last rites, Therese should obediently obey as well." (Wendelin)

"Sorry, Wendelin." (Peter)

"Don't mind it." (Wendelin)

After all, it would also leave a bad aftertaste if a beautiful woman is killed. Since it's midnight, Alfons and me took only Mark, Erw and Takeomi-san along and headed to the headquarters of the Duke Philip household's feudal army located in the capital's outskirts.



"Sorry about forgetting you. So, what kind of business do you have with me, young Duke Baden?" (Peter)

"It's not as grave as the previous matter. I'd like to excuse myself from a suicide alongside Therese-dono's elder brothers. I will support you, Your Highness. There are many other lords also looking at reality. You can see them on this list. If those two die, many other nobles will probably snap out of it as well." (Baden)

"I thank you for your kindness, young Duke Baden-dono. After I'm enthroned as emperor, we will officially carry out the ceremony of you succeeding the Duke Baden peerage." (Peter)

Young Duke Baden was hated by the emperor as he was considered to be one of Therese's underlings. He still hadn't performed the ceremony of succeeding the peerage as that has to be done by the emperor. Peter would hold that ceremony and it was decided that the Duke Baden household would support the new administration as Prince-electoral household. Since we weren't present, we heard about that on the next day.



"There are only men here. We are completely lacking sex appeal." (Erwin)

"I will tell on you to Haruka. It's unknown how many retainers and soldiers follow the rebels. Even we will have to kill people. It's better to not show such acts to women as much as possible." (Takeomi)

"It's a taboo for women to stay up late. It's not good for their skin." (Mark)

""OOOH! An unexpected comment!""

I'm walking towards our destination while being surrounded by Erw, Takeomi-san and Mark, but due to the unexpected remark spoken by Mark, all of us raise our voice simultaneously.

"Sshhh—!!!"

"Sorry."

Once we arrive at a place close to the headquarters, Alfons was addressed by a retainer awaiting him there.

"Alfons-sama."

"How is it?" (Alfons)

"Well, in fact, the two just entered the tent of the headquarters."

"Did they sense something?" (Alfons)

It seems that the two of them had been accompanied by several armed soldiers. Once we prick up our ears and listen from the entrance of the headquarters, the voices of Therese and two men are audible.

"Milady, the assassination of His Highness Peter should succeed any time soon now. Afterwards you have..."

"Are you retarded? When did I give such an order?" (Therese)

As expected, the ones who gave the order to assassinate Peter and me were Therese's elder brothers.

"You haven't, but the die has already been cast."

"You lot probably just cast it on your own accord. Do you believe that he has a character of letting himself getting assassinated obediently? Far from it being meaningless at this point, it might result in us being counterattacked and killed. Do you desire the seat of Duke Philip so much?" (Therese)

"Just how much did we suffer because of our skin colour!?"

"Therese, we will have you become empress! Soon the empress and the high-ranking nobles, who were chased out of their official positions by His Highness Peter, will take action!"

"Isn't that a plan with zero chance of success, on top of it being a convenient excuse? Though I had hoped that you had become a bit wiser. Ambition and desire are frightening allies." (Therese)

"Whatever you say!"

"We will have you restrained until the situation comes to an end."

It seems as if Therese's elder brothers are about to put Therese under house arrest.

"Wend!" (Erwin)

Erw called out to me with "You have to help her quickly."

"Storm the place!" (Alfons)

Since her brothers were about to restrain Therese, Alfons ordered the tent to be stormed.

"Who is it?"

"Alfons?"

"Unfortunately your plan has failed. The empress and her cronies are about to toast wine now."  
(Alfons)

Toasting wine is jargon for getting killed by poison. As minimal mercy, the poison was put into wine.

Given that I don't like alcohol much, I'd like to request another beverage at such moment though.

"Wendelin!?" (Therese)

Therese apparently noticed me and raised her voice that was tinged with happiness.

"Earl Baumeister!"

"Did he survive?"

"Please don't kill me off as you like. I'm a human full of openings, but I'm not as stupid as to get killed by you guys." (Wendelin)

In truth, it's thanks to Wilma though.

"Shit!"

"Okay, don't move."

Something like the thoughts of small scoundrels like you guys I already know from anime and manga I saw in my previous life.

You are going to escape this place with Therese as a hostage. There's not much meaning in that, but you will be able to earn some time after all.

Before they could do that, I unveiled the magic control I practised in preparation for the showdown with master.

I had ring-shaped 『Wind Blades』 deploy towards the knees, ankles, elbows, wrists, waists, chests and necks of Therese's elder brothers.

"If you make even the slightest movements, your hands, legs and head will be cut off. But, are you going to move despite that?" (Wendelin)

Therese's brothers didn't even twitch. The soldiers appear to hesitate as to what they should do.

"You idiots! Hurry up and restrain Therese!"

"Are you going to disobey"

""""""No, Sir!""""""

I guess it's regrettable but the soldiers can't defy Therese's elder brothers, who are high-ranking

people, and to make up for it, they try to restrain her. However, that was also an ill-advised act.

"Don't follow orders so readily in this situation." (Erwin)

"Erwin, that's the nature of manipulated people."

"I won't kill them, but they will die if they don't get healed quickly."

The soldiers, who were foolishly about to restrain Therese, are cut by Erw, Takeomi-san and Mark. As expected, it doesn't look as if they have been killed, but due to their very heavy injuries, they were arrested by Alfons' group quickly.

"How regrettable..." (Alfons)

"Alfons!"

Therese's brothers, who had no hands to play anymore, turn looks full of hatred at Alfons and me.

"It's an order from His Highness Peter, the Empire's Prime Minister. At this moment now the title of Duke Philip will be inherited by me. Therese-dono will retire and you guys have been granted wine by His Highness. It's the very last wine of your life. You better savour it slowly." (Alfons)

"You bastaaaard—!"

"If you move, you will lose your arm. Hey!" (Wendelin)

I finally undid my magic after the swords of Therese's brother had been taken, but they were immediately restrained by Alfons' retainers.

We won't verify it, but it's highly unlikely that they will receive something like mercy from Alfons. I don't want to watch it either. When I was about to return to the capital at this point...

"Wendelin!" (Therese)

Therese hugged me.

"Wait a minute!" (Wendelin)

"Wendelin!" (Therese)

Why did she embrace me even though I forced her to retire, although I'm just an accomplice and not the principal offender. With the matter of me also having changed sides to Peter, I thought that she would bear a grudge.

"I came to give you your final decree." (Wendelin)

"Even so, didn't you save me?" (Therese)

"Even if I didn't, wouldn't Alfons have saved you?" (Wendelin)

"Wendelin, as usual you don't understand the heart of a woman. Oh well, so be it. After all I'm satisfied." (Therese)

"Really?" (Wendelin)

I can't leave while hugged by Therese, so what's the best option here? At such times a former Japanese will be troubled.

"Wend, you are really useless at such critical moments." (Erwin)

"That's true. He's hopeless." (Takeomi)

"My friend, Wendelin, if you don't get through this, you will be unpopular with the women...or strangely popular." (Alfons)

"Even His Highness would be a bit more tactful." (Mark)

Not only Erw, Takeomi-san and Alfons, but even Mark ended up blaming me harshly, but having been able to avoid yet another battle over the capital, I sighed in relief.

## **Chapter 8 – A Certain Afternoon after the Political Disturbances**

"Wendelin, sorry for last night."

"Don't worry, it's better than the situation developing into a battle once again." (Wendelin)



The coup d'etat by Therese's elder brothers and the empress, who is Peter's mother-in-law, ended in failure.

The ringleader, the empress, Marquis Areil, several high-ranking nobles and Therese's brothers killed themselves after being made to drink poisoned wine. The empress apparently kicked up a fuss as she didn't want to drink the poison, but it ended with her having forced it down her throat. It has been decided that it will officially announced as death due to illness, but after the Marquis Areil household lost its rank and the other high-ranking nobles were told in detail about their fate by Peter, their successors inherited the peerage after being dropped one rank in peerage.

The Duke Philip household had Alfons succeed and Therese retire as Duchess. The liberation army led by Therese was dissolved, and all of them were in the middle of being reorganized into the imperial army under Gilbert's command.

There were already no northern lords left who expressed their discontent over Peter becoming the next emperor.

After all they actually experienced just how dangerous reckless ambitions could become after learning about the big number of people suddenly dying due to illness.



As I had an audience with Peter after waking up slightly late on the next morning, Therese was happily linking her arms with me.

"Yeeeeeah, that's no punishment at all, is it?" (Peter)

To me it looks like a punishment though. Please don't link arms with me in such a place. The stares from Emera, Mark and the other nobles are painful.

"As expected of my friend, Wendelin. I'm envious to the limit as you apparently obtained a lovely flower." (Lanzberg)

Only Earl Lanzberg praised me for some reason. This person, well, he has been like this from the start. He's considering me linking arms with a beauty such as Therese to be envious from the bottom of his heart.

But you know, it's not really as if I have such relationship with Therese yet...

"I only pray that the Empire will be guided towards a good direction by His Highness Peter from now on. As I have retired, I can't contribute anything to it, but I will at least pray for it whenever I remember it." (Therese)

"Why yes, thank you..." (Peter)

Peter showed an expression making it apparent that he wasn't fully satisfied with the current situation. He sends his look towards Emera who's next to him, but it's unthinkable for her to link her arms with Peter in public.

"Your Highness, it's about Therese-sama, but..." (Emera)

Being urged on by Emera, Peter continued speaking.

"At this point I won't tediously explain the circumstances. I will consider Therese-dono's achievements until now and provide you an annuity, albeit a modest one." (Peter)

"That's very welcome." (Therese)

So that means he's telling her to stay obedient while living in happiness. If she schemes the restoration of her powers, she will suffer the same fate as the empress and her two brothers. Though I don't think there's anything to worry about since we are talking about Therese here.

"I earnestly wanted to fight against Duke Nürnberg in my own way. In the end it resulted in me exiting the stage, but it's probably a stroke of luck to simply stay alive. For the Empire's restoration...no, for its rebirth, you were necessary, Peter-dono. In that case there's nothing left but me stepping down without having a turn of my own." (Therese)

Therese boldly declared that she would never again get involved in the Empire's politics.

"I'd like to give the highest praise to your determination, Therese-dono, but...can't you stop linking arms with Wendelin already?" (Peter)

"The current me is a free woman." (Therese)

I also wondered whether she would remove her arm, but as Therese's breasts are soft, I give up. A free mind is something frightening.

"I see. I'm also a free man, so link arms with me, Emera." (Peter)

"No, thanks." (Emera)

Being treated coldly by Emera as usual, Peter became teary eyed.



"Therese-sama!"

Once we left the Imperial Palace after the audience ended, we were suddenly called out by Ebbo, Therese's faithful dog. Come to think of it, I wonder what this guy is going to do from now on?

"Ebbo, I won't return to the Philip Dukedom anymore. You have to serve Alfons." (Therese)

"No way! I am!" (Ebbo)

"You shouldn't follow me. It will only result in unhappiness for the both of us." (Therese)

"Therese-sama..." (Ebbo)

It's quite likely that it will trigger suspicions that Therese is aiming to retake the title of Duchess Philip with Ebbo serving as contact point. The two of them staying together is risky.

"Thanks for always being my ally. That gave me a lot of reassurance." (Therese)

"Therese-sama." (Ebbo)

"I'm indebted to you. I'm looking forward to your future service as retainer of the Duke Philip household. Please accept this." (Therese)

Therese handed the sword hanging at her waist to Ebbo as reward. Since she gave the exclusive sword of the Duke Philip household's head to Alfons, it's her personal sword.

"Isn't this your own sword, Therese-sama!?" (Ebbo)

"I won't need it any longer. Please put it to good use. Farewell, Ebbo." (Therese)

"Therese-samaaaaa!" (Ebbo)

Therese left as Ebbo fell to his knees and started sobbing in front of the Imperial Palace.



"I guess I feel slightly pathetic." (Therese)

Because an adult man at an advanced age was wailing in front of the Imperial Palace, it was noticed by many people. I felt slightly embarrassed, but it wasn't the proper time to mention that, and thus I kept my thoughts secret.

"Someone who will take care of me and a place to live will be provided by Peter-dono." (Therese)

That's as if she's being monitored, isn't it...?

"Peter-dono can't make a mistake. Therefore it's inevitable. For me there's nothing to feel guilty of." (Therese)

If Ebbo stayed at her side, she would be suspected without just cause. I think that's why she will keep him at distance.

"Well then, right now I'm free, so please take me somewhere." (Therese)

"Me?" (Wendelin)

"Is there anyone else here?" (Therese)

Well, there's no one besides Therese and me present.

"Ah, that's right! Earl Lanzberg told me where to find a good establishment." (Therese)

As a matter of fact that person is writing guiding books for recommended dating spots as hobby. I guess that means that he's making use of his special skill as love hunter to earn some money on the side.

"I wonder what kind of store it is? How about we go and have a look?" (Wendelin)

"Aren't you awfully obedient this time?" (Therese)

"Well, yeah." (Wendelin)

Therese isn't Duchess Philip anymore after all. I can treat her normally without having to pay attention to weird things.

"Let's go then?" (Therese)

We arrived at our destination by foot within a few minutes without distancing ourselves from the Imperial Palace overly much. Appropriate to an establishment introduced by Earl Lanzberg, it looks as if it's suited for a date with its stylish design.

"Oddly, this is our first date, isn't it Wendelin?" (Therese)

"(Does a man and a woman drinking tea together already count as a date?)" (Wendelin)

Therese got excited by herself, but once we entered, Elise and the others were already sitting there. Looks like they have seen through Therese's plans a long time ago.

"Your wives have sharp intuitions, Wendelin." (Therese)

"Last night Wilma managed to steal the achievement, but I'm also skilled at searching for the presences of others." (Luise)

I see, even if I hide myself and try to have an affair, it will immediately get exposed by Luise.

"For today I will yield the seat next to Wend to you, Therese-sama." (Elise)

"That kindness of yours moves me to tears." (Therese)

Therese and I sit down at the table, where Elise and the others are sitting, next to each other.

"I mean, there's no point in forcefully hindering you any longer. Right, Elise?"

"That's true. Therese-sama is no longer Duchess Philip." (Elise)

The current Therese has lost all her political influence. Does that mean that Elise and my other wives can't say anything even if she approaches me as it depends on what I want to do?

"Wendelin-san rescued Therese-sama after all." (Katharina)

I see. I had the option to abandon Therese at that time. It wouldn't have been strange in any way even if I chose that option.

Huh? It's certainly true that I saved her with quite the spirit, but are the surroundings misunderstanding that as Therese and me already being an item?

"Wendelin, it looks like this store has a peculiar menu." (Therese)

"Peculiar menu?" (Wendelin)

Once I survey the inside, there are many couples, despite it having been just the other day when the battle over the capital took place. There appear to be people eating and drinking anywhere...no, now that I look closely, they held up glasses with two straw-like objects.

"(What a cliched development...)"

The couples hold a single glass with two straws and drink from it together.

In the Japan of recent years straws have disappeared and become a rare view even in the media, but they seem to normally exist in this world.

"Straws, huh...?" (Wendelin)

"I guess it became a fashion slightly before the civil war started. But, you are well-informed to know about it. It's a luxury item since it can't be created by anyone but skilled craftsmen." (Therese)

As there isn't anything like plastic in this world, the straws were made out of wood.

Moreover, these straws also have a rickrack part, allowing them to properly bend.

It seems that raw materials from monsters are used for that part.

If you consider that the wooden parts and the bending part have to be connected as well, a far more sophisticated technique than what I have been expecting seems to be used here.

"So they aren't throwaway items."

"I suppose there's no way for them to be able to throw away an item that costs more than 150 cents per straw."

"Ugh, how expensive!" (Wendelin)

Due to the straws costing around 15,000 Japanese Yen per item, I unintentionally end up raising my

voice.

It appears this is the price for each and every single straw being handmade by a craftsman as mass production in fabrics isn't possible...

"Come on, you will drink juice together with me." (Therese)

"So that's why this store, huh...?" (Wendelin)

In other words, Therese wanted to drink juice from the same glass together with me.

"Thank you for waiting."

"Dear, let's drink it together." (Elise)

However, Elise and the others have ordered their juices in advance already, resulting in Therese having a late start.

"Elise-dono, isn't that slightly unfair?" (Therese)

"We are not excluding you, Therese-sama. I believe it will depend on your own charm whether you will be able to receive an invitation. Dear, the juice looks delicious, let's have a sip together." (Elise)

"Yeeees." (Wendelin)

Actually I wanted to try doing something like this. It's also one of the keys to a happy marriage.

"It's tasty, isn't it?" (Elise)

"You're right." (Wendelin)

I realized one thing. In my previous life I thought 『Stupid couple, go and die!』 when seeing such scene, but this is something very nice after all.

Being closely observed by Elise's cute face makes the juice even more delicious.

But, there was an unexpected pitfall in this.

"Next is my turn." (Ina)

"Afterwards, me." (Luise)

It would be great if we were a couple of two people, but I have five wives.

Because I have vowed to stay fair, I ended up drinking juice from the same glasses with all of them.

"Wend, all of us chose different juices." (Ina)

"It was Ina-chan's idea." (Luise)

I see, in order for me to not get tired by having various flavours...time to binge drink!

"Wilma-san, isn't that container too big?"

"Is it? For me it's rather on the small side." (Wilma)

I don't know why this store has something like that on the menu, but Wilma had ordered a huge glass of juice.

"Wendelin-san, it will be problematic if you only drink cold juice, right? Accordingly I ordered warm coffee. Ouch, it's hot!" (Katharina)

Katharina burns herself by drinking the hot coffee through the straw.

"Uuh...Wendelin..." (Therese)

"Yaaaaay, I want to drink juice together with you as well, Therese." (Wendelin)

"Really!?" (Therese)

Since Therese, who was beaten to the punch by Elise and the others albeit being the one who invited me, looked like an abandoned kitten, I agreed to drink juice together with her against my better judgment.

Because she's smiling happily from the depths of her heart – something she hasn't shown to me so far – I believed that I could regard that as good outcome, but...

"Your belly is flabby."

That only makes sense.

Drinking the half of each of the six beverages...my stomach ended up being full since it's normal for the man to drink the bigger share in such case, although it was different for Wilma.

Once we came back home, I lie down on the sofa in the guest house.

"Hoo, such stores are currently trendy in the capital? Haruka-san, let's go together next time." (Erwin)

"Yes, by all means." (Haruka)

Hearing me talking about that store, Erw perceived this as good opportunity and invited Haruka.

"I see...won't you let me accompany you as well, Erwin? How about drinking tea together?" (Takeomi)

"... No, thanks." (Erwin)

And yet, Takeomi-san immediately came interrupting. This person should finally stop and give up.

"Something like that is popular between the youths of the capital? What to say, I guess I belong in the group of old people?" (Burkhart)

"I would have also gone if I were twenty years younger!" (Armstrong)

When the chat turned in the direction of Burkhart-san and Doushi joining in as well, a visitor

appeared.

It was Earl Lanzberg who introduced himself as 『Love Hunter』.

"There's a cafe, how was that establishment?" (Lanzberg)

"It was a cafe with an interesting idea. There were also many customers." (There's)

"That's wonderful. The distance between lovers will shorten and even I will also get some income. Everyone will become happy." (Lanzberg)

"That's your cafe!?" (Burkhart)

"For my activity as love hunter I need a reasonable amount of money after all." (Lanzberg)

Earl Lanzberg answered Burkhart-san's retort without any shyness.

"It was quite troublesome to have those straws bend at the tip. If the straws are straight, the faces will be too close. Those who think that it's better for the faces to be close don't really understand love. An appropriate distance is necessary for lovers. That distance will turn into a spice of them craving for each other." (Lanzberg)

""""""""Haa...""""""""

He's capable, but because of the rules of his family, he can only work as manager of the Imperial Palace. Enjoying love in his free time, he's earning some money for his funds on the side by making use of his special skills.

I wondered, whether his way isn't actually the smartest way to live your life.

Oh well, it's nothing I can imitate though...

## **Chapter 9 – Duke Nürnberg's Circumstances**

"Duke Nürnberg, are you finally going to meet your doom? At the end of slaughter and a reckless rebellion, only your bad reputation will be left behind for future generations. You will gather the curiosity of future historians and novelists as historical villain."

"Don't give me that, demon. Do you plan to accumulate my slander while living for another millenium?" (Nürnberg)

"It looks like you are unable to learn either, Duke Nürnberg. Even if I am a demon, I will not live that long. My esteemed self will become 187 years old this year. If I live another century, I will reach my life expectancy."

"Bah! It's plenty as long as you can live that long, no?" (Nürnberg)

The Duke Nürnberg household is currently in the abyss of downfall. There are many among my retainers and following nobles who believe that it's yet too early to give up and that they can survive if we concentrate on a defensive battle in the southern area, our own domain. First they plan to defend against the invasion of the imperial army and then they want to survive by forming a military alliance with the Helmut Kingdom. Such opinions were growing in numbers every day, but something like an alliance with the Helmut Kingdom is impossible. After all unifying the continent would become impossible if I allowed a foreign power to intervene in the process of consolidating the Empire.

"If we don't aim for the unification of the Empire with our own hands to the bitter end, there won't be any meaning in having started a rebellion." (Nürnberg)

"Such pointless pride is going to shorten your life."

"Are things turning out as you expected?" (Nürnberg)

Be that as it may, I will perish as long as the situation goes on like this. The failure of the assassination of Earl Baumeister and the catching and killing of Therese through our conspirators, the loss of many magicians starting with Talrand, the appearance of His Highness Peter, a rival I didn't even anticipate.

"It is completely as if fate is out to kill you."

"Humph!" (Nürnberg)

Fate, you say?  
I don't believe in fate or such crap.

"In history—at times, an unexpected hero is boooorn—I say."

"Shut your mouth, demon." (Nürnberg)

The youngster called Peter, the third son of the incompetent emperor who begged for his life twice in front of me. Born from a commoner mother, many nobles ridiculed that guy by calling him 『Commoner Prince』. You say, that commoner prince is going to destroy Duke Nürnberg, this me of a noble family ranking next to the imperial family in the Empire!?

"Lineage and ability are unrelated to each other. Since you do not even understand that, you are going to lose in the same way as that emperor."

"As usual, an irritating man." (Nürnberg)

"My esteemed self is always misunderstood since I am honest."

I don't think that's the problem here though.

"Mysteriously people with great talents surround Earl Baumeister."

"Now that you mention it, you're right. Even so, don't haunt me, Earl Baumeister. Demon, is your guys' blood flowing through that fellow?" (Nürnberg)



Joining up with the Kingdom's ultimate weapon; are these guys monsters?  
It makes me suspect them having the blood of demons flowing through them.

"Mixed bloods of demons and humans vanished from this continent close to ten thousand years ago. Accordingly I would advocate for an Ancestor Return as possibility."

"Ancestor Return?" (Nürnberg)

"It is something originating from the era called Ancient Magic Civilization by you humans, which perished a long time ago."

"Explain." (Nürnberg)

Since the demon seems to know something, I requested an explanation from him.  
Right now I want to get my hands on any information for the sake of fighting off those guys.

"Sophisticated magic techniques were developed in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization. They traded even with our demon country."

"Which reminds me, you came from the distant west, didn't you?" (Nürnberg)

His appearance was that of middle-aged gentleman you can find anywhere with his white tuxedo, his silk hat, his monocle and the small moustache serving as his traits, but as characteristic for demons, his ears are long.

That guy suddenly appeared in front of me.

At first I suspected whether he isn't trying to corrupt me, but he made fun of me saying that I read too many stories. As far as I understand, this demon seems to be an archeologist.

『Duke Nürnberg, since there is a great number of precious ancient inheritances in your territory, I would like you to allow me to investigate them.』

To be frank, I couldn't get a read on this man's true character.

Is he aiming to spread chaos on this continent with the demon country pulling the strings in the back? Did he approach me, who holds the authority over this region with its underground ruins, out of simple, intellectual curiosity? Either way, as result I got my hands on a large amount of legacies of the ancient civilization.

Suicide-bombing golems that imitate animals, mass-produced dragon golems and a huge sorcery device jamming 『Movement』 and 『Communication』. I obtained various items which were very useful for starting a rebellion.

『Leaving the numbers aside, rare items did not appear as much as I had expected.』

The person himself seemed to be slightly dissatisfied with the result.

Another dubious aspect of the demons...this guy is the fact that he won't tell me his real name.

That's why I've been calling him demon, but he doesn't complain about that either.

He's a guy I don't really like, but he cooperates with me by repairing and doing maintenance on the excavated items.

『You bastard! After all you are a spy of the demon country!』 (Nürnberg)

『Since this esteemed self has smuggled himself out of the demon country, that's not the case.』

All about him is shady, but it's a definite fact that this guy possesses a huge amount of mana.

『There are only few demons. In exchange, all of us are magicians.』

The demons mana pool was marvelous.

While regularly providing mana to the jamming device, he silently continues his research by himself as he performs maintenance and repairs on the artifacts.

『I guess I have to really pray that the demons won't come attacking.』 (Nürnberg)

『There are various demons. Demons proposing an expansion towards this continent exist as well.』

『Expansion, you say?』 (Nürnberg)

『The demons have reached their limit as a race.』

It looks like it has become difficult for children to be born among the demons throughout the last thousands of years.

『A declining birth rate. Although the demon country located in the west lies on an island, it's as spacious as an average subcontinent. There's no war, and the government is stable as well. And yet the number of demons not marrying grows, causing less children to be born. It looks like the birthrate will soon fall below 1:1. By the way, Nürnberg Dukedom is exceeding 4:1.』 1

Strange words such as birth rate came out of his mouth, but what bothers me most is the matter about the demons' 『Expansion』.

Words are sure convenient.

Even if that was an invasion for example, it's possible to gloss it over with such words.

In other words, there are demons advocating for an invasion of the continent in the demon country, just like there are advocates for a southern expedition in the Empire and for a northern expedition in the Kingdom. Right now their numbers might be insufficient, but if the declining birth rate advances in the demon country, that opinion might become more prominent.

Isn't it usually the other way around?

No way, war is human instinct.

Even the foolish masses, who weakly declare that they hate war and denounce war as being vain, celebrate a victory of their lord or their country as long as there are no injured or dead among their own relatives. The winners exploit and violate the defeated, abusing the difference in level between them.

It's not strange for the demons to adopt a way of thinking of compensating for their own lacking numbers by dominating the humans, an inferior race. It is possible that the demons will attack this continent where the humans live for the sake of recovering their own instinct of propagation.

That means it's necessary for me to rule this continent to prevent that from happening.

Even if I have to use this demon.

"Let's get back to our topic. You said that Earl Baumeister is an Ancestor Return?" (Nürnberg)

"The amount of his mana is below advanced level if judged by demon criteria. It is still growing and

as such it is very likely that it will go beyond advanced level even using the criteria of the demons. Since that is impossible for humans of the present time, it is appropriate to consider it as Ancestor Return of a human from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization."

"You are quite well-informed, aren't you?" (Nürnberg)

"It is not like I actually saw it happening, but there was a technique to artificially increase the numbers of magicians in the Ancient Magic Civilization."

"What did you say!? Such technique existed?" (Nürnberg)

"It is a technique that has been destroyed 10,000 years ago."

As might be expected of one with a main occupation as archeologist. The demon knows a lot about the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization.

He knew of an outrageous technique to manufacture magicians.

"Since the demon country has not perished, there are relatively many documents about that time left. The Ancient Magic Civilization pushed the development of magic techniques into the extremes."

In the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization a loosely united alliance of nations was formed. Their own country, located in the centre of the continent, was a powerful state, but since there wasn't much political instability, they apparently allowed the small countries in the rural areas a certain degree of free ruling.

"I guess that especially applied for the Akitsushima<sup>2</sup> Republic in the southernmost area of the continent. Their people chose their rulers through an election."

"It's roughly the same for the Empire as well though."

"Only the parliament members can vote in the Empire. The Akitsushima Republic allowed for all men and women above 18 to vote. It is the same in the present demon country."

"Humph, isn't that a mob rule then?" (Nürnberg)

The masses, who don't even understand politics well, are allowed to choose the politicians? Even the current imperial parliament would only throw the politics into chaos by increasing the number of foolish parliament members.

"It might be, but politics are only a means. If those actually carrying it out are capable, the political system itself does not really matter."

"You are an archeologist and a political scientist at the same time?" (Nürnberg)

"I am just repeating what a former colleague told me. Returning to the topic, they increased the needed number of politicians through the development of magic techniques."

But, there's no way for a big number of magicians being born so suddenly.

Therefore they started researching the artificial increase of magicians.

"At first it was a series of failures, but at last they discovered a method. They found something connecting mana and magic inside the blueprint of life."

"Blueprint of life?" (Nürnberg)

"All living beings come into existence based on this blueprint. For children to resemble their parents is owed to this."

"Wait. There aren't many magicians born through inheritance. Rather, inheritance has absolutely nothing to do with it." (Nürnberg)

If being born as magician was hereditary, this world would have likely been filled with magicians long ago.

"Since it will turn into a complicated, theoretical treatise, I will only give you the simple explanation. That blueprint of life contains extremely recessive hereditary components."

"Recessive hereditary components?" (Nürnberg)

"If a child between blonde-haired and black-haired parents is born, which colour will prevail in the child's hair colour? It is the black hair. In short, blonde hair is a recessive heredity."

I see, I guess the black hair is the dominant inheritance.

That means my suppression of the Mizuho people is correct.

If that group is allowed to propagate, they will erode and overthrow the Empire from within.

"The blueprint of a magician has extremely recessive heredity. It will not be inherited unless both parents possess it."

"Hey, there are children between two magicians, who aren't born as magicians as well." (Nürnberg)

That why I said the world would be full of magicians if that wouldn't be the case.

"There is one more heredity component required. This has been described in related documents as 『Mana Materialization and Increase』."

"In other words, you are saying they won't become magicians without it?" (Nürnberg)

"They will not be able to become magicians without both components. If it is just one component, anyone possesses a certain quantity of mana if it is the humans on this continent. Even among the humans nowadays there are many people holding the magician blueprint. If you were to investigate by collecting hair from the fief's population as test, it would come down to 20%. Considering it statistically, I think that will be the rough average."

Statistically, eh...?

It seems like various techniques and studies have advanced in the demon country.

"Meaning, the technique to create magicians artificially developed during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization is a technique which allowed for the blueprint of life's 『Mana Materialization and Increase』 to be established, right?" (Nürnberg)

"It is just as you say. Since it is a technique not needed by the demons, it is a lost technique by now."

Even though it would be possible to mass-produce magicians if he knew; how regrettable.

"So, why do you regard Earl Baumeister as Ancestor Return?" (Nürnberg)

"It was written in old documents. It is said that the artificial magicians, which appeared during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization, all possessed mana at his level. Also, I examined the information from you. All his wives are magicians."

"Something wrong with that?" (Nürnberg)

"For all of them to be magicians is statistically strange. According to the documents that was not true before the marriage."

Certainly, that's a weird coincidence.

But, isn't it possible to consider it as them having realized their talents as magicians through a capacity unification after the marriage since they had the qualifications for becoming magicians to begin with?

Except for the 『Saint』, 『Storm』 and 『Destruction Demon』, the other two are intermediate level. What about the possibility of them not having realized it for a while since it's intermediate level, although that's plenty valuable too?

No, a mana examination during childhood should be obligatory in the Kingdom.

Indeed, that's strange, isn't it?

"There is one more thing we know from the old documents. Even if they have both blueprints<sup>3</sup>, they will not awake to their talent as magicians until their death unless they get stimulated."

"What do you mean?" (Nürnberg)

"The ratio of those possessing both blueprints among the population of Nürnberg Dukedom is 8%. This is also an average value."

"Considering that, the number of magicians is low." (Nürnberg)

In the first place, for what reason are examination crystals provided even to rural villages in the provinces if they apparently don't become aware of their talent? Doesn't that cancel out any meaning in doing so?

"The ratio of magicians who realize their talent through capacity unification and examination crystals is identical to that during the Ancient Magic Civilization's era."

In other words, less than one percent, huh?

"Even though they possess the blueprint of life, they didn't give concrete form to magic. At first they apparently forced people to awaken through harsh training, but the efficiency of this was bad."

If you could become a magician through strict training, it shouldn't be strange for people, who can use magic, to appear among the soldiers of my Duke Nürnberg household's feudal army.

"As result of repeatedly going through various researches, they discovered another blueprint of life. It was the birth of the artificial magicians, who were provided with all three blueprints. These artificial magicians had an important characteristic."

If you make children with an opposite sex possessing the three blueprints of life, the child will become a magician with a probability of almost 100%.

"Next they forcibly drew out the talent as magician by applying a stimulus to those who had two blueprints of life and had not materialized magic," the demon explained. "As result of that, it allowed those, who were considered to be unable to use magic until then, to invoke magic. Even those, who could use magic, increased their mana by drawing out their latent abilities. Because of this, the humans of the Ancient Magic Civilization's era increased the number of magicians."

I see, so that's what led to their great prospering, isn't it?

"However, if Earl Baumeister is an Ancestor Return... Demon, what's the factor for pulling out one's potential latent abilities?" (Nürnberg)

"There is one instance where humans surpass demons. It is their sexual desire supported by their fertility. Because it is accompanied by pleasure, the number of humans has grown massively, resulting in them having far bigger numbers than the demons."

"Don't prattle bullshit. It's probably the same for demons, too." (Nürnberg)

Since there's no difference in appearance with humans, it's absolutely unthinkable for them to increase by laying eggs.  
I never heard a story like that.

"The young demons in recent years are called herbivores as they show no interest in love or marriage. Many of them immerse themselves in their hobbies and work. The government's countermeasures against the falling birth rates keep failing in vain."

I guess their liveliness as living beings might weaken the less trouble they experience in their lives while maintaining an advanced civilization.

Hmm, I suppose no matter what country or race it might be, they must not run out of troubles.

"I guess the wives of Earl Baumeister, who possessed latent abilities to begin with, had their materialization of mana enhanced due to their wedded life with him. However, even the researchers of the Ancient Magic Civilization had bad taste..." (Nürnberg)

"Is that so? It's the easiest way to increase the number of magicians. Because magicians were treated kindly back then, women, who wanted to become magicians, and women, who wanted to give birth to a magician, approached the artificial magicians, and the artificial magicians had the

freedom to choose any woman they fancied. It was the dream of any man."

"That's true." (Nürnberg)

Since I'm a man as well, I definitely understand that sentiment.

"But, why did such factor appear in Earl Baumeister?" (Nürnberg)

"That part is a mystery. Investigating it is the job of scholars and researchers. However, the reports related to Earl Baumeister you showed me are strange."

"Strange, you say? How come?" (Nürnberg)

I had Earl Baumeister investigated using quite a bit of time and money.  
A man of that caliber is going to become an enemy or an ally?  
Either way, it was necessary to know the other party well.

"Do you deny my investigations?" (Nürnberg)

"There is only one part that is strange. The time when Earl Baumeister materialized his mana. Your reports are mentioning that it is assumed to have happened at the age of around 5 or 6. This is weird."

"Why?" (Nürnberg)

"If one materializes the factor of an artificial magician, they will be endowed with mana at a level that it is clear at the time of their birth."

"That might be owed to his home not having the means to examine him in the countryside."  
(Nürnberg)

"It is common for a rainbow-coloured light to shine immediately after their birth, called 『Rainbow of Artificial Magician』. Certainly he is no abandoned child either, so it is very unlikely for his family of the woman that delivered him to not have noticed it."

"In other words, something happened to Earl Baumeister when he was 5 or 6 years old? What about him awaking to his talent by coincidence at that time?"

Is there any guarantee that all of them definitely awake their talent right after being born?

"Did you properly listen to what this esteemed me told you? As the blueprints of life are inborn, it is impossible for it to suddenly appear later on."

I see. He's saying that it's already decided at their birth since the blueprints are imprinted in them. That's why it's impossible for an artificial magician to suddenly become aware of their mana later on.

"I hear that Earl Baumeister was born after his father passed an age of 40. It's assumed that his first wife gave birth to him at an advanced age, but it's also possible that they falsified the reports after

having another woman give birth to him, isn't it?" (Nürnberg)

It's a story that often happens among nobles. A child born by a woman, who's not a wife, is pretended to be the child of a legal wife.

Indeed, if that's the case, I can understand.

If the mother is a poor farmer's daughter, there's a possibility that she didn't realize his talent.

"Let me ask for caution's sake, but are there cases where the blueprints of life suddenly change?" (Nürnberg)

"There are. But, it is impossible on this continent right now."

"Impossible right now? What do you mean?" (Nürnberg)

"It means that it should have been possible 10,000 years ago."

It's probably the matter which caused the sudden and unknown collapse of the core nation of the Ancient Magic Civilization that boasted an overwhelming prosperity and unified the continent, albeit through an alliance, 10,000 years ago.

In spite of them owning magic technology far more superior than nowadays, this country apparently perished all of a sudden on a certain day.

It remains a mystery as the archeologists and historians of the Empire and the Kingdom were unable to discover the reason until this very day.

"Us demons are not omnipotent, therefore we do not know the precise reason for the destruction of the Ancient Magic Civilization, but we do know the gist of it. There are also materials left behind which have been discovered by a research group on the past."

"That's something I hear about for the first time." (Nürnberg)

I didn't ask since I have no interest in archeology, but this guy has partial knowledge that goes beyond archeology.

Even if I ask him something, he will dodge answering, and at certain times he will suddenly talk all by himself.

Is it because he's whimsical as researcher? Or is it because the demon country stands behind him?

There were also situations which made me mad, but if I anger him imprudently and hurt this demon's feelings, I will be troubled as the option to talk with him will vanish. Let's stay modest here.

"Simply put, it is a mistake triggered by arrogance."

"Mistake, you say?" (Nürnberg)

"They had reached the point where they could handle a huge amount of mana due to the increase in magicians by the artificial magicians. It seems like they experimented with some kind of huge magic device."

"They failed and it exploded...?" (Nürnberg)

"According to the demon research group that entered the actual location afterwards, it was apparently a staggering explosion."

It looks like the Gigant Crevice was created at that time. In addition, the capital and its vicinity in a range of several hundred kilometers mostly vanished. The pillar of the nation that ruled the entire continent disappeared all of a sudden. The chaos and ruin after that is easily imaginable.

"They focused an unbelievable amount of mana in one place and it detonated, scattering across the continent. The places, where clusters of mana stuck, became monster domains, also referred to as bruises of the continent."

In other words, does that mean there were no monster domains during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization?

"What about the monsters?" (Nürnberg)

"Once thick mana passes through a body in quantities impossible normally, the blueprint of life of living creatures changes. There are many creatures that will not grow up, becoming malformed or dying, but among them, there are also some who survive and prosper as new species."

I guess that's the true nature of monsters.

"What about the boss of a domain?" (Nürnberg)

"It is an existence that contains the biggest amount of mana in a domain, therefore the excess mana clinging to that area will vanish once you defeat it. Once that happens, it will become difficult for small and medium-sized monsters to live in that area."

Hey hey, don't dish out answers to things even the researchers of both countries don't know anything about.

This is the reason why I must not become careless towards demons.

"You possess an extensive knowledge, don't you?" (Nürnberg)

"It is because I am an expert. There are also many among the recent young demons who will not study."

"You will be hated if you complain in such manner to the young people." (Nürnberg)

"Even my esteemed self was told the same by the elderly in my early days."

I ended up understanding the historical truth, but I suppose it's not related to an improvement of the war's situation.

Given that it's a truth that's not known among humans, except for me, it gives me a bit of a predominance though.

"Right! I forgot about Earl Baumeister. Why did that man suddenly become an Ancestor Return?" (Nürnberg)

"The term Ancestor Return might not be very appropriate. The third blueprint of life very rarely materializes without any technique to attach it. It is correct to say that it appeared in Earl Baumeister by chance."

"Wait a moment. Isn't that weird? During the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization it was probably possible to inherit it to the next generation by affixing it. In that case, why haven't the descendants inherited the third blueprint of life?" (Nürnberg)

"It is because even the lost technique of affixing it has a limit of affixing it for around several hundred years. If you do not use the affixation, the inheritance of the third blueprint of life to the descendents will gradually stop."

In addition there was probably chaos after the collapse of the Ancient Magic Civilization as well. The majority of the continent's soil should have been transformed into monster domains. In order to expand the area where humans can live, magicians possessing the third blueprint of life were mobilized in big numbers and died in the battles against monsters. I guess that's how it turned out?

"Humph, so Earl Baumeister and his descendants will live in peace for the next several hundred years?" (Nürnberg)

As family possessing the inheritance component of a magician, they will be appointed to responsible posts in the Helmut Kingdom and contribute to an accelerated development of the Kingdom.

"And I lowered the national power of the Empire by causing a rebellion at the worst possible timing, huh?" (Nürnberg)

"It is a story that often occurs in history. It is better for you to not worry about it."

"You are the one telling me that?" (Nürnberg)

The slightly belittling conduct and speech of this person. Is he really a scholar that has no interest in politics? Or did he make me start a rebellion upon orders from the demon country? Either way, I'm bothered that I can't get a read on the thoughts of this demon.

"So, are you going to defeat Earl Baumeister?"

"If I can." (Nürnberg)

No way! He's a valuable pawn to increase the number of magicians. Though, at the moment there's no other option but to kill him, is there?

"It would be great if that goes smoothly."

"I still have an ace. Get it ready soon." (Nürnberg)

"I will at least return the debt of gratitude for providing me a lodging and meals."

The demon headed out to prepare the final trump card that will be used in the final battle which will likely take place very soon.

I guess the demons are dangerous after all. I have exploited technology by using that guy, but it will take hundreds of years to overtake the demons. In order to oppose the demons the humans have to band together and work as one in the end.

Facing the demons while cooperating with the Kingdom is dangerous. It's possible for them to join forces with the demons for the sake of securing their own survival to one-sidedly overrun the Empire.

The humans' power must not be split into two.

For the sake of unifying the Lingaia Continent, I won't even mind being cursed as devil in the future.

Furthermore, even if I have to shed the blood of many people, I will definitely unify the Lingaia Continent.

If I don't accomplish that, just for what reason have I been born as Duke Nürnberg?

Therese, it's the same for you as well, right?

## **Chapter 10 – Huge Cannons Are a Man's Romance?**

"We have confirmed the capitulation of the rebel army at the front."

"Again? That's too quick, isn't it?"

"I think it's only natural. There's no point in splitting military forces right now. After all they would turn into nothing more than targets for getting individually crushed. Duke Nürnberg should be gathering his whole army at his stronghold."



With Peter as supreme commander, the imperial army invaded Nürnberg Dukedom for a second time.

The advance was progressing well, but this was owed to it never turning into a battle.

We also continued to advance while only working on sending the disarmed troops and nobles, who surrendered or abandoned Duke Nürnberg, to the rear.

"Our job only consists of the disarming of the groups that surrendered and the procedures to transfer them to the rear, right?"

"We will be given a warm welcome at the end of it all."

"That's true, isn't it? I believe they are ready and waiting for us at their stronghold. Besides, Duke Nürnberg hasn't counted on the lot that surrendered from the very start. Rather, if he can get them to surrender, Peter-dono's burden will increase."

"After all it would be wrong of us to kill the prisoners." (Haruka)

"That's how it is, Mrs. Haruka." (Christoph)

"I-I still haven't gotten married officially!" (Haruka)

"By now it's probably just a matter of time. It's not something you have to get embarrassed about, is it?" (Christoph)

"That's true, but..." (Haruka)



The royal army was skilfully put to use by Philip and Christoph.

Erw and Haruka had become a lot more used to leading military forces. They are chatting while

dealing with the escort of the enemy soldiers that capitulated. It's to the extent that Christoph, who's good at this kind of work, has enough time to tease Haruka who's engaged to Erw. It's the same for Philip as well, but if this person hadn't been born into the Margrave Browig family, there wouldn't have been any reason for him to act so unsightly in the dispute.

"Wendelin, are thou brooding over something?" (Therese)

"Just a bit. At any rate, there's no need for you to especially come along on this campaign, is there?" (Wendelin)

"I'm well aware that I'm a bother, but I have to make sure with my own eyes. Duke Nürnberg's...no, Max' death." (Therese)

There was another person with a guilty conscience that had joined the royal army. It's Therese who had retired as Duchess Philip. Naturally her desire to participate was met with some doubts by Peter and his retainers.

『You are going to participate in this? Don't you think that it will cause unnecessary suspicions?』 (Peter)

It was his usual tone, but even Peter didn't smile.

『What's the reason, Therese-sama?』 (Emera)

『As someone who was concerned with this civil war, I must ascertain it to the very end with my own eyes.』 (Therese)

『What is it that you have to ascertain?』 (Emera)

『That's obvious. The moment of Duke Nürnberg's death.』 (Therese)

Even Emera, who usually doesn't change her expression much, couldn't hide her surprise due to Therese's reply.

『No matter what reason he might have, there's no room to take extenuating circumstances into consideration with Duke Nürnberg. There's no other option for that man but to die. That guy being the person with whom I associated the longest is because I don't have anyone to call friend. It's something I have to see through.』 (Therese)

『I see. Does Duke Nürnberg have no friends either? Even a Duke by birth has it difficult, huh?』 (Peter)

Peter is a commoner prince that had no expectations placed on him by anyone from the start, but because of that he had many friends in the same circumstances as him. They are supporting the current Peter and thus he is a person exactly opposite to Duke Nürnberg. Even though Duke Nürnberg has retainers, who he has assigned to responsible posts, and nobles, who share the same ideas as he does, he apparently didn't have a single friend.

『So the same as Wendelin, huh?』 (Peter)

『I do have friends!』 (Wendelin)

Peter, that rude fellow. Even I have at least some friends!

『Ascertaining Duke Nürnberg's death with your own eyes, eh...?』

『Once that's finished, I won't meddle any further in the politics of the Empire.』 (Therese)

『...Understood. I shall permit it. Let's have you come along as mysterious female soldier Therese.』  
(Peter)

In the end Peter gave his authorization and Therese joined the royal army as normal soldier. It not being the imperial army indicated her complicated position. The march of the imperial army's main unit led by Peter is proceeding well. The entire Empire fell under Peter's control in less than a month.

"Well, except for that underground fortress where Duke Nürnberg and his men have holed themselves up." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san says while looking at the mountain area located next to Duke Nürnberg household's mansion which we finally occupied. As a matter of fact, there was a military fortress from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization in the underground of this mountain area. Large-scaled defense facilities had been left behind in an usable state. According to the retainers we caught, Duke Nürnberg apparently obtained various magic tools through the excavation of that underground fortress.

"He has abandoned all territory and military bases. I guess he plans to gain time by secluding himself in there."

"This might take some time," Erw sighed.

"The main defense facility is of course an underground ruin."

The several ten thousand elites that had been carefully selected by Duke Nürnberg have holed up themselves in the underground stronghold from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization while possessing large quantities of food and goods. I learned that it will be harsh for the attacking side if they don't at least possess three times the numbers of the defending side. The number of soldiers on our side are exceeding theirs by more than three times, but one can't deny that the imperial army is an assembly of various kinds of troops. Above all, it's very likely that the enemy still owns some magic tools that can be turned into weapons. Burkhart-san predicted that it would turn into a difficult battle.

"Do you have an ingenious idea, Peter?" (Wendelin)

"First, a standard siege that doesn't allow even an ant to get through...ha, that's impossible though!"  
(Peter)

Since the defense facilities use the underground ruins in the mountain area, they should be able to

escape through some hole as long as we don't surround them with quite a large army. On a first glance the population of Nürnberg Dukedom is awfully submissive towards the invaders but they have likely formed an underground organization that secretly provides Duke Nürnberg's army with provisions and information.

"How troublesome...in case we eliminate those resistance forces, we will mistakenly end up killing innocent residents..."

Even the residents that had been obedient towards Peter and the others so far might oppose them then.

If we make enemies out of a great number of people living in the Nürnberg Dukedom, the superiority of Peter, who had finally managed to assemble a big army, will vanish in an instant.

"As long as you limit it to military affairs, Duke Nürnberg is definitely a genius." (Ina)

I guess Ina's assessment is correct. Although it's for the sake of surviving, it looks like he doesn't consider the future overly much.

After all Nürnberg Dukedom will fall into ruin all the more, the longer this drags on.

"But, dear, if we butt in too much..." (Elise)

"I guess you're right there..." (Wendelin)

The civil war is in its final phase. Once Duke Nürnberg is defeated by Peter, it will be the end. Us, as foreigners, taking center stage in such atmosphere is not smart.

Meaning, it's fine as long we just participate.

As it's the same with the Earl Mizuho Country's army, they fell back to the rear as they already obtained plenty of military achievements in the capital defense battle.

"Our encampment is next to that of the Mizuho army."

Given that Peter's victory is pretty much set in stone, there are many nobles and soldiers, who are full of spirit to gain rewards as compensation for their war expenditures, additional territory, a higher peerage and high-ranking positions in the government by earning achievements in the attack against the underground fortress where Duke Nürnberg is hidden.

Outsiders like us will observe from the rear while leaving it to them.

Once we set up camp at the location assigned to us by Peter, a messenger from the neighboring Mizuho army visited us.

"Excuse me! Our Lord wishes to invite Earl Baumeister-sama's party for dinner."

"Please tell him that we will gladly accept the invitation." (Wendelin)

He's probably asking about taking a meal since both of us have time to spare.



"Therese-dono, you don't look very disappointed, do you?"

"I became free. Let alone being displeased about that, I think that it's great." (Therese)

"The emperor's throne doesn't give any happiness, huh?"

"After all that throne has been made out of thorns." (Therese)

Therese doesn't mind High Earl Mizuho having changed allegiance to Peter. In return High Earl Mizuho doesn't mention the matter of Therese not having removed the previous emperor either. After all those are already matters of the past.

"Oh my, how beautiful."

"I guess there's also food that you enjoy by looking at it."

Katharina and Burkhart-san had their eyes sparkle due to the luxurious cuisine one wouldn't expect to appear on a battlefield. Mizuho's hospitality was an extravagant, traditional Japanese meal brought in courses.

Although that's not something one would consider to do during a war, the probability of Duke Nürnberg leaving his underground fortress to stage an attack is almost non-existent and thus it probably poses no problem.

This kind of cuisine I only ate at a high-class restaurant where my company performed its business entertainment in my previous life. With my salary back then, well, it was a meal well outside of my range.

Appetizer: Tofu, Abalone, Sweet Coltsfoot, Bean-curd lees.

Supper: Sea bream in tofu skin, grilled mullet roe, hen-of-the-woods.

Sashimi: Black tuna, squid, flounder, prawn, blood clam.

Hassun: Common clam, mizuna, dipped garden eel, bamboo shoot with pepper stir-fry, stewed sardine, kelp with herring roe.

Flame-broiled: Mackerel pickled in sweet miso, Fuki flower buds.

Boiled dishes: Small turnip, fish liver and eggs in tea cloth, cabbage, taro cormel.

Pickled dishes: Halfbeak, red turnip, wood jellyfish.

Main dish: Matsutake rice.

Finishing supper: Red miso soup.

Pickled vegetables: bok choy, chopped vegetables pickled in salt with red shiso leaves.

Dessert: Soft sweet bean jelly, pear, powdered green tea.

(T/N: Don't ask me to explain all of these... pwease...)

A menu, which had the various dishes listed with a writing brush on paper that was similar to Japanese paper, was placed on the table. Young, uniformed Mizuho soldiers served as waiters. Since it's this kind of job, all of them are ikemen.

Even so, there are many dishes with the same name as in Japan, aren't there...?

"It's delicious." (Katharina)

"How magnificent."

"It's tasty, but I would be happy if the portions were a bit bigger." (Wilma)

"I think so as well! I'm also at the point where I want some wine!" (Armstrong)

Ina and Luise honestly enjoyed the various dishes, but for Wilma the portions are too small. It will probably be bad if she doesn't eat something later on when we get back to our own camp. Doushi threw a tantrum as he wanted some alcohol.

"Uncle-sama, this is a battlefield. You will have to wait until the battle's over." (Elise)

"Guuuhh...what disappointment." (Armstrong)

I think that it's usually the other way around, but Doushi got chided by Elise, his younger niece.

"Cheers on becoming a free woman, Therese-dono. Earl Mizuho Country has to get involved in the Empire's politics from now on as well. That will only increase the troubles."

"There's still another trouble remaining." (Therese)

Therese gave High Earl Mizuho, who was lamenting over the coming difficulties after the civil war ended, a short warning.

"As expected, it's going to be a tough battle, huh?"

"It's not like Duke Nürnberg was imprisoned in the underground fortress. He secluded himself in there out of his free will. The number of his forces has dwindled a lot, but the remaining troops are his true elites. If those aiming for military achievements charge in without thinking, the number of casualties will only grow unnecessarily, I think." (Therese)

Therese's prediction came true on the next day.



"They got defeated when they attacked to have a look at the situation."

"That's a disaster, isn't it? Oh well, isn't it fine as long as we win in the end? Therefore, do your best."

"Eh—! That's your reaction here?"



When I believed it to be strangely noisy last night, Peter had apparently launched a night raid using

a part of his military forces.

The next morning Peter showed up as all of us were grilling the food we had received from High Earl Mizuho over earthen charcoal braziers and open fires as substitute for breakfast.

"I guess all's within assumption?" (Therese)

"Uuh, it's awkward with Therese-dono here..." (Peter)

"Therefore, Wendelin, there are ambitious people scheming to oppose Peter-dono by using the achievements of defeating Duke Nürnberg after the war, but all of them have been simply eliminated by taking advantage of the battle as they were idiots who charged against an underground fortress without any kind of plan. It's not something at the level thou would need to care about." (Therese)

"What a frightening story."

That means Peter got rid of potential enemies by making use of the battle.

"It's fine for thee to not concern yourself with such matters, Wendelin. This fish called saury is delicious with the oil sticking to it. It goes really well with this grated daikon and this citrus. Saury is a native product limited to Nürnberg Dukedom." (Therese)

"Therese, that's a native product of Philip Dukedom. Though it has been caught by Mizuho fishers."

"I know. That was a light joke." (Therese)

Therese said something similar to what a daimyo would say in a Japanese rakugo while eating the grilled saury.

"I wonder whether the chestnuts finished roasting?" (Wendelin)

"Wend, they are done."

"However, freshly roasted chestnuts are dangerous!" (Armstrong)

"Really? If you peel them like this..."

Luise clad her fingers with a very thin film of mana and completely peeled the just roasted chestnuts in an instant.

If it was an ordinary person, they would burn their fingers. Peeling them down to their thin skin is difficult.

Because Luise is a martial arts expert, she can do that.

"You are amazing, Luise. And the roasted chestnuts are delicious."

"Hehe, I got praised by Wend. Roasted chestnuts are tasty, aren't they?" (Luise)

Everybody enjoyed the roasted chestnuts that had been quickly peeled by Luise.

"Dear, I will later prepare Mont Blanc and marrons glaces. Nonetheless, the new chestnuts are great." (Elise)

"Elise-sama, I will make sweet chestnut bean jelly and chestnuts in red bean soup later on." (Haruka)

"Those certainly sound delicious as well."

"Wend, the potatoes finished roasting. The new potatoes are sweet and tasty."

"Potatoes are great too, aren't they?"

"Such irregular breakfast at times is nice."

We noisily grilled various ingredients and enjoyed the food together.

"Say...have you all listened to what I said?" (Peter)

I did, but I didn't expect the imperial army to become unable to continue their operation due to the mindless acts of incautious nobles. I don't think that it's necessary for us to help out either.

"Even if us foreigners made a move here, we would be very likely told to not do anything unnecessary. The saury is delicious, but I really need booze to go with this." (Burkhart)

"Burkhart-san, for better or worse we are still in a war." (Ina)

"Ina-jou-chan, you are too serious. Ah, I wonder whether I won't get a vacation soon." (Burkhart)

Burkhart-san said it in my place, but that's how it is. Please do your best with just the imperial army.

"Don't say that..."



"Oh, isn't this Earl Baumeister-dono? If you are here to treat the injured, that's already done."

"Really?"

"For even Elise-dono to expressly come here. Sorry. Since we have received assistance from the churches of both denominations, we have enough healing magicians at hand."

Once we headed to the imperial army's headquarter, 『Mister Baron』, who had become a real Baron after receiving the territory and peerage from Peter, greeted us. The healing of our injured allies apparently had already been finished by Mister Baron and those below him, as well as the healing magicians dispatched by the churches. There were only casualties among the troops of the nobles who hurried to obtain military exploits. The imperial army under Gilbert's command is completely

unhurt and not disturbed at all.

I wonder whether there's anything for us to do in this situation.

"It's because it's an underground fortress that uses a mysterious underground ruin. The one defending it is that Duke Nürnberg and of course there were traps as well."

A great number of sharp fangs had been installed at the fortress.

Smaller versions of the devices that spit out the breath magic, which had been equipped on the previous dragon golems, had been set up at various places. The nobles, who staged a night raid in a dark place with bad visibility, apparently ended up suffering from those all together.

"Since I predicted that such weapons might be there, I wondered if we can break them through a firefight with the magic guns and asked the magician unit and High Earl Mizuho, but..."

However, that wasn't Duke Nürnberg's only trump card.

"Just when we tried to have a part of the magicians attack the breath-generating devices as test, the spells were blocked by a magic barrier," Peter says.

"Our movements are completely visible for the other side. Our attacks are thwarted by the magic barrier and then the barrier gets lifted and we are attacked by the breath-generating devices. At this point it's a complete stalemate." (Peter)

"Wouldn't it be better to let the magicians handle it?"

"You know, the number of our magicians has fallen considerably."

The empire lost many magicians in the civil war. It's already at the point where no one complains about Emera, who would have originally been told that she's not qualified due to her young age, becoming the head magician. That's how serious the lack of magicians had become.

"Having said that, that magic barrier won't get destroyed even when I, who has almost the same amount of mana as Emera, fire a spell? Then it will be doubtful whether Wendelin-san and Doushi can break it, too." (Katharina)

It's as Katharina says. The target is an inheritance of the Ancient Magic Civilization, so... Even Peter shouldn't view the information so optimistically to believe that it will be somehow solved as long as Doushi and I fire spells at full power.

"What about Mizuho's magic guns?"

"High Earl Mizuho said that they might not be able to penetrate the barrier as they lack fire power..."

Suddenly there's a big explosion and right after that I felt with my skin how the air's vibrating. The Mizuho army probably fired their magic guns against the magic barrier.

"... Looks like it was a failure."

A few minutes later a message from High Earl Mizuho that the mission had failed reached us.

"Is there no other hand to play?"

"Your Highness, let's surround them with the large army and wait until they run out of provisions."

"That's impossible."

First off, as heard before, it's not possible to completely besiege them, even with a big army, as the underground fortress is too huge.

Not all of the local residents are loyal to the Empire either. It's very unlikely that Duke Nürnberg hadn't formed an underground organization to secretly bring news and food into the fortress.

"Even if only food is brought in, it should be possible for them to hole up there for many years to come. That's the reason why he only kept his elites around."

By making the other nobles and troops surrender, he succeeded in pushing their food consumption on the Empire.

"If the imperial army continues to mobilize a large army, it will waste money and food. On the other hand, if we draw back here without putting things to an end, Duke Nürnberg will recover his territory after leaving the underground fortress."

"Isn't that no good? We won't be able to win, will we?"

I didn't expect that the capture of Duke Nürnberg would turn into such a pain in the ass.

"We can win as long as we destroy that magic barrier."

I see. As the fortress is too huge, the troops of Duke Nürnberg can't defend all of it at the moment, can they?

If the imperial army invaded from various places, even Duke Nürnberg would be unable to do anything.

"I understand that part, but how do you plan to destroy the magic barrier?"

"I have a secret plan!" (Peter)

"Secret plan?"

"Yes, a secret plan." (Peter)

Peter was brimming with confidence, but...

\* \* \*

"Even the daring and resolute Duke Nürnberg— In the end he only keeps defending—"

"Your remarks are as rude as always, aren't they?" (Nürnberg)

"I am just stating the truth."

This is the deepest part of the underground fortress which had been built by making use of the underground ruins. I have set a rule that no one besides me can enter this central area of the fortress. Having said that, this room isn't particularly important.

A large quantity of books and documents has been placed inside. The demon sits on a chair and simply relaxes while reading a report about the excavated items that had been used so far.

"The improved absorption magic circle is a huge success."

The breath-generating devices that had been installed in the fortress, the powerful 『Magic Barrier』 and the maintenance of the device jamming 『Communication』 and 『Movement』, all of those function by using the demon's mana.

Magic circles that absorb mana have been drawn on the ceiling and walls of this room. It's a construction to put the mana of this demon to use for keeping up all the devices.

Thanks to this demon, the imperial army can't do a single thing.

I can't stomach his overwhelming power, but as long as this guy's here, we should be able to hold the fortress for a decade.

And the changes taking place in 10 years are so many that you can call this day ancient history 10 years later.

Even the population of my Nürnberg Dukedom shouldn't yield that easily to the Empire. There's also the possibility that Peter will fail in domestic or foreign affairs so that it'll become my turn.

Even the Helmut Kingdom, which is firm like a rock right now, might fall into disorder.

Earl Baumeister achieved military deeds that outshadow the others in this time's civil war.

It's possible that just his return to the Kingdom will trigger chaos in that country.

It's conceivable that Helmut the 37th, who plays the unconcerned wise ruler, and his inconspicuous crown prince will scheme to remove Earl Baumeister out of jealousy.

However, we are talking about that Earl Baumeister here. He won't allow the royal family to purge him just like that.

Even if he himself wouldn't wish for an expansion of the disorder, it's possible that his surroundings would oppose the Kingdom in order to protect him.

If the situation develops this far, even Earl Baumeister will likely resolve himself to rise in rebellion.

Even that man shouldn't be eager to die young.

Yes, if I preserve, another chance for me will come around sooner or later.

"You are absorbed in various crafty political deliberations."

"Well, yeah. I'm a weak person, so I won't survive unless I take various things into consideration. Why are you helping me?" (Nürnberg)

"There are plenty of places and things here which I have not investigated yet. Ten years will pass in the blink of an eye if I get started on that."

It's not for my sake, but solely to still his thirst for knowledge as archeologist.

Maybe he's trying to form a connection with the continental expansion faction by passing on information to the demon country. At present it doesn't look as if he has made contact with the outside, but I must not be careless with this demon.

"At this rate it will be possible to hole up here for many years as long as nothing happens, but the enemy is shrewd as well. Are they going to come up with something? Is what this me foolishly wonders."

"They are probably planning to do so."

Right now we can buy time with the strong 『Magic Barrier』.  
During that time I have to urgently create a system so that the morale of the retainers, soldiers and their families, who have secluded themselves together with me, doesn't fall during that long period of time.

"For that reason I didn't allow anyone but chosen people to participate in the fortress defense. Right now the highest priority lies with the construction of an underground shopping area for them."  
(Nürnberg)

"You are going to establish a common everyday's life albeit secluding yourself for a long time. However, how nice of you to be stuck in such reckless castle defense."

It's none of your business, demon! Just what do you think how much I had to endure to create this army corps!?

This demon is irritating, but at the same time useful.

I will use him to the utmost limit. For now I will have him prepare for the castle defense.

\* \* \*

"I see, you are going to destroy the 『Magic Barrier』 by using a powerful magic cannon."

"Yes. For that reason High Earl Mizuho's and Kanesada-san's powers are indispensable, Peter said."

"I'm a mere katana smith though. That prince is skilled at asking for things of you, Earl Baumeister, while acting like a spoilt child." (Kanesada)

The plan Peter showed me is plain and simple.

The strategy was: "If the 『Magic Barrier』 is powerful, won't all be fine if we destroy it with a cannon that has an even stronger power?"

The hint was apparently the huge sniper rifle that Wilma used during the fight against Rainbow Assault.

It's also good that we don't have to fuss over the sniping precision this time. In short, the biggest obstacle is building a cannon barrel that won't break at the time of shooting a shell loaded with a huge amount of mana.

This kind of metalworking technique might have been known to dwarves if this was another fantasy world, but since they don't exist in this world, it's the best option to leave it to the Mizuho people who have the technological knowledge.

"Of course, since the Mizuho engineers won't be enough, I will also send engineers from the Empire as assistance. Just use them as you see fit while thinking of them as your subordinates."

While acknowledging the technological power of the Mizuho people, Peter sent craftsmen and engineers as helpers in order to allow the Empire to catch up as fast as possible. They are going to try absorbing as much of the Mizuho people's techniques as possible in the process of helping.

"High Earl Mizuho, what about the blueprint?"

"It's this one."

High Earl Mizuho shows a blueprint to Peter.  
A fairly huge magic cannon was drawn in details on that blueprint.

"Are you really going to build this?"

"If it's not at least that big, it won't be able to penetrate the 『Magic Barrier』 according to our calculations."

"Won't the barrel explode in worst case if you fire a cannon ball with such a huge cannon?"

"It will. In the past there had been casualties during the test runs of a prototype. Unable to bear the impact at the time of firing, the barrel exploded, causing deaths and injuries among the craftsmen."

"Is it going to be alright, Wendelin?"

"I came up with a countermeasure, but I won't know if it works unless I actually test it out."  
(Wendelin)

I don't want to participate in a siege in Nürnberg Dukedom for many years.  
We will blow away the magic barrier with an improved, big magic cannon and capture the underground fortress with the whole army in one go.

"Uwaah, how reliable you are, Wendelin. If I was a woman, I would take you as husband." (Peter)

"And then you would bother him like me by approaching him forcefully?" (Therese)

Peter, a woman...that's nothing I want to imagine. If Doushi was a woman, just the imagination would already be in a different dimension.

"Anyway, I will join in on the improvement of the magic cannon." (Wendelin)

Since I also got Peter's permission, I cooperated with High Earl Mizuho and we began with the production of the cannon.



"A cannon said to be impossible to build. The metals for the sake of strengthening the lacking barrel, the technique to cut it precisely in a straight line, the production of a special huge shell and the development of peripheral devices and a connection with the magic gems that will provide the

mana to let the shell fly. Many difficulties lie ahead, but the men will overcome them."



"Why such unnatural way of talking?"

Since I joined the production of the 『Big Magic Gun』 without delay, I tried to imitate the style of a certain project X narration I saw during my childhood in my previous life, but Erw, who doesn't know the real thing, didn't like it.

Though I believe that this difficulty is worth being broadcast.

"First, the initial problem is the processing of the metals which will become the barrel's basic materials."

Kanesada-san swiftly mentions the first issue.

"It has to be a durable metal, right?" (Erwin)

"Erwin-dono, if the metal is only durable, it's as if you are saying that it should be all made out of orichalcum."

"That will be difficult, won't it?"

According to the blueprint, just the barrel has a diameter of close to one meter.

With the barrel having a length of 20 meters, it would be impossible to make all of it out of orichalcum.

Even if we gather all the orichalcum on the continent, the amount will still be insufficient, so it's probably logical that it won't work.

"So, what are we going to do?"

"We will make an alloy."

"Alloy?"

"We will create a high-quality steel and add small amounts of mithril and orichalcum to it."

High Earl Mizuho explains the way of making an alloy with a high durability to Erw.

"Accordingly we are going to rely on your knowledge and experience, Kanesada-san." (Erwin)

"Well, it's an honour to receive such a high evaluation by you, Erwin-dono, but it's impossible for me." (Kanesada)

Kanesada-san states that he won't be of much help in making that alloy.

"There are several problems. First, in order to homogenize the strength of the alloy, it's necessary

for the steel to have an uniform distribution. That's indispensable so that there won't be an offset in the material at the time of adding mithril and orichalcum."

It's not so bad when it's just one katana part, but this will be the barrel of a huge cannon. It has to be made while melting and casting these metals equally. With the normal way of doing things it won't be possible to make such a huge casting.

"Eh? What should we do then?"

"If it's Earl Baumeister, he is probably capable of making it."

"It might be possible."

Erw looks at me.

If it's me, who can create a highly-pure ingots out of gathered metal with magic, I might be able to make the fine adjustments of the alloy's composition.

"Since it will be my first attempt, I have to practise..." (Wendelin)

After I take out my wand, I start from transforming large quantities of iron into steel.

If I remember correctly, small quantities of all kinds of metals are mixed into steel that has a solid tenacity. I think those were tungsten, chromium or nickel.

I was able to harvest those types of metals together with the iron, although it was small amounts when I was looking for them with 『Detection』.

Since they are only part of an alloy, I shouldn't need that much.

Also, carbon. I should add this as well, but the Japanese steel makers in my previous life didn't officially announce the distribution ratio of special steel. Since it's a company secret, that's only natural, but thanks to that I don't know what mixing ratio to use.

Moreover, I have to add mithril and orichalcum in addition to the other metals.

Given that these two metals don't exist on earth, I'm honestly struggling what kind of mixture ratio to apply here.

"For the time being, there are ancient documents, but..."

In a part of the documents shown to me by High Earl Mizuho, the ancestors of the Mizuho people wrote the mixture ratio of a special alloy that's sturdier than the steel produced by them in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization.

"It's a lost technique. Even if you make the alloy according to that mixture instruction, it won't succeed for some reason."

That probably makes sense.

It's likely possible if I use a special furnace, but it's unlikely for furnaces that use mana as fuel and the furnaces installed in houses to succeed in combining impurities with iron.

The condition that you have to mix the elements uniformly obstructs the success as well.

Even if I accomplished it, its durability will likely suffer and the usability will be gone if even a little bit of impurity enters the alloy.

"Are you going to be alright, Earl Baumeister?"

"It will be trial and error." (Wendelin)

Anyway, I will remove the impurities from the iron with magic as much as possible. I will decide its mixture ratio with the other metals after measuring its weight.

"Or rather, we really don't know the criterion for success, do we?" (Peter)

Peter, who brought the precious mithril and orichalcum owned by the Empire, asked High Earl Mizuho a very reasonable question.

"According to the documents, the alloy will emit a pale light for an instant, if you add steel, mithril and orichalcum at the set ratio and mix them equally. The alloy made in this condition is called 『Extreme Limit Steel』. It's written that it will display the highest performance as multipurpose material."

"I'm relieved if there's a criterion for success. I wondered whether you would have me hand out precious mithril and orichalcum each time you fail."

"No, I won't use any more materials than these."

Where creating a furnace is concerned, there will be blunders as well, but even if I fail the further refinement with magic, I just have to start over again.

Besides, all I need is an amount in proportion to the weight of orichalcum, mithril and steel.

The bigger problem here is that the ancient document doesn't mention just how much elements with low visibility such as tungsten, carbon, chromium and nickel have been added to the steel in the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization.

"(I guess I have to find all of that out through trial and error, don't I?)"

It will probably be necessary to run through thousands, no ten thousands of trials of repeatedly changing the mixture ratio minutely.

"Won't such complicated alloy combination trials take all day? That's impossible for me."

Katharina, who came to check the situation, gave up with just hearing the story from me.

She had apparently gathered iron and exchanged it into money, but as the quality wasn't overly high, she couldn't sell it for much.

The gathering of iron and other metals by magicians makes the individual differences in quality apparent.

If there are people, who can't buy anything but iron with a lot impurities at a lower price, there are also those who are supported by public finances like master.

Either way, the point is to remove impurities with an image that suits you.

I use an image of logically lining up the atoms of iron as much as possible while ejecting other atoms to the outside. It's the same with other metals as well. That's also the reason why the quality of an metal ingot created by me is high.

Now that it has come to this, the studying during my student days, which I considered to be only for the sake of passing the exams in my previous life, proved to be useful.

"Wendelin-san, you are strong at such plain spells, aren't you?" (Katharina)

"Aaaaahaha! I mean, I didn't train in the Savage Lands by myself for nothing." (Wendelin)

"It might have served as training, but it's nothing overly enviable." (Katharina)

The reason for Katharina to think so is easy.

It's probably because she recalls the time when she trained as a loner just like me.

"Burkhart-san, are you going to work as teacher today as well?" (Wendelin)

"Yes." (Burkhart)

There's no other magician as skilled in teaching as him.

Because of that he's taking care of a great number of rookie magicians upon Peter's request.

Given that a fair number of experienced magicians of the Empire died in the civil war, young magicians ranging in age from 7 to 13 years were gathered and are now receiving training from Burkhart-san while working as aides in the imperial army.

『It would be wonderful if there was a second Earl Baumeister among them!』 (Armstrong)

『Doushi, a too harsh training is not allowed!』 (Burkhart)

『Why? At their age Earl Baumeister has...』 (Armstrong)

『Earl-sama is a very rare case.』 (Burkhart)

Most recently the bored-looking Doushi joined their training as well. Though it seems he was given a warning by Burkhart-san when he tried to train them in the same way as he did with me.

"Seeing as the mixture ratio of the rare metals moves in the range of one hundredths of percents, I will have to comb through a huge number of combination patterns."

"The only one capable of that is you, Wendelin-san." (Katharina)

The rough mixture and molding has been already finished.

The raw materials of the cannon barrel with its diameter of one meter and its length of 20 meters have been placed on a special stone stand prepared by High Earl Mizuho.

"Besides, I will need to slowly change the mixture ratio while making sure to not forget to evenly distribute the metals in order to avoid adding hollows to it..."

It's the repetition of doing the same work over and over again, or rather – going by appearance – I'm simply casting continuously magic on the raw materials of the barrel while holding a cane in both my hands. With the work going on for the whole day, I ended up unable to change the mixture ratio once I ran out of mana. Towards the evening I used up the majority of my mana and thus simply slept afterwards.

"You have to keep at it patiently." (Ina)

"That's the kind of work most unsuited for me." (Luise)

Ina and Luise, who brought lunch as errand from Elise at noon of the next day, speak up to me who sits in front of the barrel.

"After all there's an infinite amount of combinations. It should have a bit leeway in its tolerance levels. Otherwise even the Ancient Magic Civilization shouldn't have been able to produce it."  
(Wendelin)

Once I enter the permissible range, the gun barrel will emit a pale light for an instant. Aiming for that, I simply continue adjusting the composition with magic patiently.

"Maybe there's also an effect from you having fought Alfred before?"

"I'm sure there is."

It's a plain work on the first glance, but keeping up this magic also serves as measure to fix my 『crudeness of control』 mentioned by master before. You can call it a homework for me who went through a tough battle while possessing a lot more mana than master.

"But Burkhart-san told us, didn't he? No matter how much of a genius Alfred might have been, he was never that great when he was around your age, Wend." (Ina)

"In the past Burkhart-san gave Alfred the same advice."

He was noticed because of his big mana pool, but in the end a young magician has to become skilled at magic control.

Since master was still a young man back then, he apparently received the same advice from Burkhart-san.

"Either way, as long as I don't manage to finish this, we won't be able to invade the underground fortress. My only option is to tackle this problem." (Wendelin)

Right now it's only about perfecting the cannon barrel's raw materials anyway.

"Wend-sama, bento." (Wilma)

"Thanks. I heard that you are in charge of firing and aiming, Wilma, but is that true?" (Wendelin)

"I'm valued for my actual experience in the battle against Rainbow Assault." (Wilma)

"I see. Do your best." (Wendelin)

"Yeah, I will." (Wilma)

Because the handling of the magic cannon is the same as the handling of a normal cannon, there's no necessity for precise aiming, but we still have to arrange for a shooter.

Wilma had been assigned to that task because of her experience with the large sniper rifle prototype.

"The production of the cannon mount and the shooting device has begun as well."

There's a lot of peripheral equipment necessary to operate this huge magic cannon. A sturdy cannon mount to support it, an aiming device, a firing device and magic gems to store huge amounts of mana in advance. Since a single magic gem won't be enough, they seem to connect several of them together. Given that it's a technology that failed when they tried to apply it for the huge magic airship in the Helmut Kingdom, it was obvious that this would prove difficult as well. In addition a highly efficient cooling device is indispensable as well.

"The polishing of the cannon balls made by you, Wend-sama, has started as well." (Wilma)

These have been made out of tungsten and other metals, but as there still seems to exist a difference in size and unevenness if my molding is used, several craftsmen are busy polishing them. Many people are involved with the production of such a huge cannon. Therefore failure is no option.

"You have also been put to work, right Luise?" (Wendelin)

"I'm in charge of providing additional mana. So you have to tell me that I should do my best, too." (Luise)

"Luise, do your best." (Wendelin)

"I will." (Luise)

Luise unleashed a technique of charging her fist with mana exceeding her own several fold in the battle against the Rock Gigant Golem in the Herthania Valley. Making use of that special skill, she accepted the duty of assisting by providing mana through the magic gems.

"It has taken a weird shape in the training, but I think it won't actually be too much trouble." (Luise)

Making use of the magic gems filled with mana by other magicians, Luise will amass mana in her fist to the limit and then drive it into the cannon through a mysterious cord. Matching with the mana from the linked magic gems, a huge amount of mana will be forced to explode in one go to shoot a special cannon ball with a big calibre.

Of course normal magic cannon materials would rupture.

It all depends on the workmanship of the 『Extreme Limit Steel』 that I will create.

"Wend-sama, keep at it." (Wilma)

"Go for it, okay?" (Luise)

"Aye, I will." (Wendelin)

For one week after that I improved the adjustment of the mixture ratio little by little, but somehow the barrel doesn't want to shine.

Gradually the cannon mount and the the other peripheral devices took shape nearby.

"Dear, are you alright?" (Elise)

"For thee to have reproduce OOParts lost in ancient times; thou sure have it difficult, Wendelin."  
(Therese)

Today Elise and Therese showed up while bringing my bento.

"Elise, is the first-aid station holding up well?" (Wendelin)

"Yes. Since there's almost no combat recently, it's not that hectic." (Elise)

Since the fortress is protected by a sturdy 『Magic Barrier』, the imperial army is simply encircling the area without starting any battles. Occasionally a supporter or spy of Duke Nürnberg tries to pass through but their capture seems to only create a small stir.

"If it's only that level, even the empire's magicians are able to handle it somehow. Besides..."  
(Therese)

"Besides, what?" (Wendelin)

"The young soldiers deliberately suffer scratches and cuts for the sake of getting healed by Elise-dono." (Therese)

It appears that the number of soldiers lining-up at the first-aid station after deliberately suffering wounds in their desire to be healed by Saint-sama has increased.

"Again?" (Wendelin)

Now that she mentions it, wasn't it the same during the dispute...?

"I have been told that I don't have to come to the first-aid station except at times when there are fairly heavily wounded people." (Elise)

"After all the number of patients lessens if thee are not there, ELise-dono." (Therese)

Deliberately getting injured; damn, are there no guys who receive healing from male priests?  
Realizing my thoughts, Therese seems unable to hold back her laughter.

"There are also many of the locals going there as part of the imperial army's pacification efforts, but..."

The imperial army set up free medical treatment and physical examination for the local residents in order to smoothen the military rule of the Nürnberg Dukedom. Given that there are many women, children and old people in the territory, Elise apparently wanted to participate.

"Elise-dono, I understand thy sentiments, but the empire's church has its own pride. It's better to hold back except for the times as helper in the worst case." (Therese)

"Because the headquarters of the Protestant Church is located in the imperial capital, the time they obeyed Duke Nürnberg wasn't long. For them it's important to show Peter their merit. Since Mister Baron, who became one of his influential retainers, has a deep relation to the Catholic church, they

feel an impending danger that Peter might ignore them, who ought to be the state religion, under his rule." Therese explained the circumstances.

"Elise-dono, thou are a catholic, too. It's best for thee to not show your face much unless it's really a case the priests can't cope with." (Therese)

"I guess you are right." (Elise)

"Well, they are no idiots either. They shouldn't let a patient die due to holding onto some foolish pride. If they know that no one except for thee, Elise-dono, can heal the patient, they will likely request thy help." (Therese)

If they allow patients to die for no reason, the reputation of the Protestants will fall instead. Therese said they they should ask for help if it looks impossible to them.

"Though Doushi might make a move before that. After all he was very angry over thy matter, Elise-dono." (Therese)

『To harbour such evil emotions towards my niece! If they injure themselves so much, I will heal them!』 (Armstrong)

"The young soldiers, who wanted to be healed by Elise, threw Doush into a rage due to them rushing the healing station. The church might go to Doushi first if help becomes necessary", Therese explained next.

"Therefore we have unexpectedly much free time. There won't be any change in the battle progress unless thou finish the materials of the huge magic cannon, Wendelin." (Therese)

"You know it simply takes time since I have no other option but to test the material combination one after the other. In a way it also depends a bit on luck." (Wendelin)

"It's a job requiring patience. Let me, who has little to do, feed thee. Here, aaahn." (Therese)

"At the very least I should take a break for eating. Let us three eat together." (Wendelin)

"Dear, everything has been prepared." (Elise)



Lunch is over. If I remember correctly this was the 45,567th attempt...wasn't it?  
When I reorganized the rare metals into an even spread in a certain combination, the cannon barrel's materials emitted a pale light for an instant.

"Yay! Thou did it!" (Therese)

"Dear, well done." (Elise)

"Woohoooo—!" (Wendelin)

I became happy due to the accomplishment of finding the alloy that was lost after the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization and hugged both of them at the same time in elation.

"This is...unexpected, but not bad." (Therese)

Therese's face showed that she wasn't all that unhappy with being hugged by me.  
But, in the end she's a high-ranking noble by birth.  
Her expression immediately become serious and she whispers in my ear,

"A lost alloy that can't be refined in today's furnaces? Magic precision at thy level, Wendelin, is necessary for it, but once the detailed mixture ratio becomes known, it's possible that others, who can combine it, might appear, I suppose." (Therese)

"Therese-san?" (Elise)

"I will be in thy care from now on, so it's a warning to thee husband." (Therese)

Therese tells me in a low voice,

"Don't teach Peter-dono and High Earl Mizuho about the mixture ratio of the alloy. The manufacture of that alloy might serve its role as money source for many generations of thy descendants." (Therese)

"I'm indebted to High Earl Mizuho for having shown me the old documents though." (Wendelin)

"Although it mentioned the conditioning of steel, those are at best vague documents. Otherwise there would have been no reason for thee to go through trial and error for many days, Wendelin. Keep the percental value of the other metals that have been mixed into the steel a secret. Just tell him 『I did it just as the documents told me. Thank you』. Being grateful is polite. After all, thou are a high-ranking noble as well, Wendelin." (Therese)

Therese's warning was truly befitting for a high-ranking noble.

"This no occasion to give my thanks though." (Wendelin)

Certainly, the mixture ratio of 『Extreme Limit Steel』 was complex.  
There would have been no problem if I had kept mixing the mithril and orichalcum according to the documents.  
However, I have mixed chromium, nickel, silicon, tungsten and carbon into the steel.  
The mixture of these hadn't been listed in the documents, resulting in me testing things out for many days.

"Wendelin, I hear you succeeded?" (Peter)

"At last, the almighty metal 『Extreme Limit Steel』 of the Ancient Magic Civilization!" (Mizuho)

Hearing that I had managed to get the proper mixture ratio, Peter and High Earl Mizuho rushed over

at full speed.

"So, what's the accurate mixture ratio of 『Extreme Limit Steel』? I guess it's a metal unknown to us after all?" (Peter)

"Earl Baumeister, won't you allow me to buy that information for fifty million ryo?" (Mizuho)

Its durability is lower than that of pure mithril or orichalcum, but wanting to obtain the manufacture method of 『Extreme Limit Steel』, which makes the development of further weapons possible, High Earl Mizuho pressed onto me.

"Wendelin, are you not going to sell it?" (Peter)

"The mixture ratio of mithril and orichalcum has been described in the documents, so I will gladly teach you that." (Wendelin)

It was just as Therese had expected.

If it's the sturdiness and durability of 『Extreme Limit Steel』, not only will it become possible to build magic guns and cannons with high power output, but it will also be simple to strengthen the traditional weapons and armors. That means there will be many desiring it.

"That means it's a secret."

"Wendelin, you have no interest in Nürnberg Dukedom?" (Peter)

"None. I don't need any detached territories." (Wendelin)

"I will give you as many trade advantages as you like. Shall I also introduce you to my granddaughter?" (Mizuho)

"I have already enough wives..." (Wendelin)

Experiencing the overflowing zeal, I thought that it was a blessing that I had been warned by Therese in advance.

Without out it, I would have folded and gave them what they wanted.

"Let's negotiate again once we succeeded in the building and usage of the huge magic cannon."

"Earl Baumeister, I suppose you are going to take a large amount of high grade materials again."

As I see off the two with their expressions showing that they haven't given up, Therese reveals a meaningful smile while saying,

"Be it the imperial family or major nobles, all of them are real trouble. I believe that it was great for me to be allowed to retire." (Therese)

Surely, I also thought that nobles are troublesome creatures.



"Now that the preparation of the cannon barrel's materials finished, carving out the muzzle is my job."

Anyway, I managed to finish producing the extreme limit steel which serves as the cannon barrel's main material.

Kanesada-san motivated himself by saying that the rest is just carving out the muzzle. Wearing a new set of a monk's working clothes, his two pupils standing behind him place salt as offering on top of a small stand, following his instructions.

"There's only enough of these materials for one barrel. Even if you fail, it might be possible to remake it, but thinking like that will only make the success more difficult. We will proceed with the assumption that this material is all that we've got."

After he had his pupils place the materials on the stands, Kanesada-san began to search for the centre of the barrel. If he fails in this, the cutting of the cannon barrel will fail.

Given that there are no machine tools, all of it is decided by nothing but Kanesada-san's experience and intuition. He seems to be looking for the centre with an attitude as if he would commit seppuku if he fails.

His feeling of tension stickily affected even our side.

"This is the place." (Kanesada)

Once Kanesada-san marks the centre, he receives a larger hammer and chisel from a pupil, and starts to shave the metal at a speed one would never imagine from his body.

"Eeeh! You are going to whittle it down by hand?" (Wendelin)

I won't mention any machine tools here, but I thought he would whittle it down with some kind of magic tool. For him to actually shave it off by wielding a chisel...moreover, Kanesada-san's main occupation is supposed to be katana smith.

"It's because that cannon barrel will be made out of 『Extreme Limit Steel』."

It's inferior to orichalcum, but it's a material with an overwhelmingly higher sturdiness than steel. To whittle that down...as I think that, I looked at the chisel and saw that it was made out of orichalcum.

"There is a magic item for shaving down the muzzle of a cannon, but if it's 『Extreme Limit Steel』, it doesn't have enough power..."

One of the assisting pupils quietly explains the circumstances to me.

"If it comes to whittling by hand, master's the only capable of it."

Kanesada-san seems to not only be a katana smith, but also is a master at metal molding. To plane this huge cannon barrel with a single chisel is amazing.

"How long is it going to take him?" (Elise)

"Let's see. Master is anticipating two weeks."

The young pupil answers Elise's question.

"That seems to be quite the hurdle for Kanesada-san, doesn't it?"

Under the condition that not even one mistake in the whittling will be forgiven, Kanesada-san continues to lower his hammer on the chisel with intense concentration. The other pupil cleans the surface of the places, which were roughly finished, by planing it with a chisel made out of 『Extreme Limit Steel』. Despite the season being very close to winter, all three of them sweat like mad and thus drank a lot water while licking salt at times.

"That's a tough job." (Armstrong)

Doushi, who came to check the state of affairs, mutters while looking at Kanesada-san. However, since he's off-duty today, Doushi held jars filled with wine in both hands. He offered one of them to Kanesada-san.

"All of it is manual labor after all."

Burkhart-san shows up as well and holds, as expected, jars filled with wine in his hands as well.

"Since a high accuracy of the aiming device isn't required, it appears to be going well. Even the cooling device; there's no problem since they have improved the one that was used by Wilma-jou-chan's large magic sniper rifle. What's giving them the most trouble is the connecting of the magic gems, I guess." (Burkhart)

The majority of the magic gems owned by the Empire have been taken away into the underground fortress by Duke Nürnberg. It's very likely that they are used for the maintenance of the fortress, including the sturdy 『Magic Barrier』. In order to break this barrier, Peter gathered as many magic gems as he could.

Filling them completely with mana, all of it will be released in one go when firing the shell.

"They seem to be worried about the heating of the connected magic gems same as the Kingdom that failed, but it looks like they will somehow manage until the deadline." (Burkhart)

"What about Luise's support?" (Wendelin)

"That side's no problem as Luise-jou-chan is doing fine." (Burkhart)

Luise will use her technique of charging her fist with several times her own mana. The mana gathered in her fist will be sent as additional power throughout conducting wires. As they had slight troubles in the actual creation of the conducting wires for transmitting the mana, Luise doesn't have any further work until the actual firing.

"It's tough despite the underlying principle being simple."

The cannon barrel will be made out of 『Extreme Limit Steel』, but there will be no rifling scraped into the internal surface of the cannon barrel as it will be a muzzle-loader.

Rifling has been added into the newly developed magic guns and cannons, but as there's no issue with its calculated power without it, they passed on that option this time.

Even using a muzzle-loader, which is an outdated technique, seems to be for avoiding the danger of the cannon barrel exploding due to lacking sturdiness as it would with a breech-loader. This time they picked the safe option.

"Wend, it's time for lunch."

"Got it." (Wendelin)

At the moment when Kanesada-san started to eat an onigiri after stopping his work, Ina came to call me for lunch.

"It's not something I'm used to, so I'm worn-out from replenishing mana." (Katharina)

Katharina, who has been filling mana into a large amount of the magic gems that will be used for the huge magic cannon, says in a slightly bored tone as all of us are eating lunch. It's because you can't do anything else if you are replenishing the mana in magic gems.

"You can't move during that time and you can't use magic either."

"That's the problem." (Katharina)

At first I thought that 『a big cannon is a man's romance』, but once I ponder about it carefully, that romance has the price of us male magicians being busy with the boring task of providing mana. A woman like Katharina, who has no interest in that kind of romance, is probably a lot more bored by it.

"Do the others have some free time as well?"

"They are basically on standby, so yes."

Even so, Elise and Ina seem to be helping out with paperwork. Given that the royal army is a military organization, it creates paperwork. Thus they are helping Christoph, who is in charge of that kind of work.

"Even that Erwin-san is working properly on the papers."

"Really."

"I suppose you should say it's Haruka-san. Erwin-san seems to help her, but..."

"Katharina, you have to judge that on long term."

It was the same in my previous life as well, but paperwork is nothing but a hassle. However, if you sign it while skimming through it irresponsibly, it will cause big problems later down the line.

"Wend, I'm hungry." (Erwin)

"It looks like Kanesada-san's work is progressing smoothly." (Haruka)

As we gossiped about them, Erw and Haruka, who were allowed to take a break from the paperwork, came to eat their lunch.

"Recently I got finally accustomed to paperwork a bit. Though my eyes are prickling from it." (Erwin)

"That's true. My shoulders are stiff as well." (Haruka)

As a matter of fact, Haruka possesses quite the huge rack, so it's probably easy for her to have stiff shoulders. Also, Erw, stop looking at Haruka's breasts after her remark about stiff shoulders.

"Which reminds me, we will destroy the 『Magic Barrier』 by hitting it with the huge magic cannon, right?"

"Yes, so?"

"Won't the 『Magic Barrier』 be restored right away, even if we break it once?" (Erwin)

"Ah, I was thinking about that as well." (Haruka)

When I was wondering what he would ask, he actually asked a really good question, didn't he? Haruka seems to also admire Erw for it.

"When such strong 『Magic Barrier』 is destroyed, it requires an immense amount of mana to deploy it again."

Besides we are preparing the huge magic cannon so that it's capable of firing shots quickly. Fire, destroy the 『Magic Barrier』 and then break the new 『Magic Barrier』 deployed by Duke Nürnberg once more. By repeating this, we will force him to expend a huge amount of mana, resulting in him becoming unable to deploy a new one again.

"That massive and strong shell will definitely hit. Of course there will also be damage to the underground fortress."

When the 『Magic Barrier』 stops being deployed, the mountainside and the fortress' facilities below it should be in pieces.

I expect there will also be many casualties among the stationed troops there. Therefore it's our strategy to attack with the whole army using that opportunity.

"We will attack on that occasion as well, I guess."

"Will that be okay?"

"It's a request from Peter."

The only ones, who can deal with it without suffering casualties in case Duke Nürnberg has planted some traps, are us who have many magicians among us. Peter rejected the opinion of the nobles that the fortress should be only taken with the imperial army and ordered us to attack the fortress as well. I guess Peter wants to make sure of his victory.

"But I think we have to hurry."

"That girl visited, didn't she?"

"That girl...swift attack or whirlwind was it?" (Erwin)

"Erw-san, it's Yulfa the Gale." (Haruka)

"Yeah, that's the one!" (Erwin)

Because we are in the Nürnberg Dukedom located in the Empire's south, the frequency of Yulfa the Gale's visits increased. As it seems like the civil war will soon come to an end, the big shots of the Kingdom seem to harbour various aspirations.

『Earl Baumeister, you definitely must ensure the complete destruction of that device.』

As it seems that the Kingdom's northern area is suffering quite a bit due to that device, they probably don't want it to be secured by the Empire.

I think they are afraid that the Empire will repair it and then use it once again.

"Although the last time she only wanted to do an inspection."

"I think she has no other choice if it's an order."

Haruka and Takeomi-san haven't said anything, but High Earl Mizuho might also be aiming to obtain that device.

I guess I have to reach the central area of the underground fortress as fast as possible.

"Peter-dono likely wants to get his hands on it as well. After all he could use it as trump card." (Therese)

Therese declared that Peter is definitely going for that device.

"On the battlefield plundered items belong to the person who got them first. In the end I guess I have the fate to directly face Max." (Therese)

"Therese-sama, you said from the start that you have to make sure with your own eyes, didn't you?"

"That's a figure of speech, or rather I just wanted to watch the end of the civil war from close-by. I didn't mean it as in me having to personally confirm Max' death." (Therese)

That makes sense. I would be troubled if she said that she definitely wants to personally settle the dispute with Duke Nürnberg.

As there's after all no way that we won't participate in the last battle, we prepared ourselves for that.

## Chapter 11 – The Ambition's Demise

"Finally the cannon has been completed! Let's start the operation right away?"



The huge weapon for the decisive battle, the 『Big Magic Cannon』, which had many people join in its construction, was completed within a month.

All that's left is to fire this cannon, destroy the magic barrier and suppress the underground fortress with the whole army in one go.

That means the Empire's civil war will finally come to an end with this.

The cannon has a diameter of one meter and a length of 20 meters. Supporting it is a combination of a cannon mount, aiming device, cooling device, a device that connects the magic gems which store the mana, and Luise who is working as sub-power generator.

"To use the mana accumulated in my fist as sub-power, that cannon is quite the random construct, isn't it?" (Luise)

"Isn't it fine as long as we can win because of that?" (Peter)

"Well, I guess so." (Luise)

Luise agreed with Peter's point. These two might actually have similar personalities.

"Wilma, will your side be alright?"

"We tested it several times, so it should be okay. It's only that the cannon's aiming device has become rather big." (Wilma)

"Didn't you say that there's no need for precision at the level of the magic sniper rifle?"

"Basically it will be fine if I hit around here." (Wilma)

Wilma looked through the installed scope and showed a detailed map of the mountainside to me.

"The previously mentioned breath-emitting devices have been set up at places which are marked red."

Peter didn't play around in this one month either, it seems.

He investigated the places where we will be able to cause big damage to the underground fortress' facilities at the same time of breaking the 『Magic Barrier』.

"If it's aiming at this level, I suppose there will be plenty of leeway for you, Wilma." (Wendelin)

"As long as I don't become careless. It will be fine as we adjusted the measurement error of the aiming device in the test firing at the beginning." (Wilma)

"I see. Please do your best then." (Wendelin)

When I gently caressed her head, Wilma looked very happy.

"Wend, what about me?" (Luise)

"Huh? Didn't you tell me before 『I'm a grown up woman, so I won't be pleased even if you caress me』?" (Wendelin)

"Did I really say something like that? Look, being unfair is no good." (Luise)

When I caressed her head as well in response to that, she looked delighted as well.

"Emera?" (Peter)

"What is it?" (Emera)

"Look at that!" (Peter)

"What about it?" (Emera)

"Nothing..." (Peter)

Peter tried to imitate me to stroke Emera's head, but there's no way that she would accept that. With her unapproachable manner, Peter was tragically shot down. I don't think that Emera will be happy to have something like that done to her anyway, but...

"Well, we are going to fire it soon then, right?"

It's quite casual, but Peter orders Emera to signal the start of the operation. Once she instructed the magician standing next to her, he released a flare into the sky. At last it's the beginning of battle.

"Wilma, give us a flashy shot!"

"Roger, flashy it will be." (Wilma)

Having said that, since it's just taking aim and pulling the trigger, it won't be that flashy either way.

"Beginning the mana supply from the magic gem linking device. Current capacity at 57%." (Wilma)

The magic gem linking device, which caused the most troubles in the building phase, seems to function properly. However, since it's getting heated up as expected, we can feel the hot air over here as well. It might be difficult to use it for an extended period of time.

"Capacity at 105%." (Wilma)

"I will start providing mana as well." (Luise)

Following that, Luise poured the mana amassed in her fist into a cord, sending it to the magic cannon.

It's the duty of a sub-power generator, but to guarantee the power output of the cannon, which is a trial product, her mana was necessary.

"Confirmed charging of mana. Adjusting aim, 2 ticks up, 3 ticks right. Aim all set. Fire." (Wilma)

After Wilma confirmed all of it with an indifferent voice, she quickly pulled the trigger. Just as she did, the surroundings of the magic cannon were attacked by a trembling as if a major earthquake was taking place.

The huge magic cannon isn't actually so loud that it would make windows tremble.

Since it doesn't use gunpowder, it's not at the level of rupturing one's eardrums.

Because it's a primitive cannon, the energy of the firing is released completely to the front.

That's why no shock wave reached us, but in exchange the cooling device released huge amounts of vapor while suppressing the abnormal heating.

I protect myself and the others from the steam with a 『Magic Barrier』.

"That's an amazing amount of steam, isn't it?"

"No change here." (Wilma)

"How nice, that's a convenient protection." (Luise)

"But it has no use except on such occasion. After all you will get immediately drenched in sweat if you move while wearing this." (Wilma)

Same as at the time with the large magic sniper rifle prototype, Wilma wore a mithril-coated coat. Luise acted as if she was jealous, but well, since it's difficult to use when hunting monsters...

"Did it hit?"

"It looks like it did."

Because I was asked by Luise, I peeked through the binoculars in a hurry and confirmed that a reasonably big hole had been drilled into a part of the mountainside.

The cannon's shell smashed the magic barrier, impacted on the mountainside and pierced into it. It apparently destroyed a facility, causing chaos within the underground fortress.

It was a simple chinkapin-shaped shell made out of a tungsten alloy without fuse and without any explosive material, but since that mass had been accelerated by a large amount of mana, it should have developed a considerable power.

"What terrific output. Wilma, keep shooting as long as you can."

"Got it."

While looking on the map, Wilma starts to aim at the next target.

The target points and their order had been noted down on the map of the mountainside.

This is what Peter had his troops investigate for the last month.

"Loading the next shell! Done!" (Armstrong)

"Eh? Doushi, you're in charge of loading the shells?" (Wendelin)

The tungsten-alloy shells, which had been completed by craftsmen polishing the rough shape I had created, are absurdly heavy. It was planned to have several magicians, who can strengthen themselves, handle the loading process, but for some reason Doushi is doing it all by himself.

"To have several magicians carry one shell is quite inefficient!" (Armstrong)

"I'm thankful, but at the same time surprised that you can carry it by yourself."

"This much is light for me." (Armstrong)

Thanks to Doushi, the loading of the shells finishes speedily and Wilma fires the cannon in succession.

It is impossible for the aim to be off.

Even if it slightly deviates from its target, it will definitely cause damage to the fortress as long as it pierces into the mountainside.

"The aiming device had a measurement error. Adjusting it, one tick down, one tick left. Fire." (Wilma)

There are in total 25 shells that had been produced by me. I couldn't do any more as I didn't have enough materials.

It would have been fine to use other materials too, but since the mana stored in the magic gems will run out at that point anyway, it's all the same.

Besides, if you fire 25 of those huge projectiles, it will consume a huge amount of mana to restore the 『Magic Barrier』 each time.

On the mountainside holes so big that you can see them with the naked eye had opened up at several places.

The interior of the fortress beyond the holes torn open by the shells should be crumbling by now.

"All shells hit. I think I was able to destroy a considerable amount of the breath-emitting devices as well." (Wilma)

"That's amazing, Wilma." (Wendelin)

As I praised Wilma who finished her task, there was movement within the imperial army.

The elites of the imperial army that seem to be the advance unit were ordered to storm the holey mountainside.

It's probably because the rebel army couldn't maintain the 『Magic Barrier』 any longer due to the bombardment.

"Now that it has come to this, they might give priority to the contest for great achievements." (Ina)

"But they have to be on their guard, don't they?" (Erwin)

Erw rebuts Ina's remark.

As a matter of fact the advance guard came under fire from the breath-emitting devices that survived close to the mountainside.

However...

"They should be useless since Emera-san is with them." (Peter)

Peter won't make such a mistake a second time either.

The discharged breath attacks were completely blocked by Emera who was standing at the head. The other magicians silenced the devices one after the other by launching spells at the locations from where the breath was originating.

"Earl-sama, we have to go as well." (Burkhart)

"True, let's go then?"

"I'm charging in!"

"Please don't fall behind!"

At the same time as the imperial army's vanguard started its attack on the underground fortress, we also charged in that direction.

The number of soldiers are only 1,000 led by Erw and Haruka, but since our destination is an underground fortress, it should be difficult to command a too big number of soldiers.

"Erwin, relax without stressing yourself too much." (Philip)

"Nii-san and I will act in concert with the Mizuho army." (Christoph)

Given that the speed will fall if we move with everyone, Philip and Christoph, who lead the remaining soldiers, were scheduled to move together with the Mizuho army.

"Start the charge!"

We leave the magic cannon that has no shells left to be fired anymore to the Mizuho craftsmen and head out towards the deepest part of the fortress.

"Wend, are you possibly targeting Duke Nürnberg's head?"

Luise asks something strange.

"I don't need his head. I will gladly give it to anyone who wants it." (Wendelin)

At this point in the civil war there's no point in taking something like that and boasting of it as great military exploit. It will only trigger good-for-nothing envy. Rather than that, the destruction of the jamming device takes maximum priority right now.

"As there will be many contenders for it, it's out of our reach anyway." (Burkhart)

"If I remember correctly, even a normal soldier will become a noble as reward, right?"

"Yes. It's said that they will be appointed to the rank of Viscount, albeit not a landed one. It's something I frequently heard on the battlefield. Erw-san, let us go at it steadily." (Haruka)

"Since I will be busy protecting Wend, don't do anything unreasonable, Haruka-san." (Erwin)

Erw, Ina and Haruka apparently remembered Peter's previous motivational speech to the officers and men of the imperial army. Since a big number of nobles has died, it probably doesn't hurt to give a peerage to the person who took Duke Nürnberg's head.

"What a large-scaled underground base."

Once I peeked through a hole in the mountainside, a passage of the fortress was visible. Since I don't think that there had been any construction work done on it since the civil war broke out, the fortress utilizes the underground ruin after all.

"Wow, what a wide passage." (Luise)

Luise, who is searching for enemies while standing at the front since she's a master of the Magic Combat Style, admired the vastness of the underground ruin.

"It probably was an army base to begin with." (Burkhart)

It's likely just as Burkhart-san deducted. If this place is the source of the various magic tools used by Duke Nürnberg so far, all of it makes sense.

"Doushi, where are we going to find that device?"

"Considering it normally, I think it will be in the innermost part." (Armstrong)

While moving, we observed all over battles between the imperial army that charged into the fortress and Duke Nürnberg's feudal army which defended it. The sounds of weapons clashing could be heard regularly.

"It's the enemy army!"

"Sorry, time's valuable."

Once I invoke 『Area Stun』, all members of the enemy forces, who rushed in our direction, were paralyzed and stopped moving.

"Don't bother finishing them off! We are advancing further in!"

At any rate, since time was precious, we didn't fuss over taking our revenge by killing the enemies. Erw strictly forbade attacks against the stunned enemies. We pass through the fortress while creating a large amount of paralyzed enemies.

Once we came this deep in, we couldn't see our allies any longer nor could we hear any battle sounds.

"It's quiet here, isn't it?"

"That makes it all the more dangerous."

Luise's premonition came true. The lower we descended, the more suicide-bombing golems and breath-emitting devices were set up.

"The method to deal with them has been already established though."

It would probably be difficult for normal soldiers to remove them, but for a magician they aren't such difficult opponents.

The suicide-bombing golems will explode once they receive an impact above a certain, fixed level.

"Earl Baumeister, here are the necessary materials!" (Armstrong)

Doushi creates a great amount of rock lumps by hitting the wall of the underground ruin. I throw those at the approaching, suicide-bombing golems.

Once they hit, the golems explode and we block the fragments with our 『Magic Barriers』. And that's all.

"Ina, Wilma."

"Leave it to us." (Ina)

"I will shoot!" (Wilma)

It's the same for the breath-emitting devices. Since only the breath-spitting part has been deployed, the device itself can't move.

Ina throws her spears from a distance. Wilma snipes. With me strengthening their attacks with 『Boost』, the devices were destroyed easily.

Given that they don't have any function except spitting breath installed, the devices aren't as sturdy as the dragon golems.

"However, we are reasonably far in and still haven't arrived at our destination."

We stormed in aiming for that jamming device, but we can't get to it despite being fairly deep inside.

Since it's necessary for Peter and his forces to finely comb through the fortress, they seem to be fighting a hard battle at a floor that's far higher than the one where we are.

On the way we found residential areas, where the soldiers and their families are obviously living, under construction.

Because we don't have the time to explore all of them, we ignore those and descend to the floor below.

"There's only machinery! It looks like Duke Nürnberg doesn't trust people!" (Armstrong)

After a certain floor, there were only suicide-bombing golems and breath-emitting devices set up. As we advance while destroying those, we ran into an obviously suspicious, huge door. A big number of breath-emitting devices has been placed in front of it. Just before I can destroy them with

magic from a distance, Doushi draws closer to them while deploying a 『Magic Barrier』 around himself, and destroys all of them with kicks and punches.  
When he was drawing near, Doushi was hit by breath attacks of all attributes, but all of it was repelled by his 『Magic Barrier』 .

"Complete destruction with one blow! Doing it little-by-little is troublesome!" (Armstrong)

Nothing but the wreckage of the devices remains in front of the door.

"Now then, this is the innermost room!" (Armstrong)

Once Doushi opened the huge door by himself, Duke Nürnberg and a weird middle-aged man wearing a white tuxedo waited for us there.

"A chief retainer of Duke Nürnberg? Doesn't look like it..." (Wendelin)

"Earl-sama, look at the ears of that guy." (Burkhart)

Being told so by Burkhart-san, I look at the ears of that man and discover that they were actually pointed.

He doesn't look like an elf. Then again, even in my former world elves and dwarves were fictional races.

They don't exist in reality.

"Demon..."

Burkhart-san concisely taught me the correct answer. His appearance isn't all that different from humans. As special trait, his ears are pointed. After the collapse of the Ancient Magic Civilization there haven't been any precedents of them being sighted, but demons are said to definitely exist. The actual proof for the demons' existence was helping Duke Nürnberg.

"Now I get it! You borrowed the help of demons to get your hands on the mysterious jamming device and many other legacies from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization!" (Armstrong)

For a change Doushi had a fit of anger towards Duke Nürnberg.

That's because the situation couldn't be simply excused as mere rebellion of Duke Nürnberg.

After all Duke Nürnberg, who said that he was aiming for a hegemony of the continent, proved the fact that he actually had connections to the Demon Country.

In the worst case it was a plan of the demons to divide the humans and suspicions whether Duke Nürnberg has deliberately caused damage to the Empire would emerge.

"Is there anything wrong about that?" (Nürnberg)

"You bastard!"

"No matter what I use, it will be fine as long as I win in the end. Winning will justify all past actions. Isn't this the truth of this world?" (Nürnberg)

"Wh-!"

Doushi becomes speechless due to Duke Nürnberg's rebuttal.

"However, you did it, Earl Baumeister, didn't you?" (Nürnberg)

"..."

At this point there's no need to explain as to what it is I did.  
It's because I did nothing but being a hindrance to Duke Nürnberg.

"I merely moved for my own sake. If I win, the just Earl Baumeister will bring peace to the world by defeating the evil Duke Nürnberg. And it will be a happy end for everyone. Or am I wrong?" (Wendelin)

"Don't spout such bullshit despite being nothing more than a greenhorn. You keep thwarting all my plans." (Nürnberg)

Currently more than 200,000 soldiers on both sides are engaging in mortal combat inside this underground fortress.  
No matter how elite the feudal army of the Duke Nürnberg household might be, they are in disorder due to the bombardment. It should be difficult for them to eliminate the imperial army that invaded in big numbers to attack the place.

"I guess in the end you are a person to be avoided by me, Earl Baumeister. It's regrettable, but I have to kill you here." (Nürnberg)

"What a very arrogant attitude. I don't remember having become your retainer and thus I have no obligation to be killed by you." (Wendelin)

I have heard from Therese that he's a sword master, but in that case it will be fine if I defeat him with magic.

I began to prepare the spell 『Blaze』 in order to reduce him to ash, but right after the spell finished forming, the fire vanished completely.

"Did you cancel it?" (Wendelin)

"You are correct. The forte of this esteemed me, who is a demon, as magic system is 『Darkness』. The strong point of 『Darkness』 lies in its special characteristics the other magic systems do not possess."

The demon, whose vocal tone resembles that of Doushi 1, apparently cancelled my spell with a darkness spell in an instant.

"I can also use this kind of magic."

"Uuh!"

"Erw!"

Next Erw's body is suddenly wrapped up by a black mist. At the same time as the mist clears up,

Erw, who had the white parts of his eyes dyed black, tries to assault Therese with his sword as if he had lost control of himself.

Ina gets in-between them in a hurry and blocks Erw's sword with the handle of her spear.

"Erw!"

"Erw-san! Please get your act together!" (Haruka)

"Ugaa—!"

Haruka calls out to him as well while drawing her magic katana and going to assist Ina, but Erw doesn't answer their calls and continues to swing his katana as if he had gone mad while shouting something cryptic.

It looks like he forgot all the sword techniques he had learned up until now. He's completely acting like a berserker.

"Are you manipulating the mind of your opponent?"

"I wonder about that? However, that lad regards your group as enemies, Earl Baumeister."

"What an annoying spell..."

If several of us are manipulated by this magic, we might get annihilated due to killing each other in worst case.

Everyone feels nervous, but the one who eliminated that danger was Elise.

A bluish-white light spreads around us. At the same time as that vanishes, Erw returned to his normal state.

"Huh? What am I doing?" (Erwin)

"Erw-san, you were manipulated by that demon." (Haruka)

"Ooh! There is a magic user of the 『Holy』 attribute which counters 『Darkness』! This esteemed me is deeply impressed by your ability!"

It seems holy attribute owns the property to negate the darkness attribute.

However, it apparently requires ability beyond a certain level. The demon was astonished by Elise's strength.

"Demon, it looks like your trump card, darkness, doesn't work. Give up alongside Duke Nürnberg, and offer your head."

"To get beheaded all of a sudden, humans are indeed savage."

"You know...do you believe it to be possible for you to beg for your life after seeing the terrible state of this Empire?"

Just as Duke Nürnberg says, there's no way that there will be any other punishment than the death penalty if one considers it legally and takes the feelings of the imperial citizens into account. Even

if we let him live and only captured him here, the result will be him being tortured terribly while alive before getting brutally killed in the end. In that case it's merciful to kill him right now right here.

"You are very kind, Earl Baumeister."

"No. Capturing the owner of so much mana as you possess alive will only lead to many casualties. As noble of the Kingdom it would probably great to obtain various information, but it's probably a luxury to ask for this much. As accomplice of a genocide, you will die together with Duke Nürnberg."

"This esteemed me was only interested in the items of the historic ruin as archeologist."

"Do you think that such excuse is going to pass?"

"I anticipated that I would be told so. In that case I should fight here together with Duke Nürnberg to whom I am indebted. Maybe we might be able to win."

After saying that, the demon retrieved some square box from the inside pocket of his tuxedo. Once I look properly, it seems to be some remote control.

"This underground ruin was weapon and ammunition factory of the national army and a place to construct prototypes during the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization. Among them is a secret weapon I set aside as trump card. Come! 『Giant-version Mechanic Doll, Majin-kun!』" 2

Once the demon pressed a button on the remote control, the wall behind Duke Nürnberg and the demon collapsed and a huge, human-shaped golem with a height of around 20 meters appeared.

"What. Again a golem?"

"This golem is capable of solving the inefficient application which is a golem's weak point."

Even as the demon is talking, I, Katharina, Doushi and Burkhart-san mercilessly hurl spells at the two, but all of them were repelled by the 『Magic Barrier』 of the demon who gave up on using darkness magic.

"Earl-sama! That demon!" (Burkhart)

"Yes. He has more mana than I do." (Wendelin)

Until now I didn't encounter any magicians that had more mana than me, but as expected of a demon. He boasted of an astounding mana pool.

"This Majin-kun is controlled by Duke Nürnberg and provided with mana by this esteemed me. It exhibits a tremendous power."

"We will annihilate the imperial army after killing you." (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg boards the opened chest of the golem while being carried by the demon with

『Flight』.

In other words, that place is the cockpit.

"Does that demon possess a 『Movement Cancellor』 as owned by master...?"

Although we couldn't fly as usual, the demon could use 『Flight』.  
This is also a disadvantage for us.

"Now then, feel free to despair in front of Majin-kun's power."

The voice of Duke Nürnberg, who boarded the huge golem, is audible similar to a stereo broadcasting.

It seems to be a device allowing to broadcast a voice from within the cockpit after amplifying it. Although this should be a western-styled fantasy world with swords and magic, for some reason only that point had turned into a robot anime. Though it's likely only me who's thinking about such things.

"I guess I will try it out starting from the weapons." (Nürnberg)

Having obtained a new toy, Duke Nürnberg appears to be in high spirits.

The huge golem pushed out its both hands to the front.

Thereupon the parts from below the elbows of both arms come flying at us like rockets. It was just like the rocket punch in a robot anime which I had seen in my childhood.

"The arms are flying!"

"Are they magic tools using 『Flight』?"

Erw and Haruka are surprised, but it seems there's no time to run away.

Doushi and I deployed sturdy 『Magic Barriers』 and each of us blocked one of the rocket punches.

"What amazing power..."

"They still haven't stopped!" (Armstrong)

Even after being stopped by the 『Magic Barriers』, the rocket punches still didn't cease moving, continuing to charge to mow us down. Doushi and I are slowly drawing back while being pushed, but after strengthening the 『Magic Barriers』 even further, it finally developed into a deadlock. Ten odd seconds after that the rocket punches returned to the golem's arms.

"Those are dangerous weapons."

"Yes."

Burkhart-san exposes his wariness towards the power of the rocket punches.

Doushi and I only prevented our 『Magic Barriers』 getting penetrated. The rocket fists themselves are undamaged and can still be fired many times. If we don't somehow deal with them, we will be turned into minced meat by those rocket punches once we run out of mana.

"What do you think of the power of a super weapon from the era of the Ancient Magic Civilization, Earl Baumeister?" (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg's voice that was audible from the huge golem brims with confidence. He was apparently convinced that he will be able to defeat us if it goes on like this.

"Have you become speechless, Earl Baumeister?"

"Let me say just one thing. Once it reaches the point where a military genius relies on magic tools, it means the end is near." (Wendelin)

"What impudent talk. Ooh! That's right! You were present here as well, weren't you Therese?" (Nürnberg)

As if he had just remembered it, Duke Nürnberg called out to Therese who was accompanying us.

"I've heard you had been forcibly taken down from your position as Duchess Philip or such. Isn't that an unusual mistake for you?"

"It's not really a mistake. I'm very satisfied with the current state of affairs. From the start the paths thee and I took were different. Die without worrying about it." (Therese)

"Even after retiring, you are a scary one, Therese."

Duke Nürnberg continued to talk to Therese in a jesting tone.

"Certainly thee haven't expected that I would be pleading for my life, have thee?" (Therese)

"By no means. In the end, it's our fate that either of us two has to die."

"The one dying is thee then, right? After all I'm still young." (Therese)

While saying so, Therese placed a hand on my shoulder.

"...So that's the reason. Very well. In that case, die as a woman. I'm a kind man, so I will send you to the afterlife together with Earl Baumeister."

Finishing the chat at this point, the golem entered a combat stance.

"Therese, fall back. The others from the royal army as well."

Seeing that such huge golem had appeared, I have no other option but to have everyone except the essential battle members leave this room. Common soldiers will be simply crushed underfoot. And even before that, they would only become hindrances standing in the way of our battle.

"Erw."

"I'm sorry, but I won't retreat. Haruka-san, please help the soldiers leave this room."

"Erw-san! I will stay behind as well!"

"No, being allowed to participate in this will only result in you becoming a victim of Wend's bad luck. This time you must leave." (Erwin)

"But..." (Haruka)

"Have a look at this lineup. It's unlikely that we are going to lose, right?" (Erwin)

"... Understood." (Haruka)

Haruka, a Mizuho woman, makes the decision to pull back with the soldiers as she's told by Erw.

"Erwin, I'm Earl Baumeister's guard, so I will stay behind." (Takeomi)

"No. Only in this particular battle Wend's guard will be me. Can't I have you help Haruka-san out?" (Erwin)

"Got it. I shall leave it to you, Erwin." (Takeomi)

Takeomi-san acknowledged.

"Therese-sama, you too."

"No, I will stay back." (Therese)

"But, Therese-sama, with your sword skills..."

She's no magician nor is her swordsmanship that amazing either.  
Takeomi-san tells Therese that remaining here despite that is reckless.

"I don't believe that Wendelin is going to lose. Also, even if I die, it has absolutely no effect on the Empire. Besides, I'm useful, too." (Therese)

Therese took out something from her chest.  
Once I look closely, it's a magic bag. From within she retrieves an object I feel I have seen somewhere before and throws it in the direction of the huge golem after pulling the pin attached to it.

"Close your eyes!" (Therese)

At the same time as everyone shuts their eyes, that object emits an intense flash in front of the golem. As expected, it was apparently something like a flash grenade.

"It has the effect of an explosive flash bullet." (Therese)

"Ooh—! How dazzling—!"

"Therese! Are you trying to blind us!" (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg, who was about to launch the rocket arms once again, was confused after having his eyesight temporarily stolen by the flash bullet.

"What an unbelievable, hidden weapon."

"Wendelin, it's not like legacies of the Ancient Magic Civilization only appear in Nürnberg Dukedom. There's only few of them, but things like this have been handed down in the Duke Philip household as well." (Therese)

It seems that the especially precious, dangerous items among the magic tools, which had been excavated in the Philip Dukedom in the past, have been stored in the magic bag in Therese's hands.

"Why are you, who has retired as family head, holding onto those?"

"For generations the family heads have had the duty to hide the items in this magic bag. Originally I probably should have handed it over to Alfons, but I missed the chance to do so thanks to the drama over the family head change that has never happened in this way before. It's a good opportunity, so I guess I have decided to use these items here." (Therese)

Following that, Therese takes out something else from the magic bag. It's a pipe with a length of around one meter. Upon close inspection it was something resembling a bazooka.

"I have heard that it's name is 『Sorcery Rocket Launcher』." (Therese)

"Can you use it?"

"I have read the instruction that was found together with it in my free time." (Therese)

Therese aims the rocket launcher and pulls the trigger. The fired rocket hits the right elbow of the golem, tearing off the right rocket arm in the process.

"Its power is truly tremendous." (Therese)

"Now!"

As Duke Nürnberg and the demon still haven't recovered their sight, it's now our chance. I, Burkhart-san, Doushi and Katharina fire spells, Erw and Ina throw spears, and Wilma snipes, destroying the eyes of the golem. The huge golem that had most of its limbs destroyed falls to the ground while causing a thunderous crash.

"We did it!"

"No, wait."

Looking at the golem that had stopped moving, Erw was celebrating, but the magicians among us know better.

The demon's huge mana pool is still going strong and it's wriggling, trying to start some follow-up

action.

"At this leveeel—! You won't be able to defeat Majin-kun—! Come here!"

At the same time of the demon's yell, the golem detaches the damaged head and limbs, and floats up into the air. Next, additional parts came flying from inside the wall, which had been destroyed when the golem appeared, and combined with the torso.

The golem immediately returns to its original shape.

"Naive, naive, far too naive—. This esteemed me eagerly repaired the excavated items in the last few years."

There's a huge amount of spare parts for the golem. As long as the mana of the demon and the magic gem in the torso are not broken, the golem can apparently restore itself by drawing as many new spare parts as it needs.

"In a certain sense! This Majin-kun is invincible!"

"Did you see, Earl Baumeister!? The power of this doll!" (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg, who had recovered his eyesight at some point, loudly laughs at us. His appearance is truly that of an evil last boss.



"What bullshit. Earl-sama, if you destroy it a few times, the spare parts will likely run out, too."  
(Burkhart)

"That's right, isn't it?"

Approving Burkhart-san's opinion, we all started to attack again and blew away the tattered golem.  
However...

"Come heeere—!"

Once again spare limbs and head come flying and combine with the torso, returning the golem to its original state.

"Wendelin-san, we are going to continue, right?"

"Yes, third time's the charm." (Wendelin)

Once more we attack the golem with a concentrated fire of spells.  
And once more it becomes tattered and then restores itself to its previous state.

"There's no end to this."

"How regrettable, Earl Baumeister! Demon! Deliver the final blow!" (Nürnberg)

"Well then, we shall resume attacking again!"

Duke Nürnberg gained even more confidence due to the golem's toughness.  
The rocket punches are launched from both arms and this time even shells from a magic cannon that had been installed on the golem's back without me noticing are fired.  
Adding the bombardment besides the rocket punches forced us into an one-sided, defensive battle.  
With the deployment of our 『Magic Barriers』, our mana is gradually depleting.

"Isn't this bad?"

"I wonder how often we have to destroy that huge golem until it doesn't restore itself?"

Doushi and I discussed what we should do from now on while defending against the cannon shells and the two rocket punches.

"There's, don't you have some secret weapon or something like that?"

"If thou are speaking of offensive ability, it's not that different from the magic cannon. But can I ask something else before that?" (There'se)

"Is there some kind of problem?"

"Yeah. Isn't it better to attack the rear and destroy the structure that supplies the spare parts rather than attacking the golem's main body?" (There'se)

"...That's it!"

We had forgotten this obvious fact until it was pointed out by Therese. If new spare parts come flying right after the golem itself is destroyed, then it would be best to simply destroy the structure providing those parts.

"The target is the room, from where the parts come flying, behind the huge golem!"

"Since Earl-sama and Doushi can't attack right now, there's no other option but us doing our best, huh...?" (Burkhart)

Being busy with defending, Doushi and I can't participate in the attack.

Burkhart-san and Katharina release a large amount of 『Fire Balls』. Luise and Ina throw spears loaded with mana. Wilma snipes, and Therese rapidly fires the still remaining rockets of the rocket launcher.

The spells, spears and rockets pass the golem and fly through the hole in the destroyed wall. After a short moment a huge explosion occurred.

"Whaaat—! The combination system haaas—!"

It looks like Therese's idea was correct.

The still-functional spare parts for the limbs and similar were dragged into secondary explosions and got destroyed.

"Demon! Rather than that, it's that device!" (Nürnberg)

"It is very likely that it was damaged in those explosions. Let me just say that it is not my fault."

"That device?"

Thinking, does he possibly mean..., I cast 『Flight』. My body floats into the air without my head being assailed by a sharp pain.

After almost a year it became possible for me to fly again.

"That device got unexpectedly quickly destroyed, didn't it?"

"Earl-sama, let's use the opportunity and shower them with attacks all together." (Burkhart)

"It will be a drama if they recover because we gave them a chance. Everybody, start attacking!"

With the destruction of the spare parts supply system, it had become impossible for the huge golem to replace the broken parts.

Then we should use the opportunity and destroy it completely.

"I will do it in one go! Hhmmm—!" (Armstrong)

Doushi strengthens his body functions with magic, cancels the 『Magic Barrier』, grabs a rocket punch with both hands just like that and starts to constrict it like a vise.

Due to Doushi's attack that didn't spare any mana, the rocket arm was gradually crushed and

developed cracks on its surface.

"Ina!"

"Erw!"

Next the two of them throw throwing spears.

The spears hit the joint parts of the golem's rocket arms and squash them.

With this it should be impossible to for the rocket arm to ever again combine with the torso.

"Next I'm up." (Luise)

Having recovered 『Flight』, Luise jumped on top of the rocket arm, which is being stopped by my 『Magic Barrier』, like an acrobat and swung down a mana-charged fist blow from above.

The last rocket arm becomes a mess and crashes into the ground.

"Earl-sama! Let's go!" (Burkhart)

"Yes!"

After making sure that the rocket arm has been completely destroyed, Burkhart-san and I run up to the golem.

It still continued to attack with its magic cannon, but Katharina circles behind it while preparing a 『Wind Cutter』 that had its power increased to the limit through compression, and then cut the magic cannon off the golem's back with it.

"It's great that I improved my magic control just as I was told by master." (Katharina)

The magic cannon, which had its mana supply severed and became detached, falls to the ground and becomes silent.

"Demon! Do something!" (Nürnberg)

"To put this in layman terms, we are in a biii—ig piii—inch!"

"I'm going to kill you!" (Nürnberg)

"Be quiet! Unsightly teamwork is unacceptable. Fire." (Wilma)

Duke Nürnberg's panicked yelling is audible, but Wilma shoots out both eyes of the golem with her sniping, effectively stealing their sight completely.

"At this point I will, with the magic of this esteemed me...ugh!"

"Demon! What's wrong!?" (Nürnberg)

"My body does not move as it should. I have blisters from the head to the toes and my head is dizzy, too."

"Why is something like that happening? Is it Earl Baumeister's magic?" (Nürnberg)

"I'm afraid to say, but it's not me." (Wendelin)

"It's me." (Elise)

Elise quietly did her task of suppressing the demon's dark magic, which at the same time started to attack the demon in reverse.

Since demons are also living creatures, she repeatedly cast healing magic, little-by-little capitalizing on the disposition that demons will be healed with healing magic in the same way as humans. No matter what healing magic it might be, if it's cast in too short intervals, it will instead become harmful.

Elise sniped only the demon from a distance and succeeded in the difficulty of making highly concentrated healing magic permeate into the demon's body.

"When you enter a state of being over-healed, the skin will blister, you will get motion sick, short of breath and dizzy, as well as suffer other bad influences on your mental state. Moreover, if you ignore those symptoms.." (Elise)

"It will become fatal at the end", Elise tells us.

"Huh? Previously my healing magic has been too strong..." (Wendelin)

"If it's around several to several dozen times the needed amount, nothing will happen. You have to cast more than several hundred times the required amount." (Elise)

"This is quite unexpected."

The golem's parts replacement system has been destroyed and his own body is in a bad shape due to an overdose of healing magic.

The demon was fairly troubled.

Other than now, there won't be another perfect chance to deliver the final blow.

"Burkhart-san!" (Wendelin)

"Aye!" (Burkhart)

At this point I start to run together with Burkhart-san, who preserved his mana, towards the huge golem.

"Don't allow them to get any closer!" (Nürnberg)

"Your treatment of demons is rough."

Even while burdened with the symptoms of over-healing...as expected of a demon...

Using his huge mana pool, he deploys 『Wind Cutters』 like a storm.

"That's why I'm here!" (Burkhart)

All of it was blocked by the 『Magic Barrier』 deployed by Burkhart-san.

"Earl-sama, the torso part of this huge golem looks quite sturdy. What are you going to do?"  
(Burkhart)

While making use of the deployed 『Magic Barrier』 to advance, I ponder what magic to use to disable the golem. Certainly, leaving the limbs aside, it didn't look as if I would be able to cause any damage to the torso part with the cockpit, no matter what kind of attack I used.

"With emission magic..." (Wendelin)

Since its power is low, I won't be able to deliver any damage to the golem's torso.  
What should I do then?  
The answer is what I discovered when I fought against master before.

"Gathering a huge amount of mana into one point without releasing it...no, I guess in this case it's into 『one blade』..." (Wendelin)

I take out the hilt of the magic sword, which is master's memento, and charge it with a massive amount of mana at a level I haven't used until now.  
However, I make the materialized blade as thin as possible. I keep the length at a minimum, but since I'm going to cut apart a huge golem, I make sure to not make it too short.  
Is it a problem of my image? A red blade that resembled a Japanese sword appeared from the hilt. Seeing as it's red, it definitely possesses a fire attribute, but I can't see anything resembling a flame. It's because I compressed the blade to the maximum.

"I will burn it away with this." (Wendelin)

After approaching right in front of the golem with 『Flight』, I swing down the flame sword in one breath.

"Even if it's you Earl Baumeister, this huge golem's torso is armored with an alloy of mithril and 『Extreme Limit Steel』. Something like cutting it is impossible...what!?" (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg shouts in surprise.  
That's because the golem's torso has been cut apart, allowing us to see Duke Nürnberg through the tear. However, I wasn't able to bisect it completely.  
Even though I charged it with this much mana, I only cut the armor of the golem apart.

"Once more..." (Wendelin)

That was my plan, but I had apparently used up more mana than I expected. I feel dizzy and sit down on the spot.

"Earl-sama!" (Burkhart)

"Burkhart-san, you are next..." (Wendelin)

"With my mana pool, it would be strange to even put a scratch on that thing! Doushi!" (Burkhart)

"It's impossible for me as well! Invading up to here and fighting against the golem's hand was more intense on my mana consumption than I thought." (Armstrong)

"How about you, Katharina-jou-chan?" (Burkhart)

"Even if I focus my remaining mana, I won't be able to manifest a sword blade like Wendelin-san did." (Katharina)

"Wha—!"

Due to the battles so far, the remaining mana of all magicians present has become undependable.

"How troublesome..."

The golem's activity still hasn't stopped completely.

It's also possible that reinforcements are going to arrive if we don't finish it off quickly. I began to ponder about a method how to destroy the golem.

However, that worry is solved by an unexpected person.

"Wend! I will do it!"

"Erw?"

"Wait! You can't use magic though!"

Since the opponent is what it is, Burkhart-san tried to stop to the charge of Erw, who didn't attack much until now, in a hurry.

"I have this! Luise!"

"I see!"

Without listening to our appeal to stop, Erw is tossed by Luise, flying towards the golem. In his hand...

"Wend! That's a magic katana!"

"Did you borrow it from Haruka!?"

Erw, who was launched by Luise who was clad in mana, delivers a precise slash at the golem's torso in order to widen the crack I created before.

Landing after one strike, Erw immediately stores the magic katana in its scabbard, but going by its appearance, it doesn't look as if the huge golem had been cut.

"Erw, nothing has changed though?"

"Don't worry. That golem has been already cut in two." (Erwin)

Right after Erw's calm reply, the golem really split vertically apart in two and crumbled down.

As expected, once it's broken this much, it won't be able to float in the air.  
Falling to the ground with a bang, it's turned into mere wreckage and ceases to move.

"I told you, didn't I? That I have cut it already." (Erwin)

"Ooh! How amazing!"

"Well, as a matter of fact it's because the golem had been already breaking apart from Wend's and the other's attacks." (Erwin)

Nevertheless, he was able to deliver the final blow to the last boss at the very end. It's a glorious achievement for Erw.

"Wendelin, we have to check those two." (Therese)

"True." (Wendelin)

With Therese pointing that out, we quickly head to the mountain of golem wreckage, searching for Duke Nürnberg and the demon who rode the golem. First we found Duke Nürnberg who was bleeding intensely with his right arm and leg cut off. Having been swallowed up in Erw's and mine bisection, his body had apparently been cut apart.  
It looks like he's barely conscious, but going by the state of his wounds and the amount of bleeding, he's beyond saving.

"Dear, I have 『Light of Miracles』, but..." (Elise)

True, only Elise's 『Light of Miracles』 was an exception.  
She's asking me whether she should use it or not, but before I can answer, Duke Nürnberg raises his voice.

"Don't show some half-assed mercy here. Even if I'm fully healed with magic, I will be judged by the third son of that stupid emperor and receive the death penalty anyway. In that case it's much better to embrace an unsightly death here." (Nürnberg)

"No...but..."

Once I wavered due to my idea of presenting him alive to Peter and the feelings of guilt for abandoning a human that was about to die, Therese offered her opinion,

"Indeed. Let him die here just like that. The ringleader of the rebellion would be publicly beheaded in the capital. It's probably the same to execute him by decapitation while alive and to cut the head off the corpse." (Therese)

"What a typical way of speaking of you, Therese. But, right now you have my thanks." (Nürnberg)

In accordance with Therese's argumentation, I decide to let Duke Nürnberg die here as is.

"I guess, in the end I lost. I had such premonition when I missed the chance to kill you in the capital at first, Therese...and when I heard that it was Earl Baumeister who rescued you." (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg's tone wasn't any different from usual, but he had a suffering expression due to the heavy blood loss and the severed limbs.

"I will give him at least a painless death." (Elise)

Elise, who saw that, prevents any further bleeding by blocking the open wounds with first-aid. Since it doesn't compensate for the lost blood, he will die before long, but the pain should have vanished.

"You have my thanks. To show compassion to your enemy...your nickname of Saint is truly befitting. I'm jealous, Earl Baumeister." (Nürnberg)

"Yes."

Not knowing what to answer in such a situation, I replied with a normal 『Yes』.

"It applies to your wife, but I also envy you, Earl Baumeister." (Nürnberg)

"Me?" (Wendelin)

Just what is Duke Nürnberg envious about?

"I wanted to become an adventurer in my childhood...say, Therese." (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg also called out to Therese who's next to him.

"We played games of acting as adventurers several times in our childhood." (Therese)

"That time was really fun...Therese, you acted as swordswoman..." (Nürnberg)

I guess the scenes when he was playing around as adventurer together with Therese in his childhood are replaying in his mind.

"But in the end I became Duke Nürnberg and you Duchess Philip. Our surroundings envied us, but in our eyes this is probably a blood curse." (Nürnberg)

"True. Even when I wanted to say 『No, I don't want to succeed』, I couldn't do it. After all there was no one with whom I could discuss it either." (Therese)

"The Duke Nürnberg household that has 1,200 years of history...but it's not like I founded it myself either. Feelings of parting don't well up in me at all." (Nürnberg)

Duke Nürnberg, who had ability, became a good statesman after being inaugurated as Duke. It was expected that he would reach a position of leading the future imperial army as military genius and as central figure of the Empire.

High expectations were placed onto him as young talent, but that doesn't mean that he himself wished for that.

That's probably the reason why something like a darkness was gradually born in his heart.

"A good feudal lord and a general with an expected bright future. I was envied and praised by the people around me, but I wasn't happy about that at all... That's why I thought: If I do something bold using this ability and status..." (Nürnberg)

"I might as well seize the Empire, crush the Kingdom and unify the continent. Let's challenge that reckless dream." That was the conclusion he reached.

"Once acting after thinking like that, I forgot for a little time about the emptiness. I didn't think of the victims that would appear due to that. If I won, I, who should be treated as atrocious person, would be praised. Even if I lost, I would only put an end to a life I didn't desire to begin with." (Nürnberg)

"..."

No one blamed Duke Nürnberg.  
That's because it wouldn't have any effect on this man.

"I will die in disgrace. Therese, what will you do?" (Nürnberg)

"I think I will leave the Empire. I don't feel like following Peter-dono, but if people appear that try to elevate me into a high position, I don't know what will happen." (Therese)

"I see... You are going to live freely by yourself?" (Nürnberg)

"There's no way that I can be truly free like a commoner, but I will be far more free than during my time as Duchess Philip." (Therese)

Once Therese tells him that while laughing, he revealed an envious expression for an instant.

"I guess it will be worth watching how you will freely live from now on, Therese... Let's meet in the other world...after a few decades..." (Nürnberg)

"I guess so. Farewell, Max." (Therese)

Even though he had talked until now, Duke Nürnberg calmly shut his eyes now.  
He mustered his last willpower and continued to speak firmly, but it seems this was the limit.

"He has died." (Elise)

Elise checks Duke Nürnberg's breathing and pulse, and informs us of his death.

"Freedom, huh...? You idiot....." (Therese)

Therese muttered while looking upwards.



She probably thinks that she will show to us that she's crying otherwise.

"If Duke Nürnberg hated his status so much, he should have withdrawn by himself...no, even I was unable to do that. I guess that's why I can't blame Max either... However, was there no other option? Thou are really a stupid man." (Therese)

Therese still looked upwards in order to not spill any tears.

"He was probably just too serious."

Burkhart-san, who had listened silently to the conversation until now, reveals his own thoughts in a whisper.

"He probably gathered information and technology while placing even that demon under his control. It doesn't look like Duke Nürnberg changed sides to the demons."

"Even if the other party might be a demon, I can't believe that this man was under the influence of someone else." (Armstrong)

Everyone agreed with Doushi's opinion.

"Ah, that's right... Let's take Duke Nürnberg's corpse with us. There are also other tasks left to do." (Ina)

Ina urged on all of us that we must not dwell forever in sentimentality. That particular device had been apparently broken, but its destruction shouldn't be complete yet. Additionally, it's also possible that many excavated items are lying inside this place. It was necessary to collect or destroy these as soon as possible.

"That reminds me. There's no guarantee that Peter-dono won't go crazy after obtaining these weapons. After all one doesn't really comprehend others..." (Therese)

Since the battle has ended, Erw called the soldiers, who were on standby outside the room, and ordered them place Duke Nürnberg's corpse on a stretcher and carry it.

"In the end I didn't really understand Duke Nürnberg's way of thinking."

If I'm allowed to mention it, I think that it would have been fine leaving his household if he hated it so much.

Though I might reach such conclusion since I was a commoner by birth in previous life.

"There might be other people who think so as well, but even I wasn't able to retire from my post as Duchess Philip until I was forced to do so by thee and Peter-dono, Wendelin. Max was still Duke Nürnberg until his death. I have no other way to express it but to say, that's the way it is." (Therese)

"I see..." (Wendelin)



At last we succeeded in defeating Duke Nürnberg, the root of all evil, but I couldn't rejoice about it in all honesty either.

For the family head of a high-ranking noble household...

It allowed me to consider various things.



短髪ですが  
前髪だけ少し長めです。

エメラ



不<sub>レ</sub>わ、とけ<sub>レ</sub>金<sub>レ</sub>髪

外<sub>レ</sub>目



うごきやす<sub>レ</sub>うな  
くつで

ペーター



マルク

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